LANGUAGE LOSS AND LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE: LIFE HISTORY ACCOUNTS OF SELECTED MEMBERS OF THE SIKH COMMUNITY

By

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to explore the lived experience of language loss and language maintenance of selected members of the Sikh community in a prairie city in Canada. Language loss occurs when individuals from minority language groups in contact with a dominant language forget or fail to fully acquire their first language (in this case, Punjabi). Language maintenance occurs when minority group members acquire and remain proficient in their first language in situations of contact with a dominant language.

Using a multiple life history case study approach pioneered by Kouritzin (1997), the researcher conducted multiple, in-depth interviews with 12 participants. Life stories were written from edited versions of the interviews for nine of the participants. The life stories were embedded in descriptions of the interview, life history, and narrative contexts of the individuals and their stories. A subsequent analysis was done of the themes that emerged within and across the interviews.

The participants belonged to three families. They ranged in age from 12 to 63 years; seven were female, and five were male. Five of the participants were born in India, five in Canada, and two in Africa.

All of the participants attested to the importance of maintaining their first language. The themes that emerged within and across interviews related to the importance of the first language (Punjabi) to family relationships, personal and cultural identity, religion, faith and community, maintaining connections with the homeland (India) and education.

This study has implications for scholars of language loss and acquisition and those who serves minority group members; language and education planners and policy

makers; educators, and settlement service providers, as well as for the general public whose friends, neighbours, and co-workers are minority language speakers.

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The individuals who participated in this project by sharing their lives with me, so that we could produce your stories together. Thank you for your generosity, kindness, patience, encouragement, and faith.

My family who supported and encouraged me with love and pride throughout the entire process.

Dedication

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my parents,

Albert and Lydia Tigchelaar,

who always encouraged me to study, and who would have been proud,

and to

Baba Ji

who inspires and nurtures us all.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine the phenomena of language loss and maintenance in the Sikh community in Winnipeg. Using a multiple life history case study approach that emphasises intensive, in-depth interviews with selected community members, I will attempt to understand, describe, and interpret how it feels for those individuals who have lost, or are losing their first language, and how it feels for those individuals who have maintained their language. I will do this through narrative stories using the words of the study participants. The stories will be the result of edited, multiple, in-depth interviews between me and study participants. Each story will be preceded by an introductory section that describes the interview, life history, and narrative context in which I give my own analysis of the participant's life and experience. I will also attempt to draw out themes that resonate across interviews and within interviews. My goal in this study is neither to attempt to attribute cause for either first language loss or maintenance, nor to prescribe ways of preventing or minimising language loss or promoting first language maintenance. Neither do I intend to link language loss or maintenance to any social, economic, or personal benefits, advantages or losses. My goal is only to attempt to give a voice and a venue to the deeply felt language and life experiences of the participants.

This study will be a replication of Kouritzin's 1997 study, Cast-Away Cultures and Taboo Tongues: Face[t]s of First Language Loss, with several important distinctions. This study will be done on a smaller scale. I will interview 12 participants, and I will

focus on one religio-cultural group, the Sikh community of Rostang[1], Canada. As well, this study will involve inter-generational analysis. I intend to interview members of two or more generations within two families. Finally, this study will tell of language maintenance as well as of language loss.

Justification

I have only found one study, Kouritzin 1999, that examines the inner world of individuals experiencing first language loss, and it will serve as a model for the type of study I want to do. In her book, Face[t]s of First Language Loss, Kouritzin presents the experiences of three women and two men of various ages, ethno-cultural backgrounds, and educational levels. She introduces their stories by describing the context of the interviews and by giving her own insights into the interviewee's life and experience, then she presents their stories in their own words. These stories are based on multiple in-depth interviews that have been distilled into the essence of that person's experience. I want to replicate Kouritzin's work on a smaller scale, focusing on one religio-cultural community, the Sikh community of Rostang, Canada. I am fortunate to have connections to the community that will enable me to solicit participants for the study. I am aware that this is a community in which first language maintenance is highly valued, but also concerned that language loss may be occurring. Finally, I have a deep affinity and affection for this group and see the study as a possible way of telling my friends' stories, and perhaps making them more accessible and understandable to the individuals involved and to the larger society.

[1] The pseudonym "Rostang" was chosen to replace the real name of the Canadian city where the study took place in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

I also wish to add the element of language maintenance to the study because I believe that language loss and language maintenance are two sides of the same coin. All minority language individuals have experienced both. In some cases language loss is far greater than language maintenance, with profound implications. In other cases, maintenance of the first language outweighs loss of the first language, with different implications. In some cases, whether the focus is on language loss or language maintenance is a matter of which lens we look through. I want to learn about the reality of individuals who have lost their first language and the reality of those who have managed to maintain their first language and the degrees to which they have done so. It is my intention to do an inter-generational study, interviewing the grandparents, parents and children whenever possible.

I am personally interested in the phenomenon of first language loss because it is something I have peripheral experience with (i.e., lack of first language development). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, it is an issue for many of my friends and acquaintances in the Sikh community and among the students in the adult ESL classes I teach.

With regards to my own experience, my parents immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands in 1952, four years before I was born. Shortly after coming to Canada, my father decided that he and my mother should speak only English at home rather than Dutch. I remember my mother telling me that this felt unnatural, like a game they were playing, but in the interests of assimilating to life in Canada as quickly as possible, she agreed to do so. This was long before the Pierre Trudeau's multi-cultural policy and official recognition of the cultural diversity in Canadian society. At that time, Canadian

culture was assumed to be British, and English was the only national language. People who had an accent, or who appeared to be different in any way were considered "D.P.s" and looked down on. My parents felt it was in their best interests to "do as the Romans do" in order to get ahead in their new home. As the Netherlands is a small country in a populous, diverse continent, the Dutch are used to speaking a variety of languages. Both my parents had studied English before immigrating, and my father could also speak German and French. Furthermore, Dutch is grammatically similar to English, which further facilitated their language learning.

From a cultural perspective, the Netherlands and England are neighbours, seafaring, and trading nations, so the cultural gap was not very large. My parents were both well-educated and not visibly different from the mainstream culture, so they had little trouble getting jobs and maintaining a quality of life and social status similar to (and eventually better than) that which they had in Holland. So, although my parents experienced some cultural adjustments and difficulties, they were relatively small and they never seriously regretted their decision to come to Canada.

When I was born, my parents made a conscious decision to speak to me only in English. They wanted my English to be native-like, without any trace of an accent. They felt this would give me the best possible chance of success in Canada. They only spoke Dutch at home when they did not want me to understand what they were talking about, and that accounts for the small bit of the language I do speak and understand. (This strategy probably motivated me to learn my mother tongue more than any other would have!) As our family connections to the Netherlands were not that strong, and because I do not speak the language, I do not really feel "Dutch". Since my parents spoke excellent

English, the linguistic barriers between us were minimal. Cultural and generational barriers were more the issue. As my physical appearance is not different from the mainstream, and it is only my last name (Tigchelaar) that sets me apart, I do not feel I have suffered unduly from not having a heritage language. (I cannot really say that I have lost something I never really had.). In my interactions with the adult students in my ESL classes and with my Sikh friends, however, I recognise language loss as something far more profound and painful, with far-reaching implications to an individual's sense of identity, self-esteem and sense of belonging to family, community and society. On the other side of the coin, I recognise language maintenance as a source of pride and identity, self-esteem and the glue that holds family and community together and gives them a place in the larger society.

Evolution of the Study

Experiential Context.

I became interested in pursuing a study of language loss in the Sikh community as a result of my involvement with a Sikh gurdwara (temple) in Rostang, Canada. The connection began through an elderly Sikh gentlemen in my community-based Adult ESL class. He would often stay after class to talk to me, and our conversation usually turned to religion. I enjoyed listening to him and hearing the pride and love in his voice as he spoke of his faith. At the beginning of his second year in the program, he introduced three more members of his community to the class. They turned out to be priests (also called *behangums,* or disciples/followers) from his gurdwara. Near the end of the school year, they invited me to attend a special service at the gurdwara. I found the nature of worship and the warmth of the congregation very appealing, and I began attending

services more and more regularly. In the summer of 2000, I was able to visit India with my daughter through the gurdwara. We stayed in and visited many of the important contemporary and historical gurdwaras in Delhi and Punjab. My knowledge of and affinity for the Sikh religion and community increased immensely as a result. Our visit was a particularly rare and golden opportunity because we travelled as the guests of the spiritual leader of our denomination, and we were guided by and looked after by one of the *behangums* from the gurdwara. This meant that we were granted "insider's status" not available to most tourists. We also had the connections, resources, and freedom to travel not available to most local people. It was during the trip that I decided to focus my thesis on the Sikh community.

When we returned to Canada, I became involved in several temple functions, including the religious education program, where I am able to interact with children aged three to 16 years. As a result, I began to notice the cultural and linguistic gaps that exist between generations in many families. During the classes, I was able to observe language use among children of different ages. I noticed that without exception, the young children speak and understand Punjabi. Once they reach school age, however, English becomes the *lingua franca*.

While most of the children are still able to understand everyday Punjabi, they are not always able to express themselves fluently in the language. This became apparent during a warm-up game of "Simon Says", conducted in Punjabi. (Although the classes are religious education classes and not language classes, we try to use Punjabi as a medium of instruction as often as possible. This connection between language and religion is particularly important in Sikhism for reasons that will be discussed later.) The

girl (approximately 12 years old) who was acting as the leader of the game did not know, or could not remember the Punjabi words for common body parts and found it difficult to give an entire command (e.g.,"Simon says: touch your nose") in Punjabi. I found this particularly telling since the girl comes from a notably devoted family, and she is obviously proud of her heritage.

My connection to the gurdwara has also resulted in a several important friendships. When I am with these friends, our conversation usually centres on family, relationships, and religion. When listening to my friends talking about their own and other families and relationships, it has become clear that they believe that in the most successful ones, the people involved have maintained strong connections to their language, culture, and religion. On the other hand, the expression "s/he has become Canadianised" has become a shorthand way of saying that the individual has lost the connection to their language, culture, and religion, and has adopted many, if not all, the bad habits (e.g., cutting hair, taking drugs, smoking, drinking etc.) and unacceptable behaviours (e.g., dating) of mainstream Canadian culture. I can remember a similar, though much weaker version of the same delineation between "us" (of Dutch heritage) and "them" (other Canadians, particularly the mainstream). This scenario usually occurred when my parents had experienced an insult or slight that made them feel different, or feel like they didn't belong, or when they heard or read of something that outraged their sense of propriety. Some of these instances were generational differences, like new styles of music, clothing, and hair, and others were cultural, like different degrees of formality and means of showing respect to elders and so on. I remember feeling very uncomfortable during these instances because although I knew exactly what

my parents were talking about and knew what was the "right" way (according to their beliefs and values), I also felt a strong connection to and empathy for the "Canadian" way of doing things. I hope to be able to explore this phenomenon more deeply through this study.

Although first language is extremely important to every group, Punjabi is particularly important to Sikhs. This is because it fills a vital religious as well as cultural role. Sikhism is a way of life as well as a religion. Practising Sikhism involves regular visits to the Gurdwara; a daily routine of prayer and meditation; dietary restrictions; adoption of a "uniform" of five symbols (uncut hair, which men cover with a turban; a steel bracelet to be worn on the right arm; a small comb to be worn in the hair, a short sword; and special underclothes) that are to be worn at all times, and other forms of participation in the faith community. Also integral to the spiritual routine of a devout Sikh is the thrice-daily reading of selected passages from the Sikh Holy Book, the *Guru Granth Sahib.*

The *Guru Granth Sahib* is at the centre of Sikhism. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is a 1430 page compilation of divinely inspired poetry written by the Sikh Gurus. It was invested with complete spiritual authority by the tenth and final human Guru when he passed away in 1608. Consequently, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is treated with utmost respect, and readings of it accompany all important spiritual and secular events in Sikh life. (For example, when a Sikh family experiences an important life passage like a birth, death, or marriage, or when the family starts a new business or buys a house, they will mark the event with a reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib.*)

The *Guru Granth Sahib* is written in *Gurmukhi* (the name for the written form of Punjabi), and although translations and transliterations exist, a properly performed reading must be performed in that language. Other forms of worship at the Gurdwara, like hymn singing, prayer, and sermons, are also conducted in Punjabi. Therefore, in order to participate fully in a Sikh faith community, one must be able to read, write, speak, and understand Punjabi/*Gurmukhi.* If an individual is not conversant in the language, he or she will not be connected to a vital part of Sikh identity and community. It is hard to overstate the importance of spiritual beliefs and practices in a Sikh's sense of personal and group identity.

I have found a very limited number of studies done on Sikhs living in the diaspora. Those that have been undertaken have mainly focused on child-rearing practices (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1977, 1997, 1998), educational opportunities (Gibson, 1983) or cultural adaptation (Ames & Inglis, 1973/4, Chadney, 1980; Ghuman, 1994, 1997; Mills, 2000). I have not found any studies that describe, analyse, and interpret the lived experiences of individuals in an in-depth way. I strongly feel there is a need for this type of work to be done.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

As long as people have been learning and using languages, they have also been forgetting their languages. In general, the loss of all or part of a language is known as **language attrition** (Freed, 1982). People cease to use languages as individuals and as members of groups. If individuals lose the ability to use a language (for example, if a "minority group member cannot do the things with the minority language he used to be able to do", it is usually referred to as **language loss** (Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992, p. 8). If a group stops using its language and switches to another, entirely or in part, it is called **language shift** (Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992). When people continue to be proficient in their first language in situations of contact with dominant languages, it is referred to as **language maintenance**.

Language loss can be categorised four ways. Van Els (1986), quoted in Tomiyama (1994), has created a typology of non-pathological language loss. His four categories are based according to the language lost (first language (L1) or second language (L2)) and the environment (first or second language) in which it is lost. The types are as follows.

Type one involves loss of the L1 in an L1 environment, such as the loss of language experienced by aged people in societies where their L1 is the majority language.

Type two is the loss an L1 in an L2 environment. This is the language loss experienced by minority language group members in societies where their language is a minority language.

Type three is the loss of an L2 in an L1 environment, for example, the loss of a foreign language. This situation might occur in people who have learned or acquired a second language at school or while living in a foreign land, then lost the language when they returned to their native land.

Type four is the loss of an L2 in an L2 environment. This type of language loss occurs when ageing immigrants lose their L2.

This study will focus on type two language loss, the loss of the L1 in an L2 context. However, in this chapter, reference will be made to type three language loss as it pertains to bilingualism and second language acquisition (SLA) and their relation to L1 loss.

Type two language loss can occur in several ways. Type two language loss always occurs with minority group languages existing within a majority group language setting. The first type of language loss occurs when an entire language is lost, or dies. This usually happens over a lengthy period of time as elderly speakers of the language die and the younger generation does not acquire the language. This has occurred and continues to occur with a number of Native American Aboriginal languages. A second way that type two language loss occurs is when a minority language community gradually stops using its language over several generations and replaces it with the dominant language. In this case, however, the minority language continues to thrive in the minority group's homeland. A third way that first language loss can occur is on an individual level. In this case, young members of a minority group fail to acquire the language of their parents or partially acquire it, then lose it, as they begin to participate in the majority culture (the most common time being when they start school).

The process of individual language loss is generally associated with the study of psycholinguistics (Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992; Clyne, 1992). Psycholinguistic studies explore how language performance changes in an individual, measuring criterion variables, like forgetting, lowering of proficiency, difficulty recalling elements of the language (e.g., phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, and the order of the loss of skills) (Oxford, 1982). These criterion variables are correlated to predictive variables, or the subject's personal characteristics which influence the rate and content of language skill loss and include age, gender, IQ, attitude, motivation, aptitude, schooling, amount of practice and socioeconomic status.

There are a number of challenges associated with conducting psycholinguistic studies (Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992). One involves establishing base line data, such as what the language speaker's proficiency was before language loss began. It is hard to know what the original language situation of the subject was. Some people initially acquire a variety of their language that is already marked by loss in the previous generation. Another challenge is determining what "normal" proficiency is. Is there an ideal language speaker that can be held up as a model for everyone? Language use varies greatly depending on many internal and external factors as well as social and power relationships (Bourdieu, 1991).

Language shift is generally associated with sociolinguists (Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992). Sociolinguistic studies examine how language use changes in groups of language users. Sociolinguistic studies measure criterion variables like pidginisation, creolisation, language shift, language maintenance, and language death, and correlate them with

predictive variables, or group characteristics: such as cultural vitality, language prestige, group orientation, economics, and geographical distance (Oxford, 1982).

Dorian (1982) and Paultson (1992) examined the variables that affect language shift and maintenance in minority groups. Dorian reviewed a number of interesting cases in order to highlight important questions that dominate the field of sociolinguistics. The questions dealt with matters of language prestige and language loyalty (or "positive language orientation in an essentially negative situation" (p.45)). Dorian examined situations of language contact ranging from ancient times to the present and occurring in the Old World and the New. She pointed out that pragmatism, in particular, plays a major role in determining if a minority language will be lost or maintained when it comes into contact with a dominant language. In her words:

> ...people know very well on which side their linguistic bread is buttered. Language loyalty persists only as long as the economic and social circumstances are conducive to it, but if some other language proves to have greater value, a shift to that other language begins. (p. 47)

However, she also points out that cultural dispositions (for example, if a group's identity is primarily based on religion and/or language) can also affect whether a language is maintained or lost. Politics, especially nationalistic sentiments, also impact on language loss and/or maintenance. The factors determining whether or not a language will be lost or maintained identified by Paultson were very similar to those posited by Dorian. Economic incentive and access (or exposure) to the dominant language will favour language shift. Continued access to a standardised, written L1 that is culturally prestigious, ethnic pride, and the use of the L1 in sacred purposes will favour maintenance.

Psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic studies of language loss and maintenance are not always discrete; there can be overlap. Clyne (1992) points out that psycholinguist and sociolinguistic studies can be complementary. He also proposes that psycholinguists and sociolinguists work hand in hand with linguists in conducting pertinent and meaningful studies. He proposes a paradigm that involves all three.

According to Kenny (1996, p. 4), social psychology attempts to bridge psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. He cites a number of studies that attempt to correlate variables from both disciplines (e.g., the impact of group vitality on language use, correlations between changes in language attitude and vitality, and the relationship between vitality perceptions and language attitudes).

There is also overlap between language loss and second language acquisition, (SLA) studies, and language loss and bilingualism studies. Many researchers (Andersen, 1982; Berko-Gleason, 1982; Cho & Krashen, 1998; Cummins, 1981; Dorian, 1982; Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon, 1992; Freed, 1982; Gardiner, 1982; Krashen, 1998, Lambert, 1975, Lambert, 1982; Oxford, 1982; Romaine, 1995; Toohey, 1992) have theorised about or investigated the relationship between SLA and language loss. Some (Andersen, 1982; Berko-Gleason, 1982; Fase, Jaspaert, & Kroon 1992; Jaspaert & Kroon, 1992) have suggested that SLA studies can provide clues as to which linguistic features would be more subject to loss and which would be more likely to be maintained. Others, (Cummins, 1979, 1981; Gardiner, 1982; Dorian, 1982; Krashen, 1998; Lambert, 1975; Toohey, 1992) have looked to social factors in language loss and retention. Lambert (1974) posited the notions of **additive** and **subtractive bilingualism** and **semilingualism**.

"Additive bilingualism occurs when conditions favour the development and maintenance of the maternal language while permitting the learning and use of a second language" (Allard & Landry, 1992, p.173). In other words, individuals acquire a second language at no cost to the development of their L1 skills. In fact, Cummins (1979) proposes that a higher level of L2 skills positively influences cognitive functioning. However, in order to achieve this beneficial form of bilingualism, a high level of competence in the L1 must be achieved. Cummins elucidates this belief in what he calls the Threshold Hypothesis. The Threshold Hypothesis actually consists of two thresholds, a lower threshold and a higher threshold. In the lower threshold of bilingualism, an individual has a native-like level of proficiency in only one of the languages (dominant bilingualism). At this threshold bilingualism has neither positive nor negative cognitive effects. At the higher threshold (additive bilingualism) the individual experiences positive cognitive effects as a result of his or her high levels in both languages. An important consequence of this for the purpose of this study is, as Cummins states, "in minority language situations a prerequisite for attaining a higher threshold level of bilingual competence is maintenance of L1 skills" (p. 232). Cummins (1979) also proposes a Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis which states that, "the level of L2 competence which a bilingual child attains is partially a function of the type of competence the child has developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins" (p. 233). The implication of this hypothesis is that if children's L1 skills are not highly enough developed, early exposure to the L2 will likely hamper further development of the L1, as well as limit development of the L2.

"Subtractive bilingualism occurs when conditions favour the development of a second language to the detriment of the maternal language" (Allard & Landry, 1992, p. 173), or "when the addition of a second language leads to the gradual erosion of competence in the first language" (Ellis, 1994, p. 694). This often occurs with minority language children whose L1 stagnates, is delayed, or lost when they come into contact with the majority language (usually when they start school). The most negative possible outcome of subtractive bilingualism is said to occur if the individual loses proficiency in his or her first language without gaining full proficiency in the second language. This condition is known as semilingualism.

Semilingualism is said to occur "in some contexts, when learners of an L2 develop negative attitudes toward both their own cultures and that of the target language...and fail to develop full proficiency in either language" (Ellis, 1994, p. 722). The concept of semilingualism, however, is controversial. It is believed it may be used to stigmatise people of migrant backgrounds and possibly those who speak with accents (Kalantzis, Cope & Slade, 1989).

Oxford (1982) outlined and reviewed the various types of research designs that could be used to study language loss. She pointed out that while many descriptive studies exist, they are only the first step and need to "be followed by designs that have more exploratory power" (p. 132). Oxford believes longitudinal studies are particularly important because they study phenomena over time, which is the main thrust of language loss and maintenance studies. Case studies, she states, provide in-depth information and can help generate hypotheses which can be tested by more rigorous designs. Oxford advocated the use of true experimental designs whenever possible, while realising the

difficulty of implementing studies that require randomisation and control in naturalistic settings. Her preference is clearly for positivist research.

In the next section of this chapter, I will review a number of the studies available in the literature, and highlight their main findings and contributions to the field. The studies in this section all derive from the positivist school of inquiry.

The main focus of these studies, in the case of psycholinguist studies, is the language. The following types of questions guide psycholinguistic research. Are there universals in language loss (and acquisition)? What is the order, pace, and sequence of loss? What is the impact of social features like age, motivation, attitude, and personal features like previous proficiency? Is there a such thing as a forgetting curve?

In sociolinguistic studies, the primary concern is the cause of the loss, or the reasons why languages are lost? These types of questions are asked: What causes groups to maintain or cease using their languages? How does this loss occur?

The value of both types of studies is that they supply the empirical foundations needed for language planning and language education. Language loss/attrition studies provide another window on the dynamism of language and another testing ground for existing theories of language development. What these studies do not do, however, is look at the effects of language loss. That is, traditional studies of language loss/attrition do not consider the impact of language loss on the identity; personal relationships; educational and occupational achievements; and emotional and spiritual lives of those who experience it (Kouritzin, 1997; Wong Fillmore, 1991). The personal, familial, and societal cost of language loss is also a factor that must be considered by language planners and policy makers; educators and education policy makers; and social service providers.

In the realm of psycholinguistics, early studies were generally descriptive and data-based. They attempted to account for the reorganisation of the L1 system in a submersion L2 environment. These studies usually involved testing, sampling, coding, and then linguistically analysing the subject's speech and comparing it to that of an ideal speaker or comparing it to real or theoretical models of L1 and L2 acquisition. I will present a few examples.

In 1986, Verhoeven & Boeschoten studied the L1 development of a group of Turkish children living in the Netherlands and compared them to a similar group in Turkey in order to determine what, if any, impact the Dutch environment caused on the their L1 acquisition. The researchers wanted to test the speed of the subjects' language development to see if it were delayed, stagnated, or became subject to attrition. They also wanted to see if the two groups both acquired Turkish globally, or if specific subsets emerged due to differential patterning. They found that generally the L1 skills of the four to eight year old children living in the Netherlands had stagnated. They also found that the children not only fell back in their L1 competence but also had trouble applying their L1 skills to the L2 context. However, they also found a small resurgence in L1 skills at around age 8, which they felt could be attributed to L1 instruction in school.

Kuhberg (1992) also studied Turkish children. He conducted a longitudinal study of two Turkish children who had returned to Turkey after living in Germany, and one Turkish child who was living in Germany in order to compare L2 attrition with L2 acquisition. He findings indicated that, "attrition was largely a mirror image of acquisition" (p. 138). This is known as the Regression Hypothesis.

Kravin (1992) undertook a longitudinal study of a single subject in a submersion L2 situation. She focussed on the developmental patterns of loss, but also considered variation in social, emotional and attitudinal input factors. She found that the subject's L1 skills had stagnated and hypothesised it was due to limited L1 input. That is, input from the larger community was required to support L1 maintenance in an L2 situation.

Saville-Troike, Pan, and Dutkova (1995) carried out a cross-sectional study of 18 children of unrelated linguistic backgrounds in order to examine the differential linguistic effects of L2 learning on L1 development. In particular, they wanted to explore the relationship between aspects of the L1 grammar with the L2 grammar. They were hoping to find answers to questions about the process of language integration, that is, which L1 features are resistant or permeable to L2 influence, and the extent to which processes of integration and influence are universal or relative. Their final conclusion was that children in an L2 setting will only be able to maintain their L1 if the L1 features are "(a) stable at the time of exposure to L2, (b) highly uniform in occurrence, and (c) not in systematic conflict with input from L2" (p. 147). In other words, children with a minority L1 will likely be in a situation of subtractive bilingualism in an L2 dominant environment.

Later psycholinguistic studies of language loss and attrition show the influence of theories drawn from other disciplines including cognitive psychology (de Bots & Stoessel, 2000) and bilingualism studies (Bolonyai, 1998; Isurin, 2000; Schmitt, 2000). Other researchers (Kenny, 1996) have started investigating hesitation phenomena in the speech of individuals who are losing their language (attriters). There is also an increased interest in relearning (Yukawa, 1997). I will briefly survey a few of these studies.

Hansen (2001) points out that much recent psycholinguistic research is underpinned by the savings paradigm from cognitive psychology. The savings paradigm, in turn, is closely associated with relearning. The savings paradigm posits that once knowledge is gained, it is never forgotten; it just becomes increasingly inaccessible. However, knowledge is retrievable with the right cues. In the case of language, when language is forgotten or lost, there still remain residues of the words and structures that we can no longer remember or recognise. According to the savings paradigm, these residues can be re-activiated. In order to reactivate the residual knowledge, we need different levels of memory. To be able to **recall** language, we need a high level of activiation. We require a lower level of activation to **recognise** language. If the residual amount is so small that our memory cannot activate it, it cannot be retrieved, and the information needs to be relearned. Relearning reactivates old knowledge to the point that we can access it again. Relearning a language can be accomplished in a much shorter time than learning it for the first time.

de Bots and Stoessel (2000) tested two German adult subjects who had spoken Dutch for four years as children and then forgotten the language for residual knowledge. They found evidence of residual Dutch vocabulary (after thirty years of disuse). They reported a strong cross-linguistic effect, but also the retention of non-cognate words. The researchers point out two problems inherent in their research (a) the possible difficulties in distinguishing between real memory and good learning strategies and (b) the subjects' earlier linguistic knowledge must be carefully documented.

Yukawa (1997), reported in Hansen (2001), studied the loss and subsequent relearning of Japanese by her two children. Both had been brought up bilingually in

English and Japanese. The researcher examined their Japanese before and during the period of attrition and again after they relearned the language. She compared the cases on the basis of lexical and syntactic analyses of spoken data and observation of comprehension and repetition tasks. Yukawa found that the two children experienced very different attrition processes. The younger child quickly lost production ability, while maintaining the ability to comprehend. The older child suffered only minor loss of grammar and lexicon. This led Yukawa to hypothesise that there is a certain minimum age that is a necessary threshold level for language maintenance. Yukawa posited a "processing failure hypothesis which predicts that, in the absence of constant exposure, young children suffer from processing failure of a once proficient language in spite of intact linguistic knowledge" (p. 69).

The study of hesitation phenomena in attriter speech results from the notion that attrition is actually the result of changes in processing procedures (de Bots & Welten, 1995). It is connected with the savings paradigm, in that it assumes that we retain everything we have learned, but what we have learned becomes increasingly difficult for us to access when we stop using it. Therefore, "attrition is not the 'loss' of certain items, but rather an increase in the length of time needed for their retrieval" (Hansen, 2001, p.63). Researchers interested in hesitation phenomena quantify hesitation variables (silent pauses, filled pauses, self repairs, repetition and rate of speech) in natural speech to trace the stages of language attrition.

Kenny (1996) studied the L1 Arabic attrition of 24 adult Palestinian immigrants in the United States. He used the Macro-Fluency model to focus on variables such as verboseness, rate of speech, repair, filled pause frequency, and silent pause frequency.

Kenny believes that his method will help to bridge socio- and psycholingusitics by "providing a universally accessible, diachronically measurable competency variable" (p. 231).

Bilingual studies have also contributed to research in L1 attrition/loss. Bolonyai (1998) was one of the first scholars to borrow theories from bilingual studies and apply them to attrition research. In order to study the "structural consequences of intensive language contact on simultaneous L1 and L2 child language development in an L2 dominant environment" (p.21), she drew on three interrelated theoretical models (the extended Matrix Language Frame model, the 4-M model and the Abstract Level model). She applied the model to longitudinal data from a young bilingual Hungarian girl living in the United States and concluded that the empirical evidence from her study can "support the claims regarding the role and nature of abstract lexical structure" (p. 39).

De Vries (1992) provides an excellent definition of language from the sociologist's point of view. He states:

> One can also regard "language" as a social characteristic, resource, or commodity. As such, language can be acquired, cultivated, developed, neglected, or lost, by individuals and by social groups (societies, communities, organizations). In this approach, the object of study is the individual and/or the social group (e.g. a language community. As such, language is seen as a characteristic of these *units of analysis*, and studied in relation to other characteristics of individuals (e.g. number of persons able to speak the language, number of books published annually, legal status of the language in a society). (p. 212)

De Vries goes on to explain that sociolinguistic research on language shift measures only a few variables on large numbers of respondents. Ideally these variables are measured three or more times, in a variety of domains over an extended period of time.

This type of research can be done using data obtained from censuses. This is the case in Stevens' (1982) dissertation on Minority Language Loss in the United States. Stevens used the 1976 Survey of Income and Education to study intergenerational and intragenerational language loss. She used the census data to assess "the role of individuals' social and demographic characteristics on the probability of minority language mother tongue adults maintaining usage of their mother tongue, and on the probability of children "inheriting" a minority language" (pp. 5-6). Her main findings were that "native", highly educated individuals living in metropolitan regions with few others of the same language background were more likely to switch to English, while "foreign", less well-educated people in non-metropolitan areas were less likely to speak more English. Women were more likely to incorporate English into their speech, but less likely to drop the L1 than men. She also found that geographic concentrations of minority language speakers and "isolation" are important mechanisms for language maintenance among the native born. With regards to children, she found that the mothers' language characteristics were more important than those of the fathers. Whether the parents continued using the L1 while bringing up the children was also very important.

An example of a longitudinal research design in sociolinguistic research is de Bots and Clyne's (1994) study of language attrition among Dutch immigrants in Australia. The researchers had conducted linguistic research on German-English and Dutch-English bilinguals in the 1970s. Sixteen years later, they retested the subjects who were still fluent

in Dutch, using the same research instruments. They found no evidence of attrition in that group, and concluded that L1 attrition "does not necessarily take place in an immigrant setting and those immigrants who manage to maintain their language in the first years of their stay in the new environment are likely to remain fluent speakers of their first language" (p. 17).

Yagmur, de Bots, and Korzillus (1999) used a combination of linguistic and sociolinguistic tools to measure L1 attrition and shift, and ethnolinguistic vitality among a group of 40 Turkish immigrants to Australia. They hoped to show how sociolinguistic processes affect language use in minority groups which, in turn, are reflected in language maintenance or shift. In order to do so, they examined the relationship between societal factors and how the participants' speech behaviour demonstrated their perceptions of the language contact situation. The researchers administered lexical, syntactic and self-rating tests to determine the Australian subjects' linguistic proficiency and to compare it to a control group in Turkey. They measured the subjects' perceptions of the vitality of their language (language status, sociohistorical factor, groups norms, dominant language groups' perception of the language) with a questionnaire, and they measured the subjects' language use habits and attitudes. Although Yagmur, de Bots, and Korzillus found evidence of language attrition, they also reported that the subjects felt language maintenance was very important because their language was an indispensable part of their self-identity. They concluded that as long as the social status of Turkish is low in the eyes of both the Turkish and mainstream communities, attrition will continue.

In 1991, a new approach to language loss emerged with the publication of an article outlining and interpreting the results of study into language shift conducted by the

No-Cost Research Group (Wong Fillmore). This work was unique in several ways. First of all, the research was carried out by a large group of specially trained volunteers. Second, the study was conducted without funds to support it. Third, the results were interpreted in a unique way, which personalised the social pressures that promote language loss and portrayed the effects in a personal, individual manner that demonstrated the damage that can be inflicted on self-identity, family relationships, and educational performance.

Wong Filmore's work influenced a number of other scholars who also began to investigate the effects of language loss and study language loss in conjunction with issues of culture and identity.

In 1993, McKay and Weinstein-Shr linked United States government literacy policy with the availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of literacy programs and the consequences to intergenerational relationships and the transmission of cultural knowledge. They concluded that while national policies promote the use of English, there remains a lack of initiatives and resources to fill the need the literacy policies create. They also recommended national policies that support the development of native language literacy.

Parsons-Yazzie (1995, 1996) studied language attrition among the young people of the Navajo nation of Arizona and reported on the parents' perceptions of the situation. Using excerpts from the interviews, she presented a personal and poignant picture of the implications to family relationships, spirituality and personal and cultural identity that language loss causes.

Kouritzin (1997) portrayed the personal consequences of language loss through a unique and highly readable series of life history accounts of individuals in Canada who had experienced language loss. She identified family relationships, self-image and cultural identity, school relationships and school performance as major themes resonating throughout the narratives. Her narratives bring to mind the eloquent and moving autobiographies of Rodriguez (1981) and Hoffman (1989), who detail their experiences with language loss.

Guardado (2002) examined Hispanic parents' views on their children's loss and maintenance of Spanish in Vancouver, Canada. He interviewed six individuals comprising two "intact" families and two single parents in Spanish and translated the transcripts into English. Then he used an interpretative approach for data collection and inductive analysis for data analysis. Guardado found that the particpants' L1 culture was closely connected to language maintenance (and loss). The young people in the study saw L1 popular culture as an important and positive influence in the formation of their identities. Guardado found that positive parental perceptions of the child's ability in the L1 were much stronger in families that had maintained the language. Positive encouragement was a much more effective tool for promoting L1 maintenance than coercion. L1 literacy and community support were also important factors. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, it also seems that the family's relative positions of power in society are correlated to language maintenance. The families who had successfully maintained the language also held professional positions in this country.

Pacini-Ketchbaw, Bernhard, & Freire (2003) also studied language maintenance with Canadian Latina/o students. Their study was based on a theoretical framework that

analysed how power relationships shape language practices. They drew heavily on Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital in their interpretation of the qualitative data they obtained in their study. They found that:

> (a) parents saw Spanish maintenance as a way to foster family unity, Latino identity and professional advancement; (b) the strong assimilative pressures experienced by parents often resulted in their doubting the desirability of openly speaking Spanish at home; (c) because the children were losing their home language rapidly, the parents used a number of strategies; and (d) there are several things that parents would like to see happen that would enable them to maintain Spanish. (p. 115)

Jimenez (2000) also investigated the role of literacy in the development of identity in Latina/o students. His subjects also found their L1 a source of strength and identity. Jimenz concluded that bilingual language and literacy knowledge had a strong positive influence on identity formation.

An increasing number of scholars are drawing on critical theory, post-structural thought and conceptions of cultural capital for theoretical frameworks upon which to interpret their findings. This includes several Canadian researchers who have studied the relationship between minority language speakers/ESL learners and identity. Norton (2000) applies critical theory and the concept of cultural capital to five longitudinal case studies of immigrant women in order to explore the power relationships that affect their complex senses of identity. She argues that traditional SLA theories cannot account for the realities of newcomers struggling to learn English and establish a place for themselves and their families in Canada.

Toohey's (2000) work is also informed by post-structural and critical theory. She applies these ideas to longitudinal case studies of kindergarten ESL learners. She examines the social relations in the classroom community and discusses how discourse practices affect the children's ability to appropriate classroom language.

Dhiman (1997) examined how South Asian Canadian women in Thunder Bay, Canada construct their identities in relation to the dominant society and the racism and stereotyping they experience. Puar's (1995) notion of "oppositionally active 'whiteness'" formed the basis of Dhiman's interpretation of her results.

Several important studies linking L1 and the identity of individuals of East Asian descent have been conducted in Great Britain (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1997, 1998; Ghuman, 1994, 1997; Mills, 2000). Overall, these studies indicate that young people of South Asian descent are developing bicultural identities, which incorporate important aspects of both British and Punjabi culture. Although the researchers identified language maintenance as being of major importance to the personal and cultural identities of their subjects, third generation Punjabi children were found to be increasingly English speaking. For most of the Punjabi families in the study, "religion is the key element upon which their personal identities are nurtured and formed" (Dosanjh and Ghuman, 1997, p. 300). Unfortunately, the researchers also found the process of bicultural identity formation to be confounded by the racial abuse the young people suffer.

Family relationships among Sikhs in North America, Great Britain and India are described by Ames & Inglis, (1973/74); Chadney, (1980); Cole (1995); Dosanjh & Ghuman, (1977, 1997, 1998); Gibson (1983); and Mills (2000). Ames and Inglis provide a helpful chart that compares (ideal) traditional Punjabi family patterns in India and

Canada with perceived patterns of White Canadian family life. Dosanjh and Ghuman (1977) explored the childrearing practices of first and second generation Punjabi parents. Twenty years later, they followed up their original study by exploring changes in family life, self-identity, language use patterns, and religious practice in second and third generation Anglo-Punjabis. They found that the younger generations had made many cultural adaptations to life in Britain. However, enculturation has not been uniform. The second generation of Punjabi parents has changed significantly in the realms of gender equality, independence in terms of making personal choices (clothing, toys, friends, books), and the giving of pocket money (allowance). Fewer adaptations had occurred in the realms of familial interdependence/cohesiveness and physical punishment. The researchers also found that their subjects still preserved their religious practices and were "eager to teach their children the mother tongue despite the lack of support from infant and primary schools" (p. 35). Dosanjh and Ghuman (1998) concluded that, "most Punjabi/Asian parents accept the developing biculturalism of their children and are making the necessary changes in their lifestyles and outlook to accommodate the new realities.... In doing so, they are trying to synthesise (marry) the two differing value systems and thus a variety of new idioms of culture are on the horizon" (p. 35).

In general, writings about Sikhism are not readily available. Many primary sources require knowledge of *Gurmukhi* (the written form of Punjabi) and don't have a wide circulation outside of India. The materials I have found tend to be divided into two groups, the scholarly and the hagiographic. Furthermore, some of the scholarly accounts written by westerners, and using western (critical) scholarly methods have raised the ire of Sikhs who question the appropriateness and meaningfulness of such works and the right of

non-Sikhs to subject Sikhism to such scrutiny. Cole (1982, 1984, & 1995) and Cole and Sambhi (1998) provide the most sensitive, scholarly and readable accounts of Sikhism I have found. Cole and Sambhi (1998) provide an excellent annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources. A website specific to the Nanaksar branch of Sikhism (www.sikhi.demon.co.uk/nanaksar.htm), which is currently under construction, may also be of interest to readers of this study. Other frequently used Sikh internet websites include: http://www.Sikhs.org , http://www.sikhnet.com/ and http://www.rpi.edu/~kochhj/heht/

Two historical surveys of Sikhs are worthy of mention. They are Khushwant Singh's (1999) A history of the Sikhs, volumes 1 and 2, and Patwant Singh's (1999) The Sikhs.

CHAPTER 3

Method of Inquiry

Method of Inquiry: General

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experience of language loss and language maintenance of selected members of the Sikh community in Rostang and to describe these experiences in narrative life history accounts. I want to examine each participant's experience holistically, in the context of their present and past experiences, showing as fully as possible the complexity of their lives and experiences. I do not want to impose any controls or interventions that will restrict or diminish the depth and multi-dimensionality of the research. Thus a qualitative approach is called for.

Philosophically, I subscribe to the constructivist view that all knowledge is created and that there is no subjective truth that is untouched by experience. Stake (1995) posits that there are three views of reality. The first is an external reality that we can perceive through sensory experience, but we cannot know beyond our personal experience of it. The second reality consists of our interpretations of the sensory stimuli we receive. This reality is so cogent we rarely realise that we are unable to verify it, and we assume it is the sole reality. The third reality is the amalgamation of our integrated interpretations. It is our rational reality. It is the reality that allows us to hypothesise and predict. It is built on millennia of accumulated knowledge, and it is personal, blending with the second view of reality. Stake (1995) believes that all three realities exist, and that it is the aim of research to "construct a clearer reality #2 and a more sophisticated reality #3" (p.101).

In accordance with this view, I see my role a researcher as having two parts. One involves my responsibilities to the participants; the other involves my responsibilities to the reader. My responsibility to the participants is to provide them with opportunities to tell their stories. This means creating an atmosphere of trust and acceptance conducive to meaningful communication, in which the participants will feel comfortable relating their stories and find the support required to do so. First, it involves listening carefully and caringly to the participants' stories as they speak. Next, it means studying and analysing printed transcripts of their words and preparing further questions about their experiences to guide subsequent interviews and trying to reach the essence of their experience. Finally, it means recreating the participants' stories in such a way that we both feel it constitutes a faithful and honest representation of their experiences and feelings.[2]

My responsibility to the reader is largely a reverse reading of my duty to the participants. I must provide the reader with an opportunity, through text, to vicariously experience and learn about the participants' experiences. In order to best understand the reality of the participants, the reader needs rich and accessible information from which to construct his or her own knowledge and understanding. This involves description, narrative, and analysis that the reader can relate to that will blend with and enrich his or her own constructed reality. This information will be provided in the form of life history account; narrative, interview, and life history context; and thematic analysis. It must be invitational, so that the reader will want to read it, and it must be abundant. There must be enough thick description that the reader feels capable of forming his or her own generalisations. It must also meet Van Maanen's (1988) criteria of verisimilitude and

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[2] Schulz (1997) provides a thought provoking discussion of the complexities that can develop between researcher and participant and ways of responding to the stories of research participants

apparency. That is, it must have the "ring of truth" about it; it must make sense and seem plausible to the reader. As I struggle to interpret, analyse, describe, and recreate the participants' life stories for the reader, I must always bear in mind that I am an interpreter of the participants' experiences and stand like a bridge with a foot on two shores. Even though the life stories will be told in the participants' own words, the questions I ask will partly determine the answers I get and consequently the story that is told. The questions I ask will be determined by my view of reality, the experiences I have had in my upbringing, education, work, marriage, and family life.

An important life experience that shapes my thinking about this study is my four and a half-year involvement with the Sikh faith community, and my experience visiting India. This has given me cultural knowledge and understanding that many readers may not share. I can use that experience in my writing to provide context that will enrich the reader's understanding of the individual life histories and of Sikh culture in general. On the other hand, my knowledge and understanding are far from complete. They are continuously evolving. I often misunderstand or incompletely understand things I hear, read, or experience. Often I do not realise my limitations until later, if at all. If I had undertaken this study three years ago, it would have been very different. If I were to undertake it next year, it would be different again.

Julie Cruikshank (1990) in her life history accounts of three Yukon Native Elders Life Lived Like a Story, wrote:

> To interpret an orally narrated life story, we need enough sense of the speaker's cultural background to provide context for hearing what is said. One obstacle hampering the analysis of autobiography is the very real human tendency to make

> implicit comparisons between the account heard or read and one's own life. Our interpretive abilities are inclined to fail, though, when we hear a culturally unfamiliar account, in which we may grasp the general framework but flounder when faced with the particular. Frequently, this is complicated because a narrator believes that the listener understands far more of the unspecified content than is actually the case. (p. 4)

This is a situation that is familiar to me, which I shall struggle to deal with in every aspect of the study.

As this study focuses on lived experience, it can be located in a phenomenological framework (Van Manen, 1990). As it involves careful examination and analysis of written and spoken text, it can be termed hermeneutic (Gallagher, 1992; Van Manen, 1990). As the study will be written in the form of life stories prefaced by introductory context settings, it is informed by narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

As the aim of the study is to create life history accounts of selected members of the Rostang Sikh community, the favoured research method is one that allows and enables the researcher to examine the participant's experiences through time as they are embedded in their real life contexts. Yin (1989, p. 13) describes case study research as follows: "case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context." He also defines a case study as an empirical inquiry in which "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (1989, p. 23).

The case study approach, as described by Yin (1989) and Stake (1995) is the most appropriate for my purpose because it will enable me to study the phenomena in-depth, as it exists in its real life context, and without imposing any controls or making any interventions that would diminish the depth and multi-dimensionality of the research. The case study method will allow me to present the "big picture" holistically, showing the complexity of each individual's story. With the case study method, I can ask open-ended "how" and "why" questions that can bring us to the heart of the participant's experience. "How does it feel to have lost/maintained the Punjabi language?" "Why do you want to speak/understand Punjabi (better)?" "Why is it important to speak/understand/read/write Punjabi/*Gurmukhi*?"; these are examples of the types of questions that will guide the interviews.

Within the case study approach, I will use the multiple life history methodology (Kouritzin, 1997, 1999, 2000) in my study. I have chosen this methodology because it will enable me to collect information about the participants' past as well as present experiences and examine them in-depth, from the participants' point of view. This method accommodates the reintepretation and restorying that occurs when individuals revisit their pasts. It will enable me to analyse the information I collect holistically and to focus on the participants' understanding of their experiences rather than on the experience itself.

Kouritzin (2000) tells us that there is no recognised consensus on a definition for case study research and points out that life history can be used as the focus and purpose of research, or as the means to another end, such as an educational approach or a measurable variable. She provides her own understanding of the method as:

> an aggregate of documents, including an oral life story, centring around and supporting a life narrative and possibly incorporating many of the terms it is sometimes considered synonymous with: oral autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, journals, dream analyses, diaries, personal documents, case histories, oral accounts, testimonies, personal histories, individual documentaries, confessions, third-party reports. (Kouritzin, 2000, p. 4)

Bertaux (1981, p. 7) comments that while many authors do not distinguish between life story and life history, he believes it involves not only a distinction between two types of data but between two approaches. He terms "life stories" as oral accounts of a person's life told by the person himself/herself. He defines "life histories" as the person's own story supplemented with biographical and other information drawn from other sources.

Life history, then, is more than just a biographic description of events. The complexity and depth of the interviews, the extensive analyses and triangulation of sources ensure the academic rigor of this methodology. I will attempt to capture the essence of the participant's experiences by conducting multiple interviews that probe deeply into the heart of their understandings and insights; I will provide interview, life history and narrative context to enrich the stories, and I will attempt to generalise my findings by looking for themes that resonate within and across interviews.

The life histories in my study will be joint creations of each research participant and me, the researcher. They will allow the reader and the creators to gain a clear and coherent insight into the participants' realities, which they might never otherwise get. It will allow stories to be told that might otherwise always be hidden, with the hope that

they will create understanding among all the parties involved as well as the reader. The life stories will be built from the results of multiple interviews, each one building on the previous one to create a thick, rich tapestry of insight and reflection on the participants' experiences, and set in a wider context that details the interview setting, the narrative framework and the person's life history.

I hope that the following stories will serve several purposes. I hope they will help to increase the understanding of the readers as to the lived reality of some members of the Sikh community in Rostang and the challenges they face in maintaining their identity and self-esteem while participating in and contributing to mainstream Canadian society. As many of the readers will be involved in education, I hope the results of this research will positively affect their ability to serve their students, be they adult ESL students or minority language students.

With regards to the participants, I hope the work will help them to appreciate their own accomplishments in maintaining their identity while enriching Canadian life with their cultural, social and economic contributions. I hope they will recognise in their stories their achievement over adversity, and be strengthened in their efforts to maintain their language and culture.

Method of Inquiry: Applied

In order to create meaningful narratives and insightful analyses that give in-depth expression to the participants' experiences of language loss and maintenance, I used qualitative methods associated with case study and life history research. I chose a flexible resarch design; that is, I was open to new techniques and changes in format and I attempted to be spontaneous and adaptable to new situations and opportunities. Although

I realised that my presence as interviewer and observer created its own dynamic, I tried to keep interactions with participants as open-ended and non-directive as possible. As in all qualitative studies, the overall design and method of my study was "field work"; that is, my research time was spent interviewing and observing participants.

The major data collection strategies for my research involved conducting multiple, in-depth, semi-structured interviews and taking extensive, detailed field notes in which I recorded the settings of the interviews, relevant body language and other non-verbal cues displayed by the participants, and my own impressions, insights, reactions and reflections. The interviews were audio-taped in order to enhance the accuracy of the data and to verify the impressions based on that data. The field notes were hand-written, word-processed, and audio-taped. All audio-tapes were transcribed. I tried to do all of the transcription myself, but when that proved overwhelming, I hired someone to help me. However, I still found it necessary to go over all the tapes myself to verify the accuracy and add parts that were difficult for the transcriber to understand due to accent, speed of speech, or unfamiliar vocabulary (e.g., Punjabi words, names and place names).

The participants and I jointly created the narrative stories of their experiences, using a method pioneered by Kouritzin (1997). This method involves using multiple, in-depth interviews. Before the interviews, I explained the purpose and process of the interview to the participants and gave them a written explanation of the study. Most of the subjects received a copy of the interview questions ahead of time. I also gave a copy of the thesis proposal to two major families involved. The first interview with the participants was fairly loosely structured. I asked them about their life stories and referred to the interview questions as appropriate, depending on the extent to which the

participant led the interview, or I led the interview. I asked open-ended questions as much as possible so that the narrative would be as free-flowing as possible. I employed strategies like rephrasing, repeating and summarising to probe deeper.

The first series of interviews was fairly formal, because the process was new to both the participant and me. However, I found that as I conducted more interviews and became more familiar with the process, I became more relaxed and confident. I also became more knowledgeable about the topic and began to ask participants about insights I had gained in other interviews, as well as my own ideas.

After the initial interview with each participant, I transcribed and studied the tape. Then I formulated questions about the information and ideas expressed by the participant. I asked these questions in the subsequent interview as I attempted to draw out more information and develop themes and commonalities across and within interviews. I gave the participants the transcripts and questions to the participants so we could use them as the basis for the subsequent interview.

The process of using subsequent interviews to delve deeper into topics discussed in earlier interviews was done until I felt that the point of saturation (Bertaux, 1981, Kouritzin, 2000, Munhall 1999) had been reached. That is, I continued the process until I felt that no more new generalisable themes were emerging, that the same information, ideas, and opinions were merely being restated, or that the stories were idiosyncratic and individual, interesting, but not contributing to the development of themes. In most cases, this involved two or three interviews; however, in some instances (that will be discussed in the next section) only one interview was conducted.

I put the interview transcripts for each participant in a separate binder. I separated each interview with a divider and put my field notes, impressions, and questions with the interview it pertained to. In a number of transcripts, I indicated which question (from the previous interview) the participant was addressing to make it easier to create a chronology of the evolution and development of the participants' thoughts. I also used annotated "post it" notes and a highlighter pen to cross-reference ideas and important information. This method helped me to check the reliability of my research -- how consistent the interview data was for the same person, and how consistent the data and the evolution of the narrative were across the interviews I conducted.

I used the distilled interview data to create the participant's life history account. I used the participant's own words to create the life history and together with my field notes and research journal, guide my analysis of the interview context, the life history context and the narrative context. In each case, I had important decisions to make about how, and how much, to edit the participants' words so that the **true** meaning of their stories emerged. When I say "true meaning", I am referring to the complex and multilayered meaning that emerged from the paticipants' linguistic and paralinguistic message, from their intention, from the context, and from my own knowledge and intuition.

I used the data from the interviews and field notes to conduct a thematic analysis. I identified the following themes: the meaning of language maintenance/loss; the impact of language maintenance/loss on family relationships, on personal and cultural identity; on faith and community; on connection to India, and on education. Although the agenda was flexible, open to revision and any challenges and opportunities that presented

themselves, I found that the process unfolded largely as planned. I realised this very clearly as I reread the "Method of Inquiry" section of the research proposal in preparation for writing the "Method of Inquiry" section of the completed study.

Gay (1996) describes two potential threats to the validity of qualitative research that I had to address in my study. They are observer bias and observer effect. Observer bias relates to the subjectivities and limitations of the researcher. "Observer bias refers to invalid observations that result from the way in which the observer (interviewer) observes (interviews)" (p. 222). I realise that I am inexperienced in the skills and subtleties of effective interviewing. However, I believe my nature to be straightforward, non-judgmental and non-threatening. People usually find it easy to confide in me, and trust me to keep their confidences. As an adult ESL teacher with 13 years of experience, I have had much experience listening to the stories and problems of my students. I have also lived in and visited a number of countries in South and South-east Asia, so I have experience living in a different culture and in cross-cultural communication. My involvement with the Sikh community in Rostang has taught me much about the customs, values, beliefs, and issues that prevail in that community. I also tried to make my research process and results as transparent as possible by taking copious field notes and putting a lot of time and effort into reflection and analysis of the interviews, the participants, the context and my own insights and reactions.

I tried to recognise and take into account my limitations as an interviewer and my personal biases and subjectivities as I conducted and wrote up my research, and I made every effort to communicate them to the reader. I also hope that my cross-cultural experiences and my involvement with the Sikh community enabled me to gain deeper

insight and understanding of the realities of the research participants. In fact, I recognise that I have learned and grown a great deal over the two years it has taken me to complete the study, from the time I began working on the proposal, until this moment, as I sit, typing the completed document. I have continued to be involved with the gurdwara, and my friendships with the participants have deepened. Many things that were new to me are now familiar and customary. I believe the increased depth of my understanding is reflected in the analysis presented in the "Resonances" section of this study.

Observer effect is the "flip side" of observer bias. It "refers to the impact of the observer's participation on the situation being observed" (Gay, 1996, p. 222). In the case of my research, I must consider and take into account how the participants reacted to me as interviewer. Again, validity depends on my skills as an interviewer and my ability to make my work transparent, to be sensitive to and describe in detail the participants' verbal and nonverbal reactions, and my perceptions of how I influence them.

Subjects

The participants in this study were drawn from the Sikh community in Rostang. Like Mills (2001), I selected the participants using a combination of purposive sampling (Cohen & Manion, 1994) and opportunity (Bell, 1987). I wanted to conduct inter-generational interviews with at least two families. So I decided upon two families having three generations in Canada that I thought were fairly typical and representative of the community, and whom I believed would have reflections and observations to share about language loss and maintenance. Issues of convenience and accessibility also played a major part in my selection, as I was "dependent on the good will and availability of subjects" (Bell, 1987, pp. 73-74), and I was not trying to achieve a random sample.

I believe the fact that I selected participants, rather than having people volunteer for the study, affected my method. Volunteers come forward because a topic is important to them and they have something to say about it. Some of the participants in my study had not necessarily reflected deeply on the topic before I approached them, and they may not have realised exactly what they thought about the topic at first. In fact, in a number of cases, I believe that the process of being involved in the study and discussing the topic caused the participants to become aware of new ideas. The time between interviews seemed to allow them to develop their ideas, so that in subsequent interviews they often had more to say about it. There are probably a number of reasons why the participants had not thought deeply about the topic earlier. In most cases, it probably was because they had maintained their language and took their proficiency for granted. Therefore, they had no need to think deeply about it. Or it could have been because they had lost the language to some degree, but had not yet considered the implications of their loss.

The participants in this study represent a wide cross-section of individuals spanning the continuum of language maintenance/loss. They range from those whose language was fully formed when they came to Canada and has remained intact since that time, to those who were born in Canada, whose initial first language learning was limited, and who have lost some of the language they initially had.

The participants in this study are "everyday people" in that they come from a range of different backgrounds with different education levels; they range in age and have had different life experiences. None are educators or linguists or are in involved in the fields of education, immigrant settlement, or human rights. I am very grateful for

their willingness to be involved and for the time, interest, energy, and openness they demonstrated during the interviews.

I interviewed a total of 12 individuals in three families. Five were male, and seven were female. Five of the participants were born in India; five were born in Canada, and two were born in Kenya, Africa. The participants came from a full range of age groups. They included two people in their 60s, two in their 40s, three in their 30s, two in their 20s and three children aged 12 years. As well as interviewing the children, I also interviewed their parents/guardian about them. Formal parental permission was obtained, and the parents or guardian was in close proximity (e.g., in a different room in the house) when I interviewed the children. However, in all cases, the adults chose not to be directly involved in the interviews. I respected and appreciated their trust both in the young people and in me.

Translation was not required for any of the interviews. In one case, however, the husband of a participant whose English is somewhat limited was present at the interview and helped to ensure that complete and accurate communication occurred. Trusted, objective friends who were not part of the study helped me to understand the full significance of some cultural and religious concepts and events, and specific vocabulary that were discussed during the interviews. I made sure to maintain the participants' confidentiality while obtaining this information.

I found that most of the adult participants had total proficiency in Punjabi and in English. This was so for several reasons. First of all, the centrality of Punjabi/*Gurmukhi* to the spiritual and community life of the participants is a strong incentive to language maintenance. Second, most of the participants had arranged marriages with people

whose primary language is Punjabi. Marriages of young Sikh Canadians are usually arranged by the parents with partners from India. Although there is some evidence that this practice has become less popular with some Canadian-born Sikhs, particularly women (Ames & Inglis, 1974/3, Chadney, 1980), it is still prevalent, among second, and some third generation Indo-Canadians living in Rostang.

The results of the inter-generational interviews were used to triangulate the data I collected in order to get a more complete picture and to cross-check the information I received.

In accordance with practices of the community and in order to facilitate access to participants, I approached members of the executive committee of the gurdwara and asked them to suggest individuals who might be interested in participating in the study. I also consulted the elders and *behangums* at the temple for their recommendations of potential candidates. Seven of the participants were recruited by this means. I prepared a letter of explanation to give to potential candidates. This letter (see Appendix A) explained the intent of the study, the procedure to be followed, the steps I would take to protect privacy and ensure confidentiality, and the level of commitment that would be required. I had also asked the President and Secretary of the Gurdwara to provide a letter of reference as well as oral references for me, however none of these measures were necessary. I was able to approach each of the participants directly. In retrospect, this was a better method because it ensured participant confidentiality more completely.

Meeting Times and Places

I asked the research participants to suggest the times and locations for the interviews. Almost all of the interviews occurred at the participants' homes. I interviewed two of the

participants at the gurdwara. I audio-taped all interviews. Each interview took between one and five hours. Most interviews took about two hours, bracketed by one to two hours of informal visiting. Most participants took part in two, and more usually, three, interviews.

Length of the Study.

In total, the study took 26 ½ months. I spent the summer of 2001 preparing the proposal, which I defended early that fall. I submitted an application to the Research Ethics Board in September 2001. While the application was being considered, I approached the Executive Committee of the gurdwara for referrals of possible participants. I then communicated with several of the potential participants to discuss the study and outline what their participation would involve. I was very clear that this would depend on Research Ethics Board approval.

I began the interview process in November 2001, after receiving Research Ethics Board approval. I had anticipated doing one interview a week, but the transcription process turned out to be much more time consuming than I had anticipated. Most interviews took more than 30 hours to transcribe. Consequently, the interviews were spread over a much longer time period than I had expected. I formulated the questions for the next interview while I transcribed the tapes. I accompanied each interview with field notes in the form of carefully recorded observations of the setting and context, and detailed accounts of my own reactions, insights, and observations.

After I finished transcribing the interviews, I gave the participants copies of the transcripts, so they could check for accuracy, and help structure the interviews. I also supplied copies of the interview tapes as requested. Then the participant and I scheduled

the next interview leaving sufficient time to allow the participant time to reflect on what was said and the questions I had.

Initially, I edited the interview results into a life story for each participant and wrote the introductory section (consisting of the interview context, the life history context and the narrative context) immediately after the interview process was completed. However, I was forced to change my method as a result of two intervening factors. First, I was set behind schedule by the unanticipated amount of time required to transcribe the interviews. Second, the death of my mother and ensuing responsibilites preoccupied me for a number of months in 2002, and I was not able to keep up with the time-line I had planned for the study. As a result, more time was required than I had anticipated. I completed the interviews in the fall of 2002, and spent the winter and spring of 2003 transcribing and writing the life history and introductory accounts. The summer of 2003 was spent writing the thematic analysis, methods, and literature review, and updating the methods and introductory sections.

Human Subject Considerations

Confidentiality.

Kouritzin (1999) describes the problems she experienced when she asked a participant in her language loss research to verify her life story (which was written in an edited version of the participants' own words). When the document was returned, she found that the participant had "crossed out half of the story" (p. 32) and written "irrelevant, please delete" in the margins, leaving her with little more than the participant's name, the name of the language she had lost, and her profession, but none of the anecdotes that gave meaning and flavor to the participant's story. Kouritzin was able to resolve the situation

satisfactorily by discussing it with the participant and justifying why she wanted to include everything she had written. Kouritzin concludes the account by saying:

> I think that verifying stories and double-checking for anonymity are extremely important, but now I believe that researchers should make absolutely clear that what they are offering is a chance to comment, to modify, and to have participants' reservations put in print, but not an opportunity for wholesale retraction. (p. 33)

I believe there are important lessons to be learned from this experience. As the life histories are a collaborative endeavour between researcher and participant, I believe it is important to involve the participant in all stages of creation. It is a matter of common courtesy as well as an expression of the philosophical and value system in which the work is done. However, it is important to be very clear with the participant right from the beginning that everything he or she says has the potential of being published in the research. This serves to protect the researcher, the participant, and the process.

I realise that in a study like mine, which is occurring in a small, tightly knit community in one geographical location, confidentiality is important. Therefore, I have made every effort to maintain the anonymity of the participants. This involved great discretion on my part, in terms of (not) discussing my research with others (apart from my advisor and committee members) while it was in progress. It also involved changing names of people and places. Many other details like dates and numbers (ages, family size, etc.) have remained relatively accurate.

Ethical issues.

I believe it was important to ensure that the participants and I shared a clear understanding of the purpose of the research, and that we shared expectations as to information disclosed in the interviews and how it could be used. To this end, I prepared a letter explaining the purpose and procedure of the study, which I gave to all study participants. The letter indicated that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time. The letter also detailed what I expected from the participants in terms of time commitment, my intention to take and use field notes, and my intentions regarding the use of the information they disclosed during the interviews. In fact, the letter served two purposes. First, it coherently outlined the purpose and procedure of the study in a written format that the participant could review at their leisure. Second, it added a tone of formality to the process that helped (somewhat) to delineate our relationship in the movement from friend/friend to researcher/participant to friend/friend. (The presence of the tape recorder had this effect, as well.) The heightened formality surrounding the interviews had two results. On the positive side, it reminded participants that what they were saying was "on the record". Consequently, they probably thought more deeply about what they were going to say, and monitored their speech more carefully (which also protected their confidentiality). On the negative side, the formality caused a little initial nervousness and apprehension among some of the participants. Having said all that, however, the **main** ongoing source of information about the study for most of the participants was our informal conversations. As my research has occupied most of my time and energy for the past two years, it has been a natural topic of discussion (to a limited depth) with my friends/participants.

My expectation was that all the information divulged during official interview sessions (that is, during the jointly arranged session when the tape player was running) was data that could be used in the life history accounts (with deletion of names, places and other identifying markers). I also expected to use my own observations, reactions and insights at my discretion, ensuring that confidentiality was preserved. As described earlier, I verified the facts of the life history with the participants and modified my writing with regard to the factual accuracy, but it was ultimately my decision about what to include and what not to include in order to ensure the integrity, coherence and believability of the life history. In all cases, the participants were satisfied (in some cases delighted) with the results. However, if they had not been, I would have tried to negotiate a compromise that satisfied them while still maintaining academic rigour and narrative integrity.[3] Were that not possible, I would have excluded the participant from the study.

The fact that most of the participants were personal and family friends complicated as well as facilitated my ability to do good research and write accurate and meaningful life history accounts. The complication I encountered echoes a situation described by Schulz (1997). She cites a study (Brody et al., 1994) where a friendship developed between a researcher and a collaborator/participant. The researcher found it difficult to separate friendship from research and felt uncomfortable about using information resulting from non-research-related conversations in her study. As Schulz says, the researcher:

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[3] Schulz (1997, p. 109) describes a research situation in which stories were rewritten in order to capture "shades and deeper meanings" that were intended but not captured by the typed transcripts of conversations.

> ...felt uneasy. Her discomfort stemmed from a concern for fidelity to the person. She felt that Janet (the collaborator) trusted her, and she questioned whether it was a breach of trust to listen between the lines of their discussions and take notes on their casual telephone conversations. She...wondered where the boundaries of research and relationship began and ended (p.107).

In my case, the friendships began before the research relationships. However, I often found myself listening to and reviewing conversations with the participants with two minds, that of friend and that of researcher. During the course of the research I learned things about my friends' lives I might otherwise never have known, and I gained insights I might not otherwise have had. I found that sometimes this knowledge touched and coloured conversations that had previously been strictly personal. When that happened, I made an effort to refer to the interviews. For example, I might say, "that reminds me of what you said when we did the interviews" or "Now that I know about .... I understand ... better." I wanted to be open about my thought processes. I rarely used any information gained from personal conversations directly in the study. I sometimes gave examples of personal incidents and cultural knowledge gained from the friendships in the introductory sections of the stories. I believe they will deepen the readers' understandings of the contexts in which these stories are set. I hope that the additional knowledge I gained from the interviews will serve to enhance and deepen our friendships in the future.

With regards to the participants' views of my using information gained through friendships in the study, I broached the issue with Mandeep (one of the participants). Her response took this form: "Oh for heaven's sake, it's not an exposé or anything. Don't

worry about it!" (Mandeep, personal communication, August, 2002). I interpreted this as a common sense reaction to what she perceived as over-sensitivity on my part. I think she's right.

In the research proposal, I had anticipated that the Sikh group solidarity and cohesiveness might have two effects on the study. I thought it would motivate people to agree to be involved (which was true), but I also thought it might create an expectation that I would only write positive and supportive things. I feared that there might be a lack of understanding of the impartiality and distance required for the scholarly analysis the study required. These fears proved groundless. The participants who were involved have all lived in Canada long enough to realise the cultural differences in this regard. Furthermore, while the participants became very interested in what the study meant to them personally (i.e., how their lives and the lives of their children were affected by language loss), they had limited interested in the technical and academic aspects of the study per se. I would always be asked, "how is your work going?" and we would discuss the concrete aspects of the study, but I found limited interest in the abstract elements.

Piquemal (2000, 2001) discusses four principals to guide ethics in research with Aboriginal communities. These principals are also valuable in guiding research with other minority groups, although cultural contexts and values may be different. One principal in particular resonates with this study. It is "to consult with the relevant authorities, which are both the individual and the collective" (2000, p. 50). In terms of Indo-Canadian families, this involves obtaining the permission of the head of the household (generally the eldest male), as well as the permission of the individual who is to be involved. I followed this protocol where it applied.

Dissemination of the Findings

As discussed earlier, draft versions of the life history narratives were given to the participants so they could check the veracity of the factual information. The completed work will be printed and bound as a thesis. Each household that participated in the study will receive a copy of the thesis. I anticipate publishing parts of the work or articles about the research process and findings in the TESL Manitoba Journal and perhaps in the TESL Canada Journal, or TESOL Quarterly.

Strengths and Limitations of the Method

Kouritzin (2000) discusses the strengths and limitations of life history research and concludes that the benefits of this method far outweigh the disadvantages, that life history research methodology is "one powerful enough to gesture toward recording the complexity caused by the intersection of race, class, language, history, and culture that we face in our classrooms" (p. 30).

Kouritzin lists the benefits of the life history as follows. First, it shifts focus from the extraordinary to the mundane and from the universal to the singular. That is, life history brings the stories of the ordinary person to the forefront; it turns the spotlight from the "stars" of history to the equally important and compelling stories of the "cast of thousands". In the case of my study, the spotlight is on the everyday, yet powerful and profound experiences of ordinary people. By giving a voice to their experiences and feelings, I hope I have expanded our understanding of the importance of first language maintenance, the consequences of language loss, and the reality of the Sikh community in Rostang. I hope I have challenged some commonly held assumptions on both these topics. By drawing out themes that resonate with those of previously published works on

the topic, I believe I have added to the newly evolving body of knowledge of language loss and maintenance that highlights individual experience.

Kouritzin also maintains that life history research allows for comprehensive reinterpretation. By that, she means that the life history narrative contains a rich source of information that can be used as a source of data to analyse various topics and themes that emerge from the interview data. I hope that the life history narrative that the participants and I created will contain information that provides data useful for other research on related topics.

Another strength of the life history methodology that Kouritzin puts forward is that it provides historical clarity. That is, it sets events and information in a historical context that allows us to understand what the words, ideas, and behaviours meant in the context of their time, and to see how that may have changed. This has important implications for how we do research and what we learn from it. It can help us to realise the importance of accounting for different historical and cultural realities in creating our understandings and analyses. It also has implications on ESL policy development and implementation. When we examine life histories of ESL learners we can appreciate the effects of ESL policy and practice in human terms rather than just in political terms. Again, I hope the results of my study have added to a body of knowledge that broadens our understanding of language education policies on the lives of those affected by them and enables policy makers and implementers to make wise decisions.

Kouritzin's final point in favour of life history research methodology is that it is invitational. Since it is written as a story and not in traditional academic style, it has a wider audience appeal. It will be of interest to people outside academic circles. By

availing stories of language loss and maintenance to the mainstream in a format that is easy to read, the narrative life history and accompanying analyses can help to further cross cultural understanding and acceptance. From a personal point of view, collecting, analysing, and writing narratives and analyses of the experiences of friends from a community I have a strong affinity with was a very appealing and exciting form of research and creation.

The power of the life history narrative was reinforced to me several years ago as I was driving to a neighbour's house to pick up my daughter and listening to CBC radio. The story was about the United Nations Conference Against Racism in South Africa. The reporter was explaining how slavery still existed, listing the countries in which it occurred and the numbers of people who were still slaves in these places. I listened with half my mind, thinking it was a tragedy that this practice could thrive in this day and age, but continued to think about my research and other personal topics at the same time. Then the reporter illustrated his broadcast with an autobiographical account by a 16 year-old girl from Niger who had been born into a life of slavery. She told her story before a total assembly of conference delegates. She spoke in Arabic and her words were simultaneously translated into English. I became transfixed as the previously academic report came to life. Sad, but dry lists of places and numbers took on a new significance as I heard the girl describe how her life had evolved. It put into human terms what had been abstract a few minutes previous. The reporter later described how her life story had silenced and moved the entire assembly that she had addressed. Her narrative moved me to tears and still haunts me. I will never forget it. This is the power of narrative, particularly life history narrative.

A final strength of this method is the benefits it can provide for the participants who have the opportunity to create their story and have it told. I have always found that the experience of describing an event or experience helps me to clarify and better understand it myself. This may be an exciting and valuable exercise for participants in the study. I hope it may help them appreciate their own accomplishments and more clearly realise their important place in Canadian society.

For me, the research project has enabled me to better understand and connect with the community I have become affiliated with. It has been my privilege to be able to give back something to the community and faith that have given me so much.

Some of the limitations of qualitative research, namely observer bias and observer effect, have been discussed under an earlier heading. I will now take the opportunity to address several other potential pitfalls identified by Kouritzin (2000). They take two forms. The first form involves pitfalls for theory and research. The second takes the form of pitfalls for the participant.

As life histories focus on individual stories, there is some concern about lack of representivity in the life history methodology; in other words, there is a concern that life history research focuses on the individual and fails to address universals. Kouritzin puts forward a number of defences to this concern. They include continuing to investigate until saturation of knowledge has occurred (saturation of knowledge happens when one continues interviewing the participant or group until no new information is forthcoming); triangulation; quantification of data and emergent theme analysis. My study is a small contribution to a new body of research. It is a small investigation of personal language loss in a limited population in a restricted geographical area. As such, it has the potential

to support or challenge existing knowledge and possibly add new cultural-specific ideas to existing research.

Verifiability is another concern linked to life history research. It is related to the concept of truthfulness. How "truthful" will the participants be? Will they use the interview as an opportunity for self-search or for rationalisation? What understanding and perspective will they use (past or present) when they relate their story? Is there only one version of "truth" or is the truth relative to the context of the conversation - who we are talking to, where and when we are having the conversation, and how we are feeling that day. Is the truth relative to other events and experiences that have occurred in the time between the initial event and the present? The accuracy of dates, times and places can be checked through the interview process (are these facts consistent throughout the interviews?) and, when possible, through triangulation. I believe there is an important distinction to be made between the veracity of facts and of opinions, feelings, and insights. I also believe that the veracity of opinions, feelings, and insights can best be cultivated through reflection and the opportunity to express them in a safe, non-judgmental environment.

Feasibility of the Study

This was a feasible study to do. I had access to participants, locations for interviews, and the necessary time in which to do my research. I also had the material resources: tape recorder, microphone, word-processor, and printer that were required. The cost of the research was reasonable. It involved the cost of audio tapes; printing of word-processed materials (i.e., transcripts, drafts of the life histories, introductions and analyses, chapters of the thesis) and the final thesis document itself; transcribing of some tapes;

photocopying materials for the literature review; and transportation to and from the university and the interview locations. I did not pay honoraria to the participants.

CHAPTER 4

Life History Accounts

The Sahota Family

The first family we will meet in this study is the **Sahota** family. The family consists of **Jaswant** and **Balbir**, their children and their spouses, and their grandchildren. Jaswant and Balbir have two sons, **Parmjeet** and **Sharanjeet**, and one daughter, **Jaspreet**.

Jaswant came to Canada from India as an independent immigrant in 1972. Balbir came in 1975, with their eldest son, Parmjeet, who was five at the time. Jaspreet came to Canada in 1979 when she was six. Sharanjeet was born in Canada in 1981. Parmjeet and Jaspreet are married and have families of their own.

Parmjeet is married to **Dalbir**, and they have a daughter, **Mattu**. Dalbir comes from the **Dhillon** family. She has one younger brother. She, too, came to Canada when she was around six years of age.

Jaspreet is married to **Mohinder**. Their family name is **Gill**. They have a daughter, **Babli**. They live with Mohinder's parents, near Jaspreet's parent's house.

Sharanjeet lives with his parents, Jaswant and Balbir. He is not married.
The life history accounts of **Jaswant, Balbir, Jaspreet, Dalbir** and **Sharanjeet** are presented in this study.

I have known the Sahota family for four years. They were one of the first families I met, and were especially kind and friendly to me when I initially joined the temple. Jaspreet and I currently conduct a monthly religious education program for children. I have occasaionally helped Jaswant with temple business, like giving tours to visiting students. Balbir has generously taught me how to cook some of her delicious specialities.

Jaswant: Introduction

Jaswant: Interview context.

All my interviews with Jaswant were held in his family home which is located in a middle-class, professional suburb of Rostang. The interviews were all held early on Sunday mornings. The interview times were left completely up to me. Jaswant made it graciously clear that he would be available at any time I requested. I chose this time because it allowed me to work with minimal disruption to my family.

Each time I drove the 60 kilometres to his home, my heart pounded with anticipation, tinged with anxiety. I would worry that I was inconveniencing Jaswant or his family, or that I was taking too long between interviews and he would lose interest in the project. After all, the initial interview was held in November 2001, and the fourth and final one was held in July 2002. If I ever did inconvenience him or his family, nothing was ever said or done to indicate it. I was always greeted with warmth and energy and made to feel like a part of the family. The interviews were always preceded and concluded with mugs of steaming *chaa*, the spicy, milky tea of northern India, and plates of tasty home-made sweets and snacks.

Although I had approached Jaswant and asked him to participate in the research project rather than vice versa, he was very serious about his role and demonstrated remarkable attentiveness, concentration, and interest in the process. He could remember almost every detail of what he had said in previous interviews and his answers, though often terse, were always consistent.

At the time of the initial interviews, Jaswant lived with his wife, Balbir, two sons, Parmjeet and Sharanjeet, daughter-in-law, Dalbir, and granddaughter, Mattu. At

times they provide room and board to foreign students. Their home is in a middle class, professional neighbourhood, on the corner of two pleasant, winding, residential streets notable for the maintained, well-decorated, and well-landscaped homes. Jaswant's house is surrounded by vehicles. Jaswant and his elder son, Parmjeet, both drive taxis and the family has three private vehicles. One older car in need of repair was in the driveway during the first two interviews. There was a small satellite dish on the south-west corner of the house used to pick up ATN (Asian Television Network) and other stations that bring Indian news, movies, and other programs to the family. At the back of the house is a small garden where Jaswant's wife, Balbir, grows hot peppers, tomatoes, and many of the herbs and spices characteristic of Indian cuisine. In the corner of the garden is a small bird feeder. Balbir told me that was where she put left over chapattis for the birds to eat. She believes it is a waste to throw away the gift of food that God has given us, so she shares it with the sparrows that come to her yard. When I rang the doorbell, it played "God Save the Queen".

Inside, the house is an interesting mix of modern and traditional. The living room is graced with beautiful leather furniture and dominated by a large new television complete with DVD player and VCR. The basement houses the latest in computer, recording, and entertainment equipment. Yet in every room there is at least one religious item, a picture or a photo, reminding the observer of God's immanent presence and absolute control. One of the four bedrooms on the main floor is dedicated as "*Babji*'s room" and is specially decorated and arranged to house a copy of the Sikh Holy Book, the *Guru Granth Sahib.* The *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is revered and honoured as a living guru, rests covered with specially sewn and decorated cloths, on a four-legged

wooden platform, which lies under a brocade canopy affixed to the ceiling. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is consulted at least twice daily. It is opened at random and the first verse on the left page is read to determine God's will, or *hukam,* for that day. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is also ceremoniously served an offering of food three times a day. The offering consists of a portion of the food prepared for the family, and the *Guru Granth Sahib* is served first. The offering tray is removed after 15 or 20 minutes and the family shares the remains as part of their meal. Devotees entering the room to serve the *Guru Granth Sahib* should be freshly showered, wear clean clothes, and have their heads covered and feet bare.

Jaswant's family is clearly a family in transition from one culture to another. There are strong commonalities and striking differences between generations. Although all members of the family are initiated Sikhs, only Jaswant, his wife Balbir, and daughter Jaspreet, follow the 10th Guru's orders in the traditional way. That is, they wear the five Ks, the steel *kera* on the wrist, the *kangha* or comb in the hair, the *kirpan*, or small sword, the *kacchera* or specially tailored underclothes and the *khess* or uncut hair. Jaswant wears a turban, and Balbir wears a Punjabi suit as her normal attire; Jaspreet wears both Western and Indian clothes. Parmjeet and Sharanjeet cut their hair and wear Western clothes. While most of the older generation's friends and associates are connected with the gurdwara, the younger generation has a nearly equal number of Sikh and non-Sikh friends and associates. While Jaswant speaks English fluently and confidently, his speech is nonstandard and marked with a strong accent. Balbir's English is more limited, and she is somewhat shy and hesitant about speaking. The younger generation, on the other hand, speak English like native born speakers (the youngest son, Sharanjeet, was, in fact, born in

Canada). The conversation I heard in the home alternated seamlessly between English and Punjabi, English when I was involved, and Punjabi when the talk was strictly between family members. Their Punjabi was peppered with English words.

It is shared spirituality that binds this family most tightly and, in my opinion, is largely responsible for their successful maintenance of Punjabi/*Gurmukhi.* All of the family members are devoted Sikhs of the Nanaksar denomination. The Nanaksar branch of Sikhism is led by a *sant*, or saint, Gurdev Singh Ji, who is also respectfully referred to as *"Baba Ji"*. (Literally, *Baba Ji* is a respectful term for father. In common usage, however, it often refers to God, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, or among Nanaksar Sikhs, Saint Gurdev Singh Ji, whom most believe to be a human manifestation of God). Gurdev Singh Ji, or *Baba Ji,* travels around the world, visiting the 16 Nanaksar gurdwaras in India, England, Canada, and the US, inspiring and guiding the hundreds of thousands of congregants in the denomination. All of Jaswant's family are devout followers of *Baba Ji.* Their love and enthusiasm for their spiritual leader is boundless. Any mention of his name brings loving smiles to their faces and animates their conversation. Jaswant's family members all play important roles in the gurdwara. Jaswant is on the Executive committee and Balbir provides meals for the *langar* (community kitchen) at least once a week. The younger generation attends services regularly and all are prominently involved in gurdwara functions. The family does much of the service and maintenance required in the gurdwara.

All of the interviews were held in the living room, where we sat cross-legged on the sheet covered floor. Privacy and confidentiality were not a concern during Jawant's interviews, and family members joined or left us at will. There was often someone

working or reading in the adjoining dining room as we talked. Jaswant's eight month-old grandchild, Mattu, played on the floor near us during all of the interviews.

I was very impressed with Jaswant's practicality and appreciated his suggestions for making the interviews more technically efficient and effective. Here was no passive participant in the interview process! He suggested several different ways of placing the tape recorder to maximise the quality of the sound recording, and he had a number of ideas for making subsequent interviews more productive.

At times I wondered how open Jaswant was being during the interviews, and how much he was telling me what he thought was appropriate; what would reflect well on himself, his family, and his community, and what would help me achieve my ends. I felt that his comments were very general and impersonal, and I really was not gaining much insight into the real man. Sometimes I felt that he made the most interesting and insightful comments, and certainly told the most colourful anecdotes, while we were chatting informally before and after the actual interviews. Nothing he said at those times actually contradicted his comments during the interviews, but I think the life history account would have been enriched with their inclusion. I finally came to think that personal reserve is a major part of Jaswant's character. Although he appears highly extroverted, ready, and able to talk to anyone, and capable of taking the lead in any situation, he does not easily reveal his inner workings and, perhaps, he is not deeply reflective. On a number of occasions, he described himself as *Baba Ji's sevaadar*, or God's selfless servant. He is always very quick to help and serve because it is his duty as a Sikh and maybe this is his character – a man of action.

While I was typing the transcripts of the interviews, I had the opportunity to reflect carefully on Jaswant's English language use. I realised that although his communicative competence was very good, I had to rewind the tape and listen to his words a number of times in order to transcribe them properly. I believe that the reason for this is that although Jaswant has command of a large and sophisticated vocabulary, and controls grammar very well, his English is somewhat idiosyncratic and his manner of speech is not standard. He speaks very quickly, often puts stress on words that would not be stressed by a native speaker and doesn't stress words that a native speaker would emphasise. His thought groups are also non-standard. He sometimes pauses where a native speaker would not, and doesn't pause when a native speaker would.

When I was thinking about how to compose his life history, many questions entered my mind about how to actually *write* the story. (See Denzin, 1989, for a discussion of standards in truth in autobiography.) While musing in my research journal I wrote the following:

> How much should I try to maintain Jaswant's actual style with his speech mannerisms, mistakes, etc? Should the story sound like Jaswant talking? Although it is based on interviews, it is actually a written account, and written and spoken language is fundamentally different. My hunch is that Jaswant would take a more traditional view of the situation. I think he would prefer his story to be presented in more formal and standard English. He would want grammar mistakes corrected and syntax adjusted. I think he would feel this would lend credibility and weight to his words and present him as he **is**, but cannot always **appear** because of language barriers. I think he would prefer me to use a free

> editorial hand, to "Anglicize" his speech, do away with the redundant "its" and "ones", the unnecessary "even thoughs". Personally, I feel torn. I would like to maintain the very distinctive character of Jaswant's speech because I think it adds verisimilitude and interest to the story, but I must consider whose story it really is and how Jaswant wants it told. Jaswant is depending on me to write his story for him. He wants to sound educated, articulate, and intelligent. Judging from many of his comments during the interviews, he certainly doesn't want to be perceived as "ethnic", even if it might gain him credibility and empathy with an educated, mainstream Canadian audience. If Jaswant were to write his story himself, the tone would be different from that of a spoken account. Yet it is a written narrative. I must consider how can I best present the **truth** of his story. (Researcher Journal, February 6, 2002.)

These musing led to more questions, including more in-depth investigation of the first question: "whose story is it?" and of the question "what is my role in this story?" These questions work on many levels. On the most basic level is the structure of the interviews. The questions that formed the framework of the interview were my questions. I decided what would be talked about. The question list, which was faithfully followed on every occasion that we met, was my question list. So I also controlled the order in which we talked about things. So in that way, I controlled the story. The answers, of course, were Jaswant's, but the answers must be edited; I cannot include every comment he made on every topic. The result would be a painfully redundant and tedious account. I must choose which of his words to include in the story and which to leave out. I must decide which of his sentences best portray the main points he is making

and which do not. I must also decide which of his points are the main points and which are secondary and think about how to order and present them. All of these subjective decisions are mine.

What is Jaswant's role in the story? He received a copy of the proposal as soon as it was completed. He got the question list ahead of time and had the opportunity to check over the questions. Did it occur to him read the questions critically? Did he ever think of amending, adding or deleting questions? Did he consider whether or not he actually had control over the metafunctions of the interview? He was not part of the proposal writing or initial planning of the research. He willingly entered a set agenda, perhaps without ever considering that it might have been any other way. How did he see his role when he entered the process? Did he think about it much?

Although the structure of the interviews was preordained, the questions were all open-ended. Jaswant had total freedom to answer them as he wished. I transcribed the answers verbatim. Jaswant received copies of all the interview transcripts, and after the first interview, he received them well in advance of the next interview. The transcripts were accompanied by a list of further questions based on what he had said in the interview. He also received a copy of the first drafts of the life history account with my request that he check it for accuracy and provide any feedback he wished to. I have no definitive answers to these questions; I do not think there are answers. I do believe I must be aware of them and consider them at all stages of research and writing in order to make the story as meaningful, mindful, and honest as possible.

Jaswant: Life History Context.

Jaswant did not offer a lot of details about his life during the initial interviews. He seemed more interested in expressing his opinions about the importance of language loss. As he had immigrated to Canada as an adult, language loss has not been an issue for him personally, so I guess we both felt it was not as important for him to reveal his past as it would be for the younger generation, who had grown up here. However, as everyone's life experience plays a profound role in determining their world-view, and the world view and experiences of the parents have a major impact on the children, I felt it was important to have an idea of the major events of his life. As a result, we spent our final interview talking about his life history. During that interview I realised what an energetic, enterprising and adventurous man he is, as well as strong and resilient. I will recount the highlights of what I learned.

Jaswant was born and grew up in Ludhiana, an industrial city in central Punjab, in the early 1940s. He came from a family of builders. His grandfather was a contractor and his father was an engineer. He went to a private school until grade 10. English was the medium of study there from grade 4 to grade 10. After that, he attended an English medium private college for two years. Subsequently, he went to university, where he studied most of his subjects (except math and English) in Punjabi. He began a BSc, but postponed his studies in 1961 to join the naval aviation (naval airforce) branch of the military where he trained and worked as an air traffic controller. He was able to resume his studies under the auspices of the militia, but found that the university programs had been changed, and switched to a BA program.

Jaswant was engaged in 1966. His marriage was arranged by relatives who spoke to him and his prospective wife, Balbir, and arranged a meeting. Jaswant humorously recounted their first meeting:

> I don't know who told about me and what he said. Her father came to investigate. They offered me to see her. I saw her. I did not ask any questions or anything. She served the tea on the table and gave something to eat and she just left. Maybe she wanted to have a look at me...how bad looking I am. I don't know. That was the only time I ever saw her (before the wedding). Maybe for 30 seconds, when she was putting the tea on the table. Never talked, nothing. (March 11, 2002, p. 3.)

The decision about the marriage was largely a parental decision with the young couple's opinion "just like a little stamp on it" (March 11, 2002, p.3). However, the match has been a very successful one. Jaswant emphasised that he was very happy with the decision made so many years ago. He compared the short prenuptial meeting between himself and Balbir to a situation he experienced in the naval airforce when a pilot has 30 seconds to determine that the flight path is clear before joining the circuit to land:

> We had a term in naval aviation when the pilot was coming and checking overhead before joining the circuit to land. We ask him; if he says 30 seconds, it means in 30 seconds he will be overhead of the control tower and he will request the permission to join the circuit. We clear it. So he has the 30 seconds time to see everything... Thirty seconds to see each other and that's it. Clear to land, clear to marry. (March 11, 2002, p. 4)

Jaswant remained in the military for five years after his marriage. He spent the subsequent year at home in Ludhiana working in a travel agency and on the family's farmland. On the advice of a friend who had moved to Vancouver, Jaswant, himself, decided to seek a brighter future in Canada. In 1972, he left India for Rostang. He said he decided to come to Rostang after pouring over maps of Canada. He realised that the city was in the centre of the country, which would provide easy access to the north, south, east, and west. He knew nothing of the job situation, climate or culture before he came, and he arrived in the late fall. However, he now discounts any difficulties caused by the differences in weather and climate. He said, "we got four seasons here; we got four seasons there. We got winter the same, but no snow. The only thing is because houses are heated, cars are heated, we did not find much difference. The only winter problem is if heating is not there or some other trouble comes" (March 11, 2002, p. 12).

By the time Jaswant left India for Canada, he and his wife had two children, a son of three (Parmjeet) and a six-month old daughter (Jaspreet). His wife and children remained in India. They stayed with her parents while she continued to work as a teacher.

Jaswant's first years in Canada were adventurous ones. He came to Canada entirely on his own and spent his first days at a small downtown hotel that charged $14 a night. To save money, he quickly found a room in a house in the downtown area that charged $40 a month. He was unable to cook and unsure what to do with the frying pan and pot that were supplied with the room. Initially, he lived on bread and butter, bread and jam, and bread and sour cream and fried peas, seasoned with salt and pepper. At that time there were approximately 65 Sikhs in Rostang. There was no gurdwara, only

monthly gatherings held at the International Centre. As Jaswant got to know the people in the small Sikh community, he would observe his friends' wives as they cooked, thereby learning how to make various vegetable and lentil dishes. After four or five months, he moved in with several other fellows. As he says: "We were living together for almost a year. It was really good time. And all vegetarian. Nobody know how to cook. I was the only one who knew a little bit and then we started doing experiments. It was fun when I came here" (March 11, 2002, p. 6).

Jaswant held a number of different jobs during his initial years in Canada. He worked in a garment factory, a furniture factory, and Pitney Bowes. At the garment factory, he netted $44 a week. Jaswant wasted no time in upgrading his skills. He studied welding at a local community college on Saturdays. He was soon qualified, and he went to work for CP Rail as a welder. In 1975, his wife and son came to Canada. By this time, he had managed to purchase a home in a south Rostang suburb.

In 1976, he took an air traffic control course. Every week, he would go to school from 8 a.m. till 3:30 p.m., then work the afternoon shift at CPR from 4 p.m. till 12 a.m. In 1978, he applied to the Public Service Commission for a position as an air traffic controller. He was selected. He quit the CPR to start training for the air traffic controller position, but ultimately had to decline the opportunity in order to return to India for 10 months to attend to family matters. When he returned, he reapplied and was selected again. Once again he had to decline for personal reasons. Ultimately, he began driving a taxi and has continued to do so until the present. At this time, he works 70 hours a week, 12 hours a day on weekdays, and 10 hours on Saturdays.

Jaswant never spoke of feelings of loneliness or complained of pain experienced as a result of racism or prejudice, but he did recount several experiences illustrating the discrimination he had faced. In one instance, he told of the time he applied for the job in the furniture factory. Initially, he was accepted for the position, however, moments later, he was refused, ostensibly because someone else got the job.

Jaswant seems to have been able to deal with these events with humour and equanimity. (At least in retrospect.) When I asked him about cutting his hair, he replied pragmatically:

> That was the only time when I cut beard, like when I shaved and cut the hair and everything. It was (hard to do), but I don't want to spend money from my pocket. If I don't make money, and I spend money from my pocket, I'm losing money and money. I have to get some money from somewhere. (March 11, 2002, p.7)

I was initially surprised that someone with his degree of commitment to his faith would have cut his hair. I thought that he would never cut it on principle. Upon reflection, however, I remembered him often telling me that Sikhism is a practical faith, and I realised that his nature is also very practical and shrewd, so he could probably rationalise such a decision relatively easily. He is a man who is quick to grasp the unspoken connotations of a situation and equally quick to realise the most expedient recourse. He is someone who shows his faith and commitment through quick, decisive action, not through philosophising and analysis.

Jaswant's perspicaciousness and leadership skills, his cheerful and positive nature, his lack of alignment with any particular faction in the Sikh community, and his energy and desire to serve the community make him a natural for leadership in the Sikh

community. He has served on the executive committees of four local gurdwaras. He was the treasurer for the recent tri-centenary celebrations. Jaswant also has dreams for projects to enrich and support the entire community. He sees the need for a Sikh credit union, community centre, home for seniors, and funeral home. He does not see the need for any more gurdwaras because he feels there are enough gurdwaras already, and more will divide the community. In the more immediate future, he has been thinking of a joint celebration of the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. "I'm planning to get all the gurdwaras together if we can celebrate Guru Nanak's birthday. I should get all presidents or all committees together. Just so we can celebrate together, in place of celebrating in different places. We can have some common thing" (March 11th 2002, p.21).

In spite of all his connections and initiatives throughout the Sikh community, Jaswant believes Gurdwara Nanaksar is his spiritual home, and he derives the most pleasure from doing simple tasks there. "Nanaksar is my home. No politics, nothing. I work like a *sewadar*, a guy who is there to work and take the blessing of God. Not for any purpose, only for the blessing."

Jaswant: Narrative context.

When I think about the various forms the interviews with the participants have taken, I think of two styles, the type in which I lead the interview and the participants answered the questions I asked, and the type in which the participants took control of the interview and told their story their way. To some extent, Jaswant fits both categories. On one hand, he was willing to be guided by the list of questions I had provided, but on the other hand, he seemed to have a preordained idea of how an interview should be conducted and

he followed that format. After he read the preliminary results of the work I had done about him, he fully realised what I was attempting to do. He told me that he had not initially understood the purpose of the interview. He explained that he had been interviewed a number of times on a local radio station, as a representative of his community, and as a member of a board related to his occupation, so he had assumed that our interview would be the same. He thought it would be a question and answer period when he put forward his views on the topic of language and culture, which is basically what he did during the interviews. That helped me to understand why the results of our interview had sounded more like a series of viewpoints on the topic of language maintenance and less like personal reflections and descriptions of life experience. As a result of this misunderstanding, I realised how important it was to make sure the participant understood exactly what the purpose of the interview and of the research study was. As Jaswant had been the first participant I had interviewed, I did not have any other experience with which to compare, so I had not realised what was happening.

As well, there are other factors that can make it difficult to ensure that the participants understand exactly what the purpose of the study is, especially when they are asked to join the study by the researcher, rather than volunteering because the topic is of particular interest or relevance to them, and when there are linguistic and cultural differences between the researcher and participant. Time is an important consideration; I did not want to waste my participant's time and my own time was limited. I had given Jaswant a copy of the proposal, talked about the research with him on a number of occasions, and gone over the participant information and consent sheet with him. I thought he understood, and so did he; however, what he understood and what I

understood him to understand were not the same. This leads to the next factor, assumptions, particularly assumptions based on past experience. Jaswant assumed he knew what was expected because of his past experience, and I just assumed that he knew, too.

Jaswant's narrative had several main themes. He described his vision of ideal Canadian culture; provided a rationale for maintaining first language; explained how he and his wife had maintained Punjabi in their home; discussed some major differences between mainstream Canadian and Indian culture; described his experience settling in Canada; and proffered his vision of the future.

After the first interview, I remember thinking that I had never listened so closely and carefully to anyone before; I was exhausted by the effort. Interestingly, in these initial interviews, Jaswant clearly identified the major themes of family relationships, personal identity, religious practice, and cultural difference that would resonate throughout all subsequent interviews.

Jaswant's Story: The Links of a Chain

I don't call myself Indo-Canadian, and I don't want anybody to be using the word Indo-Canadian. We are all Canadian, and appearance doesn't mean anything. There are people from different countries, and you can learn a lot from the different cultures and adopt the best one. If we can put into Canadian culture whatever is the best in all other cultures, Canadian culture will be the best one. I think Canadian culture is the best one because we have adopted so many things into Canadian culture from other cultures. If you go out shopping for vegetables, for example, you pick out the best ones. Fruit, pick out the best ones, leave the rest. Why don't we adopt manners from other societies? Pick out their best ones, leave their bad things on the shelf. We have to keep on improving, getting the best things from the other cultures, keep on adding to the Canadian culture. We respect all cultures, all religions, all people from different countries. That's why we're on top all the time.

Language and culture are what separates people from animals. If we don't have any culture, we're just like an animal. Only human beings have culture. We can do different things. Human beings are the best things on this earth. We can communicate with different people; animals can't communicate with other animals, but the human beings, they got the language.

We want the kids to learn everything. We want them to learn and maintain the original language that we taught them. It's very important to maintain the culture. It doesn't matter who a person is; they have to maintain their own culture. We want to maintain Punjabi, and we request the other people to maintain their own language for the kids of the second generation too, so they can understand the taste of the language, how they

joke, how they talk, what the meanings are. The family relations are like the links of a chain. If we break one link, the chain won't work at all. So we have to maintain the links. If we break them, if they (kid*s*) don't go and talk to their parents and grandparents, there's no connection at all. If we want to maintain something, then we have to have like a link, or chain, for a ship. If we don't have any chain, we cannot tie it to shore. So, it's just roaming around in the sea. Put the anchor down and the same way the ship can hold to the ground. It can't work without a chain. So we have to have a chain or link. Each link will be joined together the same. So we have to have links to make it a chain among the society from one culture to another one, from parents to kids to grandparents and grandkids. Those links come from one person to another one, another person to a third one. Then it will become like a chain. If we don't have the links, then we are left alone; nothing works in this world without links. It will be a world of selfish people; if there's no link of human beings to each other, you're left alone. You don't have any connection with God. You don't have any connection with the parents. You can't do anything with yourself. The life stops there. I can give you thousands of examples. The people who are in the nursing homes, their kids, they break the links. They don't go and see them. They don't phone them. And sometimes, even though sometimes they spend years and years, they don't say "hello" to them or send them a card for the Christmas. They're so lonely that we have to have volunteers to go and talk to them to make them more comfortable. If the link stays there, the parents and the children, the children go and say hello to their parents and grandparents and they will be more happy. That's the main reason. Because they don't have any links, they don't have any communication.

Communication is also a link of talking to them making them more comfortable, making their life more easy, not too lonely. They will be hoping, they will be waiting to see their kids, their grandchildren, but it don't happen, so we break the links and we are breaking the communication.

If you're teaching them (the kids) the Punjabi language, you're like an olden days telephone operator. You call the operator and she will connect you with other people. The parents here work as mediators so the kids can link up with the grandparents, so they will be happy and comfortable and the grandparents will be able to say, "Oh, my grandson looks like that, and my granddaughter looks like that; we talk to each other; we communicate with each other." The grandparents will be proud that there is somebody who can talk to them and the grandchildren will know, "my grandfather's father was like this, and he talked like this."

If we do everything in Punjabi the way it was set up in the beginning, it makes more sense and it has more meaning. We cannot translate every word into other languages the way it should be. There is so much in Punjabi that you cannot translate into proper English. The Holy Book is in a rhythm system, and you cannot make that kind of rhythm in English. If we translate it, it won't have that kind of rhythm when we study, read or sing it. I have read some of the Punjabi books translated into English. There's no rhythm in that. You lose the space and the enjoyment that you have in your own language. Also, if we lose the pronunciation, if we pronounce a word wrong, especially in the Holy Book, it can give a totally different meaning to the whole paragraph. You have to be really perfect, so you can read it the way it was written.

I don't want to lose Punjabi in the family. It would be a great loss for me to lose the culture and lose the language. They are like two wheels of a bicycle, if one is punctured, you cannot ride it. If the kids lose Punjabi, they are losing the culture and they're losing the religion. If they cannot read Punjabi, they cannot enjoy our Holy Book in the rhythm system. If they don't enjoy the religion, there is nothing left. Without religion, there is no culture; without religion, there are no human beings. We are like animals. If they don't know Punjabi, they can't have religion. They won't have any sense of who they are. There won't be any purpose.

When I came here I was a settler; I had to work, to build a house, bring up the kids, pay for their schooling, clothing, putting groceries on the table, things like that. The first generation is like pioneers; they have many hardships to face. They have to adapt to the new culture, establish themselves and their families. The are often required to make sacrifices. I have lived in Canada for 31 years. I was an air traffic controller back home. I came here for a better life. When I first came, I did shipping and receiving, but my goal was to improve, keep on improving, more and more. So I went to Red River College to study welding. There was more scope in that. Then I went to CP Rail to work on the railway. I worked on the railway in the afternoon shift, from 4 o'clock to 12. In the morning, from 8 o'clock to 3:30, I went to Red River College. I took air traffic maintenance, in 1976. Then, in 1978, I applied for air traffic controller. I was selected. But then I had to go to India for almost a year. After I came back, I reapplied. They wanted to send me for training. I did not go because my kids were growing up; they needed me. They were teenagers at that time. So I threw that job opportunity out. If I did not, I could not have brought up my kids in a good way, with good manners. Then I

took a radio-operating course, but I had to leave in between because there were some problems in India back then. I ran into lots of problems.

In my personal life I have adopted from different cultures. I have been in Germany, Holland, English, France; I learned a lot. I adopted some of those things … like openness. In Indian culture, years and years back, it was so congested, and you cannot do anything on your own. You don't have any choice. You have to listen to your parents and do it. For example, the marriage system. In the olden days in India it was arranged marriages. The girl's parents pick the guy and she has to live with him, doesn't matter how good-looking, bad-looking, how rude or whatever he is. She has to adapt to whatever the in-laws place is and she has to live with that for her whole life. She might have been living a comfortable life at her own place but when she goes to the in-laws, she has to do everything like a maid or servant. I don't like that much, it means that we are forcing the human beings to live with a person she doesn't know and doesn't understand, and she has to learn everything from scratch again. I learned from other cultures that people study each other before they get married. I learned how it should be, how it should work out.

There's only one thing I don't like, and that is the rules the government made, particularly the rules for the kids. The parents can't teach them anything; they cannot control them. The parents gave them birth. They've got the rights to guide the kids properly, in the right direction. I don't why the government did it this way. Most of the cultures, they like their kids. They try to make them the best ones. In Indian culture, we have to listen to the parents. The parents can spank the kids; they can correct them.

In one way, it's a little hard, too. Because sometimes the parents send the kids for education, to college or university, and they're not interested. But they don't have any choice. The father says, "You have to be an engineer...you HAVE TO be an engineer." But here, the kids have got their own choice. There are lots of things like that. I'm trying to tell the kids it's different, but they don't want to learn those kinds of things. They do their own thing, whatever the other kids do in this country.

Some cultures, like our own, we are so lost here. Our kids don't respect the parents. The young kids don't say, "Dad"; they say, "Hi, John." They call the names of the parents. They call them their names like they are their friends. They don't have any respect for the elderly people. In the olden days, if you were travelling on a bus and you saw an elderly person standing, you would just give them the seat. Now, the kids don't give a damn for anything. It means we are lost in this society. We have lost our own culture. With the culture, you lose the rules and regulations, too. When the culture is lost, you don't have any manners; you don't have any respect for anybody. When people say, "Oh, I'm a Canadian, I can do whatever I want", that is totally wrong. Being Canadian doesn't mean we can do whatever we want. That's only an excuse that people make. Actually, they are not Canadian, they forget that Canadians are the most respected in the world, for everything. If we lose our culture and then make an excuse that we are Canadian and we can do whatever we want, that is totally wrong.

I live in two worlds. One is the home world, inside the door. One is outside the door. Inside the home I adopt Indian culture most of the time, so the kids can learn it. Outside the door, we are totally Canadian style. I think everybody lives in two worlds, one with the family, another one with the society.

I'm teaching my kids that "when in Rome, do as the Romans do". We celebrate Christmas and the New Year and all of the festivals. We send our kids for Hallowe'en. We are cooking Indian food all the time at home, so the kids can eat and have a taste of that and know how to make it. But on the other hand, we don't forget McDonald's. We take them there too, so that way they are not losing anything. They enjoyed both foods, both cultures. You maintain the culture where you are, plus don't forget your own culture. But it's hard, I tell you, it's very hard. Because sometimes the kids are not in a good mood to speak Punjabi. They say, "Why to speak Punjabi? We live in Canada. We're Canadian." We try to explain to them that we should not lose our language because wherever we go, whatever we write, we have to use our language. If we go back home, there's lots of people, the grandparents, for example, who won't be speaking English, so they have to communicate in Punjabi. Any time the kids go back home, there are very few people who can talk English from the elderly in our family. To explain their views to them and listen to them, they have to have the language. My parents, who live in Rostang, don't understand anything, any word of English. That's when we started realising that although we can communicate in English, we are losing our language.

We use English very rarely at home. When we use English the atmosphere goes in English. There's a different feeling. Sometimes we speak in Punjabi and they answer in English. We just ignore them and we try again, and we say, "why don't you speak Punjabi so we can understand better?" I don't mean we don't like English, but we have to teach them our language. We pretend we don't know much English; we can't understand much.

My wife and I discussed among ourselves that the kids must learn Punjabi. We wondered how we could do it. We don't have any schools here were we can send them, like in Vancouver. They don't have time during the day to go to the gurdwara and sometimes we are busy, we cannot take them. We got Punjabi newspaper; we talked to them; we showed them the pictures. We did not have time to give actual lessons, but we tried. We played Punjabi movies so they can continue to learn our culture and language. They listen to the language, and then they talk the language. Sometimes in a joking way they speak the dialogues from the movies. We do some social things. When there is a program, when some singing group comes, we try and take them. We try to take them to the religious activities at the gurdwara. Like now we got a festival coming up, Divali. That's an age-old program. We want them to know what it means and how we celebrate. It's our duty to take them to our own religious organisation so they can see how we worship, what language we speak and how the people maintain the culture. At home we cannot teach them that. Most of the time, when we are there, the people speak Punjabi only. So they answer in Punjabi. They look very funny if the people speak Punjabi and they answer in English. Plus, it's how they communicate, how respectfully; it's not like a rough way of communicating. So that's one reason why we take them to the gurdwara, so they can learn how we respect, how we deal with others and how we talk nicely to each other.

Normally they speak to each other in English. I don't mind if they speak English with their fellows or at school, but speaking Punjabi is more important. So far they all do it, they all speak, read and write Punjabi. They started realising. When they were young, they did not. But now, as soon as they're grown up, they realise this is more important.

They appreciate it now. For my younger son, even though he was born and brought up here, he started singing in Punjabi, which was a totally different experience for him. He did not like speaking Punjabi at home, but we were kind of forcing him to learn. But now, he said to me one day, "it was nice if I could have listened to you in the beginning so I can speak all the words properly the way I should be." He said it's becoming hard with some of the words. He can't pronounce the way it should be. So, they realise later on why we were telling, trying to tell them. Why we were trying to teach them the language. They return to their roots. They needed it (Punjabi) to do the *path*. They found the taste of reading in Punjabi is more different than translated into English. They became more keen on learning in Punjabi and reading in Punjabi. Then we taught them how to write it and then they learned that way, too. They talk in Punjabi now, too. Not like before when we speak in Punjabi and they answer us in English. Even with their friends now, they started talking in Punjabi.

I have two grandchildren; one is very small. The other one I got is almost four years old. She enjoys speaking in our own language, eating our food. We play with them all the time. Right from the beginning. We use our own language to talk to them so that they can speak their language. This is the time the tongue can twist. Once they grow up, it's hard to twist the tongue. We can teach them Punjabi right at home, then when they go to school; they watch television; they can learn English. This is more important, for us to teach the grandchildren. I'm going to tell you very straightforward. I don't care what the parents think. It's my duty being a grandfather to maintain and teach our culture and language to them. This is my duty. I will do it.

As long as we go to *Gurbani*, our Holy Book, we have to have Punjabi and Punjabi speaking people. In Vancouver they got Punjabi schools. They teach Punjabi. More kids will learn it. It's changing already, the way the new kids pronounce Punjabi, it's a little different one. But they're trying; at least they try to maintain it. People are getting married in back home. They got the links with the old culture. The links will continue. The culture and the language will be alive. They are not going to end. It's not going to die. It will never end. It will never stop.

Balbir: Introduction

Balbir: Interview context.

I had only one interview with Balbir, which provided only a bare shell of her life history account. I thought long and hard about how to deal with the situation. I felt there were two options. In the first option, I could press for more interviews. I knew that if I asked her for another interview, she would agree. However, I also knew that the interviews were uncomfortable for her, and that she preferred not to do more than was absolutely necessary. I also was not sure how much more data the interview would yield. Furthermore, my friendship with Balbir is important to me and I did not want to jeopardise it. Even more to the point, I could not force my needs and wants on another person if I knew it was causing pain or discomfort.

The second option involved using Balbir's words to write a very short, simple story, and elaborating it with detailed life history, interview and narrative contexts to provide further explanation. I decided in favour of the second option. As I have captured it, her story is short and simple, and, as such, it reflects her connection with the English-speaking world. Apart from her job where she works with a few 'White' Canadians, and more East and South-east Asians, and shopping for necessities, Balbir has little contact with "Canadian culture". Her life is completely wrapped up with her home, family, and faith. Both are areas where she strongly maintains her language and culture. At the time of writing, I have known her, her husband, Jaswant; sons, Parmjeet and Sharanjeet; and daughter, Jaspreet; for almost four years. My connection with them through the thesis has been for more than a year. During this time I have gotten to know the family quite well, both as a friend and as a researcher. As a result, I feel I have enough knowledge and

insight to create context that will adequately supplement the life history. As well, I have done in-depth interviews with other members of the family that will help to round out the picture.

As a friend, I have visited the family a number of times socially, for informal cooking lessons and once to help them settle into their new home. I have also assisted Jaswant with gurdwara business, like giving tours to groups of students.

It was after interviewing Jaswant and Jaspreet, that I realised it was very important for me to interview Balbir. From all accounts, she was the one with the relentless determination that the children learn Punjabi. She had indefatigably corrected them and told them to speak Punjabi when they spoke English, and according to Jaspreet, she had given up the chance to go to school and learn English. She feared that her ability in English might detract from her children's ability to learn Punjabi, so she did not want to learn to speak English well. Even Jaswant admitted that it was his wife who had been strict and strong in enforcing a "Punjabi only" home. I remember his telling me that "mom" (Balbir) had sometimes had to yell at the children to speak Punjabi.

I was a little nervous about asking Balbir for an interview. After all, it had been almost year since I had interviewed her husband, and I still had not given him all the results of my work. (His was the first story I did, and I spent a lot of time working and reworking it, as I learned about the process. Also, there were two major interruptions, one in my work caused by my mother's death, and another when he went to India). I was afraid Balbir and Jaswant might have gotten fed up, or even given up hope with me. Also, I was afraid that Balbir just might not want to be interviewed, that she might was to retain her privacy and not want to talk "on the record" about this topic. When I finally

did ask her, I was delighted by her response. She was happy to hear from me, and very willing to help. (I've learned to broach requests to fellow Sikhs with the phrase, "I need your help..." It unfailingly evokes enthusiastic positive responses.) In fact, she and her husband changed their plans for the day in order to be available at a time that suited me.

Initially, when I thought about interviewing Balbir, I was not sure how to deal with the issue of translation. I thought that we might need a translator in order to deal with the complex and deep aspects of her thoughts and experiences, but I was not sure whom to ask. I was not sure if her daughter or husband were appropriate, because I did not know how candid or open she would be in their presence. The topic, of course, featured them! I did not know if she'd be comfortable with a non-family member, either. When I phoned to request the interview, she said, "sure", but then she got her husband to call me back to arrange details of time and place. There was obviously no question that he was involved and would be available to translate.

The interview took place at their home, however, it was a different home from the one where the earlier interviews had been held. In the intervening year, the family sold its large suburban home and moved to a smaller home in another suburb. The new home had previously been a source of income, a rental property. It is a row house with a small yard on a treeless street near a large elementary school. The inside of the house, although neat, clean, and well-maintained, is much smaller than the old house. Furthermore, the doors, windows, lights, and other fixtures are of lesser quality than in the old house. In the bedrooms, the large furniture, which suited the old house, looks crammed in the smaller rooms. Balbir has bewailed the loss of her beautiful home in the lovely neighbourhood to me.

I believe the house was sold in order to raise funds for a purchase of land in India. I'm not sure if the purchase was made to keep certain properties in the family, or because the laws regarding citizenship and ownership of land had changed, (making it easier for non-Indian citizens to own/inherit land) or some combination of both. It seems that Balbir and Jaswant plan to retire to this land in a few years. The fact that their elder son, Parmjeet, his wife, Dalbir, and daughter, Mattu, had moved to their own home probably also contributed to their decision to move to smaller quarters.

Our interview occurred late in the afternoon on a Saturday. It was Jaswant's only day off in the week. Balbir and Jaswant had spent the day preparing and delivering *ladoos* to friends and associates. *Ladoos* are a special kind of Indian sweet. They are given out by families celebrating special life passages like the birth of a child or grandchild, or a marriage or engagement. The preparation of *ladoos* is time consuming because it requires several steps. First, water and flour are mixed into a batter. The batter is poured through a special sieve into hot oil where it is deep-fried. The sieve breaks the batter into bits. Next, the deep fried bits are soaked in a sugar and water syrup. Finally the sweetened bits are mixed with spices and formed into balls.

In celebration of the birth of her first grandson, Balbir prepared over six hundred *ladoos,* which she and her husband had delivered to over seventy families. When I arrived, the list still was not complete! She left her work in the kitchen to greet me. Then she returned to the kitchen to make tea for us. When she came back, we sat and chatted for some time before getting down to the business of the interview.

During the interview, Balbir and I sat on the floor in the midst of a huge pile of lego blocks that her granddaughter, Mattu, was playing with. As we talked, the little girl

played around us. I could hear her cooing in the background as I transcribed the tape. Our tea and snacks were on the coffee table next to us. (Not surprisingly, we enjoyed *ladoos* with our beverage.) On the other side, the television broadcast cartoons (English) for the granddaughter's pleasure. Jaswant sat on the sofa, a short distance away. He translated questions if it became evident that Balbir had not understood, and helped with answers if it was clear that I had not understood. Balbir seemed to appreciate his presence. Her answers were brief and to the point. She chose her words carefully and enunciated clearly. I noticed at the time, and even more when I transcribed the tape, that her grammar, though basic, was generally textbook correct.

During the interview a young friend of the family stopped by to visit. A recent immigrant to Canada from India, he had completed his education here and was currently working for a computer company. He sat quietly on the couch next to Jaswant as the conversation proceeded. His presence did not have an apparent effect on the interview. Balbir's demeanour did not change after he joined us and her answers to my question did not seem to change in tone or substance.

Although I'm sure that Balbir did her best to answer my questions as well as she could, I think that several factors prevented her from speaking as openly as I would have liked. Of critical importance, linguistic differences played a major role in limiting the depth and breadth of our conversation. I think the experience of being interviewed was new to her and she was unsure of how to respond. I'm sure that the knowledge that her words were being preserved on tape to be used later in writing inhibited her, as well. Her strong sense of family loyalty allowed her to say only the most positive things about her children.

I began the interview with simple, concrete questions about her life history. I asked Balbir about her childhood and life in India. She had been a teacher there before she came to Canada. Her eyes lit up when she spoke of this topic. She had loved teaching and still keeps in touch with several of her students who have immigrated to Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. When I asked her about her life and work in Canada, her answers became briefer and more subdued. It became clear to me that her life here has not been easy or pleasant, and I was unwilling to probe a topic that was painful for her. When I asked her about how she had maintained Punjabi language and culture in the home so well, she firmly asserted that her children had liked Punjabi and had wanted to speak it. She offered no other information. She proudly showed me samples of her youngest son's writing, and both she and her husband declared that he could write *Gurmukhi* the best of everyone in the family.

As we began to speak of more abstract topics, Jaswant became increasingly involved in the conversation, not just as a translator, but to offer his own views. Eventually, he took over completely and after a while, Balbir returned to the kitchen. In the kitchen, she went back to cooking. After she left, Jaswant and I discussed a variety of topics and I took the opportunity of asking him questions about racism and discrimination, and about cultural differences, questions that I had been wondering about for some time. I had a feeling that racism, either direct or indirect (e.g. systemic), as well as cultural differences might have been major contributors to any alienation from the mainstream that he and his wife felt. I also thought there might be a correlation between feelings of isolation and alienation, and language and cultural maintenance. I had hesitated to ask these question before for several reasons. First of all, I had not known

him as well when I had interviewed him and I had felt shy to ask such personal questions. Second, the tone of our earlier conversations had led me to surmise that such questions would have been unwelcome.

In this conversation, Jaswant made many of the same points he had made in our earlier interviews. This time, however, he spoke more candidly and in more depth. I also feel that I was more able to understand what he was saying. By understand, I mean that I felt I knew intuitively what he meant. This understanding was probably the result of a year of immersion in my research and my growing connections with the participants. We talked about the difficulties of immigrating to Canada, of having to start over as a pioneer, of learning to deal with a new language, culture and climate, of not having one's education, training and experience recognised, of having to work in a different occupation and having to start from the beginning. We also talked about some of the major differences between Canadian and Punjabi culture. Specifically, I asked what many Punjabis mean when they say that someone has "become Canadianised", realising this phrase tends to have a negative connotation. Jaswant explained that there were two meanings to the phrase. One was the standard interpretation. That is, becoming Canadian means adopting Canadian citizenship and legally becoming a Canadian citizen. The other means losing the important values of Punjabi culture, such as the language, respect for age and status, family structure and living arrangements, frugality, religious practice, and sexual mores, and adopting less acceptable values of Canadian culture, such as independence of young people, sexual freedom, consumerism, and secularism. I proffered the view that one of the difficulties for many newcomers is a loss of status. I suggested that many immigrants who were professionals in their homelands are unable to

find similar work here. New immigrants are often forced to work at blue collar jobs where they mix with a different class of people than they are accustomed to and receive less social respect than they are used to. Jaswant did not agree with me. He stated that he was glad to have entered a different line of work, because as a taxi driver he has been able to meet a wide variety of people and have a broad range of experiences. He believes that life as an air traffic controller would have been highly stressful and with a single focus. He also feels that he has almost caught up salary-wise to where he would have been as an air traffic controller.

After some time, I joined Balbir in the kitchen. I felt a little ashamed that the interview had ended the way it had, that it had trickled to an end, rather than coming to a formal, mutually acknowledged closure. I tried to talk to her about it. However, I think she was satisfied. I asked her if there was anything else she wanted to tell me. She said, "no". Then I asked if she wanted to do another interview. She also said, "no". Finally, I asked if I could call her if I had any questions or if my information was incomplete. She happily agreed to that, and more happily returned to her work. In short order, she prepared a delicious dinner for everyone. Dinner was served very informally. The other guest and I sat at the kitchen table while Balbir continued to prepare fresh chapattis. Jaswant played with, and fed Mattu, in the living room. During the dinner, I had the chance to talk with the other guest. We continued the conversation we had begun earlier. At this time, he felt free to speak and talked openly about the discrimination he faces at work and in his everyday life. He described how, as a salesman dealing with the public, he felt a great deal of unspoken pressure to cut his hair and shave his beard. He

confirmed many of my thoughts about cultural and lifestyle differences facing immigrants from India.

At the end of the meal, Balbir packaged extra food and a box of her home-made *ladoos* for me to bring home to my family.

As I was somewhat uncertain about Balbir's reaction to being interviewed, and how she would react to what I had written, it was important to me that Balbir had the opportunity to give me feedback on the result. When I had finished writing Balbir's story and introductory sections, I gave them to her to read. She read it right away; in fact, she was the first person to read what I wrote. Before I even had a chance to talk to her personally, her husband and her daughter told me that she had liked it. Remembering how our interview had ended, I wanted to have a chance to talk to her about it personally and privately, so I called her one day when she was on her own, and asked her if the story was correct and if she was satisfied with it. With audible enthusiasm, she told me she was very, very happy. I think now that the process is finished, and she has seen the results, she understands the purpose. I wish I had been able to explain adequately before we started, so that she could have enjoyed the process more and been a better informed participant.

Balbir: Life history context

Balbir is a woman of rock-hard faith. She is steadfast and determined in her performance of ritual and in her faith that God will look after her and hers. She is unshakeable in her belief that everything that happens is God's will, and as such, is to be accepted uncomplainingly. Her humble submission to fate is a quality I greatly admire.

Balbir is concrete and fundamentalist in her beliefs. She once confided to me that there had been a period of financial insecurity. This had been a time of desperate worry and anxiety for her. Balbir explained that she had prayed and asked God to help. In her prayers, Balbir had promised to God that if God did help, she would perform a *sempit path.* (*Sempit path* is a special type reading of the Holy Book where the reader repeats a certain passage after each *shabad* or verse. It requires great concentration and skill on the part of the *pathi* or reader. It takes a long time and great energy and commitment to perform *Sempit Path*, especially if it is undertaken by only one or two people.) Balbir believes that God did hear her prayer and intervene. Her husband, Jaswant, now has a better job and makes a good wage. He works 12 hours a day from Monday to Friday, and 10 hours on Sunday. This seems like a tremendous strain on a man in his early sixties, but, to my knowledge, he has only expressed happiness at getting the contract and being able to earn the "good money". Balbir is also very happy about this development. She is undertaking the *sempit path,* firm in the belief that God answered her prayers.

Another thing I have always noticed about Balbir is her devotion to duty. She is the nose-to-the-grindstone servant, and the unflagging supporter of her family. She is always serious and earnest. I rarely see her light-heartedly tease or jest with her family. I have also noticed that she is generally the first one to jump up and do things for people. I have not seen her direct her children to serve, as I have seen other Indian mothers do. This was especially apparent to me once when I invited her and her daughter to visit. I had hoped this would be a relaxing outing for her. On the contrary! She brought her grandchild, Mattu, and spent her time looking after the lively child and offering to help

me. I've also noticed that Balbir's children often direct her to do things for them, such as making tea for guests. Balbir also serves her husband unquestioningly, bringing him his shoes when he prepares to go out and jumping up to fetch him things as he needs them.

Balbir has a very busy life. Although she is in her early sixties, she works full-time in a garment factory where she spends eight-hour shifts on her feet. At home, she is solely responsible for domestic duties like cooking, cleaning and laundry. She also maintains a demanding routine of service to her faith. She rises at 4:30 or 5 a.m. every day in order to read and do ritual service for the Holy Book, the *Guru Granth Sahib,* that she and her husband keep at home. Once a week, she prepares and delivers dinner for the *behangums* and visitors to the gurdwara. Two other times a week, she supplies *karah parshad* (a sweet blessing that is distributed to the congregation at the end of worship services) to the gurdwara. Although her level of religious commitment requires a great amount of energy and dedication, it seems that it is the discipline and rigour of her commitment that keep her going.

I rarely hear Balbir complain or grumble about her lot in life. As a mother she is highly supportive of, and attached to, her children, even though many of the cultural adaptations her children have made must distress her (or example, sons cutting hair and living separately from her). As a grandmother, she is loving, nurturing, and indulgent. As a friend, she is kind, helpful, and generous. However, whenever I am with her, I sense a deep sense of sadness and longing. She often becomes emotional when she speaks of her children and grandchildren, or when she speaks of her beloved parents in India. Once, I asked her if she feels comfortable in Canada, and whether she feels Canada or India is home. She answered in a whisper, tears in her eyes, "Canada is nice,

yes, but India is home". I know she longs to return to India, to care for her aged parents and to try to return to the happier, more relaxed lifestyle of long ago.

Balbir has spoken to me of her earlier life in short snatches on several occasions. She grew up on a farm in a small village near the Punjab city of Ludhiana. She remembers this as a very happy time when she worked very hard physically, helping her mother with housework; caring for younger brothers and sisters; doing farm work, like milking buffaloes; and preparing and serving meals to farm workers; as well as cycling several miles to attend school daily. Balbir recalls that during this time she was often very physically tired, but her mind was at peace.

Balbir also has very happy memories of her short teaching career. I can envision her as an idealistic, earnest, young teacher who found joy in helping her students to learn. The fact that several of her students still keep in touch with her indicates that the respect and affection was mutual.

I believe that the transition to life in Canada must have been very difficult for Balbir. She left a secure, structured home, a rewarding position, and a familiar cultural context for an unfamiliar and wholly unpredictable new reality. The weather, the language, the culture: all must have seemed incomprehensible and largely unpleasant. Furthermore, the fact that her husband had already been here for several years and had been able to adapt relatively quickly, might have heightened her sense of isolation and discomfort. Jaswant is an adventuresome and pragmatic man, he is quick to see and act on opportunity, and he is not afraid to take risks. He is open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. On the other hand, Balbir is much more dutiful and cautious. Her world-view is concrete and based in tradition. For her, there is a right way and a wrong

way of doing things which is not relative to circumstance. Cultural differences, particularly those associated with morals and values must be particularly threatening. I know Balbir is very uncomfortable with many aspects of current Canadian culture. She strongly disagrees with consumerism, which she perceives as a tendency to "only enjoy right now, not thinking of the future." She is bewildered by the notion of the independent nuclear family and what seems to be indifference toward elderly family members (who may be sent to live in a nursing home) and extended family (who may be left to cope with problems without support and involvement). I'm sure it is anxiety provoking for her to see her family adapt to their new physical and cultural environment. I speculate that Balbir derives peace of mind from performing her duty, and serving and submitting to a higher power, a higher power whom she believes requires adherence to particular rules and rituals. The rules and rituals are surely those of orthodox Sikhism as practised in Gurdwara Nanaksar. I'm sure Balbir derives her sense of identity and self-worth from her religion, language, and culture. They are enduring entities in an inconstant and unstable world. She believes the best way to care for, protect, and guide her family is by preserving religion, language, and culture in the home and inculcating them in her children and grandchildren. That she has done so with love and determination shows in the degree to which her family maintains a connection with their roots while also belonging to and contributing to mainstream Canadian society.

Balbir: Narrative context.

My interview with Balbir was clearly a case where I took the lead. I asked the questions and she answered them. It was clear that she was not used to having so much attention focussed on her in such a formal setting. Her answers were clear and carefully worded,

spoken in complete sentences whenever possible. Sometimes she would express herself in phrases. Her meaning was always clear.

I realise now that Balbir probably did not fully understand the purpose of the interview and the research, as she had probably never experienced anything like it before. I don't know if it would have been possible for me to adequately explain what I was attempting to do, and I don't know how much different the interview would have been if she had understood. She had a much better understanding of it after she received a draft copy of the work I had done with the results of our conversation. At that time, she expressed pleasure with the result.

Our interview can't be described as a conversation in the usual sense of the word; however, it was characteristic of many conversations I have had with English as a second language speakers. That is, I would ask a question; she would answer it, then pause to gather her thoughts, or think of the appropriate word to express her thought. I, with my North American fear of silence, would begin another question at the same time that she would continue with additional information about the first question. This occurred several times, until I learned to wait until I was sure that she was really finished. I think this type of situation results when the paralinguistic signals indicating the beginning and end of conversational turns differ between cultures, and when the "allowable" amount of silence between interlocutors varies. I also think that some cultures and some individuals are more "interruptable" than others. That is, in some cases it is appropriate for the listener to interrupt the speaker with various linguistic and paralinguistic indicators of understanding or lack of understanding, agreement, or disagreement. These signals show

that the listener is following the conversation. In other cases, these signals are inappropriate. They are merely interruptions that break up the speaker's narration.

I felt a strong need to encourage and support Balbir during the interview. I could sense how challenging it must have been for her to be taped while speaking in English about personal topics. I could sense that some topics, for example, like how she feels about living in Canada, were sensitive, so I avoided them. I did not want to cause her any pain or unpleasantness. I tried to stress topics that I could see she enjoyed speaking about, asking questions about her teaching career, which had been obviously a very important part of her life. It seemed to be much easier for her to talk about other people than about herself. Her eyes lit up when she described how her students loved to learn math, and pride filled her voice when she told me how well her younger son can write *Gurmukhi* (the written form of Punjabi). She sounded determined when she explained how she would encourage her grandchildren to speak Punjabi and maintain connection with their culture. I could sense there were many aspects of Canadian culture that she was uncomfortable with, but she was diplomatically hesitant to mention them.

Balbir's story was very easy to edit. First of all, it was very short. The transcript was only 19 pages long. Furthermore, her answers to the questions were brief and to the point.

Balbir's Story: Canada is Nice, But...

My village is Japalvinder, Ludhiana, Punjab, India. I have only three sisters. I have three brothers....passed away. I am in the middle. The younger one is living in England, and the elder, living in India. I am in Canada.

I went to school. I passed the tenth grade in my village, and after, when I passed the tenth grade, I went to Women's College for training BJT, Junior Basic Teacher Training. I stayed over there for two years and finished my training. I was a teacher, not a long time, maybe for two years, primary school. Before I married, maybe seven, eight months, I got government service (job) and then I teach, not in my village, in another village. Distance, maybe four miles. I went over there by bicycle. Then, after some time, they transferred me and I came back to my village and I stayed over there maybe nine months. My mother looked after Jaspreet. Then I came to Canada.

I very liked teaching. In grade 2, I was teaching in my village. So many students remember times-table from one to 20. After twenty it was not in the book. They said, "I want to remember times 21." So, I wrote it on the board. And I teach to grade 4. So many students were very intelligent in math.

Before my marriage I teach in a single teacher's school. I was the only one. Not so many students. In grades first to five only fifty-six, fifty kids in the school. I control the whole school.

You know, I have some students in Canada. One student in Winnipeg, and one in Vancouver. There are two brothers and one sister living in (Winnipeg). The sister was (studying) in my class. I teach her. She knows everything.

When I come Canada, I was feeling good because my husband was here. I have to do. But everything was too much different. The weather was not good; winter is no good. I come here August 17th, '74, and I start work September 15th, one month after. I go to sewing factory, and I continue. Now is second job only. Second from '74 until now. Second factory only, job is same.

I speak a little bit of English when I came here. Here and India, English is a bit different. Reading is same; writing is same. I can read. I can write everything, but pronunciation is different. I cannot speak too much, but I can pass my time. Sometimes wrong, sometimes right. I go to Red River for (learning) English, maybe one or two weeks, but my son was small, five and a half years. So I don't like that. I have to speak English in my factory with Canadian and Philippines ladies.

My son could not speak English when we came here. He (learned) everything from his friends and school. My husband was saying, "you speak English with Parmjeet. You can teach him more English." But I said, "No. If I speak English, then he cannot speak Punjabi." So many families can speak in English with their kids, but kids cannot speak nice in Punjabi. They will forget everything. When they go to India, they cannot speak…nothing, culture...nothing. My uncle, living in England… when my cousins went to my house, they cannot talk with grandmom. They cannot talk with my parents, either. My grandfather, he feels badly because the grandkids cannot speak Punjabi. They cannot talk on the street and with any people. They are only looking.

I tell my kids if you speak Punjabi, then you can talk with Punjabi people easily. When they go to India, they can speak 100% Punjabi to the old people. Because they (old people) cannot speak English good. They (children) like to speak. We don't compel

them. They (children) can speak Punjabi 100% with grandma, grandpa. My (older) son can speak Punjabi nicely. My daughter can speak nice Punjabi, too. My younger son sings songs in Punjabi. He likes that. They speak Punjabi all the time to me. They learn to speak by themselves.

I like my religion, so I want to teach them (children) Punjabi (*Gurmukhi*). And I like my kids to know about my culture. I am strong. I gave them lessons. I take paper. I write *eera, oora.* I make lines... *oora, eeraa, sasaa, hahaa...* And I say to Sharanjeet, "write here. You write here." Lots of practice. His (younger son) writing is better than anybody else. He started to learn...maybe he was in grade 4 or 5. They not feel it hard, because we speak Punjabi all the time.

I want my grandson, grandkids, should speak Punjabi. I will talk all the time in Punjabi at the house. I will speak Punjabi, then they will have to do. I TRY. I will play with them and talk in Punjabi... teach them about their culture. I will go to my gurdwara and teach them about our Gurus. I will tell them *sakis* (stories about the Gurus' lives). Teach them cooking. Watch shows in Punjabi, and Punjabi movies, too. And I will explain to them. I want my grandson, granddaughter to go to India. If they want to go over there, they will be perfect in everything. Now, my granddaughter speaks Punjabi nicely. And she wants to go over there. She likes India.

I want to go to India. I will stay over there. Because in old (age) days, over there is good. Here everybody is busy in their work. After work, they want to go here and there. In my country, in old age we stay home. So many people come for visiting. One comes, another comes, pass the nights. Everybody likes their own culture. In my heart, in my heart, I am Indian.

Jaspreet: Introduction

Jaspreet: Interview context.

All of my interviews with Jaspreet were held in her home. She lives with her husband, Mohinder, six year old daughter, Babli, and parents-in-law in a modest side-by-side in a south Rostang suburb. Although at first glance her residence appears similar to the ten or so others of the same style on the street, a moment of closer inspection reveals improvements and detailed touches that indicate the artistic, observant, and caring nature of the owners. The front of the house sports new doors and windows as well as fresh paint. The tiny front yard contains several well-designed and carefully maintained flowerbeds. In the back yard is another small, but beautiful garden containing both flowers and vegetables. The plants are meticulously tended and artfully arranged. Coriander, mint, and fenugreek grow side by side with eggplants, zucchini, tomatoes, and sweet and hot peppers. Sunflowers, morning glory, and marigolds rub shoulders with hibiscus and other, more exotic, blossoms. A small path of stepping-stones enables the visitor to approach and acknowledge each denizen of the garden. A cement patio features a thickly padded and shaded swinging chair where two people can comfortably enjoy a cup of tea and observe the garden.

When I rang the front bell, the door was immediately opened by Jaspreet's daughter,

Babli, who greeted me with an enthusiastic, "hi auntie Ann!" and a big hug. Next I received a big hug and a huge smile from Babli's paternal grandmother, and finally a hug and warm greeting from Jaspreet herself. Each interview began with a hour or so of informal visiting where we would catch up on each others' latest doings, and I would have the chance to see Jaspreet's latest project or acquisition.

At the first interview she showed me how she had redecorated her *Baba Ji's* room. *Baba Ji's* room is the room that houses a copy of the Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Normally, the most attractive bedroom in the house is reserved for the *Guru Granth Sahib.* The book is installed on a ceremonial bed-like platform and treated with the respect befitting a living, human guru. If the season is hot, an air-conditioner or fan cools the room, if it is cold, the room is heated. Jaspreet had repainted the walls of the room a deep rose pink and the wood trim and doors a thick white. The wood floors gleamed and natural light poured in the clear, shining windows of the west facing windows. The holy book was covered with a matching pink brocade cover, or *romal*, trimmed with gold thread. A comfortable matching armchair, also in deep rose, was placed across from the holy book. In front of the book on the floor was a purple and yellow cloth that Jaspreet or other members of her family used to sit on when praying, meditating, or reflecting in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib Ji.* Sacred music was playing softly on a cassette player. The fragrance of incense wafted in the air. The energy or presence emanating from *Baba Ji's* room seemed palpable. When Jaspreet opened the door, the atmosphere flooded out over us. I felt a powerful atmosphere of peace and calm flow assertively through the open door. The brightness of the full force of the outside light made me blink. It seemed an oxymoron; the feeling was that of

purity, calm and peace, yet it hit me with force akin to stepping out of a warm building into a -35° C Rostang winter night or opening the door of a 400° F oven. Although powerful, it was a positive sensation. The air seemed fresher and cleaner than in the rest of the house (where it was also fresh and clean), yet there was a powerful stillness there, like the intense stillness of a sleeping baby.

Jaspreet applies her artistic talents to the whole house. She and her husband, Mohinder, recently finished remodelling the bathroom. They installed a new sink, counter and cupboard, floor and tub surround. They also painted the walls and ceiling. Jaspreet has repainted much of the house herself, applying stencil work to the walls of the kitchen and dining room. The house is immaculately clean, but not sterile. It has a practical, lived-in feeling.

Jaspreet and Mohinder have their bedroom downstairs. Mohinder made much of the bedroom furniture himself. The bed, in particular, is a work he is proud of. It features drawers and storage space underneath the mattress. This, he pointed out has two functions – it gives extra storage space and dispenses with the need to clean under the bed. On one side of the room is a computer system with a printer and scanner where Jaspreet edits and prints the many photographs she has been taking recently with their new digital camera. On the wall is a collection of prints and pictures from India. The artwork shows Indian people engaged in various traditional arts: spinning, weaving, dancing, drawing water from a communal well and so on. Jaspreet later mentioned that this display represents what she associates with Punjabi culture.

When we started the interview, I noted that Jaspreet had prepared herself for it. She had obviously read over the questions and thought about them. But the topic seemed

quite new to her. It is not one that she had reflected on heavily in the past. When we discussed the questions, she did her best to give complete and candid responses. However, I quickly realised that while her answers were interesting, intelligent, and insightful, they lacked the depth that would characterise a topic that the speaker had mulled over.

Each of our interviews took place in the living room. We sat on the couch or on the floor with the tape recorder between us and talked. Each time we met for this purpose Jaspreet was wearing a traditional Punjabi suit, or *salwar kameez.* I believe she often wears suits when she goes out, for example, to work or shopping. Jaspreet's mother-in-law always wears suits. Mohinder was wearing North American style clothing at the times I was at their house. Babli always wore North American style clothes at home, but they were often adorned with Indian bangles and hair decorations. Whenever I have seen her at the gurdwara she has been wearing Indian clothes.

During two of the three interviews the television was on. Most of the time it was tuned to an Asian television network that the family gets by satellite. A Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata,* was the backdrop to one of our conversations, while a popular, modern Hindu movie played during another. North American cartoons were also on for a short period of time. We always enjoyed a "tea break" halfway through the interview. Tea would be served by another member of the family, which enabled Jaspreet to give me her full, undivided attention. Refreshments were formally served on a tray with cups and saucers and a gleaming steel pitcher full of steaming tea to refill empty cups. One or more sweet snacks and one or more "salty" or savoury snacks were always served with the tea. The sweets included *burfi*, a rich confection made of milk, sugar, and spices, and

besan, which contains chickpea flour, sugar, oil, and spices. The savoury snacks included *samosas*, which are spicy deep-fried pastries filled with potatoes and peas and a spicy mixture of crispy deep-fried lentils, beans, nuts, and noodles.

I used to feel overwhelmed by the bounteous hospitality of my Indian hosts. Initially, I tried to match their generosity. Eventually, I realised this was not necessary nor expected. Occasions naturally arose where I would have the opportunity to repay people's graciousness. At those times my efforts would be more appreciated. This sometimes occurred in rather unorthodox ways, for example, during the potato harvest last fall, I brought 50 pounds of potatoes from our neighbour's farm. Jaspreet received the unusual offering in stride, jokingly directing me to put it downstairs in the cool part of the basement.

I am always impressed by the sensitive social antennae of the Indians I know. They seem to have an acute perception of the needs and wants of their guests, and a willingness to go to great lengths to meet those needs. They employ their social skills very skilfully usually in a kind of intuitive teamwork carried out by the whole family. It is often so subtle that I'm not always aware of it until later. I am sure that many times I am not aware of it at all. A recent example will illustrate the point. My family was invited to visit Jaspreet's father, Jaswant, and his family. My husband is quiet and shy and does not usually enjoy these types of events. He prefers to stay home and work on handyman projects. Jaswant was very quick to realise this. Within fifteen minutes of arrival, he had my husband in the kitchen discussing how to carry out a renovation project. A few minutes later, they were busy drawing diagrams and blueprints for the

job. My husband later expressed how much he had enjoyed the visit. I'm still not sure if Jaswant ever seriously intends to redo the kitchen!

While I was in Jaspreet's home, I observed the patterns of language use around me. Jaspreet spoke a mixture of Punjabi and English to Babli. Babli usually answered back in English. I found it interesting that this little girl whom I had met three years ago, and who could not speak English at that time, is now totally fluent, and tends to use English as her primary language. Jaspreet and Mohinder spoke English if I were involved in the conversation. Sometimes when they spoke directly to each other, they would use Punjabi. I noticed that their Punjabi was laced with English words. Babli and her father spoke a combination of English and Punjabi. If I were around, Mohinder used English out of courtesy to me. If he addressed Babli directly, and the topic was a domestic matter, he spoek Punjabi. Again, Babli often replied in English. Babli spoke Punjabi with her grandmother. Her grandmother does not speak English, so this is necessary.

Jaspreet: Life history context.

Jaspreet's formative years were spent in India. She was born in a village near the industrial city of Ludhiana in the Punjab, and came to Canada when she was six. As she outlines in her life history account, her father, Jaswant, immigrated to Canada when she was five months old, leaving her, her mother, Balbir, and older brother, Parmjeet, with her maternal grandparents. Jaspreet's mother was a teacher and returned to her profession soon after Jaspreet's birth, so Jaspreet spent her days with her grandparents while her mother taught. Another grandchild also lived with the grandparents at that time. She was her mother's older sister's daughter. She was about seven years older than Jaspreet.

Jaspreet says her grandparents were like parents to her. It is hard to overstate her affection for, and connection with, them.

Jaspreet's mother and brother, Parmjeet, immigrated to Canada in 1975, but Jaspreet remained in India with her grandparents for three years before she joined the rest of her family in Rostang. The family decided that it would be easier for Jaspreet's parents to establish themselves in Canada if they were not responsible for their pre-school child. Furthermore, Jaspreet was very happy and comfortable living with her grandparents. This type of arrangement is quite common among Indian families. It is normal for extended families to live communally, and the delineation between nuclear and extended family does not exist as it does among Canadians of European background. The children belong to everyone and everyone is responsible for each other's welfare. At the present time, it is not uncommon for Indo-Canadians to adopt (temporarily or permanently) nieces and nephews, thereby giving them the opportunity to live and study in Canada. It also happens that young children may go back to India to live with extended family while the parents establish themselves in Canada.

By the time Jaspreet came to Canada, her father, Jaswant, had managed to buy a house for his family in the south part of Rostang. Her mother, Balbir, had found a job in a garment factory and her brother was in grade four. Jaspreet remembers that she had not wanted to leave India, that she would have preferred to stay with her grandparents. She recalls crying and throwing a tantrum in the airport. She also humorously recollected she had been afraid of her father at that time. We assumed this must have been because he appeared as a stranger that she was expected to love and bond with immediately. She says she used to call him "the fat, black man".

Once Jaspreet came to Canada, however, she quickly adapted to life here, bonded firmly with her parents and brother and made friends, both within the Indian community and with her classmates. Jaspreet has no memory of encounters with racism or prejudice. She does not feel she was singled out any more than any other child for teasing or bullying. In fact, her childhood memories are positive and pleasant. She remembers supportive friends who admired her exotic clothes, jewellery, and hair ornaments and envied her ability to speak Punjabi. She herself, however, remembers sometimes feeling "odd" about the difference in language and appearance. In particular, she remembers feeling awkward when she was out in public places, like shopping centres, with her parents and they were speaking Punjabi and/or wearing traditional Punjabi clothing. She has also mentioned uncomfortable moments with her paternal grandparents when they did things that were normal in India but unusual here. (For example, in India certain plants that are used as a vegetable are considered weeds here. Jaspreet described feeling embarrassed once when her grandmother directed her to pick these plants in the presence of "White" Canadian friends.)

I wonder about Jaspreet's largely happy memories. Did her own confident and happy nature bring out only the best in her classmates and the neighbourhood children so that she only experienced positive interactions? This could, of course, be true to a certain extent, but totally? That goes against my own experience of human nature. Do good manners and consideration toward her "White" interviewer and anticipated audience prevent her from admitting to any but positive experiences? Perhaps. What about her own perception of how she could be perceived if she complained of racism? Possibly. Has she made a choice, consciously or unconsciously to ignore or deny any negative

experiences, to focus instead on the positive? This might also be true. Jaspreet has a very strong and determined character. She is highly insightful and empathetic, but not deeply reflective. Without the predisposition to analyse and dwell on negative experiences, it might suit her best to forget, rationalise, or deny them. It is possible that any combination of the above is true, or, simply as she says, she did not experience any racism or bigotry while she was growing up.

When Jaspreet arrived in Canada, she did not speak English. Within a year she was fluent in the language. She judges herself as having been a smart child who was capable of learning quickly, but less gifted than her older brother, Parmjeet, whom she portrays as extremely intelligent. She continued to do well in school, and in grade 8 began to dream of being a lawyer. In grade 12, she changed her mind and decided she wanted to be an optometrist instead. She had the full support of her family for her educational goals. Her father, in particular, encouraged her to do whatever she wanted, and to go wherever necessary to achieve her aim. She also described how her traditional grandparents used to tell her to do something with her life so that she would not be dependent on anyone.

Jaspreet completed two years of a B. Sc. in order to enter an optometry program. During this time, she met an optician. She was inspired by this woman's kindness and helpfulness, and began to think about taking a four-year optician course in Rostang instead of studying optometry in Montreal or Waterloo. Jaspreet had some hesitation about leaving Rostang to study in eastern Canada because of her involvement with the Rostang branch of *Gurdwara Nakasar*. She said that she could not imagine being so far away for such a long period of time. She ended up working with the optician who had

influenced her and taking a two-year program that qualified her to dispense glasses (but not contact lenses). She continues to practice in this field, although she is looking for a change: "I think sometimes I would like to do something different. I don't know what. I don't want to be doing this forever" (September 26th, 2002).

Jaspreet was married in 1994, six years after completing her studies. Her fiancé, Mohinder, was an Indian citizen who was living in India, and they were married in India. Her family helped to find her husband and arrange the marriage. Jaspreet and Mohinder currently have one child, a six year-old daughter, Babli; they have adopted a second child, the three year old son of her husband's brother and are expecting a third child. Three years ago, her parents-in-law emigrated from India to live with them. They live in the same south Rostang neighbourhood where Jaspreet grew up.

"Arranged marriages" are still the norm in India and among the Indo-Canadian population. However, the term can be misleading. Many "English Canadians" assume that an arranged marriage is one in which the match is decided and forced upon the bride and groom by their families. While this may have been true in the past, at the present time the situation is quite different. Family does play a major role in the selection of potential life partners, and intermediaries often help find suitable candidates, but the young people themselves usually have the final say about whom they will marry. It has also become quite normal for young people to meet and spend time together before the final choice is made. As well, "love marriages", where the young people select their own mates, are increasing.

In my opinion, there is a lot to be said for arranged marriages as they are currently practised. In Indian culture, where families live conjointly, marriage is the

joining of two families as much as of two individuals. It is very important that the families are compatible. Furthermore, Indian or Indo-Canadian children are not raised to be independent in the same way as children of European descent are. They trust and expect their parents to make, or help them make, important life decisions. On a practical level, wise, experienced elders with insight into the implications of marriage's lifelong commitment may be better able to make successful long-term choices. My teen-aged daughter was quick to realise this on our 2000 visit to India when she mused, "I think I might like an arranged marriage; it would save a whole lot of trouble. And I think (my brother) might appreciate it, too" (Julia Greening, pers. com. September 2000).

Throughout her life, Jaspreet has belonged to *Gurdwara Nanaksar* and enjoyed a close personal relationship with its leader, Baba Gurdev Singh Ji. She visits the temple daily to pray, meditate, and listen to the hymns. She also contributes a great deal of *seva* or service. This includes cleaning, sewing, ironing, painting, helping with renovations, or any type of practical work that might be required. She has also established and maintains a regular program of religious education for the young people in the congregation. Children from 3 years to 18 years study religious history, discuss topics of spiritual relevance, learn hymns and prayers, and do arts and crafts in her classes.

Jaspreet also maintains connections with other *Nanaksar* devotees around the world. This includes members of congregations in England, USA, Kenya, and India, where *Nanaksar* has temples. When she travels, she visits these temples and often stays at them, particularly when *Baba Ji* is in residence. At those times, she joins many other pilgrims who travel great distances for an audience with their spiritual preceptor. Jaspreet's spiritual life is of paramount importance to her, and she is willing to sacrifice

opportunities for personal and career advancement for it. Her spirituality appears to blend Indian mysticism and, to some extent, superstition, with the Western tendency to temper religious practice and belief with scientific findings and humanistic philosophy. She appears to believe literally traditional religious stories and teachings. She has related *sakis* (stories of the Guru's lives and times) which illustrate the Guru's supernatural powers and focussed on the concrete reality of these powers. She knows and follows the rituals of her faith, believing that maintaining such a spiritual routine will accrue karmic benefits for her. She gives deep credence to dreams and intuition, believing that the Almighty speaks to us through them. She is also rock solid in her belief that *Baba Ji* is God incarnate. At the same time, however, Jaspreet related several times how much she enjoyed studying sciences, particularly the labs, and she is a competent and enthusiastic user of a variety of new technologies like computers, scanners, digital cameras and so on. She is also an inveterate player of tricks and practical jokes. Her jokes generally combine earthy humour with the edginess characteristic of North American humour. In all areas of her life, Jaspreet blends east and west, old and new, sacred and profane, and does so with ease and humour.

Jaspreet visits India regularly. She has been there twice in the three years that I have known her. She has said many times how much she loves to be there and how hard it is for her to come back to Canada at the end of these visits. She appears to savour these visits as a means of connecting with a deep spiritual part of herself. She immerses herself in her religion as it is traditionally practised, re-establishes connections with family, and drinks in the sights, sounds and smells of her ageless motherland, intensely appreciating the age old customs and manners of thought and behaviour around her. After her return,

she relates her experiences with a mixture of indulgent humour and wonder. Traditional remedies, means of resolving disputes, mystical experiences, customary ways of undertaking daily tasks, all seem to hold a fascination for her.

Jaspreet stated that although she speaks Punjabi like a native, her thinking processes occur in English. I believe she meant that she had internalised the culturally-tied styles of thinking that accompany English language culture, particularly in matters relating to emotions. As she pointed out, she did all her formal learning in school in English, "we learned everything emotional through our books and stuff, through our novels and books, 'cause we were surrounded by White people" (September 26, 2002, p.16). As well as the predominance of English language and English language culture, differences intrinsic to the two cultures also contributed to her learning to think in English, "everything we watched and because our culture, being not so open.... You know? I mean maybe weren't just as exposed to it in that sense as what was going on in the White culture. We just learned White feelings, too. Indirectly" (September 26, 2002, p. 16). Jaspreet's linguistic ability in Punjabi, as well as her familiarity and comfort with Indian culture have given her a strong sense of her roots and her identity. She is proud of her traditional culture and is deeply attached to her motherland. She often seems filled with a longing to be more closely attached with her roots, both on concrete and metaphysical levels. However, she is also deeply influenced by Canadian language and culture. She realises the advantages of living here to her and her family, particularly in terms of healthcare and education. As well, I am sure she appreciates the freedoms and opportunities available here that are not available in India. Jaspreet is part of a growing group of young people of Indian descent who are creating their own identity

and place in Canadian society, a place that blends elements of both cultures and languages but is ultimately unique. Now in her thirties, Jaspreet was among the pioneers who established this group. There were far fewer Indians in Rostang at the time when she was growing up, and there was a stronger reaction toward them from Canadians of European descent. As well, there was less recognition of the needs of East Asians, and fewer products and services available for them at that time. The process of acclimatising was more difficult. The neighbourhood Jaspreet grew up in, the attitude of her parents, and her own character helped to determine the experiences she had and how she dealt with them. She and her generation helped to smooth the path for those who came after. The degree to which she and her counterparts maintained their language and culture positively affected the development of a strong sense of belonging in the younger generation. This was because they helped to create a positive model of successful integration for the younger generation to follow, a model in which mother tongue and culture were valued and used to maintain links with the past, as well as to create a new and interesting blend. This blend is also reflected in mainstream culture where world music is becoming increasingly popular, clothing styles, and cuisine from all around the world gain popularity, and Canada's urban centres become increasingly multicultural.

This model is not static or monolithic. It is constantly changing with time and with changes in both Canada and India. As Jaspreet pointed out about India, "It's becoming a lot more Westernised.... In the bigger cities especially, they're speaking a lot more English. A lot of people, whether they're educated or not, just seem to understand English" (October 10, 2002, p. 6). She continued on the topic, saying, "...more things have been abandoned in India...a lot of the old things. They're thinking they're

modernised by getting rid of this stuff...and they bought into all these new things" (October 10, 2002, p.7). As well as changing with time, the model also seems to involve a continuum that ranges from those who are closely connected to traditional Punjabi language and culture to those who are only loosely connected. Furthermore, a person's place on the continuum can vary as they move closer to or farther from their roots. As Jaspreet's generation has families, their children will be another step distant from their Indian roots. Although these children will be more removed from their roots through time, they can chose to move closer or farther away. Moving closer could be achieved through formal or informal study of the language and culture, involvement with religious or cultural organisations, association with fellow Indians, and other such means. Moving away, of course, would be achieved by rejecting or devaluing the mother tongue and culture and associating more closely with English-Canadian culture. Jaspreet has chosen to stay closely connected with her language while successfully integrating into Canadian culture. She is pleased that her daughter, Babli, speaks Punjabi and seems to appreciate Punjabi culture. However, she realises that, "it's going to be a big challenge to maintain it. Probably more so than what my parents faced" (October 10, 2002, p. 6). In addition, she and her husband realise that arranged marriages are in decline and that, "in maybe the next five to eight years kids probably won't go back to India and get married" (October 10, 2001, p. 8). Therefore, another important means of maintaining and refreshing traditional Punjabi language and culture in Canada is disappearing.

Jaspreet recognises and appreciates the young people who have created their own identity by blending the best of their traditional culture and English language culture, and creating something new. She believes that music and dance – the parts of Punjabi culture

that she says appeal most to her -- serve to tie the younger generation to their roots. She is relatively flexible in her acceptance of behaviours that have become normal in "White culture" but not in Indian culture. For example, she does not approve of, but does not condemn drinking alcohol, dating, and wearing revealing clothing by others of her religio-cultural group. However, she is less tolerant when it comes to those who reject the 5 Ks of Sikhism, particularly the uncut hair. She says, "I've seen a couple of guys who they'll either wear their turban...or *patka* loose, almost like a bandanna style. They've got their own style, which is interesting... If I was their parent, I would probably rather have them make their own style, instead of having a funky haircut" (October 10, 2001, p.10).

Jaspreet: Narrative context.

Jaspreet told her story in a comfortable, flowing style. It reminded me of waves gently, but inexorably, lapping up on the shore. There was a calmness about her story, but also an enduring strength and sense of continuity.

It is interesting to note that a conversation I had had with Jaspreet, over a cup of coffee in Tim Horton's, months before I began my research, had a major impact on my choice of topic. Somehow we had started talking about first language maintenance (although not using that term) and she had told me in detail how it had been her mother's sacrifice that had enabled her and her brothers to speak Punjabi so well. She explained that her mother had been a teacher in India, but when she came to Canada, she had been so determined to maintain Punjabi language and culture at home, that she had not pursued English language training and educational upgrading for herself. She had thought that if she learned to speak English well and became a professional, there would be little chance of

her children maintaining the language. As a result, she had not studied English; she had stayed home with the children and worked in a factory instead. Something in the passion and determination of this example inspired me to pursue the topic. Serendipitously, this occurred around the same time that I initially met my advisor and discussed first language loss as a potential topic for my thesis.

I took the lead in the interviews with Jaspreet, in that our conversation was guided by the questions I asked, but Jaspreet gave thoughtful, detailed answers. We had discussed the study several times before, and I had given her the interview questions beforehand, so she was well aware of what we were going to discuss.

I noted that her narrative was mainly descriptive. She described her upbringing, the language use patterns of her childhood home and with her own family, the role and purpose of Punjabi and English in communication, and her hopes and plans for maintaining Punjabi with her own children. She often added interesting insights and observations to her descriptions. For example, she noted that her proficiency in Punjabi has increased since her marriage. She explained that she has learned a lot of new language from her husband, Mohinder. Mohinder came to Canada as an adult. He was educated in India, and his language was fully formed before he immigrated. Jaspreet learned Punjabi at home with her parents, and she never studied in Punjabi. Consequently, her Punjabi was limited to a household context and her vocabulary was mainly composed of everyday words. She did not know much slang, many idioms, or expressions, or words to express more complex, abstract topics. This is likely the situation with most child immigrants, or children who are born in Canada to immigrant parents. Most, however, will not marry people from their homeland, so unless they study

their language or study in their language, they probably will not develop full adult competence in the language.

Jaspreet's story included praise for the many people who helped her or encouraged her to maintain her language: parents, extended family, elderly members of the congregation, even Canadian friends. I was a little surprised that she never criticised anyone, mentioned negative experiences, or expressed any resentment or bitterness. Two or three times she related experiences that illustrated "awkward" examples of cross-cultural differences. At these times, her tone was level and even; sometimes it was tinged with humour. I did not feel any of the hurt or anger I had sensed when discussing these topics with Dalbir. Once when Jaspreet described a friend's determination not to name her child an easy to pronounce Westernised version of an Indian name there was a note of passion in her voice; however, it was on her friend's behalf.

I also noted that any time Jaspreet mentioned family members it was with pride and admiration. I have found earnest, unreserved, and openly expressed family loyalty (in the presence of outsiders) to be a common characteristic of the people I know in the Sikh community. It is very different from the ironic, belittling, or effacing way White North Americans often refer to the important people in their lives. I think the roots of this tendency lie in the individualistic nature of Western society and the collective nature of Asian society. I also think there are cultural differences related to what East Asians and Canadian believe constitutes modesty and arrogance.

As I was reading over the transcripts of the interviews for this study, I was struck by a fact I had known in theory for many years, but I was really **seeing** for the first time in practice, in detail and in voluminous amount. That was, how very different spoken

language is from written language. Everyone who speaks makes many mistakes; these mistakes are a natural part of speech. They include grammatical mistakes, syntactical mistakes, morphological mistakes, and of course, false starts, incomplete and unfinished sentences. As well, a person's speech is marked by a number of different variables, including the level of education they have, specialised training they have taken, their employment, whom they are talking to, and the place they live. Native speakers of English usually make the same kinds of mistakes, with some variation due to level of education. Common examples of this include using "good" in place of "well"; "seen" as the simple past form instead of "saw"; some incorrect subject-verb combinations, like there is + plural nouns, (e.g., there is lots of birds in the garden); and use of plural subject pronouns and adjective pronouns with singular subjects (e.g., everybody has their own habits). English as a second language speakers tend to make **different** mistakes (for example, non-standard word combinations, inappropriate verb tense use, and inexact idiom forms). These differences, combined with differences in pronunciation, are what make it easy to identify non-native speakers. Keeping in mind that Jaspreet had come to Canada when she was six years old, and was unable to speak English at that time, I was interested in knowing if her language use patterns were different from a native speaker's. I had not noticed any differences that would identify Jaspreet as a non-native speaker of English while we were talking, and her pronunciation was certainly native-speaker like, but I thought I might have been so intent on what she was saying I had not noticed how she was saying it. Therefore, I was interested in examining the interview transcripts because I could study the dialogue slowly and repeatedly, and see it in written form. Apart from a few unusual expressions, (for example, she said: "show as much passion

into it" instead of "put as much passion into it", and she used the word "essence" in expressions that were new to me, for example, she said, "in the same essence" (November 11, 2002, p. 1), in a situation where I would say, "at the same time"), Jaspreet's English seemed typical of a young (30 years old) adult native speaker of English. She used the typical expressions of "like", and "you know" as well as the intonation (often rising at the end of statement, as a way of seeking agreement) of her generation. Another feature of her speech I noticed was that her sentences sometimes dwindled off without being completed which left it to the listener to either infer or fill in the remainder, or deliberately ask what the conclusion was, which could be awkward.

Two last features of Jaspreet's narrative are worthy of note. First, was an interesting tendency she had to say something serious and important, then unexpectedly (to me) offering an opposite alternative. For example, after a lengthy discussion of her education and career goals and experience, she told me she wanted to do something completely different from what she is doing now. I assumed she meant she wanted to study for another career, but she surprised me. The conversation concluded as follows: "I think sometimes I would like to do something. I just don't know what. 'Cause I don't think I want to be doing this forever. Either that, or become a housewife. There's my goals" (September 25, 2002, p. 24). I wonder if it was a way of hiding or disguising pain or frustration.

The last feature I want to mention is her habit of sometimes omitting the subjects of her sentences, which gave her utterances a terse sound. For example, when she was talking about what had motivated her to become an optician, she said: "Discovered

contacts through my dad…Didn't know what contacts were. Way out of touch" (September 25, 2002, p. 24).

Jaspreet's Story: My Learning was the Love I had for God

I'm very proud of being Punjabi. I believe I speak my language very well. When I go to India, people tell me that they can't believe that I live in Canada; they think I belong to a village or something like that because I speak like them.

I give credit to my mom. I give her all the credit today. It's because of her I know this language. She sacrificed. And my dad, he supported my mom. When we were at home, he made sure we would listen. They were a team. I would give part of the credit to my grandparents. My love and respect for them was also a big part of holding onto my language and learning it and learning more of the pure, native Punjabi. They came here when I was in grade 5, and there was no way of communicating with them other than Punjabi. I would also give credit to my friends. I had wonderful friends. My friends would always say, "oh, that's so neat! You can speak in three languages." There was never any kind of peer pressure on me for anything that I can remember. My parents, my grandparents, my friends, and then God. He became a very, very big part of my life at a young age, too. I did not know much about the religion, but it was just the presence, just the feelings of it. So there are a lot of blessings there that I can count, one after another. And it wasn't like I had any kind of a gap anywhere. It was just a nice smooth flow that I can remember, a mixture of everything in it.

I was born in '72. My Dad came to Canada about four or five months after I was born. My mom started her teaching again, so I guess I was about two or three months old when I was left with my grandparents, my mom's parents, during the day. I formed a deep bond with my grandparents. They are my parents. My mom and brother went to Canada in '75, and because I was so close with my grandparents, they left me there. My

grandmother said, "Why don't you leave Jaspreet here with us? Your older sister left her daughter; why don't you leave your daughter? When you go to Canada, are you going to take care of her? She's so young. Or are you going to work?" And also, I think another reason was my name. It was Kawaljit before, on all my papers. But my dad had named me Jaspreet. He always called me Jaspreet. Somewhere in my dad's mom's family....my dad's uncles, called him something that rhymed with Kawaljit. My grandparents, my mom's mom and dad, thought it was inappropriate that father and daughter should have rhyming names. But I was already officially Kawaljit. So, when my mother went around to get passports and stuff done for me, she used Jaspreet and it was, "uh uh, no such person." I guess that made it even more practical for her to leave me there.

My mom and dad came to get me in '79. And, for whatever reason, I did not like my dad. He used to scare me. But when I came here, I liked my dad. He was really nice. He made a bike for me. He painted it all up, this black and white bike. It had a striped seat on it. It was usually me and my dad at home during the day. 'Cause he worked evenings, and my mom worked during the day. I remember my mom and dad getting me this Wendy Walker doll, and the box was as big as I was, pretty much. I was so excited about it.

The only thing I can remember about starting school is that I did not know much English. I had come, I believe, some time in August, but I missed quite a bit of school in the beginning. I was very happy to go to school. When I started, I was placed in grade 1. And I just remember standing there, like somebody in the army and telling them, "My name is J. S. I do not speak English." I just knew my ABCs and stuff, and how to

colour. I remember being in normal class a bit and the math and stuff. I did have to go to a special class to learn English, and I remember some cards that we used to go through. I guess learning English must have happened naturally because I was in that surrounding. By the end of the year I had picked up a lot, and I was placed in grade 2 without having to go to a special language assistance class.

My teachers treated me very well, very, very well. Everybody in my class was very good. They were very friendly. I remember playing outside with them. Nobody every put me down. I had wonderful friends. I'm still in touch with one because our kids go to school together. She was ever so good with me. She'd come over and we'd hug each other even though the language barrier was there.

When I was young, it sometimes used to be odd to belong to a different culture. Awkward because there weren't a lot of other Indians around. Sometimes after the gurdwara we'd go shopping, and, of course, we would wear suits. I had learned earlier that it wasn't normal clothing for a lot of people, and people would stare at you. But when my friends saw that, they used to compliment me. They'd say, "Oh, I like that!" "Can you wear that again?" "Can I borrow it?" Then you don't shy away. To the point where I'd wear nice embroidered tops to school with pants. That was in elementary school. I wore bangles, too, and a *dhori*. That's something you put in your hair, and it hangs, and it's got a different colour at the bottom. Everybody loved it! A lot of people I knew would come over and see my things and thought they were beautiful.

Sometimes, going out shopping with my mom, I'd run into some friends. And my mom would ask me something in Punjabi. The friends would kind of look, and to me it was "Oh my God. I'm embarrassed." But my friends would always say, "Oh, that's

neat, you can speak in three languages." 'Cause we were learning French, English and Punjabi. But to me it wasn't neat. It was awkward, like, my mom can't speak English that well. I really don't know when I changed out of it to where I am now where I don't feel awkward about it.

My brother and I spoke English to each other at home. We never spoke to each other that much at school because he was three years older. He had his group of friends and I had my group of friends. After school, we'd play together because his group and my group were related, a couple of them were brother and sister, but we'd always speak English. Almost all of our friends were *gora* (White). They used to come over and they knew it was our culture. They used to eat dinner with us and they were very happy with it. Every now and then they'd say, "Hey, mom, can you make us this?" There were a few, few people, not such close friends, more like acquaintances, where the parent wasn't okay with different cultures. They were a little prejudiced. So we never stuck around with those kind of kids anyway. There was another awkward thing. There were a couple of other Indian students who were in the school. They would never feel comfortable, even when we were playing baseball, and it was just the Indians playing baseball. It was awkward for them to come and join us. It was just so weird. It was really, really awkward, and I don't know why. We knew a few of them, but some of them wouldn't even say, "hi". And if you did, they wouldn't say it back. I remember thinking, "we're the same people!" That was when we were in high school.

When I first came to Canada, my brother and I spoke Punjabi all the time. My brother spoke English very well already by the time I came here. He's three years older to begin with, so by the time I came here he would have been in grade 4 already. He

wanted me to fit in and get ahead. He would yell at me to speak English. I constantly got yelled at by him to improve my marks and do my homework; it was his love. He was the smart one, and he would try to help me out. The teachers always encouraged me. My mom and dad, they wanted me to learn (English). I remember my Dad putting on Sesame Street and Mr. Dress-up and stuff for me to watch, and at lunch time we would watch that and Yogi Bear.

Once I did learn English, mom would never speak to us in English. If we would speak to her in English, she would never answer us back in English. She always used to tell us to speak Punjabi, you know: "Talk to me in Punjabi. I don't know English." She would just tell us up front. It was continuous, almost every day. And even between us kids, if she caught us, she'd go, "Oh, you guys forgot Punjabi, have you?" Sometimes when we played together, we said some phrases in English, like: "Christ!" or "Jesus!" or something. And if mom was in the laundry room while we were playing, she'd say, "oh, why can't you say Guru Nanak? Why can't you remember your own Guru?" And we would just roll our eyes and say, "it doesn't have the same essence." My mom was very strong in us to learn our first language. She always used to say, "I want my kids to speak their language. I don't want them solely in English. I know we live here, but I want them to have my language."

My dad supported my mom, but in a different kind of a way. He did not show as much passion into it as my mom always did. When we were out and about, he liked to speak English. I remember a time when my mom was in India, and it was just me, and my dad, and my brother. We'd talk English with him all the time, and he'd talk back to us in English. But there were also times when he would speak to us in Punjabi and we'd

keep answering back in English, and then after a while, we knew we'd better switch to Punjabi. Without being told, we knew, it was just something indirect. But we knew.

When us cousins were in the basement playing, we spoke English. With my aunts, uncles and stuff, it was all Punjabi. When we were all sitting together, and we threw in a couple of English words here and there, then my aunt used to say something about it. Or my grandma, hers was an indirect way even though she really knew. She'd always say, "You're talking about us. You're probably swearing at us." And we'd say, "No, we weren't!" So, we'd translate it for her, just to reassure here, and then she'd say, "Oh, okay." But she got us to translate it, which took us a long time. I know it took me a long time to figure it all out.

I never really knew how to read and write Punjabi when I came from India, because I never went to school all that much. I remember learning to read and write the alphabet, but I don't really remember learning how to write words and stuff.

Mom always worked on us speaking it more than reading and writing. After grade 2, my mom used to teach us to read and write a bit. In writing, she used to have us sit every now and then to learn. More so at holidays when she had time. Throughout the school year, school was more important. Despite the fact that mom made her efforts to teach us to read and write, we did lose it. We kind of learned it and then forgot it. I did not entirely lose it. It wasn't that I couldn't read any of it, but it wouldn't be even half of what I know today. I guess we need to be in touch with it, and reading and writing it constantly. Because as school went on, and we went into higher and higher grades, there was more and more school involved. I think maybe that's how I lost it because I was more involved in school and less involved in trying to learn it (Punjabi).

I started to read again when I wanted to. I thought, "I really want to read my language." How I learned reading, I think, was probably the love I had for God. 'Cause I wanted to learn how to read prayers and everything. Reading is a big part of my religion. It gave me strength to want to learn to read. There was a yearning to read.

I can remember when we were very little; there was a story of a cow that we used to read. I had it memorised, and I would read it line for line. When I really, really wanted to learn to read the *Guru Granth Sahib* and do *path,* the story of the cow came back. I found the book and read it and got my info from that particular story. Then I read more from throughout the book and asked my mom for help. I asked her if I was pronouncing right. The other thing that I did to learn how to read was I used to put on the *rehiras path* (evening prayer) tape, and I memorised that. Because I heard it over and over again, and because I knew what was going on, I could follow the *gutka* (prayer book) from the beginning, and I learned the pronunciations. And plus, because I had started to learn to read and write again, the tape and the *gutka* in combination helped me a lot. I also started writing letters to my grandparents because I knew that would help. Writing just came afterward. At first I did not realise what I was doing. Then I realised what was going on. So I thought, "Oh, okay, this is a good way to learn." And that's how I learned it. I think that would be when everything started hitting my spiritual life. My main learning, I guess, would be through *Guru Granth Sahib*. If I did not have the love for it, I might not have learned it.

Now, I can read quite well. I wouldn't say as fast as I can read in English. Also, it depends on what I'm reading. I've read a lot of novels in Punjabi for pleasure. It was fun. I have

never been too much of a newspaper kind of a gal. I just used to look at the matrimonials and stuff.

I think I'm still learning Punjabi. When we were younger, living with mom and dad, we were limited to certain topics and styles of talking. Now there's so many other words and things. I'm glad I married someone from India. I don't think I would be as good in Punjabi as I am today, especially since he came here with so little English. It has helped me to learn a lot of words I never knew, a lot of phrases. We're more open about a lot of things because we're adults. I know more slang and I learned a lot of swear words from him than I ever learned from mom and dad. That really helped me in arguments and venting. Even in songs and movies, I say, "What does that mean? I've never heard of that saying." You hear a saying in Punjabi but what does it mean?" They're words, but the meaning isn't there. On a daily basis at home, mom and dad did not use a lot of phrases (idioms) with us. It was just plain, simple language.

My husband comes from a different place in Punjab than my mom and dad do. At his place things aren't always the same. There are some words that are different. The way they speak might be a little different. There are so many words that just come up.

My husband and I speak a combination of both (languages). I can probably count on both hands the times when we've had a fully English conversation or a full Punjabi conversation. Even when we're with our friends that are Punjabi we tend to speak a bit of both. It depends on the topic, and who I'm talking with. If I'm talking to a friend it might be 50/50. It really depends on the situation. Even in India, we did not speak pure Punjabi because there were a lot of people that would throw in English. I know there are a lot of words in English that I say because the essence isn't there for me

in Punjabi. For feelings or arguments or whatever, there are just no words. So, for certain things I'll throw in an English word to express myself. Sometimes if I don't know the name of something then I'll throw it in in English. Often I know what it is in English, but I'll say it in Punjabi because I can't describe it all of a sudden in English.

I can express myself better with emotions in English that I can in Punjabi. Because I learned all my emotions in English, right? Everything I read, right from the beginning was always English. All those English feelings, everything was in English. Maybe I just don't know the proper words in Punjabi.... I'm sure I know the words, but it doesn't feel like it's coming from the heart. Like to say I'm extremely happy, I can display it better in English. I've never really done it in Punjabi. To say I'm really happy in Punjabi would be like so blah. It wouldn't have the same spice. Maybe we did not really ever have the deep chance to convey our feelings the way we did in English. My best friend is Indian, if we have a heart to heart, it's all in English. I could let my heart out with my dad, but it would always be in English. I usually wrote him letters and left them for him to read, and they were always in English. Even when we say, "I love you" to mom and dad in English, it sounds like it's coming from the heart. Whereas, when you translate it into Punjabi, there's nothing in it. That's probably why you never hear it in an Indian movie, either. Anytime somebody expresses that (I love you), it's in English.

I bet you it's all because we learned everything emotional through our books and novels, 'cause we were surrounded by White people. We learned White feelings. And on television, too. Everything I watched on television for the past 25 years. Because our culture not being as open, we weren't as exposed to it as what was going on in the White culture. Even when I watch Punjabi serials, they haven't got that emotion; it just doesn't

seem to be there. It's not to say that mom and dad did not hug us or did not praise us, or that Punjabi people don't have emotions, we do! But it's just different.

I like to argue in English. It sounds better; I can't be as evil in Punjabi when I argue as I can be in English. But the Punjabi words would be in there, too. Swearing is a lot better (in Punjabi) than it is in English. It just sounds ruder and you can say it with a certain force.

For talking about family relationships, Punjabi is better. It's easier for us to say my *sas* or my *mama* than to say my brother's wife's aunt's so and so.

I know I think in English more than I think in Punjabi. It could be about anything. It could even be about a matter that's very near and dear to me. If I've read something and I'm thinking about it, I'll think about it in English. Very rarely do I think about it in Punjabi. It doesn't necessarily mean I don't have the Punjabi cultural part of me in it, but the actual language that I'm using in my head is English. I'm wondering if I can think the same way in Punjabi, word for word. Or how I would think? I don't remember thinking a lot in Punjabi ever. I don't know if I unknowingly translate it, or, after I've thought about it, think how I'm going to say it in Punjabi, but I know my thinking process mostly happens in English. It's automatic. Only if I'm thinking about *Baba Ji*, if I'm thinking about things I could say to him if he was here, then it's mostly Punjabi. Maybe it's faster to think in English because the emotional part is faster in English.

I've always liked my culture. I've always liked dressing up and bangles and hair stuff. All that kind of stuff I knew wasn't a part of English culture. I've always listened to Indian music. I like old Indian music that probably my dad listened to when he was

young, and today I still like that. Dancing and having fun comes to my mind when people say "culture" to me. I think about these guys nicely dressed in turbans and *kurta pyjama* (men's traditional dress consisting of a long shirt and loose pants with a drawstring closure) and dancing. And the language, 'cause if the language isn't there then the songs and dancing and stuff aren't going to be there. Even in terms of food, I've always liked my Indian food as opposed to Canadian food. I guess being around Indian people and going to the gurdwara would be the main reasons we maintained the culture. And, of course, having the *Guru Granth Sahib* at home was a big part of my life.

I was never that much into the English culture that I just left this and went to that. I would say I was more like a happy medium, where I did my English stuff, but I had my Indian favourites, too, that I just couldn't get away from. My older brother, he was into English music as well as Indian music, same with my younger brother. I think all three of us are at that level where we're neither here nor there, probably better blended in both things. It depends on the situation.

My best friend (Harvinder) and I both like our Indian culture. Even her mom and dad were quite similar to mine in that they wanted to keep the language. 'Cause a lot of people at that point were losing it (language), and they were doing a lot of Canadian things that we weren't. They were kids who would cut their hair, and they would want to wear all the modern clothes. I do remember a few kids at the gurdwara who wouldn't understand Punjabi and I know Harvinder and I used to make fun of them, even to their faces sometimes. I remember we used to think we wanted to be more traditional, in the sense that we wanted to be able to speak Punjabi always, and our kids, too.

We had a discussion about names not too long ago. Because a lot of Indian people, we find, name themselves English names. Let's say their name is Balwinder, they might call themselves Bob. My friend and her husband want to have kids in the near future. Her husband and she were talking about names. Her husband said to her, "You know, I think I want my child to have an easy name, a very simple name. And that way it's easier for Canadians to say the names." She had a fit on him! She said, "I went my whole life with Harvinder and people are okay with it. If somebody couldn't pronounce it, I would say it over and over again until they understood it. I am not naming my kid some dinky little name for people's sake!" And I think that has so much to do with this whole thing anyways.

She wants to teach my daughter Punjabi and when we're together, if my daughter speaks Punjabi to her, she goes, "Why? You don't know Punjabi? You gotta speak Punjabi!" She's just totally, totally good at it, just saying, "No English in my house." WE might be talking in English! But if she asks my daughter something, it will be in Punjabi, and she (Jaspreet's daughter, Babli) has to answer back in Punjabi.

My daughter speaks her language. She's very good at it. She likes the music, and she likes the cultural part of it. She spends maybe more than half a day in English, for sure half a day because of school. The afternoon is with her grandma. That would be in Punjabi. She speaks Punjabi with my mom definitely, but with my dad, she can speak a little bit of English. Exactly the same as it was with me! With her cousin, it's mostly Punjabi. She'll speak English with her aunt, and with her uncle she can speak Punjabi and English. It's the same thing with my younger brother. It's mostly English, but if he asks her to speak Punjabi, then she will. But mostly it's in English. It just comes out. If

I find there's too much English going on with her and my brother, then I tell them they have to stop and speak in Punjabi. We deal with it day by day. At school, her friends think it is so neat that she can understand Punjabi. I have to thank all the elderlies around me, whether it be my mother and father-in-law, my mom and dad, or my grandparents. She's always liked elderly people, and all the elderly people I know don't speak English. So it's nice for us that way, and I feel blessed that I have the company of these elderly people, and she loves them, too, and in order to communicate she has to communicate in Punjabi.

It's going to be a challenge to maintain it (language and culture) in the future, I think. Probably more so than what my parents faced. 'Cause it's English all the time, all the time, English, English, English. But it's with me, I think, because I speak more English than her dad does, or grandparents do. As long as she's got an English speaker...

I can remember days without having a good Punjabi conversation with her (Babli), where it's more English, like driving to school and then when I ask her, "how was your day at school?", it sounds fake. I tried asking her in Punjabi, but it doesn't have the same effect. It sounds like it's formal or something not real. But if we're driving down and start talking about the colours of the cars and stuff in Punjabi, that's different. Or if she wants to ask me about anything that's going on in the house or anything, then I keep thinking, "ask me in Punjabi." Sometimes she has problems with it, 'cause it's different in English and there's different ways to say it in Punjabi. I find English is sometimes easier for her and I to communicate in.

I would like to take her to India every year or few years, once she is established in her (English) reading and writing and stuff. I do want her to know her family, both

sides. In the next few years, kids probably won't go back to India and get married. We're not having our heart set that we're going to marry our daughter to somebody in India or anything like that. If she finds somebody here, then that's fine; I'd rather her be happy. Whatever she wants.

A lot of younger kids, the ones that are more my (younger) brother's age, are pretty good in Punjabi. I find it interesting that all the boys and girls, no matter how modern they think they are, they have all the cool hair styles and wear the neatest clothes, they all love the Indian dancing and music. Even if they don't know a bit of Punjabi, they can still mouth the songs. They love their dancing. They can get up and dance to Indian music; it's not a problem to them to have a good time. I've even seen kids with alcohol in their hands and stuff, but they'll have a good time dancing to Indian music in Indian ways. They've got their own style, which is interesting. I've seen a couple of guys who'll wear the turban, or some that wear a *patka* and it's let loose, almost like a bandanna kind of style. They're still trying to maintain something. If I was their parent, I would rather have them make their own style instead of having a funky haircut. You know? If they want to eventually wear their turban, I'm sure they will, but this is something right now. They're not getting rid of their culture.

I've maintained my language and culture, and when you look at the joys that you get out of it, it's so rewarding. It's so nice to know a couple of languages. Whether you know French, Spanish, whatever, you know different language and people admire you so much, so why wouldn't you keep your own?

Dalbir: Introduction

Dalbir: Interview context.

I had three interviews with Dalbir. The first two took place in her parents' home. Although in keeping with Indian tradition, she was actually living at her husband, Parmjeet's family home at that time, she still spent a lot of time at her parents' house, often staying there for several days at a time. Her family lives in a beautiful new home in a Rostang suburb with a large Indian population. We met in the lower level of the house, which is designed as a separate suite with its own kitchen, family room, bathroom, and bedroom. The house was built this way so the suite could be used by either the older or younger generation, allowing them some measure of privacy and autonomy. At that time, the suite was used mainly by Dalbir's younger brother. He used the kitchen, with its patio access to the back yard, when he entertained his friends. Meeting at Dalbir's parents' house, particularly in the self-contained lower level of the house provided a measure of privacy and allowed Dalbir to speak freely.

Each of the first two meetings lasted about three hours, including half an hour before and after of informal chat with the rest of the family. They were informal and easygoing visits, but a lot was accomplished. Dalbir entered the study with a strong sense of purpose. Language and cultural loss and maintenance were obviously topics she had thought a lot about, and had been deeply affected by, throughout her life, and she had a carefully considered story to tell. Although we followed the list of prepared questions faithfully and carefully during the first two interviews, Dalbir took a strong leadership role in the interviews and gave long, detailed and coherent answers to the questions.

The third interview took place several months after the first two. The delay was caused by personal reasons on my part, most importantly the death of my mother. It seems, however, that the initial interviews had helped Dalbir to further sort out her thoughts, and the gap between the second and third interviews had given her time to reflect and analyse, and then apply her insights to events and incidents in her every day life. Based on the content of the third interview, it seems that issues of language and culture had come to occupy a greater part of her thinking. It appeared that she had reached a greater awareness of the impact of language and culture on herself and on members of her community. She was seeing and experiencing manifestations of cultural incongruity with greater clarity and understanding. Although I had prepared questions based on the first two interviews to guide the third interview, this interview took on a life of its own. I started with two of the prepared questions, then Dalbir told me she had been waiting to talk to me and proceeded to describe many major events and occurrences that she had been thinking about. Later, when I looked over all the materials we generated in our conversations, I realised that all the objectives I had begun the process with had been met.

For the third interview, we met at Dalbir's new home. It is a brand new house in the same neighbourhood in which Dalbir's parents live and is solely occupied by Dalbir, her husband, and daughter. The house is bi-level. The view from the large patio windows at the back looks out onto an undeveloped field that had been farmland until recently. The walls are painted white, and the furnishings are simple, but of excellent quality. I can close my eyes and still see the amazingly bright, highly polished floor tiles that Dalbir proudly told me her husband had installed.

The nuclear family living arrangement that Dalbir and her husband have adopted constitutes a major break with Indian tradition, and I wondered about the implications and consequences of this move to Dalbir and her nuclear family, her inlaws, and her own family (parents, brother and extended family). I was later to learn that Dalbir had made several major breaks with tradition in her life. We spoke at length of the pain and growth she had experienced as a result. As these incidents were of a highly personal nature and disclosing them risks breaking confidentiality for a number of people, they were not included in the life history account.

The third interview took the whole day. I arrived at her home at 10 am and left at 3:30 p.m. Our talk went on and on and on. Even as I was leaving, I felt that there was still more to say. We spent the day in the family room, sitting on the floor, and at one point after a delicious and heavy lunch (at which I learned to make *makki roti*, a special kind of corn flour chapatti) lying on the floor! Dalbir's daughter, Mattu, played around us for much of the time. The tapes caught her high pitched squeals of delight as she explored her mother's purse and the bag I use to carry my tape recorder, tapes, and other materials and examined all the contents. She went to her maternal grandmother's house with her uncle for part of the time.

I filled two 90 minute tapes with our conversation. After that, I just turned the tape recorder off, thinking I would use whatever additional information and impressions I gained for the sections of the thesis I was going to write in my own words. Otherwise, I was afraid I would spend the rest of the summer transcribing! By the time I left that day, I was totally exhausted by the effort of listening and concentrating so hard for so long in such a sustained manner, but I felt I had gained a great deal of new information and

understanding. During this interview, Dalbir spoke in a highly personal and candid manner, and several times I turned off the tape recorder because of the sensitive subject matter. This was particularly the case when the stories involved other people.

I felt that although the actual experiences and reactions Dalbir shared were unique, they were indicative of larger, more universal themes. They spoke to me of intergenerational disconnection involving three or four generations. The generations include the older generation, the now late middle-aged or elderly parents, who came here as young adults in their twenties or early thirties with the dream of making a new and better life for themselves and their children. In doing so, many of these individuals were cut adrift from the certainties, values, and assumptions they had grown up with. They often ended up feeling like strangers in a strange land, where so much seemed incomprehensible and out of their control, including in many cases, their own children. Then there is the younger generation, those like Dalbir, who came here as children, and who feel caught between two worlds, but truly belong to neither. These are young people who understand their parents' values and feel the weight of their expectations, but who are also Canadians. They are deeply connected to and have much invested in mainstream Canadian life and culture. This is the "guinea pig" generation, the young people who were the lightning rods for the pressure and insecurity that accompanied their parents' early struggle to adapt to life in Canada. This is the generation whose members often rebelled against the weight of their parents' expectations. The consequence of their rebellion was often loss of language, culture, and identity. This is also the generation that is now struggling with difficult questions about their own identities and their children's upbringing.

The next generation is made up of young people like Dalbir's brother and younger cousins, and even her daughter, who were born here and consider themselves to be Canadian first, Indian second. This generation seems surer of their identity and their place in Canada. In fact, they have created their own identity and their own place which combines elements of Indian culture and Canadian culture, but is also new and unique. As Dalbir says, "there are more of them and they don't need White friends" (July 12th, 2002, p. 3). They enjoy the comfort, freedom, and choice of life in Canada, but they also feel a strong attraction to and pride in their heritage. There is less pressure at home for these young people. Their parents are accustomed to life in Canada now and are more accepting of the their lifestyle. Multiculturalism, a new policy in the late 60s and 70's when Dalbir was growing up, is an everyday reality and life, in practical terms, is easier for them.

The last generation to be considered is the grandparent generation. This group is composed of the parents of the older generation. They come to Canada as family class immigrants, sponsored by their children, the "older generation". Most are already seniors when they arrive. They speak little or no English and tend to remain quite isolated from mainstream Canadian society. They usually spend their time at home, caring for their grandchildren or great-grandchildren and helping to keep house. This generation can be pivotal in maintaining Punjabi. However, if Punjabi is not maintained in the family, there can be serious communication breakdowns between the elder and the younger generations. Differences in the culture, lifestyle, and expectations within the four generations can also result in tensions and difficulties in the families. This is manifested as tensions between generations, e.g., the grandparents and the parents clashing over how

the children are raised, the grandparents and the grandchildren disagreeing on values and behaviours, great-grandparents and grandchildren finding little to unite them.

I realise that the "generation gap" exists in all families, in all cultures and subcultures. However, I feel it is most extreme in communities whose heritage culture differs the most dramatically from mainstream Canadian/Western culture. Indian/Sikh culture is different from Canadian culture in many ways, but particularly in terms of views on sexuality and relations between the sexes. Dalbir and I spent a lot of time talking about the differences in sexual mores and standards in the Sikh community and what is accepted and portrayed in Canadian culture. Although some of the concepts like marriages arranged by parents, (used to be) hard for me to understand, many of the other views, like the prohibition against public displays of affection, reminded me of my own upbringing.

Dalbir: Life history context.

Dalbir came to Canada with her parents when she was around six years old. They came directly to Rostang, and have remained here ever since. There are four people in her nuclear family, Dalbir, her parents, and her brother, who is six years younger than she is. Her brother was born in Canada shortly after the family arrived.

When she was a child in Rostang, Dalbir lived with her extended family of fourteen, which consisted of her own family and her mother's two brothers, their wives and children. She was the oldest of eight children in the joint family. As she says, "They were all six years younger.... There were seven of them, they were all like two years apart and I was the oldest" (March 14th, 2002, p.7). The family unit functioned like a small community, which provided its members with a great deal of strength and support

in immediate practical ways and by inculcating cultural values and norms and enforcing the use of Punjabi as the household language. There was no question that the children would speak Punjabi at home. Dalbir remembers her relatives saying: "If we don't speak Punjabi at home, or our kids don't speak Punjabi, they're going to forget...and what did we gain by coming here?" (March 14th, 2002, p. 8).

Dalbir remembers her life revolving around family activities. All the adults functioned as parents to the youngsters. Dalbir remembers her report cards being passed around for inspection by all the members of the older generation. She recalls how important it was for everyone to be there for each other, especially for the children; "if you bought a house, you always bought it close to your relatives because your parents always thought, "My kid cannot come home to a closed door." You didn't leave your kids alone" (March 14th, 2002, p. 7).

Dalbir's parents are both well-educated. Her mother holds an MA degree from India, and her father attended university in Canada. Although Dalbir remembers money shortages from her childhood, "...we didn't have a lot of money...my parents ...were too busy sending money back home. You had to meet your necessities here and you were always sending one of your pay cheques back home" (March 14th, 2002, p.7); those days are past. Her family now owns and operates a successful medium-sized business.

Dalbir remembers her father as a leader who was active and highly respected in the community. His position meant that the family had an image to live up to, and Dalbir felt a lot of pressure to conform and meet expectations. Dalbir spoke about the weight of those expectations and how too much pressure brought out an inclination in her to rebel. "Sometimes I honestly think I should just cut myself off...I feel that

pressure…sometimes I will either rebel one way or the other, just do something and say "in your faces"" (July 12, 2002, pp. 22, 23).

Meeting expectations centred in large part around conforming to gender roles and educational achievement. Dalbir spoke many times about the emphasis her family placed on getting a university degree, and how strong the support was for all the cousins to get a higher education. The communal nature of the family and community meant that the success or failure of one member reflected on all.

I got the impression that in spite of several major rebellions, Dalbir generally obeyed, and still obeys her parent's wishes. She spoke of her family with great pride and love, and now she herself consciously carries on many of the views and values pressed upon her when she was young. She spoke at length of her hopes and dreams for her daughter, and how she wants her to have the best of both worlds, mainstream Canadian and Indian. She also described the difficulty of deciding what a happy balance would be and how to achieve it. Dalbir wants the comforts and some of the freedom and choice of Canadian society for her daughter, but she also values Indian cultural norms, like formal acknowledgement of age and status relationships and sexual morality. She looks to her religion, to her first language, and to her family and community to guide her and support her in her quest.

Although at age 32, with a beautiful child, a happy marriage, a supportive family, and a good job, Dalbir seems to be secure in her place in mainstream Canadian society, I sense that she, like many others in her situation, experienced turmoil in her life as she grew up. Much of it was likely due to being, as she puts it, "the guinea pigs" (March 14, 2002, p. 5). That is, she was part of a small group of young Indian children

who came to Rostang in the 1970s and grew up here. These young people quickly adapted to mainstream Canadian life and culture. They wanted to fit in, to belong. They learned English; they absorbed the values, ideas, and information they were exposed to at school, with their "White" friends, and on television.

While the younger generation quickly acculturated, however, the older generation did not. They struggled to learn English, and they struggled to come to terms with the new culture. They also had to struggle with loss of status and position. Many of the Indian immigrants at that time were well-educated and came from established families. In Canada, however, neither their educational nor their social credentials were recognised, and they had to start at the bottom. Furthermore, because of their distinctive appearance, many initiated Sikhs (men wearing the beard and turban) were regarded as exotic curiosities at best, and the targets of racism at worst. Consequently, much of what the older generations experienced was either demeaning and/or at odds with what they had grown up with and learned to value. This put them in the difficult position of trying to build a life here and maintaining their language and culture. When they saw their children rapidly assuming the culture they regarded so ambiguously, it was usually a source of great anxiety and alarm. The children were caught in the middle.

Parental response to the situation varied from reactionary over-strictness, where children were forced to follow traditional ways with no allowance for the new reality, to cases where parents attempted to become mainstream, and the heritage language and culture were forgotten or rejected. Dalbir cited an example of a young Sikh man she saw hanging around outside of a 7 Eleven store late one night, wearing a turban and smoking (smoking is strongly prohibited in the Sikh religion). She wondered: "Why is he doing

that? Because he's forced into it (wearing the turban)? And is this how he rebels? By doing the worst possible thing his parents could imagine, drinking and smoking in public at 7 Eleven late at night?" (July 12, 2002, p. 12). Dalbir feels that her family was strict, but not overly so. They were flexible and accepted the necessity of giving up some traditional practices in order to ease adjustment to life in Canada. For example, she says, "my parents never....made us wear Indian clothes; it was always Western clothes that were, you know, decent looking. So you didn't kind of look that different. Yeah, clothes wise you would fit in. Uh, I had a hair cut. So that was another thing" (March 14th, 2002, p. 2). However, it was clear that Dalbir lived, and continues to live in two worlds.

Dalbir spoke several times of her childhood need to fit in and belong to the mainstream culture and the hurt and pain of realising that she never would: "No matter how much English you really speak, you can never be, you can never be basically White...you don't fit in" (March 14th, 2002, p. 8). Dalbir has mixed feelings about her connections to "White" culture and to Indian culture. At various times she identifies more strongly with one or the other, depending on the context in which she finds herself. Sometimes she is concerned that she is "White-washed", or perhaps more importantly, she is concerned that she is being judged by her community as being "White-washed". This usually occurs when she sees herself in relation to more orthodox, less "Canadianised" Sikhs. She worries that she has gone too far in adopting mainstream Canadian values and behaviours, and in doing so, she has betrayed herself, her family, and her community. She states that her major goal is that she and her family uphold the moral and spiritual values of Sikhism. She asserts that she is not concerned with outward appearance (wearing the "5Ks", the *kera* or steel bracelet, the *kangha* or comb, the *kirpan*

or dagger, the *kachhera* or special underwear, and the *kesh* or uncut hair.) as long as there is inner integrity. The outward appearance can come later, after the "inside work" has been done. As she puts it: "I want them to have the faith and the love in the heart" (July 12, 2002, p 16.) Yet it is evident from the anger underlying her words that the whispers about appearances made by the old ladies in the gurdwara bother her deeply. "It's always considered that if your daughter has nice long hair.... "Oh, she's the perfect kid." Who gives a shit what she probably did or does when she's doing it. I think that's a bunch of bullshit. You know?" (July 12th, 2002, p.16).

On the other hand, Dalbir feels that she is far more Indian than her brother and his generation. She says that he is a "whitie"; he can live in the same world at home and in the outside world, whereas she lived (and continues to live?) in two completely different words. She carries the distinction to the next generation and states that she doesn't want to raise her daughter "Canadian". When I asked her what Canadian meant, she replied:

> "Canadian to me still means not speaking the language, not having Indians friend, hanging out with White friends all the time, doing the shopping thing, telling me when she's 13 she's independent. I will not handle that.... Having a boyfriend at 14 and bringing him home. Or 15 or 16.... I will not handle my daughter dressing like a little...you know, the tight pants and the tight little mini skirt, the big fricking mascara." (July 12th , 2002, p.16)

In spite of the turmoil she experienced earlier in her life (or maybe because of it), Dalbir has maintained her language and culture. I believe this has given her a strong sense of identity and source of personal strength that she is now using to make a secure

and dignified place for herself in Canada. Dalbir's religious beliefs and faith have also grounded her firmly to her roots and given a sense of meaning and purpose to her life, although here, too, she sometimes is not sure of the balance between traditional spiritual practices and life in 21st century Canada. "I'm caught between my gurdwara and my *gristhi* (secular/householder) life. And I don't know how to balance the two" (July 12th, 2002, p.22). Dalbir belongs to the congregation of Gurdwara Nanaksar and her family has a weekly turn in providing a meal for the temple inhabitants and any visitors. But Dalbir also visits other gurdwaras and is connected to another Sikh holy man to whom she turns for spiritual advice and guidance.

The conflicting pressures exerted by Dalbir's family and the outside world, combined with her own need for autonomy have led to several very painful episodes in Dalbir's life. The most painful was the divorce that ended her first marriage, an arranged marriage to a man from India. Although it seemed like an unfortunate match with profound personal and cultural differences, Dalbir stuck it out for six years in compliance with cultural and family expectations. The divorce, however, seems to have marked a turning point in her family relationships and in her own sense of self. Divorce is a huge taboo in Indian culture. For a member, especially a female member, of a family the status of Dalbir's to get divorced must have caused huge reverberations in the community. Although it was obviously extremely painful for Dalbir, it was also very traumatic for the entire family. The matter of family pride and honour, or *izzat*, was at stake.

Major changes like divorce, no matter how negatively they are regarded, however, often have positive aspects, as well. In this case, Dalbir was released from a

very unhappy relationship, and she believes that the family survived the divorce and became stronger and more flexible. The parents became more able to accept and adapt to Canadian culture and respond positively to the needs and demands of the younger generation. Dalbir feels that her divorce was a catalyst that forced her parents to accept changing times in order to keep their family relations intact.

> And since I first got married and I got a divorce… my parents have totally changed. … Like nothing in the world could bother them. The don't give a care what other people think….like I said, if this was before, one set of the parents would have died for sure. And yet, you hear that in every household. That they cannot change it, therefore they are willing to accept it, if they want to keep their sons and daughters…they don't want to lose them. (March 19th, 2002, p. 5)

Dalbir works for a major airline as a flight attendant. She thoroughly enjoys her job; she loves to travel and she likes serving people. She has a number of friends at work and she enjoys talking to them, especially joking and comparing cultures. She was delighted to learn that members of other cultural groups, especially White (European) cultures laugh at and stereotype their own cultures. She was surprised to find out that other "White" cultures share some of her ambiguous feelings about the mainstream Anglo-Canadian culture. She feels she has broken barriers at work by helping some of the people she works with feel comfortable with members of different cultural groups, "I was the only East Indian person.… I mean these were ladies with 30 years experience….even they started feeling comfortable with me" (March 19th, 2002, p.10).

Dalbir also feels proud that her ability to speak Punjabi is recognised and valued at work, that her first language and culture are something special.

Dalbir: Narrative context.

Recently, I happened to meet Dalbir's husband, Parmjeet, and he asked me about my research; in particular, he wanted to know if any of the stories were special, if any one stood out in my mind. I was able to honestly answer him that all the stories were special, that each one of them had qualities that added something new and unique to the overall picture, while at the same time, they had all contained a number of themes that seemed to be universal.

Dalbir's story is unique because it contributed a sophisticated level of analysis and reflection to the study. Dalbir intuitively sensed that there were major themes embedded in her experience, and realised that her experience was not isolated or unique. She saw that much of her experience was generalisable to everyone in her community, and she was able to provide anecdotes to highlight that. Her insights and examples allowed me to develop an analysis of the challenges faced by the four generations of East Indian (and likely other) immigrants to Canada. These insights were often delivered in pithy and memorable statements like, "The kids used to be afraid of the parents, but now the parents are afraid of the kids. They don't want to lose them" (March 19th, 2002, p.5), and "No matter how much English you speak, you can never be White" (March 19th, 2002, p. 5). Dalbir also clearly identified a trend where the younger generations, increasing in number and confidence are creating a subculture in Canadian society. They are combining elements from the home culture and the mainstream culture and they are producing something unique, entirely their own.

Dalbir's story is the most accessible to a North American audience. Standing with a foot in each culture, she is skilful at using the cultural language the listener understands. Her story is more North American with its irony and cynicism. It has an edge, a rawness, and a bitterness that is not found in the other accounts. Dalbir also shows the greatest overt understanding of North American humour both in her story telling and in her realisation that the best way to reach out to people was through self-deprecating humour. (She described how she created a comfort zone with the people at work by imitating an Indian accent and making Indian jokes. This encouraged the others to do the same about their cultures and created a more relaxed atmosphere). Dalbit spoke the most bluntly and in the greatest detail about the racism she encountered and of her feelings of being different and not fitting in. She described in the greatest detail the damaging effects of being different to her self-esteem. She talked eloquently about being caught between two worlds and the pain and frustration that entailed. Dalbir's story is the most detailed and personal, and it is a tribute to her courage that she spoke to me so openly and at such length.

Dalbir increasingly took the lead over the course of our interviews. This was particularly the case during the third interview. There had been a large gap of time between the second and third interview and during this time it seemed that she had done a lot of reflection. In the third interview, Dalbir told her story, and I listened.

Dalbir is an excellent story teller. She is very observant, and she has the verbal equivalent of the cartoonist's knack of creating a caricature with a few swift strokes. She uses her voice to dramatise her stories, lowering it to a conspiratorial whisper to create suspense or to deliver a key point. She also has an excellent sense of timing and knows

how to make the listener wait just the right amount of time for the punch line or climactic moment. She is also very funny. She told stories, like the one about the embarrassment involved in watching romantic movies with her whole family that made me laugh till I cried.

Dalbir is well-educated; she has a Bachelor of Commerce degree. Her parents are also well-educated. Her father earned a bachelor's degree in Canada, and her mother obtained a Master of Arts in India. This may help to account for her ability to analyse her observations and experiences and synthesise her thoughts as well as she does.

Dalbir, like Jaspreet, speaks English like a native speaker although she, too, came to Canada when she was about six years old. I noticed that she used some of the latest North American slang and mannerisms in her speech (for example the expression "talk to the hand" (March 14th, 2002, p.23) which means "I'm not going to listen to you"). However, she uses Indo-English expressions, as well (for example: "boyfriend-making and girlfriend-making" (March 19th, 2002 p. 18)). As well, Dalbir has the interesting and amusing habit of speaking with a strong Indian accent when she quotes her parents or other elders. Like Jaspreet, she used a few non-standard word combinations ("didn't prefer it" (July 12th, 2002, p. 9) instead of "didn't like it"; "more acceptable to" (July 12th, 2002, p. 4) instead of "more accepting of"; and "felt very much pride" (March 14th, 2002, p. 21) instead of "felt a lot of pride."

Dalbir's Story: Always Caught Between Two Worlds

I was born in India, came when I was five and half, six years old, so I didn't know very much language at all. Before I started school, mom taught me the ABC's at home. She didn't want me to sit there not knowing what was going on. She didn't speak English in the same sense as everyone else, but she knew how to read English. She had her M.A. from there. So, she got me some books, just like C for cat and D for dog. My mom would say, "C is for cat; say cat." Of course she'd say it in the Indian way, "*ghut*" and you'd go to school and your teacher would be "caat". It was like having a tutor at home 'cause you'd learn your lesson in the morning and in the evening, you'd have to recite it back to her. That's how you learned how to spell all your vegetables before you got to school, and how you had the best handwriting and printing.

She'd make me watch Sesame Street or cartoons so that I would pick it up. I remember my mom saying "see how they say it?" So when I went to grade 1, I knew my ABCs. I knew my 1, 2 ,3s up to 100 and I knew the first basic couple of words. But that was it.

All I can remember from school is that it was different because most of the kids knew what was going on and you really didn't. The teacher had to physically show you things, like how to put your chair up. When I first started they would just teach you with kindness. At that point you didn't even understand words. It was a lot nicer when they gave you a pat on the shoulder or a smile. 'Cause you understood that a lot more than you understood somebody saying "oh you did an excellent job, blah, blah, blah…." I used to get a lot of kisses from the teacher. I think it was because if you excelled at something, like printing, it was encouragement from them.

I was six years when I started school, so I didn't go to kindergarten. I was just thrown into grade one. I do remember the guidance counsellors. That part I remembered, where they would take you away from the rest of the class for an hour. And she'd concentrate on speaking with you. Maybe that was the form of ESL back then. That, and there used to be a couple of us at a table and she'd make you read and then I guess she'd correct your pronunciation. So you'd do that for like an hour a day with another teacher while the rest of the class went on to do something else.

As far as I can remember, I was the only kid in my class that didn't speak English, nobody else in the whole neighbourhood really at all. It was tough being the only East Indian kid. In the whole school there were only three of us. Lots of kids called you names. They didn't know you were Indian. It was more "Paki", 'cause they associated with Pakistan. And the kids would tell you swear words. You stood out, I mean, out of the whole school, from grade 1 to 6, you're almost the only brown person there. Of course you're going to stand out. It really knocked down your self-esteem. You always thought twice before you said something. And you always kind of looked over your shoulder. It was like, subconsciously, you knew you didn't really fit in. You tried, but it was always there. Your self-esteem was very low. It wasn't low in the sense that you weren't doing well in school. You did good in school, but it was low in the sense that you weren't that eager to participate because you were afraid of what somebody might say. You held yourself back, especially from social stuff, like joining drama club or sports and stuff. The negative point about that, though, was it made everybody else think you weren't good enough.

I do thank my parents because I had a haircut, I didn't go to school with pigtails or anything. That kind of helped me blend in. My parents never made us wear Indian clothes; it was always Western clothes that were, you know, decent looking. So you didn't look that different. Clothes-wise you would fit in. That kind of helped. I do remember there was one boy from our school, and I think he had a harder time than I did. He had a *joora* (long hair in a topknot) and he had a *patka* (small head covering, like a turban).

My parents never discouraged us from eating meat, like sandwich meat or whatever. My mom would make us any kind of sandwich, but I think it was my own personal preference that I didn't want it.

Another thing was I remember, our parents were not very comfortable with letting us join after school sports. They wanted us to come home, 'cause that's what the culture was. They weren't used to this idea of after school activities. Like, school is finished, so what's this after school stuff? So we never really joined because you knew you couldn't. You had to ask your parents for everything, like if you wanted to go out with your friends, if you wanted to go shopping or out to movies, and you always knew the answer was "no". You did those kinds of things when you reached 19, 20. You didn't just go to the mall when you were 12 by yourself, 'cause for them, you weren't grown up. You were still a child until you were 21, 22. So that kept you separate. I had White friends in school, but we weren't allowed to go over to their house. I mean we played with them outside. But it wasn't like you went to a sleep-over to your White friends' house. You were always caught between two worlds and you still are.

You always went everywhere with your mother or with your relatives, even if they were your extended relatives, 'cause everything was so family-oriented and family based. As far as the community was concerned, my dad didn't want to be involved in community politics, but he always kind of was. So we had a lot of community people at home, too. So my parents had this image to live up to.

We all used to live together in one big house. It was my mom and dad, my mom's two brothers, their wives, their kids and my brother, 13, 14 of us in one side-by-side. So when the kids were all born, there were seven of them and they were all two years apart, it used to be called the "baby house". I was the oldest; they were all six years younger. My parents didn't have a lot of money. They were busy sending money back home.

I remember when we got our own VCR. It was a cause for celebration. Everybody came over, or every weekend somebody would want to borrow it. I think we used to get together more than we do now. And every Sunday was gurdwara. I think it was a lot different times now than it was then. I think kids now say more what they want, and the parents are more open to hearing it. Back then the parents wouldn't understand it.

I think every parent decided to preserve Punjabi in the home. I don't think it was just one parent. I think all the aunties and uncles and every other Tom, Dick and Joe-Harry that you met at the gurdwara decided consciously that if we don't speak Punjabi at home, or if our kids don't speak Punjabi, they're going to forget. You know? And then "What did we gain by coming here?" They're going to forget the language, they're going to forget our food, they're going to forget our traditional things. They're going to forget

our values, like, nice girls don't stay out late, you know? I mean, when somebody came to your house who was East Indian, you always tried to wear Indian clothes. Or when you went to some Indian thing, you always wore Indian clothes. You didn't wear makeup. That's what we were used to and that's what they were trying to instil in you. You always said, "*Sat shri akal*". If it was an Indian person calling on the phone or you were calling their house, you'd say, *"Sat shri akal"* after you said hello. You don't just say, "hello, is so and so home?" That was a big thing.

My dad knew English, but he would never speak English at home, and if we asked a question in English, it was either he translated it into Punjabi or he answered you back in Punjabi. We always got told, "What? You can't talk in Punjabi?" It was majorly important for them, really, really majorly important for them that we learn our language. That was the bottom line. There were no "ifs" or "buts". I guess another reason the parents wanted you to learn is that they didn't have a good command of the English language themselves.

When my dad knew we could speak Punjabi, it didn't matter. Like now, me and my brother, we'll speak English most of the time. It's a broken English. It'll be two words of this and Punjabi words thrown in. Like when we came. My uncle dropped us off, and I said to my cousin who is in grade 10: "oh, you didn't *burf saaf* out of your boot. You know, like, "What! You didn't take the snow off your boots and you just sat in the car!"

You know? I don't think it was the language that held a person back. I think it's more your skin colour. Like, I honestly think languages can be learned. Skin colour can't be changed. And people are going to judge you by what they see, not by what

you're speaking. That's going to come after. It's your first appearance. I have uncles and they're very fair-skinned. One of them went to school here. My dad went to school here. They put themselves through university and stuff like that. He (uncle), well, he worked on the language so well that basically he doesn't have a bit of an accent. So when he speaks, people look at him, they look at his skin colour, and they think, "Is he East Indian, or is he not?" So it makes a big difference. But first it is your skin colour. My dad got away with it because my dad never had a beard, and he was always very fair-skinned himself. He looked different, but you had to kind of look twice. And I guess it made a big difference with your schooling, in the sense that they put themselves through university and their accent was reduced, and their perception of things had changed. So that made a big difference to their thinking and to the White person's thinking. I mean, they could have been educated from back home, could have had MAs, but that doesn't count. It had to be here. If they were educated here, they could speak in fluent sentences without stuttering.

When I was in high school, there were more East Indian people around. And if you spoke in your own language...the teachers ... it made them feel self-conscious. Even some of the kids, I don't think they knew how to react. I guess they didn't feel confident when you spoke your language 'cause they thought you were talking about them. You know? I guess sometimes when one is so busy making fun of the other person, it's in the back of their mind that, "I did this, so maybe that person is doing this to me." So if you were speaking your language, people would automatically assume you were making fun of them. So it was like getting a taste of your own medicine back. They didn't prefer it. But if you did speak your own language, they always looked at

you. But the biggest thing I learned was that if you laugh at yourself, then they (White people) become more comfortable. With my own (White) friends I would make fun of the accent that we would speak English in. And I think that really opened up a lot of things. You know, I would speak English to them in the way East Indian people would speak, and it became a comfort zone. So I figured if you can laugh at it yourself, then the other people will laugh, too.

We used Punjabi when we wanted to say something about someone or we wanted to tell something that happened that you just can't describe in English. Like the sense of humour is different. The jokes weren't the same. I remember watching television and my grandma or my mom would say, "What's so funny and why are they making those stupid faces?" Whereas we would think that was funny because that was what we were getting accustomed to.

When you got to high school, a lot of the immigrants came by then. They had done grade 10 in India and they would be placed in grade 10 here. And you were always a little reluctant to speak with them, because what if a White person heard you? Sounding different! So you were kind of always embarrassed of them. Until it came to the point where the teachers might take you out of class so you could go help this person understand something. Then it became a nicer thing. So you always had to have some older person telling you it was okay. But for you to go up to them individually, you always kind of felt like… But as they became more, you didn't care. That's enough of this nonsense; you were no longer embarrassed.

The other time you really didn't want to speak your language was when you were with your parents. You didn't want to sound to be different. You'd try to speak

English. When you had to explain something to your parents, it's like, "What are they (White people) going to think?" You didn't want to go with your parents if they wore a *suit* (Punjabi woman's traditional dress) or your dad had a turban. Before, you always wore Western clothes, even if you didn't want to. You were always so aware of your surroundings. My parents would say, "What's your problem?" or "What are you embarrassed about?" but I guess you were a kid and it was different. Now I couldn't care less. I'll go shopping myself in a suit. And my cousins who are only in grade 5/6 will do the same thing. Their attitude is "Who the Hell cares?" You know, kids will talk in their own language (Punjabi) wherever. It's kind of become a thing of pride: "We don't care if you don't understand it. I'm trying to explain something to my mom or my grandmother, so go away."

My youngest cousin goes to Punjabi school in the neighbourhood here. It's after school and it's every day or every second day, and they take kids from grade one or kindergarten, 'till grade six or seven. They teach both reading and writing. So today, when I went over there, she had a Punjabi *owra, awra* (an alphabet book). And it's not like somebody is making her do it. I think it's because she wants to do it now. And it's so funny because one of my cousins who I took her to play with, she doesn't know how to yet. She wants her in-laws to teach her daughter. So I guess now it's kind of become a thing of pride that it's nice to know.

I, now, have no hesitation about speaking it (Punjabi) anywhere, and what I think has really brought about it more is being able to speak it on the flights with six hundred passengers sitting on this big plane, and you doing your announcements. Now I really feel proud. When I first started working at the bank, some of the managers would come

to me because I could speak Punjabi, too. And I remember in grade…it must have been grade 9 or 10, we did *gida*, it's like a Punjabi dance, in front of our school. And that really changed everything for me personally. I very much felt pride. We also had two East Indian teachers teaching in the school. So that was a big thing. So when the kids had respect for them, it was different. I think another thing that made me really proud was university. I took Hindi in university, and it was a White professor who taught us Hindi. I remember the first time I went to Hindi class and there was 15 of us sitting there, some White people and some East Indian people and this *gora* (White man) walks up and he starts talking. We couldn't believe it! I think we all just kind of looked at his face….are the words actually coming out of this person's mouth? He had no accent, nothing. We were shocked. It was nice that somebody actually went and took the time to learn it and so well that he taught in university. It was really, really a shocker. But it was really nice. And it was even nicer afterwards to see other people taking it.

Our Punjabi is pure because the people we learned it from were our grandparents, and they spoke the typical village Punjabi. So our Punjabi is more pure than if you went to a household in Delhi. Maybe if you went to the village area, they would speak, but the more city India, they don't. So actually, it's kind of funny, 'cause all those city guys, city kids in India, they've got a trend of speaking English and Hindi. They look at us like we're from the village.

I learned to read Punjabi because I was so interested in the movie gossip that I didn't want my mother reading the newspaper to me anymore. I wanted to read it myself just in case she missed out some gossip that I wanted to read about, about an actor or something. That was my motivation. And the fact that I used to do *path* and I didn't

know how to read it until I memorised it from a tape. And then I kind of figured that maybe I should because there were other *paths* that were longer and I couldn't memorise them. Like I memorised *Japji Sahib*. I would sit there with a *gutka* (prayer book) not knowing, and I'd listen to a tape and think, "Oh! That's what this word is, that's what this word is." And I'd do the same thing for *Rahiras*. If you told me to write it, I don't think I still remember the alphabet. Yet if you give me a piece of paper, I can read it.

Being a parent now, with my daughter, I think I would like my daughter to have the best of both worlds. I remember when we were growing up, our parents always said, "Look how polite they (White people) are." You know, with Western culture you give them even a small piece and they'll say "thank you". So that was a big thing. The parents always encouraged you to be like that. Or with cleanliness, like, if somebody came to your house, cleaning your house, or when you cooked, you sprayed something. Stuff they kind of tended to ignore before. That's something that's still in you, that fear that you're going to be different.

Our parents wanted the politeness, the education standard, everything like that, but not the going out, not the boyfriend-making, the girlfriend making, and not the public kissing and holding hands. It was funny when we used to watch television. When we used to watch Hindi movies, you know in a Hindi movie they'll show their faces so it looks like they're kissing but it's just photography. Or when they were showing two people hugging, they'd have the birds singing and the flower pictures, you know? And everybody would kind of like..... You would just fast forward it. When you came to a Canadian movie, you just couldn't watch it with your parents. I remember my dad would say, "Turn that shit off!" You know? I mean, you sit there and.... "TURN IT OFF! Is

this what you learned?" So you prayed, "Don't kiss her. Please don't kiss her!" 'Cause you wanted to keep watching the damn show. And the East Indian thing is the whole fricking family sits, right? And of course, if there's this love scene going, somebody is going to make some smart-assed comment somewhere. And you know it's coming, or you know what? We used to time it because the kids had it pretty good. Even now, the kids know. We all knew it. They're getting too close! And suddenly everybody would run for the bathroom. And in our house, 'cause there was seven of us, we'd ALL run for the bathroom. Or we'd all go, "stop hitting me!" Even if the other person wasn't hitting.

If you go to an Indian (wedding) reception, they clink glasses because it's a White thing to do, but you won't see the guy bend down and give her a big kiss on the lips. He might give her a little peck on the cheek and that's it. But mouth to mouth! Somebody would probably get up and slap him! To be perfectly honest, I think the guy has to be really stupid, packed in a hall with 400 East Indian people and wanting to kiss the girl on the lips, even if it's his wife. That's calling for abuse from her dad. One of my husband's friends got married last year. We went to the engagement. It was a nice engagement. The girl's father said to him, "You dance with my daughter too close, and I'll beat the shit out of you outside."

I don't think the Indian culture appreciates a girl going from one guy to the next just to get to know the guy. Nowadays, parents are a little bit lenient, and they'll say, "Okay, let them get to know each other (before marriage)." They mean personality; they don't mean physically. But if she decided, "Oh, I'm going to get to know him for two months and I don't like him after four months, six months, and I'm going to get to know

the next guy"; the concept just doesn't work. You know? I personally don't think that's a bad value, I don't. I honestly would like to instil that in my daughter.

Education is a big thing in our family. That's all I ever heard in my life, "You have to get a good education. You will not be getting paid minimum wage. We didn't come to this country to work our ass off so you could work at McDonalds." There was no damn way that any child from my family would not go to university. You didn't, you had another thing coming. From grade 1, grade 2, you had to get good grades. My fricking report card went from my parents to my uncles! And it wasn't just me, my brother, all my cousins. My uncle did not talk to one of his daughters for two years because she decided she was going to drop some courses and work for a while. I've got my Commerce degree and my uncle and my parents will still say, "we'll pay for you to get an M. B. A., if you want. We'll look after your kid." And the other big thing I remember from my mom's point of view was, "I don't want you dependent on any man." That was a big thing with my parents and my uncles, especially for the girls. "We don't want you depending on some Tom, Joe and Dick-Harry when you get married. Or he passes away and you sit there." I ended up going to university because it was my dad's thing, and I thought, "Oh, well. If I have the opportunity, I'll go." I remember in my family, my uncles they all tell their kids, "We'll sell the shirt off our back for you to get and education, but if you think you're going to waste my money and fuck around in school, the door's open, get the Hell out."

I think every East Indian parent back then had it that you had to be a doctor. If your son's a doctor, oh my God, it's like being the president. But now I think they're accepting other degrees. And they don't believe in this bullshit of BA, BSc. What the

frick is that? Any idiot can get a BA. The elders, they'll just be like, "talk to the hand; come to me when you're serious."

To me, education is freedom. Freedom from not having to listen to my parents. In the sense that, "No, you can't do this, you can't do that." If you were educated, it's like, "Oh, that's okay, she can do this, she's now working" or "She's done her stuff." Whereas before, they would think twice. That's a point of respect. If your son or daughter is educated, your parents will gain respect. "So-and-so's daughter has a good job", or they've done a good job of raising them.

My brother's generation is totally different from our own generation. For them, being outside and being at home is the same. Whereas, we were expected to act a certain way at home, and outside we acted totally different. We lived totally in two worlds, yet we didn't fit into either world, so we just kind of went along with both of them. For them (brother's generation), those two worlds have kind of come together. Another difference between my generation and my brother's generation is that they cared about the grandparents, but they were buffered from them by my generation and by my parents. They didn't have to please them, too. Whereas with us, we always had to please our parents' parents as well.

My brother likes to think he has the best of two worlds. Everybody from his generation has an idea of where they are and what they want and stuff. They'll tell their parents more freely that, "No, I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to do that." It's easier for them to say, "We want to do this", or "We want to that" and the parents are more acceptable (sic) to hearing it. Back then the parents wouldn't have understood it.

Before the kids were scared of their parents, now the parents are scared of the kids. They don't want to lose them.

There's more of them (Indo-Canadian youth) out there, so socially, outside the home it's easier. Before it would have been you in a group of like three, four White friends. Now, I look at my cousins. They don't feel the importance that they need to have a White friend. When I go to University, I see groups of East Indian girls sitting together, or even the Filipino girls…nobody cares. They have their own thing. Today's youth are a lot prouder of their culture and of their language than they were when we were kids. And like I said, the main reason being is that there's more of them out there. The notion, "I don't care what somebody else thinks" is a lot more stronger because they don't need the place, they don't have the need to fit in. It's more the attitude, "You want to hang out with us? Great. You don't? Good-bye. We don't need you. If I don't have White friends, I can find other friends." They'll even teach the White person a thing or two.

They get a little kick out of the traditional ways. As much as they say, "Oh my God, that looks so stupid!" they enjoy it as well. Like when you go to a social function that the older generation has been doing with their little rituals that they do at a wedding or something. I have not seen any East Indian kid of my brother's generation fight it. They like it. They might complain about it, butthey don't want that part to be missed out on their own social thing. I see it all the time. My cousin is getting engaged next month, and my brother, he'll laugh at somebody else's engagement, "That's so stupid! She fed him four times! That's ridiculous!" But when it comes to their own, they don't want to miss out on it. They want the bridal shower, and they want the ladies *sangeet* (evening of

music and dancing), too. They want a bit of everything combined into a big thing. Deep, deep down, as much as my brother's friends like to think they're Canadian, I think they know pretty well that they're East Indian. They realise that they're Canadian first, but when it comes to their values, they're still Indian.

They're always learning it (Indian culture), too. I don't think you ever really stop. There's so many more East Indian people that are coming fresh off the plane and something is always a little different. You've always got to ask "Why are they doing this?" The movies and fashions (from India) have changed, too. But the biggest thing you notice is in the movies. Totally different subject matter. It's more open to the problems of society. But they always end happily ever after.

I don't want my daughter being Canadian...not speaking the language, not having Indian friends, hanging out with White friends all the time, doing the shopping thing, telling me when she's 13 she's independent, having a boyfriend at 14 and bringing him home. I want my daughter to learn my language, to know my culture. I want her to know the singing, the dancing parts, the religious things. I want her to respect God. I want her to know that when there's *akhand path*, this is the proper way of behaving. My biggest reason for moving here (a predominantly Sikh neighbourhood) is I want my daughter to be in this Indian culture. I want her to know the wrong things that happen in it, and I want her to know the right things that happen in it. I want her going to those Indian parties and I want her dancing to that Indian music. I want her to know when we do *langar*, this is how we do *langar*. I want her to know the community, 'cause when she gets married, that's where she'll have to live. That's the normal everyday peoples' life. And what we learn out of it is that without your community and without your people,

without your socialisation, you can't do it. You can't do it as one individual. I don't care if she cuts her hair. I don't care if she says, "I'm not going to wear this *kera*" because I personally believe that will truly come when she's ready. I'm not out for the appearance. I want her to have the faith and love in her heart.

Sharanjeet: Introduction

Sharanjeet: Interview context.

I conducted only one interview with Sharanjeet although I had planned to do at least one more. I set a date and went to the house with my recording materials, but when the time came, the interview did not happen. I ended up visiting with the family instead. Nothing was ever said directly about cancelling or postponing the interview, but I had a strong sense that the interview would not have been appropriate at that time, so I did not pursue it. I can only speculate why this was so. I think Sharanjeet felt that the one interview was enough. I assume that he felt he had done his duty. I assume he was not interested in becoming further involved in a process he did not really understand. I could sense his unwillingness to continue the interview process, and had no desire to push him. I appreciate the fact that he did participate at all.

It seems that Sharanjeet's ambiguity about being interviewed and his method of dealing with the interview is analogous to his situation and his self-assessment of embodying a 50/50 mixture of both Eastern and Western cultures. During our conversation, Sharanjeet stated several times that he felt both English and Punjabi were his first languages, and that he belonged to both cultures. I presume that he participated in the interview out of an Indian sense of duty because his father, Jaswant, had asked him to do so. However, he participated with limited enthusiasm. A young "White" adult might have refused to participate without feeling he had caused any negative reflection on his family. I do not think Sharanjeet would have considered refusing directly. His respect for his father determined that he must carry out his father's wishes, especially if his father's reputation could somehow be involved. If Sharanjeet had refused to

participate in the interview, it might have indicated that his father did not have authority over him, or that the family was not united in purpose. This would have diminished his father's *izzat,* or sense of dignity. So Sharanjeet participated in the one interview, politely and dutifully. His family and I recognised and appreciated his co-operation and respected his disinclination to repeat the experience.

At the time, I only presumed this is what happened. At the time, it would not have been appropriate to ask directly, so I did not. Fortunately, I had an opportunity to ask Sharanjeet about his feelings later when I asked him for feedback on a first draft of his story. He indicated that he was happy with the resulting work. He said that initially had not really understood the nature of the interview because this type of research was new for him, and that had been the reason for his hesitation, but now that he has seen the result he thought the story was "neat". I now think he might have been hesitant to participate at that time of the second interview because his and my families were present.

This anecdote illustrates an example of cultural differences that some things that would be addressed directly in "White" Canadian culture, are unspoken in Indian or Indo-Canadian culture, and vice versa. I often used to feel bewildered and off-balance by these differences, but over time I have learned to accept them and assume the best. Sometimes I will describe a situation to trusted friends in order to gain their perspective. It is through these insights and my own growing repertoire of experience that I make assumptions.

When Sharanjeet talked about his family in the interview, it was always with respect and admiration. When he referred to his parents, I never felt any undercurrent of resentment or condescension that often marks the utterances of young "White" adults

who are struggling to establish a separate sense of identity. However, Sharanjeet's views on many other matters spoke to his "Canadian" values. For example, Sharanjeet attested that it did not matter to him whether his family spoke English or Punjabi at home. He said, "I don't care about it. What ever makes them happy" (November 5, 2002, p. 23). He also indicated that he would not try to force his views on his future family. He intends to allow his children themselves to choose whether or not to maintain Punjabi language and culture. He said, "You can't really force them…I don't really believe in that. If they have an interest for that, go ahead, go do it. It's your life" (November 5, 2002, p. 24).

Although Sharanjeet often spoke in understatement, sometimes bordering on "attitude", ultimately, a gentle and sensitive side of him always seemed to emerge, as in this exchange about difficulties he had experienced because he was of a minority language and cultural background:

Sharanjeet: I ended up getting in a fight with him.

A: About language?

Sharanjeet: Yeah, like language, sort of, you know, ignorance toward other cultures and stuff.

A: What happened?

Sharanjeet: I took care of it.

A You fought him?

Sharanjeet: Yeah, I got in a fight with him. We were friends after that, though. (November 5, 2002, p. 20)

It seems that although Sharanjeet chose to fight with someone, they ended up being friends, and that was important to him. His terse explanation of the situation, "I took care of it" seems particularly Western.

I sensed Sharanjeet was a little shy and self-conscious. He expressed these feelings in typical North American style, through his short, guarded and often offhand answers,

A: At home, did you have books?

Sharanjeet: Oh, the odd book here and there.

A: Did people know you could speak Punjabi?

Sharanjeet: I don't know. No one brought it up.

(November 5, 2002, p. 11)

Overall, I think that our one interview captured many of the salient points of Sharanjeet's experience. It certainly left me with a much better picture of the total family dynamic and of the process of acculturation that has occurred in the family within two generations. Sharanjeet's experience adds an important dimension to the total family picture. I will do my best to do justice to his story with the information that I have.

When I initially approached Sharanjeet about doing an interview with him, I sensed a mixture of curiosity and resistance. He seemed to relax somewhat when I described the purpose of the interview, and explained that there were no right or wrong answers, that I only wanted to ask him about his life experience and language use. Later, as I reviewed the transcript, I was interested to note that his initial answers were somewhat terse, short phrases or even single words. Later in the interview, his responses

became more voluble; they expanded to paragraphs. This was especially the case when we were discussing the loves of his life: music and entertainment.

I interviewed Sharanjeet on a weekday afternoon. I had to knock on the door several times, with increasing force, before he heard me. I had phoned to remind him before I came, so he would expect me. I had a fleeting thought that he had changed his mind about being interviewed and had gone out to avoid it. It turned out that he had not heard me because he was upstairs in his room working on the computer. I heard him leaping down the stairs to open the door when he finally did hear me. He greeted me with a big, friendly smile. Sharanjeet is in his early twenties. He is tall and slim and has the good looks that characterise his family. He has hazel eyes, short, dark brown hair and a very short beard worn in "Goth" style. His ears are pierced and he often wears jewelled stud earrings. On that day he was wearing jeans and a T-shirt.

At present, Sharanjeet is not studying or working. The fact that he has not defined a future educational or career path dismays and worries his parents, Jaswant and Balbir. He is under pressure to set concrete goals for himself. Although he has expressed various interests: architecture, management, business and real estate, none of them has motivated him for long. It has always been music and the entertainment world that has sustained his interest. He explained how he has been interested in music his whole life, and has known that he wanted to be involved in the entertainment industry since he was twelve or thirteen. Vocals are his speciality and he is currently collaborating on an album with a cousin in England. He occasionally performs at public or private functions around the province. He explained that he sings a variety of musical styles, "I mix everything. In my album I've got reggae stuff with Indian ragas in it. I'm doing an English track on

mine, because I don't want to stick with just one thing. I'd like to explore" (November 5, 2002, p. 17). I think that Sharanjeet derives a great deal of self-esteem from his skill as a musician. Much of his self-image and identity are entwined with his involvement in the music industry and his goal of producing his own album. His ability to perform in Punjabi adds something unique and exotic to his image. This connection with his roots and his special musical gift provide much of his motivation to maintain his first language and some elements of his culture.

On several occasions, Jaswant had asked me to talk with Sharanjeet about educational possibilities and to encourage him to enter a program of studies. The first time I agreed to do so, I had not realised that the initiative came only from the parents. When I arrived, armed with university and college calendars and registrations guides, Sharanjeet went along with my efforts politely, but little with enthusiasm. I soon realised that he was not interested in my help and that the subject was touchy, likely even painful, for him. I imagine he thought the interview might be connected with another effort to steer him toward some educational plan or program. This may well be why he initially had some hesitation about participating in it.

This situation, where parents' and children's expectations differ, highlights a predicament that exists in many Indo-Canadian families. Traditional Indian society is patriarchal and the extended family lives conjointly. For this system to work, young people are socialised to remain dependent on the parents and subservient to their authority. Consequently, Indian children are not given the same freedom and choices that Canadian children are. Indian parents make decisions for their children (often including which occupation they will enter and whom they will marry), and the children defer to

their parent's authority, even when they are fully adult and their deference becomes a formality. The family stays together, with the sons bringing their wives home to live with their parents. The family functions as a unit, and individual needs are forfeited for the collective good. Parents make great sacrifices for their children, but then expect to be cared for by them when they get old.

Canadian children of European descent are socialised to become independent. For this system to work, young people must learn to make decisions for themselves. They are offered choices and autonomy from the time they are very young. Parents foresee the time when their children will be living separately from them and their parental responsibility will be complete. Euro-Canadian parents also make sacrifices for their children, but they see the children as much more responsible for the consequences of their actions.

When young Indo-Canadians, like Sharanjeet are born and grow up here, they operate within two sets of cultural expectations, those of their parents and those of the society around them. Their lives are balancing acts between the two. Different individuals find balance points at different parts of the continuum. The gap between the young people's balance point and their parents' expectations can be a source of friction and conflict in the family. A major source of unhappiness derives from the process of young people struggling to achieve independence and, in some cases, going to live on their own.

I was aware of feeling very middle-aged when I interviewed Sharanjeet. I think it was the dynamic of the relationship that caused the feeling, because I am not usually aware of age differences when dealing with people. I have friends who are in their 50s

and 60s and friends who are in their late 20s and early 30s, as well as friends who are my own age, and I generally feel much in common with all of them. I rarely feel separate from people because of age differences. The times that I do feel a generation gap are usually with my own children, and that is because my responsibilities as a parent create the barriers. I also think this type of generation gap is a Western phenomenon, where teenaged children, in their struggle to become independent, have to diminish their parents in order to separate from them. I know that my children seem to derive a great deal of pleasure from my ignorance of pop culture and current slang, and my seeming unawareness of the hard, cold realities of the "real world". They need to think they know so much more than I do about current realities. Otherwise, how could they ever cease to need me, and dare to strike out on their own? How could they become self-sufficient individuals? They need to see me as out of touch and old fashioned because our culture demands it. In the Indian culture, where children are not encouraged to become independent as they are here, respect for elders is a universal, unquestioned virtue. I wonder if the gap I felt with Sharanjeet was due to how Sharanjeet perceived me. Did he perceive me in the same way that my children perceive me? Was I being assigned to a special category reserved for out of touch elderlies? If so, it may speak to how closely associated Sharanjeet is with "White culture".

This question came to mind, because I had the same sense of being out of touch at a later date when my family was visiting his. I sat in the living room with my children and Sharanjeet, while my husband and Jaswant discussed house renovations in another room. I was very pleased by how well Sharanjeet, and my son, Chris, and daughter, Julia got along, by how much they had in common and how much they had to talk about.

There was a spread of eight to 10 years between them but I could feel no great sense of gap or difference. The times when I intervened in the conversation to ask questions or make a comment, I felt like a politely tolerated outsider. It was typical of how young Canadian adults treat the senior generation.

Sharanjeet and I sat on the floor in the living room for the interview. It was the same room, and we sat in the same manner I had when I had recently interviewed his mother, Balbir. Once again, I put the tape recorder on the table between us. No one else was there at the time, which I had hoped would allow Sharanjeet to speak more freely. At first, Sharanjeet seemed a little nervous, but he did his best to be gracious and co-operative. Initially, it was a little difficult to draw full answers from him. I found myself wondering how I would be able to weave a story from his laconic responses. I rephrased and paraphrased his answers in order to make sure I understood properly and to try to draw more information. Sometimes I found myself leading him by paraphrasing back a longer, more detailed answer than he had originally given me in the first place.

A: What about Canadian culture, what do you like? What is important to you?

Sharanjeet: What's important to me? I don't know about important, but what I like is everything out of it. You know, it gives you that sort of frame of mind where you can be just open about whatever. That "I don't care" attitude, kind of thing, whatever you need to vent, you can vent.

A: So there's more freedom for you to be an individual?

Sharanjeet: Individual expressions, yes. That's a big part of it. There's also hockey.

A Hockey, okay, sports.

Sharanjeet: Because that's what I grew up with.

A So it kind of sounds like you're taking Canadian culture for granted in that it's yours, but there are strong elements of Indian culture that you want to keep, and that are important for you. You can tell me if I'm right or not, but it seems like you feel your base is within Canadian culture, but within that there are big parts of Indian culture.

(November 5, 2002, p. 7)

Sharanjeet did not provide thoughtful, lengthy answers to my questions. For example, when I asked him how much time each day he spends speaking Punjabi, he simply answered, "Depends who I see" (November 5, 2002). However, his answers were sincere and well-intentioned, and they provide an interesting insight into the different points of view and sense of self-identity contained within one family. They also illustrate the process of acculturation, how it occurs in a family in two generations. The contrast is very clear when Sharanjeet's story is compared with his parent's.

The telephone rang several times during our conversation. Twice it was the fax machine. The other time it was a call for Sharanjeet. It was his father. It was interesting to note that although he spoke English to his dad, his English changed, and he assumed a strong Punjabi accent. When I mentioned the change of speech, he was surprised. He had not realised that his manner of speech changed when he was talking to his parents. I have noticed this phenomenon occurring with other young people in the Sikh community.

During the interview, it became apparent that Sharanjeet did not have strong feelings (or was unwilling to express any strong feelings) about language maintenance.

His motivations for maintaining the language are mainly instrumental. He can understand and speak Punjabi well, and he continues to learn the language because he likes to sing in Punjabi. As a result of this musical connection, Sharanjeet wants to know the correct pronunciation and the breadth and depth of meaning of the words he uses. His ability to sing in Punjabi also gives him a cachet in the growing sphere of world music.

Sharanjeet also wants to maintain connections with his family, particularly the older members. He knows Punjabi is necessary to communicate with many of his elderly relatives, and he also knows the fact that he has maintained the language endears him to them. He is aware of the pride and happiness that his ability with his mother tongue brings his parents. He feels that his facility with Punjabi reflects on his parents and enhances their place in the community. As he points out, "... it shines on them, right? And they're happy as well that I'm sticking to the Indian ways a little bit...They know they did their job and that's basically it" (November 5, 2002, p.13).

I feel that Sharanjeet's input adds the important perspective of a young, Canadian-born Indo-Canadian, who, while having maintained the language himself, has let go of many other aspects of his culture and background. It indicates the connection between language and culture, and language and self-identity. It illustrates a case where the language has been maintained, but many elements of the culture have not. It highlights another motivation for keeping the mother tongue-- to create identity and self-esteem by using the mother tongue to make music. It demonstrates an example of how Indo-Canadian young people are creating their own subculture that combines aspects of traditional culture and adopted culture.

Our interview lasted about 45 minutes. Once we got started, the time went quickly. I was interested in and intrigued by some of Sharanjeet's answers. They were different from the observations and opinions I had encountered in previous interviews. They were much more typical of mainstream Canadian culture than Indo-Canadian culture. They characterised thinking that valued independent thought, critical analysis and individualism.

Sharanjeet: Life history context.

Sharanjeet is the youngest and the only child in his family to have been born in Canada. He is about nine years younger than Jaspreet, his nearest sibling. He spent his pre-school years in the same neighbourhood that he currently lives in, although he remembers spending "a year or two" in India during that time. When he was five or six, the family moved to another part of south Rostang, a middle-class, professional neighbourhood, where he went to school. He has also spent time, off and on, in England in the last few years, with his aunt and her family. His English cousin is a musician, and the two of them are collaborating on a CD that combines a variety of musical styles, like rap, fusion, hip-hop and reggae with modern and classical Punjabi music.

Sharanjeet considers English as his first language, although he is fluent in both English and Punjabi. He remembered sometimes speaking Punjabi with his parents, but stated that he would often use English when addressing them. He always spoke Punjabi with his maternal grandparents who lived with the family in Canada for a number of years when he was little. His grandparents did not speak any English. They helped look after him while his parents worked, and returned to India when he was eight or nine.

Sharanjeet said he spoke English with his brother and sister. Sharanjeet did not recall there being any rules regarding the use of Punjabi in the home. He remembered having freedom to use whichever language he chose.

Sharanjeet's recollection of language use in the home in his childhood is quite different from Jaspreet's memories. Sharanjeet recalls a relaxed atmosphere where both English and Punjabi were used. He did not remember any rules or strictness regarding first language use. To understand how the change in family policy might have occurred, we must bear in mind that Sharanjeet was born in 1981. By that time, his father had been in Canada for nine years and his mother for seven years. When he started to speak, Jaspreet was already around 12 years old and Parmjeet, his older brother, was about 14. They had already established a firm foundation in their mother tongue. Furthermore, Jaspreet averred that when she was about 12 years old, her spiritual life became very important to her and she began to take a renewed interest in her mother tongue so she could use it to worship. At that time, Jaswant and Balbir were both very busy with their jobs and managing and supporting a household of seven people. Enforcing a "Punjabi only" household in an English environment is taxing work. Perhaps with the language abilities of the older children assured, and Punjabi speaking grandparents caring for young Sharanjeet, Jaswant and Balbir felt less need and had less energy to vigorously enforce the sole use of Punjabi at home.

Although Sharanjeet did not feel his parents were ever concerned that he would lose his first language, other family members admitted there was a time when they feared that Sharanjeet was losing his mother tongue. However, it seems that time has passed. Sharanjeet developed a renewed interest in learning and using Punjabi in order to

incorporate it into his music and to work with Indian musicians and studio workers who do not speak English. He also realised the need to speak Punjabi in order to communicate with non-English speaking elders. Sharanjeet has high regard for the Indian value of respect for elders and wants to be able to communicate with and behave appropriately with the senior generation. As a result, he has made the effort to regain any language he might have lost and he continues to learn. Sharanjeet asserted that he can speak Punjabi very fluently, so well, in fact that people in India do not always realise he was born and raised in Canada. They think he is from a big Indian city.

Sharanjeet stated that his thinking processes remain the same whether he used English or Punjabi and that he could switch from one language to the other unconsciously. He said he never needed to translate from one to the other, or to think about what he wanted to say in either language; the words would come naturally. Sharanjeet learned to write G*urmukhi* on his own, and has developed a beautiful script. He said he could easily write personal letters in *Gurmukhi*. He believes that with extra time he could write a high school level essay. He said he could read a Punjabi newspaper and understand about 90% of it.

Sharanjeet was fluent in both English and Punjabi when he started school. Although Punjabi was the major language spoken by family members at home, the children spoke English among themselves. Sharanjeet also learned English from watching television shows like Sesame Street. Sharanjeet did not remember having to make any major adjustment when he started school. During the early years--kindergarten to grade 3--he attended school with his two cousins who lived in the same neighbourhood. From grades 4 to 6, he was the only Indian in his school. He did not

remember ever speaking Punjabi in school, not even with his cousins. In fact, he stated that people probably did not know that he could speak Punjabi. It seems that Sharanjeet blended into school very well. He is a quiet, likeable young man, and his appearance, with his light skin and hazel eyes is not highly "visible". He is intelligent, witty, and "with it".

Sharanjeet only remembered being in one fight when he was very young, with an older child who was "ignorant toward other cultures and stuff" (November 5, 2002, p. 20). He did not remember the details of the disagreement, and stated that they became friends after.

Once Sharanjeet got into high school there were more students of Indian background. In high school, Sharanjeet found that his "White" classmates responded positively to his ethnicity. Many of them chose to study India for school assignments and approached him for help. His response to their interest was mixed. He felt good that his heritage was recognised and appreciated, but he may also have felt uncomfortable at being singled out and made to feel different. He stated, "It was weird… That's a first" (November 5, 2002, p. 21). His comment, "that's a first", makes me think that he might have experienced some negative reaction to his background in the past, so that he was somewhat surprised at the strong positive reaction he experienced then.

It seems that in high school Sharanjeet enjoyed increased popularity, due, at least in part, to his Indian background. He stated, "in high school…a lot of people got into it. In high school, there were a lot of guys and a lot of people, everyone knew me." (November 5, 2002, p. 21) This indicates a change in thinking that seems to be occurring in the mainstream, where different cultural backgrounds are becoming valued and

appreciated and where the ability to speak other languages and observe different cultural practises is seen as exotic and interesting. However, this new prestige does not seem to apply equally to all people, languages, and cultures. It seems to apply mostly to those who, like Sharanjeet, have a foot in both worlds and who can be seen to be interesting without being too different. Many Sikhs who wear the turban and traditional clothes are still subject to overt racism and discrimination. In fact, Sharanjeet himself shows limited tolerance for newcomers who seem unwilling to adapt to the new ways of their adopted homeland. He stated, "...it gets frustrating too, like if they don't make the effort to try to learn.... You know, life's all about change, and if you don't change, then why bother moving and going to new places?" (November 5, 2002, p. 14).

Sharanjeet likes to keep a balance between east and west in most aspects of his life, and this includes friendships. When we discussed who his friends were, he stated, "I've got a mix of everything. I like to keep that" (November 5, 2002, p.18). He maintains friendships with people he knew from school, from sports, from the Sikh community and from the music world. A few of his school friends are aware of his musical ability. They come to the locales where he performs to listen to his music. He stated, "They don't understand what you're saying, but the music's there and they like it" (November 5, 2002, p.18). Sharanjeet seems to derive a great deal of his identity and self-esteem from his musical ability. It is something that makes him special and sets him apart from others. His ability to perform in Punjabi, at a time when world music is becoming increasingly popular, gives him extra cachet and added motivation to maintain and develop his ability to communicate in Punjabi.

Sharanjeet takes pride in the accomplishments of Indian people and people of Indian background. He is particularly proud of manifestations of modern Indian or Indo-Canadian culture, like the films of Mira Nair (Monsoon Wedding, Hollywood Bollywood, Earth, Fire). He feels that these achievements explore the culture in an entertaining way but do not feed stereotypes. He stated, "It takes off that whole…Apu image" (Apu is a character from the popular television series, The Simpsons. Apu portrays a stereotyped representation of an Indian immigrant) (November 5, 2002, p.8).

Although Sharanjeet's balancing act might bring him the best of both worlds, it does not come without a cost. If he adopts elements of Western culture that are at odds with his home culture, there is bound to be friction. Many potentially controversial areas are similar to those of mainstream Canadian families and include: respect for tradition and authority; work ethic and study habits; dating, sexual mores, and values and finances and spending habits. In some cases, however, the cultural values between east and west are diametrically opposed, for example, in family structure. As mentioned earlier, Indian families live conjointly and children are raised to remain dependent and subservient to parental authority. Many Western practises that are designed to prepare children to live independently and make their own choices (like giving children allowances, paying them for doing extra chores or work at home, allowing teenagers to date and go out in mixed groups unchaperoned, and encouraging children to treat parents as friends and equals) are unheard of and threatening to people of Eastern descent. When Indo-Canadian children assume Western values, it can be the source of much familial unhappiness.

Although Sharanjeet keeps some Indian traditions, like respect for elders and authority, and he continues to live at home, he does not keep the religious traditions.

While he respects his parent's commitment to their faith, he rarely goes to the gurdwara (except when he brings his mother there, and helps with repair and maintenance work) and does not keep the "5 Ks", or symbols of the Sikh faith.

Sharanjeet: Narrative context.

Interviewing Sharanjeet was a very different experience from interviewing the other members of his family. First, his point of view on several specific matters differed from his parents. Secondly, his world-view was far more Western. Third, his style of communicating and story telling was different.

As the youngest in the family and born in Canada, Sharanjeet grew up in an environment with major English influences. His siblings spoke English to him and each other, as did his cousins. Almost all of the outside world was English. As a result, he grew up largely bilingual.

Sharanjeet's father, Jaswant, and his sister, Jaspreet, expressed that they had been concerned that Sharanjeet was going to lose, and/or not fully learn his language when he was younger. As Jaswant stated, "for my younger son…he didn't like speaking Punjabi at home, but we were teaching him, we were like, were kind of… I shouldn't say that, we were kind of forcing him to learn" (October 21, 2001, p. 7). Sharanjeet, however, saw the situation quite differently. When I asked him if his parents had tried to teach him Punjabi when he was younger, he replied, "I think I just picked it up because it's always around" (November 5th, 2002, p. 2).

Jaspreet and Jaswant had both mentioned how resolute Balbir had been about enforcing the use of Punjabi in the home. As Jaspreet said, "she was always firm, and if it wasn't for her firmness…I don't think I would be as good in Punjabi as I am today" (November

11, 2002, p. 17). When I asked Sharanjeet if his mom had been strict about speaking Punjabi, he replied, "No, she gave me freedom" (November 5th, 2002, p.3). When I asked Balbir if she had had to remind her children to speak Punjabi all the time, or if they had done so naturally, she replied that they had spoken Punjabi to her naturally.

In the first case, it is quite possible that Balbir and Jaswant were less strict with Sharanjeet than they were with Parmjeet and Jaspreet; however, it is hard to imagine they were completely open. Regarding the second case, it's confusing that Balbir remembers the children responding to her in Punjabi naturally (without reminders) while Jaspreet and Jaswant both remember her firmness and constant reminders. I thought of several possible reasons for the lack of congruity in perceptions. On one hand, it might just represent different understandings of the same situation, or, on the other hand, it may indicate that Sharanjeet's and his mother's responses were based on feelings of family loyalty, with both wanting to present their loved ones in a positive light. Cultural differences, however, can shine divergent lights. For Sharanjeet, casting his parents in a positive light might mean portraying them as open and accepting (Western value), while for Balbir, casting her son in a positive light might involve showing him to be obedient and compliant (Eastern value).

Sharanjeet's opinions, values, and self-image were much more Western, or Canadian, than the other members of the family I interviewed. Sharanjeet mentioned a number of times that he felt English was his first language and that he "kept English traditions" (November 5th, 2002, p. 3). He also stated that "you keep a little bit of the Indian stuff in you, but a lot of my attitude is North American attitude" (November 5th, 2002, p. 14). He demonstrated his "North American-ness" in his response to questions

about his hopes for his future family. He indicated that it did not matter to him if his future wife spoke Punjabi or not, and that if she wished to learn, he would "just send her to India for a month or two" (November 5th, 2002, p. 25). It also did not seem to matter to Sharanjeet if his future children spoke Punjabi and maintained the culture (excluding the key elements of respect). He said, "I don't care about it. Whatever makes them happy" (November 5th, 2002, p. 23). "You can't really force them. I don't believe in that.... If they want to talk it or read it or write it, sure I'll help, but if not, I won't get upset"(November 5th, 2002, p. 24). Sharanjeet also indicated that he was not interested in performing at social functions associated with his culture. He explained that differing expectations regarding dress and payment (he doesn't want to wear traditional clothes and he expects payment for his work) have caused him to turn down requests to perform.

Sharanjeet also demonstrated a North American-style attitude with his use of irony and self-deprecating humour (both are qualities I find to be rare among people from non-Western backgrounds. I find earnestness to be more common). For example, when I observed that his English became strongly Indian accented when he spoke to his father, he commented, "Call me Apu[4]" (November 5th, 2002, p. 5). When we discussed his dream of working in the world of entertainment, and I asked him if he were interested in being a camera-man or other "back stage" professional, he replied, "No, I need the attention" (November 5th, 2002, p. 20). When the idea of a potential future family was mentioned, his initial response was, "Scary thought" (November 5th, 2002, p. 23).

When I asked Sharanjeet about his educational goals, he answered "I don't have any" (November 5th, 2002, p. 18). I was a little surprised by the response. First I

wondered if it had been designed to shock. Then, I thought that even if he were not currently studying anything, he probably had dreams. If he did not have any objectives related to education, I thought he might have had other goals he could have mentioned. I wondered why he did not mention them, why I had to draw information about this topic from him. I wondered for a long time about the deeper meaning of Sharanjeet's statement. Finally, I thought I might have some answers. I speculated that by saying, "I don't have any (goals)" Sharanjeet might have been refusing to accept any expectations (from himself or anyone else) about his future and his ability to make and achieve goals. I also wondered if he were trying to prevent me from making any assumptions about him. As well, he may also have been saying that he did not have any goals because he was afraid he might not reach them; he was afraid to fail. It seems most common in Western, or Westernised culture, that young people who have a (normal) fear of failure often respond by withdrawing in this manner, by not "playing the game". I wonder if it is because our culture is so competitive and individualistic that success and failure are thought to be individual achievements, rather than the accomplishments (positive and negative) of a team, be it of colleagues, a couple, friends, or family. If so, it also speaks to Sharanjeet's adoption of Western values.

Sharanjeet's style of speaking is also very Canadian. He used a lot of slang and idioms typical of a native speaker, for example "freak out" (November 5th, 2002, p. 22); "...don't come crying to me" (November 5th, 2002, p. 24); and "check it out" (November 5th, 2002, p. 18). He also spoke in short, terse sentences. The interview followed a questions and answer format. At first I had to draw out Sharanjeet's answers. As the

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[4] Apu is a character from the popular television series, The Simpsons. He represents a stereotyped image of Indian immigrants. He speaks with a strong accent. He appears highly-educated, but runs a convenience

interview progressed, his answers became longer and more detailed. Near the end, particularly when we were talking about his music, he began to relate anecdotes and give more lengthy explanations.

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store. He is very hard-working.

Sharanjeet's Story: I Belong to Both Cultures, Give or Take a Bit

I was born in Rostang, went to school here, grew up here. We moved when I was little, five or six, to (another south Rostang neighbourhood). I did my schooling there and came back here. In the first year or two since I was born, I lived in India for a year or so, and lately it's just been living in England, about three years. I got an aunt and a cousin who live there. I do my cousin's (music). That's why I was in England for three years.

My main goal is music, music for entertainment. That's something I've been doing since I was thirteen. Ever since I was young, as far as I can remember. I know a lot of percussion. I used to play the trumpet in junior high. I gave that up, left that behind. Stupid that I did, because it's important to know the instruments. Instruments are like the anatomy of music; you have to know them. I also like acting, comedy, anything to do with entertainment.

I can't write music or songs, like a lot of people do, but if you get the feeling in there, you can do it. I do my cousin's stuff. It's all Indian pop. Right now, he started with a modern sort of look with an old sort of sound to it. It's all stuff you do in the studio. Now, it's like a lot of fusion or hip hop type of sound mixed in with the vocals. I mix everything. In my album, I've got reggae stuff with Indian *raags* in it. I'm doing an English track on mine because I don't want to stick with just one thing. I'd like to explore. Mind you, it's better if you sing English because there's more of an audience for it. But if you can mix it successfully, and put it out into both worlds, then you've created a different set.

I have a band (in England). We do a lot of stage shows and stuff. But here it's just get a DJ, give him your disc, he plays it. Just dub over your vocals. Sort of like

karaoke, in a way. I know a lot of (Indian) musicians that are out and about. A lot of them are based in England, 'cause that's where the market is. I get music from them.

A lot of the words in the songs are old (Punjabi). The writers are getting back into putting old words into the songs, complicated words that have multiple meanings in them. As for all the kids and everything, I know a lot of them don't like to talk it (Punjabi), 'cause if I'm talking (in Punjabi) with another friend of mine, and they're standing there, they feel uncomfortable. I guess the music is the only thing that keeps them connected to it (language and culture).

Actually, I don't like doing anything that involves cultural things. I get a lot of wedding gigs here, and they want you to dress traditionally, and they don't want to pay. I've turned a couple of people down. I just wasn't happy doing it that way.

Education-wise, I wouldn't mind getting a background in something and then you've got something to fall back on. Even if you get married, like whether it's a love marriage, or arranged marriage, it doesn't matter. The family is going to ask, like, "what does your kid do?" And if I don't have my tape out, then they're going to be like, "What's the deal here? How's he going to be able to support my daughter?" If you go business-wise, I wanted to be an architect. That changed to real estate. I'm doing a real estate course. It's something to fall back on. Before that I wanted to do management, wanted to have my own business. I still want to have my own business, but I'm not sure what kind of business. I've got all kinds of ideas; I just need the money to back it up. I know it'll work if I do it.

I had both languages when I was growing up. I would speak more English. English is my first language because I was born here. I just picked up Punjabi because

it's always around. I don't consider it my first language, but I guess you could say it's half and half. My grandparents lived here for a couple of years, from the time I was little to about eight or nine, then they went back to India. Them and my brother and sister looked after me. I spoke Punjabi with my grandparents because they don't know English. Once in a while I'd speak Punjabi with mom and dad, but mostly I'd speak English. It was mixed. I'd speak English with my brother and sister. Mom gave me freedom (to speak either language). I speak a mixture mostly because I'm so used to it. Family back home, my cousins here, we'll just split it up between. You know, with your uncles obviously you're going to speak the home language, but with your cousins you're going to speak English, right? Mostly with the elders, you tend to speak it properly.

I use Punjabi or English depending on the person or the object I'm dealing with. I don't have to think about it first. It's just right there, ready to go. My thinking is the same in Punjabi and in English. With the record companies or musicians in India, you got to know your music terms. Even when they're the same thing, the word is different. Obviously a piano is a piano, a keyboard is a keyboard, but the notes are different and the style of play is different. In English you got your do, re, me, and in Indian it would be *sa, re, ga, wa*. Different names for the same notes. A lot of guys in the studios don't know English. So it's better if I speak in Punjabi with them because that way they understand what I'm trying to tell them to do.

In India, people have asked me if I'm from a bigger city. I can get away with that. I taught myself how to write. I'm pretty good at writing. I make a couple of mistakes here and there with a couple of letters, but it doesn't change the meaning of the word. I keep learning. I read everyday or whenever I get a chance. If I hear words that I

don't know, say on television or something, I just ask Dad or just keep it in mind and try to remember it myself. I watch Indian movies, not really television 'cause the shows are boring. I watch an hour or two a week.

I guess I belong to both cultures, give or take a little bit. I think you've got to go with where you are, you know? If you can keep it an even mix, then you'll have it all good. I keep Punjabi traditions, not the religious traditions, but just like family type, like respect for elders. I know a lot of kids socially who have that "I don't give a shit" kind of attitude. Like the ones I grew up with are like, "kiss my ass", "I don't care" sort of thing, if someone older is telling you what to do. But over there (in India) you listen and do it. Or just listen and sort of ignore it, but you've got to listen to it. So if you can keep that here, you can get by pretty well.

I guess language is the biggest one for tradition and culture, 'cause you know, that's where you came from and you shouldn't forget that. There's lots of kids who do forget it, or they don't want to try it. You don't really have to read and write it. As long as you can speak it. Obviously you're going to run into people that don't know English, or just know a little bit, or if you go to India for the first time, and you've never been there. What are you going to do?

It sort of gives your parents respect. Other people give that respect towards your parents because it shows they've maintained what they learned in you. It's important to keep respect because it's always been in the culture. It keeps that alive. It just adds to the beauty of it. My parents feel good about me speaking Punjabi. They encourage me 'cause in a way it shines on them. And they're happy that I'm sticking to the Indian ways

a little bit. It shines on them; they know they did their job. I'm sure they did not want to see it fade away. But I don't think they have to worry about that now.

I eat Indian food. Yeah, got to love that! And music, entertainment. There's been a couple of movies that have been nominated for Oscars. They didn't win, but it's there, so you know somebody's watching it here, other than the brown people. It sort of takes off that whole, the Apu image. It explores the culture, but it explores it so we can laugh at it and take it seriously at the same time.

In India, it feels relaxed 'cause you got space, especially where we are. It's all farm. You got space and you just relax. You've got the freedom to do whatever you want. I'm not worried about bills or work over there. It feels like home. It gives you a peace of mind 'cause you know that's where you came from, and you can't really fight it no matter how much you try.

I don't know what's most important to me from Canadian culture, I like everything out of it from A to Z: clothing, music, entertainment, going out, sports… because that's what I grew up with basically all my life. I still play hockey. I like doing things that are normal to do here, whatever nowadays people do. A lot of my attitude is a North American attitude because it gives you balls in a way. It's a confidence booster. If you want something, you've got to go get it. It gives you that frame of mind where you can be just open about whatever. That " I don't care" attitude, whatever you need to vent you can vent, individual expression. I was born here, so I was born with the English ways. I spent most of my life here. I wasn't raised in India like my brother and sister who were there until they were five or six. I mixed in pretty well.

I don't care for a lot of that political stuff. Like Iraq is a good example. You know, they gave Iraq a certain amount of time, but still they keep checking, and they keep pushing. That's what I don't like is the pushing. I don't know if Saddam is a good guy or a bad guy, but they wanted him to fail. And a lot of that has flowed into Canada.

I already spoke English when I started school. It wasn't a big change. It just added to the play level. They taught us the ABCs, those basic things. No one asked me if I could speak Punjabi, not that I can remember. In elementary, till I was in grade 3, there was me and my cousin, and that's it. When I hit grade 4, from grade 4 to grade 6, I was the only Indian kid in school. No one was really racist. No one picked on me because of my colour or culture or anything like that. Obviously you get in fights, but it wasn't a racial type of fight. It was the other stuff, the "I want to play with the ball" type of thing. I know a bunch of guys in (another part of the city). I don't really hang out with them, but I've got friends on one side and the other side, and they got their friends, and it's like a gang, like a bunch of guys here and there, but they just don't like each other, they're always getting beat up. I don't know what it's based on. It's pretty stupid, though. I think they bring that onto themselves. I try not to get involved. If you want to fight, you can leave me out of it.

They (my classmates) wanted to learn about it (my language and culture). They were interested. I got good feedback. They got into the music part of it earlier. So from there, they got a little more interested, and a lot of them did a lot of projects on it. I was probably the only kid in my history class that did a project on ancient Greece. The other kids were doing it on India and stuff from India. Some of them would ask me like, "Why do you guys do this?" "How was this done?" I was just like, "Oh man, I don't know this

stuff." There's a book, go read a book. It sort of felt good, but at the same time it was like, "Man! I'm the only guy studying White people, and White people are studying me." It was weird. In high school there were a lot of guys, and everyone knew me.

I don't care if my family uses English or Punjabi at home. Whatever makes them happy. That's where my North American attitude kicks in. I don't care if I marry an English, or Punjabi-speaking girl. She can always learn. I'll just send her to India for a month or two. Life is education; education is life. All that I know, is all that I can pass on. I can't teach them (future children) stuff that I don't know. They'll have to learn that by themselves, if they're interested enough. You can't really force them. I don't believe in that. If you have an interest in that, go do it. If you want to smoke, go smoke. It's your life, your problem. Once again, the North American attitude. But early on, I think you can teach them whatever you can teach them. I would want my children to maintain the respect thing. That's for sure. That's a must. But anything else, if they want to talk it, or read it, or write it, sure I'll help, but if not, I won't get upset. I'll make an effort to a certain degree, but if they're not willing to, then why force them?

The Sandhu Family

The second family we will meet is the **Sandhu** family. This family consists of **Mami**, her daughters, **Mandeep** and **Prabjit**, her sons, **Rajbir** and **Arjun,** and her grandchildren. Mami lives with her two daughters and their families. Mandeep and Prabjit were born and spent their childhoods in Africa. In the early 1970s they moved to India for approximately six years. After that, they immigrated to Canada.

Mandeep is married to **Jagjit** who comes from the **Bains** family. They have two children, **Rosa** (12) and **Inderpal** (3).

Prabjit is divorced. She has one son, **Gurdev** (12).

Rajbir lives in British Columbia. He is married to **Ella**, a "White" Canadian and they have three boys, **John, Paul,** and **Greg**. Their sons are in their early twenties. He is the owner-operator of several highway tractors and trailers. He drives with Jagjit.

Arjun lives in Rostang with his wife, **Pritam,** and their three sons.

The life history accounts of **Jagjit, Mandeep, Prabjit,** and **Gurdev** are presented in this study. **Rosa** was interviewed, and information about her is included in the thematic analysis, but I did not prepare a life history account and introduction for her.

I have known this family for about three and a half years. Our families have become friends.

Jagjit: Introduction

Jagjit: Interview context.

It was hard to find a time to interview Jagjit. His work schedule as a truck driver keeps him away from home for many days at a time, and when he is home he often works on his truck in a workshop across the city from his house. I was delighted when we finally found a time that we were both available to meet.

Jagjit had just finished polishing his truck when I arrived. His truck is his second home. He spends substantially more time in it than in the home he shares with his family. It is a beautiful vehicle, and he keeps it immaculately clean and brightly polished. I remember once, several years ago, going inside to have a look. I had never been inside such a large truck before. I felt compelled to remove my shoes, because the interior was so spotless. As I looked around the shining chrome controls, comfortable velour seats, and thickly carpeted floor, I could see the care and pride of ownership invested in the vehicle. Cars and trucks are an enduring interest of Jagjit's. He also owns a 1976 Ford Mustang in which he has invested much time and money restoring and upgrading. He attends antique vehicle shows with the car.

Jagjit is of medium height with a solid build. He has a thick, glossy black beard, which he wishes were always straight and even. He normally dresses casually, in jeans or sweatpants and a T-shirt or sweatshirt. He likes to cook and eat. He specialises in North American dishes like veggie burgers, submarine sandwiches and various kinds of salads. He is always happy to cook for his family and guests.

I have known Jagjit and his family for almost three and a half years. His wife, Mandeep, and I are good friends. I have always felt a certain kinship with Jagjit. Perhaps

it is because we share a similar "born and raised in Canada" outlook and sense of humour. I also greatly admire his humbleness, kindness, and total lack of malice and guile. This was the first time we had ever had a sustained conversation with each other.

The interviews took place in the home he shares with his wife, Mandeep; daughter, Rosa; son, Inderpal; mother in-law, Mami; sister-in-law, Prabjit; and nephew, Gurdev. It is a newer house in an area that is in transition from agricultural to suburban just south of Rostang. The house is located on a sprawling four-acre lot that is constantly being improved with new flower beds, gardens, and other similar projects, largely the work of Prabjit and Gurdev. There is a circular drive in front of the house and parking space for several vehicles. There is ample space for Jagjit's highway tractor, but he is not allowed to park it at home. Although the area appears agricultural, it is zoned residential. Jagjit had obtained a variance that allowed him to bring his truck cab home, but a neighbour organised a petition requesting that it be revoked. I attended the hearing that reviewed the variance, and was astounded by the contrived excuses given by the complainant. I had visited the home often enough to know that most of the allegations were grossly exaggerated, and many were blatantly untrue. I was also dismayed by the fear and mob mentality that had caused other residents of the area to support the petition. Only two of the councillors in attendance were in favour of repealing the variance. Two other councillors, including the chair of the committee, supported sustaining the variance. Ultimately, a compromise solution was found for the situation. Jagjit was given a year to find another place to park his vehicle. One of the councillors who had supported repealing the variance suggested the compromise. This councillor even stated that it was unfortunate that some people (the complainants) were envious of the energy and

entrepreneurship shown by some newcomers to Canada (Jagjit and his family). I found it interesting that this councillor voted to repeal the variance and chose to compromise, rather than stand up against envy and discrimination that he himself identified! I also found it interesting that he referred to Jagjit and his family as newcomers. Jagjit is a third generation Canadian, and Mandeep and her family came here more than 20 years ago. There was nothing to identify them as newcomers. Neither Jagjit nor Mandeep speak with an accent, both were wearing Western clothes at the hearing, Jagjit was not wearing a turban, and his beard was not long at that time. The situation highlighted to me how the racism that Jagjit's grandfather faced more than eighty years ago still exists, albeit less obvious and direct.

Jagjit's home throbs with life and energy. There is always something happening, and there are often visitors. Cooking and serving food and *chaa* (Indian style tea) is an ongoing activity. When the interviews were conducted, the whole family was home, including his brother-in-law (and driving partner), Rajbir, from B. C. and his brother-in-law, Arjun, and family from Rostang. Later in the afternoon, some family friends arrived for a visit.

Jagjit and I sat at a formal table in the dining room, away from the rest of the family in a quieter part of the house. Jagjit was able to express his opinions and describe his experiences privately. When I transcribed the tape, however, I was amused by the constant buzz of conversation I could hear in the background. Children's voices, adult voices, elderly voices, all talking and laughing in a vivacious mix of Punjabi and English.

Jagjit seemed to be pleased to be involved in the research study. I felt he was happy to be able to help, curious about the process, intrigued by the outcome, and glad to

tell his story. However, I also sensed that he initially felt a little self-conscious about being interviewed. I do not think Jagjit is accustomed to discussing and describing his opinions and experiences in such depth and length. He is normally quite reticent; being the centre of attention in this context was a new experience for him. As he answered the questions, I felt no doubt about the sincerity of his answers. I was very impressed by how openly Jagjit expressed his appreciation to his wife and her family for helping him reclaim his heritage, how warmly he spoke of his birth family, even when they did not support his decisions, and how honestly he admitted some unflattering facts about himself (e.g., that he had avoided immigrants from India when he was young.) At a later date, when I gave him the transcript of the first interview, he immediately sat down and read it from beginning to end. I also appreciated this unabashed interest in our collaboration.

Although Jagjit was first initiated as a Sikh 13 years ago, he had reaffirmed his vow shortly before I began the interview process with him, and he was still filled with energy from his renewed commitment. During the interviews, the intensity and frequency of his comments relating to his faith, heritage, and identity reflected the power and freshness of his pledge. Rediscovering and asserting his identity as a Sikh has been a long and sometimes difficult process for Jagjit. Originally, he underwent initiation as much to please his wife and in-laws as to fill his own needs. In doing so, he went against the flow of his birth family. His parents are cultural Sikhs, but they do not actively practice their religion. His siblings and cousins have assimilated into the majority culture very thoroughly, to the point of rejecting their religious heritage. Some have gone as far as expressing disdain for orthodox Sikhs, commenting to Jagjit, "Oh, you're not

becoming one of **those** are you?" when he began to wear a turban and stopped trimming his beard. This comes on top of the racist taunts and fights the teenaged Jagjit experienced because of his ethno-cultural background. Jagjit's job is not a genteel occupation either. Truck drivers are not generally noted for their political correctness, and this has been another reality Jagjit has had to face. Before Jagjit was initiated, most of his friends were "White" and he had assumed the lifestyle of a "White" truck driver, a lifestyle which included many behaviours that are forbidden to *Khalsa* (initiated Sikhs), for example, drinking alcohol, smoking, eating meat, and eating from the same plate as with non-Khalsa. After becoming Khalsa, Jagjit was required to change both his lifestyle and appearance immediately and dramatically. It is difficult to over-estimate how challenging this change must have been in the context of his professional life. It would seem that from Jagjit's point of view, he had suddenly become just like the people he had fought to disassociate himself from in his youth. To outward appearances, he was no different from the immigrants he met and avoided when he was a teenager; yet he did not share their world-view, and he could not really claim their cultural entitlement. I believe that at many times, Jagjit must have felt torn between two worlds, the world defined by his assimilated upbringing and work, and the world of his marriage, family, and emergent spirituality.

Recently, it has been easier for Jagjit to fulfil and be fulfilled by the religious vows he made. He attributed the change to several factors. First, he renewed his vows of his own volition, because he himself felt the need to do so, and not to please anyone else. Second, he is getting older and more mature. Third, he is working with his brother-in-law, Rajbir. Rajbir is a great source of encouragement and support for Jagjit. Rajbir is a

born leader who also experienced a spiritual renaissance as he approached mid-life. Prior to that, he, too, had adopted a Canadian lifestyle that included habits forbidden by Sikhism (drinking, eating meat, etc.). As a result, Rajbir understands and can sympathise with Jagjit's experience. Furthermore, Rajbir is a gifted speaker with great power to sway and convince, and he loves to talk about the virtues of Sikhism. I am sure their conversations on the road provide much motivation for Jagjit. Finally, Rajbir follows the dictums of his faith carefully, but in a way that accommodates Jagjit's Canadian sensibilities (for example, he sometimes wears a bandanna rather than a turban). This has helped Jagjit find creative ways to carry out his promise. The last, and most important factor that Jagjit attributes to his growing ability to honour his vow is the mystical intervention of *Baba Ji,* or *Sant* Gurdev Singh Ji, whom he believes has given him the power to change.

Jagjit: Life history context.

Jagjit's early years were spent on a dairy farm in Mission, B. C. His family lived with his mother's parents, her two brothers, and their families in three houses on the farm. This is a different situation from most families of Indian descent, where the sons and their families live with the parents. Interestingly, this is the same living arrangement Jagjit has with his family. He and his wife, Mandeep, and their two children, Rosa and Inderpal, live with his mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and her family.

Jagjit is a third generation Indo-Canadian. His paternal grandfather came here when he was a young man, and Jagjit's father was born here. Jagjit's grandfather passed away when Jagjit's father was a child. Consequently, Jagjit's father was brought up by

relatives. Although he has lived most of his life in Canada, Jagjit's father also spent several years in Hong Kong.

Jagjit's maternal grandfather initially came to Canada on the *Komagata Maru.* The *Komagata Maru* was a ship that brought 376 Indian passengers, mostly Sikh, from India to Vancouver to challenge the "continuous journey"[5] clause of Canadian immigration law. Upon its arrival, the boat was held off shore for two months, from May 23, to July 23, 1914, till it was escorted out of Vancouver harbour under the guard of the Canadian Navy, and sent back to India. The passengers ran short of food and water, and disease was rampant. Many died. When they arrived back in India, the passengers faced further sanction. It was in the context of this type of racism that Jagjit's mother's family settled in Canada.

Jagjit expressed fond memories of life on the farm. He remembered hard work, milking the cows and cleaning the barn, and fun, playing with his cousins, riding horses, and spending lots of time with his beloved grandfather. Altogether there were about 14 children in the three families living on the farm, so until he went to elementary school, Jagjit's world revolved around his extended family. English was the primary language they spoke. Jagjit and his siblings spoke English to each other and to their parents. Although his mother could speak English, Jagjit remembered that she would always answer him back in Punjabi. Jagjit's uncles and all of his cousins spoke English at home. In fact, most of the cousins could not speak their mother tongue at all. Only Jagjit's grandparents and parents consistently spoke Punjabi to each other. Jagjit felt that his parents would have liked the children to have learned and used Punjabi at home, but they

were probably too busy with farm work to ensure this occurred. In light of Jagjit's observations that both his father and maternal grandfather had experienced racism in Canada, and that they had cut their hair and shaved their beards in order to get established, I wonder how much their desire to fit in and minimise differences affected the use of Punjabi at home. Perhaps they had not enforced the use of Punjabi in the hope of becoming and being accepted as fully Canadian, or had they internalised the racism they experienced, and begun to think of Punjabi as less important or less valid than English? Or had they perhaps developed a strategy in which they outwardly seemed to conform to mainstream Canadian values, for example by wearing Western clothes and speaking English, without actually give up their own values and belief system. Such a strategy is described by Puar (1995), and termed "oppositionally active "Whiteness"". It involves the construction of a new, strategically-reactive identity which allows members of visible minorities to function successfully in the mainstream culture by taking on elements of the mainstream culture while maintaining traditional values and beliefs.

For Jagjit, however, speaking English at home had seemed normal. He commented, "I guess just born and raised in Canada, it's English, right? Everybody speaks English.... You're going to keep speaking the English language which is in your surroundings" (August 10, 2002, p. 3). It was not until he got older and rediscovered his roots that he regretted not having learned his mother tongue when he was young. He commented "That's sad, because what you know now, when you get older, you regret it. Especially your heritage, you don't know your background, where you come from" (August 10, 2002, p. 4).

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[5] In 1910, a Canadian immigration policy was formulated which required continuous passage to Canada as a stipulation for prospective immigrants. At that time, no ships made direct passage from Indian ports to

Jagjit's mother wore Punjabi suits and cooked Punjabi food at home everyday, and his grandfather frequently attended services at the local Sikh temple. Jagjit sometimes accompanied him. Otherwise, however, Jagjit's lifestyle was similar to any other mainstream Canadian. All of the young generation adopted mainstream ways. For them, the emphasis was on fitting in.

Jagjit reported that he had enjoyed speaking Punjabi with his mother. It seems that she appreciated his efforts to communicate in his mother tongue and accepted a mixture of Punjabi and English. As he somewhat nostalgically pointed out, "the most important thing was, Mom always understood you" (August 10, 2002, p. 8).

Jagjit also stated that he began learning and speaking much more Punjabi when he went to live with his in-laws. He believes that his Punjabi is more fluent now that he lives in a household where it is commonly spoken between the older generations (parents and grandparents). He also appreciates the efforts of his wife, Mandeep, who encourages him to speak Punjabi and corrects him when he makes mistakes in grammar, syntax, or register. Jagjit and Mandeep want their two children, Rosa, 12; and Inderpal, 3; to grow up speaking Punjabi and maintaining a close connection with their culture and faith. Jagjit said, "It's very, very important for your kids to know who they really are" (August 10, 2003, p.15). He also believes it important for them to speak Punjabi at home to show respect for their faith and heritage. But Jagjit also acknowledged that it was difficult to maintain Punjabi language and culture in an English society, especially since he, himself, grew up speaking English. "We try to speak Punjabi to the kids... but just automatically English comes out. I realise I'm speaking English and I try to start speaking Punjabi, but for myself, it's English still" (August 10, 2002, p. 23). Jagjit said he regrets that he does

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Canada, so the order had the practical (if not legal) effect of excluding people from India.

not actively discourage the use of English at home. Jagjit also felt it was important for his children to know other languages for instrumental reasons, "I want my kids to be fluent in as many languages as possible. Not just because of who you are, but education–wise, for jobs, travelling" (August 10, 2002, p. 13).

Beginning school was a relatively easy transition for Jagjit. He was already fluent in English, and had many older cousins and siblings who brought mainstream culture home to him. The main difficulty for him was having to sit still in a desk surrounded by strangers. After the initial adjustment, elementary school was fun for Jagjit. He fit in and made friends quickly.

When Jagjit began middle school, the situation changed. He began to experience racism because of his skin colour and ethnic background. This was a very difficult time for Jagjit because he had grown up believing he was "just like another Canadian" (August 10, 2002, p.6). At the time, he could not understand why he was no longer accepted. He had been born and raised in Canada; he had never even been to India. His primary language was English. He dressed, behaved, and even thought the same way as his classmates. Yet in the eyes of his classmates, he was not a Canadian; he was a "Paki". Jagjit felt betrayed and he fought to defend himself. He stated that he had to fight or he would have "got beaten up every day at school" (August 10, 2002, p. 10).

The fact that Jagjit fought kids who picked on him and called him derogatory names based on his ethnicity can imply several things. It can mean that he had rejected his Punjabi-Sikh heritage and sought to disassociate himself from it; he did not want to be connected with his ethno-cultural background. This means he was really rejecting an important part of himself. Or it can mean that he was defending his Indian roots; he was

fighting for the honour of his heritage. It might also mean that he was just reacting to the hostility and antagonism directed at him.

I had the opportunity to ask Jagjit what he thought about these ideas recently (Jagjit Singh, personal communication, July 9th, 2003). He acknowledged that all my conjectures were true to some extent. He repeated that he had fought for who he was. In his mind, *who he was* at that time, meant a Canadian, just like any other, but of Indian descent. He fought because he did not think he was a "Paki", or "rag-head" (and in fact, he was not, his family was not from Pakistan, and he did not wear a turban). These labels carry strong negative assumptions of difference and inferiority, and Jagjit had obviously accepted these assumptions (that they existed, not necessarily that they were true). Therefore, he did not want to be called those names. In that sense, he was disassociating himself from his heritage. (For example, the name "cheese-head" is a common slang name for Dutch people. I would find it strange, but I would not be hurt if someone called me that. It is only when the negative and hostile connotations of such labels are commonly understood that they can become insulting and offensive.) Jagjit, of course, knew his heritage was Indian, and he said he was proud of that, but his idea of what "Indian" meant, and his classmates' ideas were very different. In that way, he was defending the honour of his ethno-cultural background. Jagjit also said he did not like being treated rudely and aggressively. In that regard, he was reacting to the hostility and antagonism directed at him.

Jagjit states that when he was young, he felt he was like any other Canadian. However, there are factors that must have affected how he perceived his place in society. He discusses how his father had talked to him about racism, explaining how Indians were

excluded from all but menial jobs, and how his grandfather and father had had to shed important elements of their identity (beard, turban) in order to establish themselves here. I wonder how much Jagjit connected these factors, consciously or unconsciously, with his place in the dominant culture. He made it clear that in his family there was tremendous pressure to fit in and belong. In this light, Jagjit's adoption of orthodox Sikhism and the accompanying lifestyle can be seen as an extremely courageous act. When he spoke of his faith during the interviews, I saw it as a gift he received as he approaches middle age. He views it with wonder and awe, with fresh eyes. He does not take it for granted as many that grow up with it do. It is a new and beautiful thing for him.

When Jagjit got to high school, the situation changed again. When he was in the higher grades, his classmates began to appreciate his cultural background. As he said, "when I got to senior high and that, it was okay because people accepted you…" (August 10, 2002, p. 10). Friends started to ask to come to his home for dinner, because they enjoyed the Indian food his mother cooked. This was an ironic situation for Jagjit, because he now found his classmates admiring his culture, the same culture that had previously caused him so much pain and unhappiness, and that he had tried to disassociate himself from. Furthermore, at the same time that his friends wanted to connect with his culture, he wanted to associate himself with mainstream Canadian culture, the culture that his friends took for granted. Referring to his friends' requests to come to his house, he said, "for me it was the other way around. When are we going to go to your place?" (August 10, 2002, p. 11).

By the time Jagjit reached high school, another factor made it easier for him to fit in. Multiculturalism was becoming an accepted reality. There were many more students

of Indo-Canadian background in his classes. However, there was also an irony involved in this situation. Many of the Indians were new immigrants from India. Jagjit did not feel he belonged to this group, either. He found he was very different from them. Furthermore, he had suffered so much from having been associated with them in the past, that he wanted nothing to do with them. He said,

> This is the stupid part...If you look back, you did not want anything to do with them, because, well, they didn't know any better. They dressed different. They wore their turbans. A lot of them would come up and try to talk to me. I'd never give them the time of day. (August 10, 2002, p. 10)

The situation is much different for Jagjit now that he has reaffirmed his commitment to Sikhism and begun rediscovering his roots.

> The way I look at it now, it's completely different. If I was to go back...it would be a lot different...because now I know who I am as far as my background, my religion...You don't treat people any different. (August 10, 2002, p. 11)

When Jagjit was young, he dreamed of having a "nice office job", perhaps being a lawyer. Jagjit explained that his parents valued education and encouraged him to study, but never pressured him. After he graduated from high school, he worked for General Motors for several years. While he was working for GM he decided he wanted to be a truck driver. He stated, "I knew I wanted to become a truck driver. A lot of people wouldn't think it's a big job, but you know, it is. My dad drove a truck all the time and I ended up being a truck driver. I wanted to get away from it. Office job is nine to five. I

wanted to see the country" (August 10, 2003, p. 18). Jagjit is still a truck driver. He drives across North America. This is a demanding job that takes him away from home for long periods at a time. Jagjit used to find it difficult to follow the lifestyle and dietary requirements of his faith while he was on the road. He also mentioned facing racism and discrimination when he wore a turban on the job. Nowadays, he often drives with his brothers-in-law, who follow their faith strictly, under all conditions. This makes it easier for Jagjit to maintain an orthodox Sikh lifestyle.

Jagjit married 13 years ago. His wife, Mandeep, comes from a very devout Sikh family. They were married in a temple in Jagjit's hometown in B. C., and their wedding was a mixed mainstream Canadian and traditional Sikh ceremony. It was Jagjit's first experience with many Sikh rituals and marked the beginning of a great change in his life. Slowly, over subsequent years, supported and encouraged by his wife and in-laws, he has moved toward reclaiming his roots, toward rediscovering his heritage. It has not been easy for him. The scars resulting from childhood experiences with racism are deep and sensitive. He struggled for so many years to disassociate himself from his background that it is sometimes difficult to embrace it. As he said,

> "As far as being East Indian, born and raised here, I didn't want that image of people thinking: you're baptised now, having a beard and wearing a turban. You know, before, I wouldn't get caught wearing a beard. Always worried about what everybody else would think. That's the first thing that comes to my mind. What is everybody going to think? They're going to brand me as another East Indian. And that's one thing I didn't want. (August 10, 2002, p. 16)

Although Jagjit's father is proud of Jagjit's decision to return to his roots, Jagjit gets little support from his extended family. He expressed his cousins' reaction as being one of shock:

> Even my cousins, when I wore my turban and I had my long beard, the whole relatives would look at me. They'd say, "What did you do to yourself? What are you doing? Why do you have this beard? That's not you." (August 10, 2002, p. 16)

Jagjit is the only one of all the grandchildren who has embraced his heritage. The rest of his cousins have decided to assimilate into mainstream culture. Jagjit feels that such large-scale adoption of the dominant society is particularly common in British Columbia, where there is a large Indian community. He links it to two factors, the desire of Indian immigrants to fit in and the current situation where parents are so busy working that they do not have time to spend with their children, guiding them and teaching them proper values. Jagjit describes one possible, unfortunate result,

> ...the parents so busy with their own...they just let the kids go and do whatever they want. Buy them a vehicle, they're gone. Next thing you know, you've got gangs. East Indian gangs. I think this last year, sixteen East Indian youths shot....[6] (August 10, 2002, pp. 21, 22)

However, in spite of the hardships, Jagjit finds it immensely rewarding to be learning who he really is. It was a theme he repeated many times during the interview. He believes he has a much stronger and deeper personal identity. He feels he is a

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[6] An essay by Renu Bakshi in Maclean's (Dec. 23, 2002) further described this situation, linking it to a situation where Indian male youth, accustoned to Eastern, male dominated culture, and misled by misguided interpretations of religious teachings, assume the freedoms and privilege of Western Society without taking on the accompanying responsibilities.

stronger person who is now able to look at things differently with a more understanding and mature point of view. He takes deep pride in his heritage of faith, devotion, and courage. He is proud to belong to both cultures. He is enjoys researching his past, the history of Sikh immigration to Canada, and he is continuously evolving a sense of identity that blends his Punjabi Sikh heritage with his Canadian persona.

Jagjit: Narrative context.

Jagjit's story is a story of identity, identity lost and regained. In fact, Jagjit suffered a double loss of identity. First, he lost (or had stolen) his image of himself as a Canadian, and second he realised his loss of (or missed opportunity to acquire) identity as an Indo-Canadian Sikh. As a child Jagjit had assumed he was just "another Canadian". When he reached middle school, he felt his identity as a Canadian was taken from him. The children who picked on him, calling him racist names because of the colour of his skin, made him feel like he did not belong or fit in. At the same time, he did not feel he had an Indian identity. He did not know the language, culture, history, or religion of his ancestors because they were not valued, or taught at home. As he said when I asked him about his relationship to his first language and culture when he was younger, "I never gave it a thought, because you know you're born and raised here and *you knew who you were* (italics mine). You never gave it a thought" (August 10th, 2001, p.9).

Jagjit's opportunity to regain his identity as a Sikh came through his marriage into a traditional and devout family. He is still struggling to find out who he really is.

Jagjit told his story in what I would consider a very Western style. His answers were factual, clear and well organised; brief and to the point ("Just the facts, Ma'am"). He did not provide many anecdotes or examples to illustrate his points.

It was interesting to note how the issues that Jagjit raised resonated throughout the other stories. Although the issues were the same, they were also opposite, like the image we see in a mirror. That was because Jagjit's situation was often similar but opposite to the other participants. I think that was because the other participants came from households where Punjabi had been the major language. I will outline several examples.

The first example deals with the notion of cultural entitlement. Jagjit pointed out that because he had not learned Punjabi language, culture, and religion at home, he had never really thought of himself as Indian or Sikh, "You're growing up actually as a Canadian, not really as a Sikh, yeah, as a title, yeah, you are a Sikh, but not in reality" (August 10th, 2002, p. 9). On the other hand, his sister-in-law, Prabjit, pointed out that although she and her family chose to come to Canada and become citizens, they would never be fully accepted as Canadians. She said, "You will be in Canada forever, and the next generation will be here, but you will not have that title that you are "White Canadian" (October, 12, 2002, p. 36). Both participants chose to use the word "title", but the in either case the meaning was very different. Jagjit used the word title to mean an empty label. Prabjit used it to indicate rank or status. In both cases, it indicated membership in a group they felt was unavailable to them.

Another example concerns Jagjit and his nephew, Gurdev. Gurdev and Jagjit are both three generations removed from India (Gurdev was born in Canada and his mother was born in Africa). However, while Jagjit had always felt himself to be Canadian, Gurdev had no hesitation that his cultural identity was Punjabi Sikh.

An interesting "mirror" image exists between Jagjit and Sharanjeet. Both men were born in Canada. However, Sharanjeet feels confident that he is a 50/50 mix of both

Canadian and Punjabi culture. He also feels free to select what he wants from both cultures; that is, he feels entitlement to both. I believe he derives this strength from his ability to speak both English and Punjabi, and his familiarity with the cultural and religious practices (even though he has chosen not to follow religious traditions) of both. Jagjit, on the other hand, felt betrayed by "White" Canadian culture, and feels he is still learning about his heritage culture (i.e., he is not a fully fledged member). Both men also referred to having to fight when speaking about their relationship to their heritage culture. When I asked Sharanjeet if India felt like home, he said he felt peace of mind there because it was where he came from, and it was not possible to "really fight that, no matter how much you try" (November 5, 2002, p.5). On the other hand, when he was in middle school, Jagjit felt he had to fight for who he really was, which was **not** someone from India (or Pakistan). Jagjit and Sharanjeet also both indicated that when they reached high school, their cultural backgrounds had become interesting and attractive to their mainstream classmates. Sharanjeet indicated that the interest made him feel proud, but also surprised him. It put him in a new position, one in which he became the centre of attention in a positive way. He said, "It was sort of, it felt good, but a the same time, it was like, "Man, I'm the only guy studying White people and White people are studying me" (November 5th, 2002, p. 21). Jagjit also saw the irony in his classmates' interest in his background; he now had something that the others wanted, while the others had something he wanted. Jagjit and Sharanjeet diverged in opinion regarding maintaining Punjabi in their homes with their children. Jagjit felt it was very important; Sharanjeet planned to make it a free choice for his children.

Jagjit articulated a number of valuable insights that resonated through all the interviews. He pointed out the importance of associating with people from one's ethnocultural group in order to reinforce the connection with the first language and culture. He said, "If you don't spend time around people with your own heritage who know your background, you'll be lost, and that's what I was" (October 12th, 2002, p. 12). He also identified the importance of parental example and pressure in maintaining the first language. He said, "I guess it's actually all the parents. Parents don't force it upon you to learn your language, you're not going to bother, right?" (October 12th, 2002, p.3).

Jagjit's Story: I've Had to Fight for Who I Really Am

I grew up in Mission, British Columbia, born and raised in the valley. I am the fourth oldest. I got two older sisters, one older brother, and two younger sisters. They're scattered all over, now. One lives in Toronto, my brother. Two sisters live in Calgary; the one that's younger than I am lives in Mission, and the youngest one lives in Victoria. My father was born here, actually in Abbottsford. Mom came (from India) when she was roughly eight years old. I never met my dad's dad. Dad lost his dad when he was six years old. He had one sister.

We grew up on a dairy farm. There were three houses on the farm. There was our family, my grandparents, my mom's younger brother and his family, and my uncle, Satnam, and his family. There was quite a handful of kids on the farm. We all stuck together. We grew up together.

I spent a lot of time with my grandfather until he passed away in 1977. My grandfather spoke English, although surprisingly, we spoke mostly Punjabi. I was also close to my grandma. She didn't have any school education at all, not even elementary. She is still alive, and she's probably in her '90s. Hard working lady.

My grandmother could never really speak English, just Punjabi; that was it. Mom and dad spoke Punjabi all the time, but everybody else mostly spoke English. It was pretty much just English around the house. With my uncles and that, it was pretty much English. Even talking to mom, I did speak a little bit of Punjabi, whatever I could speak, but it was mixed with English. I could barely speak any Punjabi at all. Actually the whole generation of all my cousins, they barely know their mother tongue.

It was important to mom that I should have spoken Punjabi. When I talked to her in English, she'd always answer back in Punjabi. But I guess mom and dad were always so busy with the work that the brothers and sisters just started speaking English all the time. Actually, it was kind of fun (talking to mom) because even though we'd mostly lost our mother tongue, you'd speak whatever you could in your mother tongue. Then, whatever words you couldn't understand, you'd speak in English. But the most important thing was that mom always understood you. As far as communication, that was easy.

My brother, myself, as well as my two younger sisters never got to India. Back in the '60s and 70's, my dad said there weren't very many East Indians here. It was hard to socialise because there were very few families here then, maybe a couple of dozen families in British Columbia, and that was it. Besides, it was hard to even get a job. The only job you could get, from what dad told me, was a labourer's job. Jobs that the White people didn't want, work in the mines, railway, mills. Those kinds of jobs.

I remember the first day of school because you're actually going away from your family and going to school for the first time all day long. After the first couple of days you make friends, and it was fun going to school. As you got older, it got difficult because there weren't very many East Indians. Like at my school, there were only three of us. As you got older and into junior high school, then you had to fight for who you were, really fight. Get into fights because of the colour of your skin. You had to stand up for who you were, because if you didn't, you'd get beat up every day. I felt a little betrayed because I was born and raised here. I was just like any other kid, any other Canadian. I didn't dress any different; I didn't have a turban or anything. But they can

tell because of your skin colour. They know if you're an Indian-Indian or an East Indian. They can tell a real Indian and an East Indian apart. There was a lot of racism back then. You had to deal with red necks. It made me a stronger person because if I didn't stand up for who I was, it would have been a lot harder for me. You know, that's one thing my grandfather always said, "stand up for who you are." He said, "You treat people the way you want to be treated. You treat somebody bad, you're going to be treated bad."

It got better as we got older. By the time I got into grade 10, there were more East Indians in the area, so it was not hard. The funny thing was, the friends I had made from grade 8 and up, they'd want to come to my place and eat East Indian food. That was so funny because, you know, growing up ... But then they liked my mom's cooking. For me it was the other way around; I wanted to go to their place for supper!

To be honest with you, I stayed away from the immigrants coming in. This is the stupid part. I didn't want anything to do with them, because they didn't know any better. I never gave them the time of day. I guess that was the fear of myself, that I didn't want (White) people to think bad of me. The way I look at it now, it's completely different. If I was to go back and go through school from junior high to high school, it would be a lot different. Now I know who I am as far as my background, my religion, as a Sikh, as an East Indian, who I really am. Now I don't treat people any different.

I've learned the last 12, 13 years more of our East Indian, Sikh heritage than I knew before. It's a shame, you lose who you are. And I know when I was growing up, being with my grandfather, he tried to keep me towards going to the Temple. You know, I did go, because wherever he went, I was with him.

My grandfather was very religious, my mom's dad, that is. He wore a turban. He did have a beard. He was one of the very first settlers to come from India. He came in 1927. Just to get a job, to fit in, he had to get rid of his turban, he had to get rid of his beard, because in those day Asians weren't welcome. He didn't have a choice. But once my grandfather established himself, he did grow his beard back and he did have his turban. That was back in the '60s. He went back to his religion again.

From the pictures I've seen from when my father was young, he had a turban when he was six years old. As he got older he lived in Hong Kong for a while and came back to Canada. I don't know if Dad ever lost that part of it. His father had a turban and beard. He was a very strong Sikh.

You know, before, I wouldn't get caught wearing a turban or even having a beard. I would always worry what everybody else would think. Now, I don't care what people think. Maybe I'm getting more mature; there's no doubt about who I am. Maybe that's what changed me. Even my cousins now, when I wore my turban and I had my long beard, they were shocked. The whole relatives would look at me. They'd say, "what did you do to yourself? What are you doing? Why do you have this beard? That's not you." Well, this is who I am now. Accept me for who I am.

I think if my grandpa was still alive to this day, then he would be very proud. Of all the grandkids, I'm the only one. I actually found out who I really am. The rest of the kids, they lost their roots. I'm proud, I'm very proud of who I am. I'm not 100%, but I'm learning everyday. Especially being along with Arjun and Rajbir. I'm never scared to ask questions. It's really nice to know you've got somebody to talk to. You're not sure. I mean, if you don't ask, you're never going to learn.

To be honest with you, I never used to think about it (relationship to Punjabi language and culture) because, you're born and raised here and you know who you are. You never gave it a thought. You never gave it a thought, it's your life. You've grown up around it and everybody in your surrounding spoke English so you never thought of speaking your mother tongue. I wish I would have learned a lot more when I was younger. I lost my heritage. I didn't know who I really was or my religion as a Sikh. You're growing up as a Canadian, not actually as a Sikh. Yeah, as a title you are a Sikh, but not in reality. Because you're brought up in this society and all you think is you're Canadian. I'm really glad I married into this family because it's made me feel a lot more stronger towards our religion. Being with Mandeep (wife) and her family here, you learn a lot. Like, as far as who you really are. I never knew that when I was younger. I didn't know better because I wasn't taught. If you don't spend time around people with your own heritage, who know your background, you'll be lost, and that's what I was. Because I was just another Canadian. I was lost. I didn't know who I really was.

I'm still learning Punjabi. Everyday, everyday. Mandeep is always correcting me. The way I've been speaking, it's not proper. It's like speaking broken English. It's the way I pronounce it. In some ways it's the short version. But you learn as you go. If you don't make mistakes, how are you going to learn? Mandeep is the one who has encouraged me more and more. She's taught me a lot. Mandeep is lucky to have grown up with proper Punjabi.

It's very important for your kids to know who they really are. We try to speak Punjabi to the kids. Mandeep tries to push, to speak Punjabi, but mostly we're sort of loosely speaking English. It's the first thing that comes out of your mouth. But then I

realise I'm speaking English, and I try to start speaking Punjabi. Automatically English comes out before you think about it. That's not so good, because how can you teach your kids? But that's the good thing about Mami (mother-in-law) She pushes them (kids). It's nice for Mami to push them to talk it. Reading and writing, they go to the temple for that.

Mandeep: Introduction

Mandeep: Interview context.

Mandeep and I have been friends for almost four years. We first met at the temple after a worship service. I was sitting cross-legged on the floor by myself, finishing my share of the *langar*, or communal meal of chapattis, lentils, vegetables and yoghurt, that traditionally concludes the evening prayer and hymn singing, when she and her sister, Prabjit, came over to talk to me. One woman sat on either side of me, and both began talking, at the same time! They introduced themselves and described their family, whose members live in three continents. I remember feeling overwhelmed and delighted by the outpouring of warmth and friendliness, and a little unsure of where to focus my attention. Our first meeting ended with an open invitation to visit, and with an offer from their mother, whom everyone calls "Mami" to sew an Indian suit, or *salwar kameez*, for me. I was not sure what to do. I was a newcomer to the temple and did not have many connections to the congregation. I wanted to get to know them better, hoping for the possibility of friendship with such gregarious, animated women. However, I was not sure about what to think of such unrestrained hospitality and generosity; was it really genuine? Should I take it at face value? An opportunity to find out naturally presented itself a short time later when news came that Mandeep had had a baby boy (Inderpal). I went to visit her in the hospital, and the relationship has continued from there. Mami did stitch a suit for me, too, a beautiful red one, made of warm chenille.

Mandeep usually wears Western clothes at work and at home. When she goes to the gurdwara or to any community function, she wears a suit. Wearing traditional clothes

is both a sign of respect and belonging. Clothes, or material, are a traditional gift in East Indian culture. Wedding ceremonies are preceded by a *milni*, a customary meeting of the bride's and groom's families, where family members exchange garments with their counterpart from the other family. When my daughter and I visited India in 2000, we were presented with gifts of suits when we visited the families of people we knew in Canada. In India, suits can be purchased ready-made or they can be tailor-made.

A woman's suit is a practical and elegant garment. It is composed of a long tunic (*kameez*), slitted at the sides, that covers loose pants (*salwar*) which fasten with a drawstring. A flowing length (4-5 m.) of gauzy material (*chunni*) is wrapped loosely around the shoulders or drawn over the head like a scarf. The garment is generally made of a brightly coloured natural or synthetic material. Cotton is favoured. The tunic is graceful and feminine, yet does not restrict movement. The pants are very practical. A woman wearing them can carry out any activity easily and discretely. They are so loose and comfortable that they can be worn throughout pregnancy, just by adjusting the drawstring. The *chunni* adds elegance to the outfit, and provides warmth and modesty. The style of suits changes regularly, as different fashion trends become popular. Women returning from India bring the latest fashions with them and introduce the new styles to Canada, where they are quickly copied. When my daughter and I were in India, we quickly began wearing suits on a daily basis. We did so because of the practicality and elegance I described, and also as a way of fitting in and feeling like we belonged. I soon came to prefer suits to Western clothes, and wish I had the confidence to wear them in Canada.

An interesting example that shows the importance of clothing as a symbol of identity and belonging occurred to us when we were in New Delhi. I had taken my daughter to McDonalds to satisfy a junk-food craving. We had not realised that in India McDonalds is trendy and pricey and frequented by middle class Anglophiles; it is not the cheap, fast-food outlet it is here. When we entered, we were amused to find ourselves not just the only Westerners in the restaurant, but the only people wearing traditional Indian clothes. All the Indians were wearing jeans. This incident also reminds me of an observation made by a number of participants. That is how life and culture in India is evolving rapidly. It is becoming more Westernised, but it is Westernising with an Indian flavour. Furthermore, a new indigenous culture is also emerging. The India that many of the study participants and their families left 20 or 30 years ago no longer exits in India. It is, however, being preserved in North America in the language, the values, the rituals, and ceremonies, and other manifestations of culture. Jaspreet pointed this out saying,

> I would say probably more things have been abandoned in India…they're thinking they're modernised by getting rid of this stuff, whereas people here, they want to show their children…and even like in our religion…people here respect it more than people there respect it. (November 11th, 2002, p. 7)

Although many East Indian women wear Western clothes in their daily lives in Canada, they, like Mandeep, always wear suits to the Gurdwara as a sign of respect.

My interviews with Mandeep were held in her home in south-east Rostang. She lives with her husband, Jagjit; two children, Rosa and Inderpal; mother, Mami; sister,

Prabjit; and nephew, Gurdev. One of her brothers, Arjun, his wife, Pritam, and their three sons, who also live in Rostang, regularly visit. Her husband, a truck driver, is often "on the road".

When I think of Mandeep's home, I think of a matriarchy in the most positive sense. The household is ruled by the three women, mother and two daughters, who work as a seamless, efficient team. Their personalities and strengths are different, but complementary. They share child raising. In fact, I have heard their children refer to both their mother and aunt as "mother". They maintain the house and grounds together, each doing the work they prefer, and do best. They entertain together, hosting frequent gatherings in flawless synchrony. Rarely do they ever verbally negotiate or arrange logistics, it seems to be done through telepathy. The house crackles with positive energy. Mandeep is extremely outgoing, outspoken, and witty. She can entertain and draw-out even the most reticent or curmudgeonly. Her sister, Prabjit, is gentle and caring. She is the one who listens, reassures, and encourages. Everything thrives in Prabjit's presence, plants, animals, and people. Their mother, whom everyone refers to as Mami, is the supreme matriarch. She is blunt and direct in her speech. She doesn't mince words when she expresses her views on what she believes to be wrong and right. Her opinions, however, are always tempered by her loving and caring nature and deep faith. As her name indicates, she is the universal mother.

I have always admired how this family coexists so harmoniously and graciously. When there is work to be done, all three generations pitch in together, doing whatever part of the job best suits their age, strength, and ability. Projects are often undertaken

with the assistance of Mandeep and Prabjit's two brothers, Rajbir and Arjun, and their families, who live separately, and with friends from the congregation. The atmosphere is positive and enthusiastic, and much is accomplished. I have noted that everyone has a great deal of tolerance and compassion for each other's needs. When the work is done, there is always time to drink tea and talk.

I have observed the family's patterns of language use and found that among the senior (parents and grandparent) generation, Punjabi predominates. When Mandeep talks to her mother, it is almost 100% Punjabi although Swahili words are sometimes used. They are generally household words, for example, the names for various types of foods. I am sure they must be a carry-over from the early days when the family lived in Kenya and Swahili was used to communicate with domestic help. When Mandeep and Prabjit talk, it is usually Punjabi although English words are often thrown in, especially with work related topics (specific terminology, etc.). If I am part of the conversation, it is always English. Occasionally, Punjabi will be used to discuss something private. It is done quickly and unobtrusively. Mandeep speaks both English and Punjabi to her children. She generally doesn't mix the two languages in one utterance, but will speak to them in one or the other language. English is more often used. Mami speaks Punjabi to everyone in the family, and everyone speaks Punjabi back to her. While it appears that the children can communicate well with their grandmother, it is clear that English is their primary language. I have also heard them use a few Swahili words in their utterances. Mandeep and her husband usually speak English to each other while I am there. She indicated that they generally speak English in private as well. When other Punjabi

friends are present, the conversation is usually in Punjabi although sometimes there will be topics where more English is used. The language switching appears to be spontaneous and effortless.

Mandeep and Jagjit have two children. Their daughter, Rosa, is twelve years old. She is tall and graceful with an artistic temperament. She is a talented singer and dancer and likes to draw. Their son, Inderpal, is an extremely active, sociable three-year old. He is the apple of his mother's eye.

Mandeep and her family live in a newer house that is about seven years old. It is furnished comfortably and attractively. The front entrance of the house brings you into a small entrance that leads into the living room. This room is designed to enhance conversation: a chair and two overstuffed black leather couches encircle a large rectangular, glass-topped coffee table. An oak entertainment centre houses a 30-inch television on the front wall. In the opposite corner, there is a gas fireplace with an oak mantle and marble hearth. A large, framed print of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak, rests atop the mantle. The picture windows at back of the living room look out on a sprawling, four-acre lot and beyond to the railway line that runs along the east border of their property. The family keeps several bird feeders and puts out alfalfa pellets to feed the deer. I have seen up to eight deer and birds, ranging from tiny goldfinches to massive Canada geese, in the yard at one time. Two bedrooms and the bathroom lie to the right of the living room. To the left, one step higher, is the kitchen, and beyond that is a formal dining room. The house was built with an open design, so the kitchen looks onto the

living room, separated only by a wall of cupboards and the sink. Someone working in the kitchen can look out over the living room and be part of whatever is happening there.

The kitchen is the heart of the home. There is almost always someone there, cooking, preparing tea, or cleaning. (I am always amazed by how clean the whole house is, considering there are three children living there.) The person in the kitchen is usually Mami, and when I see her, she is usually preparing food for the gurdwara. Like other devoted followers, Mandeep's family has a turn providing a meal for the temple. Their evening to cook is the same evening that I usually visit. Consequently, I have had many opportunities to watch the food being prepared and to learn some recipes and techniques. Mami is in charge of the procedure although she delegates portions of the work to everyone. She moves around the kitchen with a grace born of many years of experience and of mindfulness that this work, or *sewa*, is being done as an offering to God. Nothing is done with haste, and there is not a wasted motion when she cooks. Everything is done carefully, deliberately, and skilfully, from chopping onions into tiny equally sized bits to rinsing the empty milk jug to get every last drop of the precious fluid[7] to mix in the chapatti dough. Everyone in the kitchen must cover their heads with a scarf or bandanna while the offering is being prepared as a way of showing respect and of maintaining the highest degree of purity in the food. Other measures also ensure purity. Before the food preparation can begin, the kitchen must be cleaned, and the pots and utensils washed. The people cooking the food must shower before they begin their work. The dishes cannot be tasted beforehand to check the seasoning. The food is meant as an offering and

must be served as such before it is sampled. Preparation of this special meal reminds me of an opera or drama. It begins slowly and calmly and works toward a grand crescendo when everything is finally ready and packed to go to the temple. By this time, Mami is usually anxious and raring to go, concerned that their tribute might be late. (It never is.) Again, I admire how unceasingly accepting, gentle, and respectful the family is toward their mother even when they realise her recurring agitation is groundless.

Once the offering reaches the temple, it is taken to a special kitchen where a portion is removed for the *thal* (the tray of food that presented to the Holy Book as a ritual offering four times daily). The rest is served to the *behangums* and visitors. Leftovers are brought carefully home to be eaten and appreciated as blessed food.

Our interviews occurred on Friday evenings after the offering meal had been cooked, and the rest of the family had gone to the temple to deliver it, listen to the prayers and hymns, and pay their respects. By the time we talked, Mandeep must have been tired. It was the end of the week. She works full-time as a postmistress in a retail outlet. Her store is very busy, and she works by herself. She has mentioned several times that she is on her feet all day and rarely has a chance to take a coffee break or even stop for lunch. Knowing her, I am sure she puts 100% of her energy into the job, providing excellent service and joking with the customers. In spite of her probable tiredness, Mandeep threw herself into the interview with gusto.

I found it very interesting that although we have been friends for a number of years, I had only known the bare outline of Mandeep's life story, that she had grown up in Africa and India, (as the next section will detail) but I had not known the details or

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[7] Milk, product of the cow, is valued by many Sikhs as it is by Hindus.

how she felt about it. The process of interviewing her gave me a new understanding and deeper respect for my friend, the challenges she has overcome and how she has met life head on, buoyed up by a strong sense of identity and pride that is derived from her family, faith, and community.

Mandeep: Life history context.

Mandeep has lived in three continents. She lived in Africa for 12 years, in Asia for eight years, and in North America for 21 years. In each location, she has created a place for herself where she feels comfortable. She has done so by learning the language, and adopting the customs and habits (at least when she participates in the larger community) while remaining strong and secure in her sense of self, a sense of self derived from connection to her family, faith, language and culture.

During her early life in Kenya, she lived in an Indian community in the capital, Nairobi. The Indian community was fairly large and ethnically diverse, with members from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. It was also economically prosperous; most of its members were business owners. In general, the community remained separate from the majority population of Black Africans. Within the community, each group maintained its own language, faith, and cultural practices. Mandeep describes herself as somewhat of an anomaly in this regard because she was involved in local music and drama activities in Swahili. She also explained that it had been normal for her to have friends of all different backgrounds. She attributes this openness to her parent's insistence that all people be treated equally, regardless of position or background. Although there was a strict rule that Punjabi be spoken at home

and at the temple, she usually spoke English or Swahili with her school friends. It was normal for everyone to speak a variety of languages and to automatically switch to the language best suited to the occasion. She could speak Punjabi, Swahili, Gujariti, and English.

When Mandeep was in grade 6, the family moved to India. They spent one year in Punjab, her father's home state, and about seven years in another northern state. Mandeep described how it had been difficult to adapt to life in India because:

> that's supposedly your own people and your own background, but you're still foreigners because, you know, you didn't, you sort of don't fit because you're raised different in a different country, so you've adapted a lot of things from that foreign country." (September 1, 2002, p. 7)

In particular, Mandeep found it difficult to get used to the caste system, where one group of people was "untouchable" and another highly exalted. Although she had come from a position of power and prestige in Africa, her parents had instilled the belief that all people were fundamentally equal. She also had trouble adapting to the aggressiveness and competition she encountered in her daily life. Shopping in the market, using public transport, all these daily activities involved much more assertiveness and energy than they had in Kenya, where there was a smaller population and more "laid back" culture. New language requirements in school also posed problems. Mandeep was expected to know Hindi and learn Sanskrit in order to pass her grades. She had never studied Hindi before. She explained that "we were learning the alphabets, the ABCs while these kids were reading books, writing lessons, and we weren't even understanding the ABCs of it"

(September 1st, 2002, p. 9). She was able to learn Hindi quickly because of its similarity to Punjabi (the script, however, is quite different) and she got through the Sanskrit.

Although the family continued to use Punjabi at home, Mandeep found herself using Hindi more and more. It was the language of the outside world, so she, "shopped and you dealt with people in only Hindi" (September 1st, 2002, p. 10). "In school, high school, kids, university, kids that you dealt with every day was Hindi. Even if they were Sikh kids, you spoke Hindi" (September 1st, 2002, p. 10). It was a language of prestige, and she found herself using it more and more:

> "Everything is Hindi, and so you don't even realise it, you're so caught up in the whole thing. You know, you just speak and talk that language. In fact, it got to a point my sisters at home, we would talk Hindi. So, it was just second nature. (September 1st, 2003, p. 10)

Ironically, it was in India that Mandeep was in greatest risk of losing Punjabi. After the initial adjustment period, she came to enjoy life in India, make friends and fit in. Hindi and, to some extent, English, were the dominant languages. In fact, many young Sikhs in the area had begun to adopt Hindi as their primary language, and seemed to disassociate themselves from, and even feel ashamed of their mother tongue. Mandeep described the situation, "I had a lot of friends that hardly knew Punjabi. Sikh friends that were born and raised in that city…I think they took great pride in thinking…I can't speak the language" (September 1st, 2002, p. 11). She explained that there had been no outward discrimination against Sikhs, but that Sikh young people had internalised the notion that

Hindi and the dominant culture it represented was superior to their own. She said, "They thought it was just like upper class…or it was beneath them to know their own language. Again, the minority thing is there, or discrimination you can call it. You don't realise it" (September 1st, 2002, p. 11). She attributed it to personal insecurity: "…they're not comfortable or secure in their own family, or their relationship or their home environment" (September 1st, 2002, p. 11) and to the power of popular culture, particularly movies:

> I think because of the movies, too…they play such a huge role for the Indian people in India that it's just the biggest social event for them to make sure they're caught on with all the latest movies and everything, so they always have to be living up to these fantasy worlds that they're not even aware of….maybe they're trying to escape their daily, you know, poverties. (September 1st, 2002, pp. 11&12)

Mandeep attributed her maintenance of Punjabi during this period to two factors, her parents and the temple. Her parents insisted that they speak only Punjabi at home, and they provided a strict and principled upbringing. She explained, "I know both my parents, how strong they were…in raising us and played a huge role in teaching us…Both parents instilled in us a lot of pride" (September 1st, 2002, p. 14). Mandeep feels that her upbringing gave her strength and confidence to be herself in any context. The temple was a bastion of Punjabi, and it was a major part of her life:

> Everybody had temple…and functions and everything was very much Punjabi… religion part of it took a big part of your life, always there…it's

like having parents. You have to have a temple and you have to have an everyday routine that you do. (September 1st, 2002, p. 10)

In the early 1980s, Mandeep and her parents immigrated to Rostang to join her older brother. At that time, there weren't many Sikh people in Rostang, and her brother was married to a (White) Canadian woman, so Mandeep initially experienced feelings of isolation. However, she soon came to appreciate what Canada had to offer, "I liked the ways, the clean, the chances, the education; it's all there. Freedom...that if I worked hard, I could acquire all these things" (September 1st, 2002, p. 21). Furthermore, she could speak English well, so she had no problem getting around and getting things done. She got her GED and found a job at a local retail outlet; soon she was quite comfortable again. She has been working for the same company for more than twenty years now. She enjoys serving the public, and has risen to a position with a degree of responsibility she find challenging, but not onerous.

Mandeep stated that she had not experienced racism until she came to Canada, but that she has not encountered a lot. She stated that the racism she had faced made her prouder and stronger. She stated, "I was never ashamed or embarrassed, but just wanted to prove more to these people who I really am" (September 1st, 2002, p. 3). Mandeep also feels that Canadians have become more aware and accepting of diversity in recent years.

Part of the reason that Mandeep has not faced much discrimination is probably due to her appearance. She is not immediately identifiable as Indian. Mandeep is tall and fair-skinned. People often assume that she is Spanish or Portuguese. Furthermore, she

wears Western-style clothing in her everyday life. It is probably easier for her to feel strengthened by occasional incidents of racism than someone who is more visibly different and has no escape from it.

Thirteen years ago, Mandeep married Jagjit, a Canadian-born Sikh from British Columbia. For the first few years of their marriage, they lived in B. C. Ironically, she found she could communicate with her elderly in-laws more effectively than her husband could. She said, "when I was there…it was very comfortable. I could comfort them with speaking or explaining to them that hey, it's 2 o'clock, or understand the medical or emotional…any kind of terms in their language" (September 1st, 2002, p. 24). Mandeep was intrigued to find that her in-laws spoke "ancient" Punjabi, the same language that Jagjit's grandfather had brought from India almost 80 years ago.

Mandeep and her husband both want to maintain Punjabi in the family. It is very important to them that their children are fluent in all aspects of the language. To this end, she takes them to the temple twice a week for Punjabi lessons and tries to speak Punjabi with them at home. However, she finds it quite challenging to do so. Most of the children's time and learning is in English at school and at home. It is difficult for them to express in Punjabi new concepts, or talk about things they've experienced in English. As well, the family's pace of life makes it hard to find the time to teach/learn the words. As Mandeep's English is almost native speaker-like, it is usually simpler and more efficient for her to use English. Furthermore, Jagjit is more comfortable speaking English than Punjabi, and often without realising, speaks English with the children and his wife.

Mandeep cites religious and practical reasons for her desire that her children maintain Punjabi. She wants her children to remain connected with their roots: "It would be very important for them to learn ...who they belong to, or how, and who they are" (September 1st, 2003, p. 31). She wants them to be able to participate fully in temple functions and to be able to read Sikh religious, cultural, and historical works in the original language. Finally, she sees bilingualism as an important tool in our global world: "...you never know where and when you're going to settle, or what you're going to do...or who you're going to end up with" (September 1st, 2003, p. 31).

Mandeep: Narrative context.

Mandeep is an excellent story teller. She is brimming with ideas and eager to share them. She is dramatic and animated; her speech is filled with energy and emphasis. Nothing is tentative or ambiguous. She is definite, adamant, and convincing. It is easy to just listen as the words pour out and she paints great, colourful verbal pictures. I can compare her style of speaking to a mountain river as it rushes down its course.

When I listened to the interview transcripts later, I realised that there were so many ideas in her utterances that I had not caught them all during the conversations. I reread the transcripts carefully, trying to determine exactly why that had happened. I realised there were several reasons. First was a matter of speed of delivery. Mandeep speaks very quickly. I would hear one idea, become intrigued by it and start to think about it. In the meantime, however, Mandeep would have moved on to something else and I would have missed part of the second topic and maybe even a topic that had been introduced in between. Another reason for my inability to follow I realised, was a

difference in our communication styles. I tend to move methodically through thoughts and ideas, thinking and speaking in fairly complete and detailed sentences. Mandeep, on the other hand, has a more immediate style. If an idea comes into her mind, she expresses it, even if she is currently in the middle of another idea. So, she might start one idea, interrupt it with another, then return to the original idea. The linguistic result is sentences that are started, then interrupted by other sentences or phrases, then completed, often in different verb tenses. I also found that Mandeep would load her sentences with strings of phrases to modify or give different names for things, or with short quotes or bits of dialogue. Then she would deliver them so quickly that I would have trouble following the flow (because I would want to think about each one separately). For example, when describing how Sikh youth in India were losing Punjabi, she said:

> And then because they're following these trends and clothes and fashions and glamour from the movies, they don't even realise that they've adapted that lifestyle and that's why they're doing this. It's you know, just like kids here in Canada, a lot of Indian kids will say, "oh, I don't know my own language, I don't speak it". "Well, why not?" "I just don't know." "So, why like?" It's almost like, you know, they're not disgraced or shamed that they don't, they're so Canadian I guess because they want to fit in so badly. "Oh, I was born and raised here, I just don't speak the language." To me that's a shame. (September 1st, 2002, p.12)

Mandeep would also introduce a number of different characters or ideas then use the same pronoun referent for all of them and I would get confused trying to keep them straight.

Once I had gone through the transcripts a few times, I was able to grasp all the ideas and insights they contained. I could further appreciate Mandeep's analysis and understanding of her own situation and the context in which she lived.

A dominant characteristic of Mandeep's story is her unflagging support and loyalty for her family. She speaks with glowing admiration of her parents and siblings at all times. She always focuses on the postive and omits or glosses over anything that might cast any negative reflection on those she loves. I have noticed this characteristic at other times, too. It is a quality shared by her sister, Prabjit, as well. I think it is the key to their success as a family and the reason why they were able to live proudly and successfully in three continents. It gives them a sense of identity and belonging that transcends the ups and downs of life. The strong family bonds are strengthened by their shared faith and language.

It is interesting to compare Mandeep's experience of growing up in Africa as the child of immigrant parents from India with other participants in the same situation. In many ways, her experience parallels that of Sharanjeet and Jagjit, who were also children of Indian immigrant parents born in a second country. The results bear some interesting similarities and differences. As in the case of Sharanjeet's parents, Mandeep's parents were determined to maintain Punjabi in the home. They also enforced strict rules about

language use at home. Similarly, the two families were devoted members of the Nanaksar gurdwara and followers of *Baba Ji*.

In terms of lifestyle, however, there were major differences. At the time that the Sandhu family lived in Africa, the Asian community was fairly large. Asians enjoyed power, prestige, and prosperity. Most of the families owned businesses which the men operated. The women generally did not work outside of the home and had Black servants to help with domestic chores. Asians tended to live in wealthy enclaves in the major cities and socialised with their own groups. In general, their lives were comfortable, and their social positions were prestigious. It was normal for each sub-group to preserve its own language, culture, and religious practice.

The situation for the Sahota family was quite different. At the time that Jaswant immigrated, there were very few Sikhs and no Sikh temples in Rostang. Although Jaswant and Balbir both had professional credentials from India (Jaswant had a BA and training and experience as an air traffic controller in the military; Balbir had a teacher's certificate and several years of experience), they were unable to work in their fields, and ended up working in the service and manufacturing industries. Both worked outside the home, and continue to work, very hard, combining job, domestic duties, and service to the temple. Through their hard work, they have achieved material success; they own their own home and vehicles, as well as rental property and land in India. Jaswant and Balbir's position in society, however, suffered when they came to Canada, as they lost the social standing due to a professional couple and became subject to racism based on skin colour and ethnic origin. Jaswant faced this challenge by trying to adopt the best of

both cultures for himself and his family, but ensuring that the language, faith, and key values of his culture remained intact.

Jagjit's family experienced the same loss of social status when it came to Canada. The family, too, achieved material success, becoming the owners of a dairy farm. However, the Bains diverged from the Sandhu and Sahota families in their response to pressure from Canadian society. They chose to adopt mainstream values by relinquishing orthodox Sikhism and Punjabi as the dominant language of the home. Of all the younger generation of the Bains family, only Jagjit has chosen to return to his roots.

An element of Mandeep's story that is especially interesting to me takes place in India, when she and her family were living in Dehra Dun, a city in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. This is an area where Hindi and, to some extent, English, are the dominant languages. Hindi is the language of the street and the market, and also the language used in the popular media, particularly movies. Mandeep explained how many Sikhs living in Dehra Dun whose first language was Punjabi, were adopting Hindi and losing their mother tongue. In fact, even she and her sisters were starting to speak Hindi to each other. It seems ironic that after preserving their language in another continent, the family was in danger of losing it when they returned to their homeland. This example highlights the power of prestige to promote or discourage the use of a particular language (Gardiner, 1982; Dorian, 1982).

Mandeep made some interesting observations when we were discussing how it felt to belong to a minority language culture. When I asked her how racism affected how she felt about her culture and language, she replied that she felt stronger and prouder.

Then she went on to say, that she, "was never ashamed or embarrassed, but just want to prove more to these people who (she) really (was)" (September 1st, 2002, p.3). It seems that she feels obliged to win people over, earn their affection and loyalty. She feels that as a member of a visible minority group, she has to work harder and be better than "White" Canadians, in order to overcome their stereotypes and prejudices and prove herself. She said, "It makes me me more secure, and happy, and content, like instead of looked upon like "you can't do this", you know, I feel like, "hey, I can do this better than you" (September 1st, 2002, p.3). Mandeep went on to generalise these feeling to other members of minorities groups she has encountered at work, "I think a lot of minorities, they have a good chance now, and they want to prove it to you, and they want to earn your, I guess, respect. They work harder and proving you" (September 1st, 2002, p.3).

Mandeep is an extremely proficient English speaker, especially considering that English is only one of five languages she has mastered in her life. Not only does she have an excellent vocabulary and advanced grammar and syntax, she also has control over a number of different registers of the language. She can suit her tone to different occasions. I have heard her speech range from very formal (at the hearing regarding the zoning variance to allow Jagjit to park his highway tractor at home) to very informal (when talking to the truck drivers who work for her brother). Only a few anomalies indicate that English might not be her native language. She often omits articles, sometimes uses prepositions incorrectly, and occasionally forms idioms and expressions inaccurately.

Mandeep's Story: I'm Very Happy about Who I Am

I was born and raised in Africa. I grew up in Nairobi, Kenya. My dad was born in India, but he lived in Africa, in Kenya, well, between Kenya and Kenya for 35 years. He was a teenager when he came. Right after high school, he wanted to explore; he wanted to go to the far seas. He went by himself in a little boat. He went into shock, going from India and never seeing a Black person, to all of a sudden he's in a country that's full of Black people. He had stories to tell; he was quite overwhelmed and shocked.

The first big part of his life he dealt with English people. He was fluent in English. He could read and write and speak proper English. You know, in order to cope in Africa, he had to. In his business life he used mostly English. The men who went there were always in jobs, positions, where they had to speak English, being in colonial times. They had to deal with the foreigners, so they were speaking pretty good language. All the people who went there were pretty well-educated.

As soon as I learned to speak, it was my mother tongue, Punjabi, and English. We spoke Punjabi at home and learned English immediately to talk to people. You know, if parents' friends came that were non-Sikhs, you would speak English. It was British English. We had to learn it immediately, and it was just part of life. We spoke Swahili at home, as well, because you had help, servants, that you needed to communicate with. So you immediately learned that, and you had to take it in school. It's the national language. There was a huge community of Gujaratis in Africa. That's a totally different dialect, so we spoke that very fluently. We didn't read or write it, but we spoke very fluently. So we were doing four languages in Africa: Punjabi, English,

Swahili, and Gujarati. You would speak everything without realising. You would just switch gears to whichever language: "Oh, this person doesn't speak Punjabi, I have to speak English."

English wasn't a status in Africa. It was just something you had to use to go to school and read and write. It was just part of life, just another language that you could speak fluently. You were not smart-ass, or whatever, if you were speaking English. It was more insulting that you did not speak your own language, like it was beneath you. How could you not? Most of the time you were speaking Punjabi. If some elder in your community could not speak English, it wasn't, "Oh, they don't speak English, now I have to communicate with them in Punjabi." It was just understood out of respect, out of your religion, out of your community, your social beliefs, that you did the right thing. The language was the right thing.

Mom and dad insisted that you speak Punjabi at home. They had a rule: you speak all these languages with everybody, but Punjabi's your mother tongue. You must practice it at home. So we did. That was normal. Our parents wouldn't answer us when we spoke another language. Most of the time they'd say, "I don't understand what you're saying." "You remember, you're at home, speak your language with us." With both parents, we were encouraged and applauded for speaking the right language. We were taught who we were, our background, our roots. Our parents were educated enough about culture and religion to explain to us who we were and where we came from. We understood and automatically respected. Again, I guess education-wise, the parents were aware of who you were and made you really proud of your background. And we wanted

them to be proud (of us) because they had accomplished so many things and overcome so many things. So we were aware of all that, and they constantly encouraged you or rewarded you for learning your language and were proud of you.

They didn't keep that rule (Punjabi only) through adulthood. Later, we could have an argument with our father in English and not be penalised for it. But as kids, we were constantly reminded. Most of our family friends were Sikh, so we were among them all the time. That helped, too.

We had lessons (in reading and writing) in the temple. You know how they have Saturday, Sunday school? We had that. Volunteer if you went, but if you don't go, you just don't go. No restrictions, but we were in the temple all the time. Like you were so involved with so many functions that you were doing a lot of singing and all that, so you learned reading a little bit, so you could memorise, and you would sing. You had some idea. You were constantly in touch with that.

I went to school in Africa up to grade 6. I studied in English. It was a public school with English medium. Back then, public schools with English medium were more like private schools. Not everyone could afford them, because you had to pay the fee. I could understand everything, right from grade 1. I continued learning everything in English. I connected myself with the school, and I was very active in programs which were very African. I was one of those kids that was so interested in drama and singing, so I was always in those programs. Probably the only Asian kid that went to these places. Some of the parents would say, "Oh, my God. I'm not sure if I want you to go to this part of town at night." Not my parents, but some parents would say that. But I was

exposed to all that, and I was very comfortable. Then I would be switching roles, African dancing, African singing. It was all Swahili.

My classmates were mostly Black. Quite a few Sikhs, but the majority was Black. There were a lot of kids in the class, I'm sure 30 or 40, and the (Sikh) community was not that big. You had a handful of kids from your community in each class. We played with whoever was your friend. It didn't matter. We spoke English most of the time, or Swahili.

Our parents taught us we must respect everybody. Basic common sense, one would say, you respect everybody no matter what and how you are, and what you look like, and how you speak. You know, when we lived in Africa, there were some that could be nasty to the people that worked in your homes, servants. Demanding: "I want that, go get it!" "You are this or that!" But our parents taught us that those individuals are working because of their circumstances. That's their jobs. You must treat them fair and right, honest and sincere. You know, you had vendors that came to your door every morning to sell you fresh vegetables, and both our parents would never discourage or say no to them. Especially when they came first thing in the morning. They both sort of believed that they had to carry their day on the right foot, so they had to buy, even if it was something for a buck or whatever. It wasn't like, "Get lost, don't bother me." It was, "Oh, come in." "Okay, I'll buy this, and hopefully you'll have a better day." "Have you had something to eat?" Both parents were very caring.

After grade 6 we moved to India. We stayed in India for eight years. Then we were exposed to the other part of the world that's supposedly your own people and your

own background. But you're still foreigners because you sort of don't fit because you're raised different in a different country. So you've adapted a lot of things from that foreign country culture-wise. Doing those things, you felt like a fifth wheel.

When we went to India, the first year we spent in Punjab on our farm, our ancestral grandparent's home. We did not realise how our grandfather and ancestors were having prestige as the land owners or the village authority. We realised that, "Whoa, we're upper class, we're somebody". The people are all sort of respecting, fearful of you, and we had that, almost like a royalty. And we didn't even know it. A lot of the people in the village couldn't touch you, the people that were so-called low lives. They were simply sweepers, or cleaners…janitorial jobs. And the background that I came from was like, they had to stand quite a ways from you and never sit beside you. They had to sit on the floor and treat you with such respect, even though you were children. Basically, we could be a brat and get away with it, and nobody could say anything to you. And we soon realised that they won't even call us by our names, some of the people from that background. They would have to address my grandfather and his son and so on, that this is the granddaughter of so and so, and the daughter of so and so. Me and my brother, the two youngest ones, thought it was very cool. And we would go past them again, so they would have to address us again.

And then you soon realise there was so much of caste difference. It comes back to minorities and discrimination. You own most of the land in the village, and you were owning so many villages, and your last name is like status. You're prestigious, and then it goes to your ancestors, and who they were. You are one of those people, so everybody

has to sort of abide by their rules, and they've done it for so many years that now they dare not even speak up to you. For a short period of time I went to school in Punjab, but it was not educational. I did not have to pass any test or anything. I was just sitting and spending time. And they had to cater to me. I had one incident where a teacher had scolded me for misbehaving which I deserved, but I was so appalled because he had addressed me in a sort of rude way. I was so insulted and I thought, "How dare he?" When I came home and told them, it was like no way! This guy could just lose his job because he spoke to me like that. I was only 11 years old. We did not want to stay there. We did not want to stay in those schools. We just went there for passing time while our parents decided where we were going to live.

Once we ventured off, went into the bigger cities, away from the family, they don't care who you are. They don't know what your background is. In common life, on the daily street, the people didn't care. For us, things like getting on a bus, or coping with a crowd at a market, was a big shock. Like the verbal abuse, how could you speak to somebody like that? I think they conduct themselves in a rough and tough manner so that you're not going to mess with them. Please and thank you, you do that, they think, "What a wimp!" If you say, "Thank you", they think you're a foreigner, you're an idiot. How can you get on in this city, this country, without being rude? Get real! You can't cope that way. We were not used to having to bargain on a daily basis, to fight for our right. You just didn't expect it. You go, and you pay for that much. But if you did pay that, you would get ripped off, and you soon realise that's not the right price. You have to knock them down half or more, and that was the reality. I think that's probably the

reason; you get so used to the surroundings, and you want to fit in, and you want to speak fluent Hindi. And you're one of them, and now you talk the language and behave that way without realising.

I never knew a word of Hindi until we went to India. Later, we were in a province, or state, rather, that was all Hindi. Hardly any Punjabi, the language on the street around you was Hindi. We went to a private school with an English medium. But we had to learn Hindi. It was the language must, one subject which we knew nothing about. You know, I had to make up those seven grades to pass the grade. And I think in the seventh grade they start Sanskrit, which is absolutely no way, no how! I don't even know…I think I just memorised a couple of lessons in books. I could never even think of how I did it. I didn't cheat. Just basically memorised it and got through the grade.

Hindi was the one we learned, had to learn. We had to study right from ABCs. It was a crash course because we had to learn, and we had to meet certain standards. We had to take tutoring at home because we were learning the alphabet while these kids were reading books, writing lessons, and we weren't even understanding the ABCs of it. So we learned, we did pretty good, I guess. We spoke very fluent. In school, high school, university, kids that you dealt with everyday was Hindi. Even if they were Sikh kids, you spoke Hindi. You shopped in only Hindi. Just the cool thing to do, I guess. In fact, it got to a point, my sisters at home, we would speak Hindi. That's how common and popular it was. Because you know, the people around you, the movies, have a huge impact on you. And you're in teen years, and it's a big influence. Everything is Hindi, so you don't even realise, you're so caught up in the whole thing, like listening to music, like kids

these days here with the videos. You just speak the language. It was just second nature. I still understand, no problem understanding at all.

I had a lot of friends that hardly knew Punjabi. Sikh friends that were born and raised in that city. I think they took great pride in just thinking, "I can't speak the language." They thought it was just like upper class if they were not speaking it, or it was beneath them to know their own language. Again, the minority thing is there; you don't realise it. There was discrimination for them, themselves among their own people. They're living in another province or state, and they speak that language, so they think they're above you. You know, when you're in another country with other people, but among your own people. I think they're not comfortable or secure in their own family, or their home environment, or they think they're not associated with (their own language and culture). They're embarrassed about it. I guess because most people are Hindus, and maybe (the Punjabis) want to fit in so badly.

I think because of the movies, too. They play such a huge role for Indian people in India. It's just the biggest social event for them to make sure they're caught on with all the latest movies and everything. Maybe they're trying to escape their daily poverty, so they make the movies so fun, and glamorous, and beautiful, that people think that's who they really are. So even if they don't have food to eat, even the poorest person will make sure they're caught onto those movies. And all the people in the movies speak Hindi.

It's just like kids here in Canada, a lot of Indian kids, will say, "Oh, I don't know my own language, I don't speak it." It's almost like they're not disgraced or

ashamed that they don't. They're proud that they don't know. They're so Canadian, I guess, because they want to fit so badly. (They say,) "Oh, I was born and raised here, I just don't speak the language." To me that's a shame. It's like being embarrassed of who you are and who your parents are. You don't want to show where you live or who your parents are.

At home, we spoke Punjabi with mom and dad. And, of course, with the Sikh community, when you saw or met people. We had visitors and functions that were very much Punjabi. We had a big role in the temple. The religion part of it took a big part of your life. It's like having parents. Everybody had temple. You have to have a temple, and you have to have an everyday routine that you do. How strong your faith is, or how much you practice is another thing. But temple is a huge factor in your daily life. We improved through the reading of the Holy Book, so I could cope with it. I can read, but not at the school level or any grade level.

I never thought, I never felt like I was a minority until I came to Canada. That's when at times, somebody made a racial remark, I realised, oh my God, I am different. But until then, minority meant nothing to me, no disgrace or shame. From time to time, I feel like I belong to a minority. I don't think it's a lot. I think people have become more aware of minorities, or they know which group belongs to who. I mean, when I first came, you would hear, like "Paki", all the time, a lot. But now it's not that. Maybe because of Iran and Iraq, there's so many backgrounds, and they know, okay, you're not one of them. I think because of things like Folklorama and things like that, they're becoming more aware. But prior to that, I don't think they knew who you were and

where you're from. "Where is your country?" "Why do you have that on your head?" "Why do you have that rag on your head?"

People think I'm Portuguese, or Spanish. Like even our people, when they come to my store, they'll say, "What's your background?" And I go, "Excuse me?" So I think that's why a lot of Canadians don't know who I am, so they don't treat me that way. If I had darker skin, then they could say, "Oh, you're one of them." Now people even say, "Oh, I thought you were tanned Caucasian." I ask, "What do you mean?" They say, "Oh, you don't have the accent," or "you don't smell." I see often in my work, when people get hired on a job, or something, if they speak different or look different, customers sort of dish it out to them. Like, they're somebody who I can do it to and get away with it.

I feel bad for those people who are so ignorant. They don't know better. When you travel around the world, they know, immediately, the different Eastern backgrounds, but Canadians don't.

I would say I feel proud and strong about my culture. I personally feel that I'm very, very happy about who I am and how I was raised and how I believe and how I feel. And how I think. So I was never ashamed or embarrassed. I think you just have to work hard and prove it to people that you're not who they think you are. People from backgrounds of minorities are a lot more loyal often, and dedicated, and appreciative of their jobs. Better work ethics than a lot of Canadians. They have a good chance now, and they want to prove it to you, and they want to earn your respect. They work harder

proving it to you. I find that a lot of Canadian kids, or White kids, to them, it's like they're doing you a favour. They showed up, what more do you want?

I was finished school when I came to Canada. Actually, I was first-year university in India. But to equate the education, it was not even. I think it was grade 10 or 11. So I upgraded by taking GED. So I was in a better position with jobs or whatever. English was not a problem at all. To me, having five different languages was a great tool and an advantage. I could always speak that language and be a part of that community and that group and that setting. So I was able to belong. Maybe that's why I felt so secure as an individual. I fit in. Coming to Canada it was the same thing. You went to stores, you dressed normal like everybody else did. You didn't dress up different, people didn't look at you different then. You spoke the language; they understood what you said. So you sort of felt that you fit everywhere you went.

In some ways, here in Rostang at that age (about 18), it was very isolated. In India, I was doing all those new things and movies and trends and enjoying it. And all of a sudden you come here, and at the time when I came, there were not that many Sikh people. I think, too, because I came with my parents to my brother, who was living with a Canadian girl, he did not have that many Sikh friends and did not associate with that many Sikh people. And (me) being the youngest family member, he (brother) was very protective.

I liked the ways, the cleanliness, the chances, the education (in Canada). It's all here. Freedom that if I worked hard I could acquire all those things. All I had to do was work hard, study hard. The chances are all there for you, whereas a lot of times, in places

like Africa and India, you don't know. There are so many people, you don't have the same chances.

I was soon quite comfortable, once again. I guess the language was the main thing. And then I guess my nature being outgoing and outspoken, I had no problem fitting in. I was able to tell what I thought and what I felt, so not a problem. At home we continued to speak very fluent Punjabi with him (brother) even though his wife was there. We would not disrespect her when she was there. When the three of us were talking, then it would be English. But if it was one on one, him and me, it would be the language. It continues up to this day. And with the parents, of course.

Now I don't speak that much Punjabi, because I spend most of my day at work. And I'm working and talking to people in English all day. My daughter, the children, they're very fluent in English, and it's so easy to talk and explain to them. You don't even realise that you're continuing the practice from work. And then being married to a person who does not speak very fluent Punjabi, I have gotten used to speaking so much English. I'm ashamed to say I don't speak that much Punjabi anymore. Just with my mother and my family, my sister and brothers; there's no hesitation there. It's natural. And then in my personal life, I keep it balanced with the faith, so I am in touch with people that speak the language. I find it respectful when I'm at the temple to speak Punjabi. Now there's a lot of Sikh people in Rostang, so you can have friends of your age group, and you can talk and visit. There's a lot more people so you fit in once again. I'm equally comfortable speaking English and Punjabi. If the people I'm talking to are very comfortable in Punjabi, it's obviously Punjabi. If they do not speak fluent Punjabi,

and you can't enjoy a conversation, then it's English. I think that I can emphasise or explain myself fully, get a point across in either language without picking a word from here or there. I don't throw in many English words unless it's something we only deal with in Canada.

I would like to encourage my kids to speak it as I did, but I think the lifestyle we have now, compared to my mother when she had us, makes it hard. We're so caught up in this stressed world. I don't speak that much to them, mostly English. It's such a habit and faster. You don't even realise it sometimes. 'Cause when you go back to your daily pace of duties and chores and everything, you just don't have much time to spend with your children overall, and then to emphasise this language, between homework and all. And things you do everyday are based on what you are doing here. They're a lot easier to communicate in the language (English). It's been a language that we're so comfortable in, so you don't realise. You read all the storybooks that are English, or rhymes, or singing, or dance. And all these children's shows and programs on television are in English, so you just tend to carry on without even thinking what you're doing. Before they go to school, they are communicating in Punjabi most of the time. Once they're in school, as they go into the higher grades they lose it.

When we insist they have to, they'll start a conversation (in Punjabi), then, they'll go, "Wait a minute, I can't explain this in Punjabi. Now I've got to tell you in English so you know what I'm talking about". When they are forced to deal with issues that they want to explain in detail, they don't necessarily find all the words. I'm trying to take them to the Sunday School that is offered here. Depending on time, and place in

your life, and then their interest. You don't want to force it on them. You want them to be enjoying it and comfortable, so you encourage it in a positive way that they will enjoy it, whether it be through singing or music. You want to try and keep them in touch. We often watch historical Sikh movies, which are on video. Based on religion and what happened and when. So they can reconnect with their roots and their faith and their language. They do understand. They feel the compassion and the emotion. We often do that; not only for the sake of the language, but also to learn your religion and roots.

I think they're pretty good (at speaking Punjabi). They understand pretty well everything, you know, the common terms of daily need, language at home. The emphasis is on understanding, so at least they have it. But when they talk together, it's always in English. Mami (her mother) is strict with them, but not as much as with us. She leaves most of it to us. She'll just remind us that our kids don't speak the language.

Kids, I notice now, are becoming so into their culture, maybe not as much in their faith. Especially in Vancouver, it's so cool to behave, and wear their attire and not be embarrassed. I can say that from more than a decade ago, when I got married, everything was so English. I remember, his mother asked, "Why can't we play Indian music?" How about every third song?" And we did, and I think it was a trend, and now the majority of it is Indian music. And they soon realised that their Canadian friends thought that was so nice, and it's so much fun and how interesting, and all the positive. I've gone to many functions ever since, and I've seen a huge change. Now the wearing of Indian clothing is so much a fashion. Now they are able to feel not so…outsiders. I

find that in BC, they're quite comfortable if they're going to the temple, to the mall, it's no big deal. Nobody's going to turn and look. The change is here.

I think it's important for the kids to learn Punjabi, to learn who they belong to, and who they are. They will then be able to read history or the Holy Book. Culture, you know, a lot to do with Indian culture or history. There's so much out there that they probably won't have access to in English. It's also important because you never know where you're going to settle, and what you're going to do, or where you're going to travel. So if you have the chance to learn a new language and new skill, why not?

Prabjit: Introduction

Prabjit: Interview context.

Prabjit was the last adult I interviewed for the study, so that by the time we met, I was fairly comfortable with the process. On the other hand, I could sense that she was a little nervous. She mentioned several times that she hoped she would be able to answer the questions correctly. I did my best to assure her that there were no correct answers, that her experience and reflections were unique and would add another important and interesting dimension to the study. Her story turned out to be one of the most coherent and cohesive in terms of a traditional, chronological life history account.

Prabjit and I carried out our interviews in the basement playroom of the home she and her son, Gurdev, share with her mother, Mami; sister, Mandeep; brother-in-law, Jagjit; niece, Rosa; and nephew, Inderpal. We sat on the floor with the tape recorder on a coffee table between us. The basement is partially finished. The outer walls have been insulated and covered with drywall. Prabjit is anxiously waiting for the time when the area will be divided into rooms, providing the family with extra bedrooms for visitors, and for when the children get older and need their own bedrooms. As usual, the job of finishing the basement will be done by her brothers, Rajbir and Arjun, and brother-in-law, Jagjit, and any friends they recruit to help.

There was a couch and armchair in the area, but we chose to sit on the carpeted floor. Around us were children's toys and the family's computer.

I am not sure if Prabjit chose this place to ensure complete privacy or to escape the children, particularly her young nephew, Inderpal, whose inexhaustible curiosity

would make our conversation difficult. In family conversations, Prabjit is usually deferential to other, more boisterous family members, so going downstairs would assure her the chance to tell her story her way, in her own time.

Initially, I had wondered about the value of interviewing both Mandeep and Prabjit. After all, the two sisters are relatively close in age and have spent most of their lives together. I had thought that there might not be enough difference in their experiences to justify the time and effort required to present their stories. However, regardless of how similar the major events in Prabjit's and Mandeep's life might have been, there were notable differences in their experiences. Furthermore, their perceptions and interpretations of what they had encountered also diverged significantly. I think that presenting their stories highlights how unique each individual's perceptions of the world is, and how reality and perception combine and influence each other.

After the interviews, when I asked Prabjit to choose a pseudonym for herself, she laughed and told me just to use her real name. She said that her story was true, and she would stand behind it. When I thought about what her words meant, it struck me that Prabjit has an inner strength and integrity that are not immediately apparent. These characteristics lie hidden beneath her gentle and friendly demeanour, but they are there, and they have helped her deal with the challenges she has met in her life. I also thought about how open she was about the difficulties she faced and how she felt about them. She did not hide them, gloss them over, or put a brave face on them.

The qualities I noticed first about Prabjit when I originally met her were her cheerfulness, compassion, and patience. She would arrive home from work on the days I

was visiting, looking exhausted, but always smiling. If she described a difficult experience or problem she had, she would always manage to find positives and something to laugh about it in it. Stories she would tell would generally stress the qualities of faith and perseverance. I was also impressed with her genuine enjoyment of the children, her ability to listen to them fully as they talked, and her ability to include them in whatever she was doing.

I have observed that the role of children in Indo-Canadian families is quite different from that of most North American families. Most Indo-Canadian families are structured along a fairly strict hierarchy with the father at the top followed by the mother (or adult son) and (younger) children below[7]. Father is, in theory at least, the undisputed master of the house. It is his duty to earn the money to support the family and to make important decisions to guide them. It is the wife's duty to look after her husband and children by shopping, cooking, and cleaning for them. It is the parents' job to make decisions for and give instructions to the children, and it is the children's duty to listen and obey. Children do not speak back to the parents or blatantly question their authority. They owe them their undivided loyalty and obedience. Children grow into their responsibility. It is usually by age eleven or twelve that they are expected to undertake meaningful duties. Even when they become adults, young people expect to live with the family, sons with their parents and daughters with their husbands' families.

Although older children gradually assume more and more responsibility, younger children, are greatly indulged. I have rarely seen parents or older sibling become impatient with little ones, and they are usually given (almost) everything they want.

Indo-Canadian families tend to do everything together--work, shop, visit, and relax. It is common to see an extended family of grandparents and adult children with their children enjoying an afternoon at the park. Teenagers (who have not become "Canadianised") talk with the adults, or play with the younger children, depending on their age and inclination. The age-based friendships that occur in Western society, where children of one age group have friends in the same age group, but not outside of it, do not seem to exist in the same way. Groups of children of varying ages play together.

This is the reality of Prabjit's (extended) family. The entire family gets together several times a week to share meals and socialise, and the cousins all play together and enjoy sleep-overs at each other's houses. The adult brothers and sisters look after each other. They help to do each other's shopping; they carry out household and vehicle repairs; and they help each other with yard work. The trucking business is also a family affair, with the sisters keeping accounts and paying bills while the brothers drive.

In many Indian families, however, the traditional family structure is under stress as the family acculturates to the culture and lifestyle of the dominant society. This is particularly true when some family members embrace the change and others resist it. Children are usually quick to adopt the values and behaviours they encounter in the outside world, and see on television and in movies. Many women become caught between the two cultures as they find it necessary to work outside the home in order to augment the family income, yet are still responsible for housework and child-rearing. They begin to question their role in the family structure. Many men feel a loss of control and authority as they perceive their wives and children rejecting their traditional authority

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[7] See Ames & Inglis (1973/74) for a very helpful description of family patterns in British Columbia Sikhs.

and adopting new ways. The stress and pain caused by these changes is accentuated if the family is not able to communicate fully and openly.

Prabjit: Life history context.

Prabjit was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. She is the fourth child of a family of seven, four boys and three girls. Her father had come to East Africa when he was a young man, in search of opportunities for a better life and established himself in the trucking industry. He married Prabjit's mother (Mami) when she came from India as a bride of sixteen. One of Mami's strongest memories of those early days was of a beautiful, white, dancing stallion that had been given to them as a wedding gift. She also vividly remembers the challenge of having to run a household and learn a new language (Swahili) in order to do so.

Prabjit has happy memories of her childhood, particularly of being part of a large Indian community that was composed of many smaller religio-cultural groups: Gurjaratis, Ismailis, Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs. Although each group strove to preserve its own language, religion, and culture, they were also very inclusive and celebrated each other's holidays and festivals. It seemed natural to Prabjit that she and her siblings just "picked up" the languages they heard around them. Consequently, she had at least partial fluency in Gujarati and Ismaili; as well as full fluency in English and Swahili, which she studied at school; and Punjabi, which is her mother tongue.

According to Prabjit, the various Indo-African communities strove to maintain their languages and cultures because they did not feel at home in Africa. As she said, "They're all different groups, but they wanted to keep the language. Even though we are

born in Africa, we are foreigners there" (October 12th, 2002, p.3). As Prabjit's father used to tell her, "We will not ever be accepted because of our background" (October 12, 2002, p.5).

Prabjit's family held British citizenship because her father had been born a British citizen. He had grown up in India while it was still a British colony, but he was not living there when India gained independence, so he was not entitled to Indian citizenship. He was entitled to citizenship in the newly independent African nation of Kenya, but he chose to maintain his British citizenship. It seems he was quick to recognise that "Africa was for the (Black) Africans". He likely had doubts about his family's long term future in Kenya and was not sure how long Asians would be welcome there, especially since they generally held (economic, if not political) positions of power and prestige that might be resented by the newly self-governing Kenyans. He probably realised that British citizenship was more practical and valuable in both the short and long-term. With British citizenship, he and his family would be entitled to travel to many places in the commonwealth that holders of Kenyan passports might not easily access, as well as having an easier time obtaining visas for other places. British citizenship would also ensure him refuge in Britain if circumstances became difficult for them in Kenya.

A similar situation existed in Malaysia, where I lived for several years in the early 1980s. Malaysia was under British colonial rule until the early 1960s. While in power, the British encouraged Chinese and Indians to emigrate in order to work as labourers and administrators in their regime. Once in Malaysia, however, many of these newcomers entered the commercial world and quickly became successful business people, often out-

competing the native Malays. Realising the potential political and economic consequences of this development, the British enacted legislation limiting the rights of non-Malays, and setting racial quotas in various government-controlled educational and public service institutions.

Deep divisions and tensions based on racial lines existed in Malaysia as a consequence of this situation. Many Indians and Chinese felt like second class citizens, who did not have equal rights and freedoms, and were not really welcome in their adopted home (or land of birth) in spite of the economic prosperity they had achieved for themselves and the nation. Many Malays felt that they were being pushed to the side in their native land.

Prabjit did not mention racial tension, and her sister, Mandeep only alluded to it indirectly, when she explained how her parents taught her to respect all people, even those who worked as household labour. She stated, "and you never treated the servants, (like) minorities that were beneath you; our parents never let us do that" (September 1st, 2002, p. 5), and "You know, when we lived in Africa, there were some that could be sort of nasty to the people that worked in your homes" (Mandeep, September 1st, 2002, p. 13). However, I'm sure that such racial tension must have existed. Black Africans, like Malays, and Aboriginal Canadians (till today), were marginalised and discriminated against in their own land. Given the differences in culture and technology of the time, I am sure that many Asians living in Africa felt that their culture and lifestyle were superior. The prestige that the East Asians felt may partially account for their success in maintaining their language and culture through several generations in Africa.

Prabjit grew up in Africa, feeling like she did not really belong there. Then, when she was sixteen, she moved with her family to India, only to find that although she could speak the language, she did not really belong there, either. Life in India was particularly difficult for Prabjit, more so, it seems, than it was for Mandeep. There were several reasons for this. The obvious reason is the difficulty she faced in school, particularly the corruption she encountered when she tried to obtain a grade 10 certificate. However, I think there may be at least two other factors at play. First, Prabjit was at least four years older than Mandeep when she moved to India. She had already competed grade 10 (which was regarded as the last year of high school at that time) in Kenya, and was ready to move on to specialised training in college or university. Therefore, failure to obtain the grade 10 certificate in India must have been particularly frustrating. Furthermore, she was also at least three or four years past what researchers have identified as the prime age for language learning.[8] This might have made it more difficult for her to adapt to the new culture and language.

I believe the other reason why life in India was particularly difficult for Prabjit was the difference in personality between the two sisters. Mandeep is a person who will make a place for herself wherever she goes. She has a large personal presence and a great deal of confidence. She is not afraid to meet life head on and deal with the consequences of any collisions that result. Furthermore, when collisions do occur, she is more likely to attribute blame outside of herself. She takes a practical, pragmatic approach to challenges and is very results-oriented. Prabjit, on the other hand, is quieter

and more retiring. She has less confidence about her ability to meet external challenges, and is more serious and conscientious about what she undertakes. She is more likely to internalise any lack of success. A major difference in outlook can be seen in their two reactions to having to meet certain standards in Hindi and Sanskrit, languages they had never studied, or in the case of Sanskrit, encountered, before. Mandeep's reaction was: "In the seventh grade they start Sanskrit...I did not cheat, just basically memorised a few lessons and got through the grade" (September 1st, 2002, p.8), and "Hindi was a must...and we had to study right from the ABCs...so we learned it. We did pretty good, I guess, because we were able to read and write it" (September 1st, 2002, p.9).

Prabjit described her experience as follows, "I would be sitting in kindergarten, and now I have to do grade 10 level. There was no way I could manage" (October 12th, 2002, p. 8). "I had to really struggle those years just to get by" (October 12th, 2002, p. 9). "They would not accept that you've done so well, coming from another country, starting from zero" (October 12th, 2002, p. 9). "So I struggled, and I think I got really frustrated and just lost interest in school...I had no intention of going back there"(October 12, 2002, p.10). "You know, I got it in my head that maybe I'm not smart" (October 12, 2002, p.11).

Compounding the difficulties around schooling and language were the differences in culture. It must have been very disappointing for Prabjit, who had grown up thinking of herself as Indian, to find life in India unfamiliar and uncomfortable. It must have been

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[8] Ellis (1994) describes the research that posits a critical age for second language acquisition. Krashen, Long , & Scarella (1979) also argue that ulitimate second language achievement is higher with those who

particularly so in Dehra Dun where her family did not have the status they had enjoyed in Kenya and Punjab, and where Hindi and English (and not Punjabi) were the dominant languages. However, the sense of hurt and failure she had felt were somewhat mitigated when she was obtained a grade 12 standing from a correspondence school in Bombay. Her faith in herself was further restored when she was offered a teaching position in an elementary school and successfully filled the position for two and a half years.

Prabjit returned to Kenya for a year after her stay in India. During that time, she stayed with her older brother and took the opportunity to travel. In 1982, she came to Canada to join her parents and sister, Mandeep, who had come the year previous, and her older brother, Rajbir, and his family. She was too old to be sponsored as a dependent by her family, so she came to Canada on a visitor visa, then applied for permanent residency. Consequently, she had to wait for two years to become a landed immigrant and gain the right to work and study in Canada. During that time, she baby sat for her older brother, Rajbir, and his (White) Canadian wife, Ella, thereby establishing an enduring connection with her sister-in-law and nephews.

Prabjit's first years in Canada were also difficult. Her first job as a clerk at 7 Eleven fell short of her youthful aspirations. She worked there for approximately three years until she married and moved to California. Her marriage was arranged in the shadow of the death of her beloved father, and it was not successful. It ended within a year, and she came back to Rostang, four months pregnant with her son, Gurdev. I was amazed at the inner strength of this quiet, gentle woman and her courage and

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start learning as children

determination to terminate an unacceptable match regardless of the consequences. For many women of all backgrounds, it is often easier to stay in an unhappy relationship than risk social censure, poverty, and isolation.

Shortly after Gurdev was born, Prabjit decided to further her education. As a single parent, she needed a job that could support herself and her son. She took a legal secretarial course at a local business college and completed it with high grades. This success was a great boost to her confidence. She was particularly gratified when she received top marks in English, surpassing even native speakers. Finding a job afterward was more difficult, especially when her son began to suffer from asthma. She finally did find employment and has worked at several office jobs although not in the field she trained for. Ultimately, Prabjit has worked in successively more demanding positions, earning promotions and recognition for the quality of her work. Today, she is a credit officer at a medium-sized business that serves the construction trades. It is a job that she enjoys and finds challenging.

Prabjit has experienced several incidents of racism during her life in Canada. These incidents have caused substantial upheavals in her life. In one case, she was unfairly let go from a job. Although Prabjit recognises that this type of bigotry is not common to all Canadians and is based on fear, it has coloured her view of Canadian society. She believes she has been the target of racism because of the colour of her skin. (Her skin is darker than her sister's skin.) It is hard to dispute her point. She is intelligent and hardworking; she has excellent interpersonal skills and presents herself

very well; and her English is excellent. She is also very attractive. What other reason could there be for the unfair treatment she received?

At the present time, Prabjit has created a place for herself in Canada where she feels at home. She has done this by maintaining her language and faith and blending her culture with the dominant culture to create a comfortable lifestyle. She is hurt by the occasional racism she experiences, especially because it is unpredictable and unjustified. She counters it by maintaining her language and holding on to the religious and cultural practices that give beauty, purpose, and meaning to her life, and being happy to share them with any one who is interested in learning.

Prabjit: Narrative context.

If Mandeep's narrative was like a mountain steam, Prabjit's was like a prairie river meandering gently, but inexorably, along its course. Once she understood the purpose and plan of the interview, Prabjit calmly took control of it and told her story in her own way at her own speed. Her account took the form of a traditional life history. It began logically with her early life in Kenya and continued chronologically to the present day. It was more a factual account than a reflective analysis of her life. She described the events that had occurred in her life systematically and in detail. If I interrupted her story with a question, she would answer the question, then return to her narrative.

Prabjit's methodical and orderly style of speaking made her account relatively easy to edit and shape into a life history account. As I read and re-read the transcripts, looking at both what Prabjit had said and how she had said it, I noticed that although her English was perfectly fluent, there were some non-standard structures in her speech. For

example, she consistently used "did" and the simple form to express the past in affirmative sentences, she used continuous tenses (past and present) when the simple form would have been more appropriate, and she tended to omit articles. I also noticed that she would express ideas through a variety of sentence fragments and phrases, often pausing and waiting for me to rephrase or complete her utterances. This created a kind of a shared dialogue; one in which both she and I contributed cooperatively to construct the narrative.

Many of the participants in this study who are nearly equally fluent in English and Punjabi have indicated that when they speak they can switch automatically and effortlessly between the two languages. They do not have to think about it first. They also mentioned that when they speak Punjabi, they think in Punjabi. When they speak English, they think in English. Furthermore, their style of thinking does not change with the languages. Prabjit indicated that this was the case for her, as well. She said that she uses whichever language suits the occasion better. She choses the language that will make her interlocutor most comfortable, "(the language) would change because I want to make you feel comfortable…and make you fit in" (October 12, 2002, p.21). This fits well with what I know of her personal style and disclosures of other participants.[9]

In terms of the content of Prabjit's story, I was struck by several things. One was Prabjit's account of how she had been denied the opportunity to earn her grade 10 certificate at school because of corruption. The experience had lowered her self-esteem to the point that she had doubts about her ability to learn and do well in school for years

after even though the situation had been not been her fault. The story impressed upon me the harm can be done to people who enter the educational system and, through no fault of their own, are uable to accomplish or achieve what is expected and are made to feel like failures as a result. I think of many adult ESL students I have taught who have been so psychologically damaged as a result of war or trauma in their countries that they are unable to concentrate in class and learning becomes very difficult for them. It is often easy for the teacher to dismiss the problem as the student's fault without really understanding what is causing the situation. Thus the problem is compounded.

When Prabjit later told me about the counsellor who had gone out of her way to assist Prabjit, to the point of instructing the college representative to visit her at home, it reinforced my belief that educators and human service providers who make the effort to understand and empathise with their students/clients and go the extra distance to help them can make tremendously positive impacts on their lives. In this case, Prabjit had undertaken the legal secretarial course (which she had been doubting her ability to accomplish), done well and become motivated to seek meaningful employment in that field. Even though she did not ultimately find employment as a legal secretary, the training gave her the skills (computer, business English, etc.) and confidence she needed to keep trying and to do the type of work she is currently doing.

I was also very impressed by Prabjit's response to the racism she faced. She did not respond with anger, hate, or bitterness. Instead, she chose to wrap herself and her family tightly in a protective blanket of language, culture, and faith. Thus fortified, she

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[9] In a study of 10 Punjabi children and their attitudes to bilingualism and biculturalism, Mills (2001) also found that interpersonal skills and consideration determined language use. Code switching was also

was able to reach out to colleagues and co-workers and share knowledge and information about her heritage. Rather than feed into an escalating cycle of mutual fear and distrust, she has chosen to remain true to her roots and react with friendliness and generosity, thereby creating understanding and acceptance.

The third aspect of her story that affected me was her implied belief that her son, Gurdev, would never really be fully accepted as a Canadian. When I asked her why it was important to her that Gurdev learned Punjabi, she replied:

> Okay, he is born here. He is Canadian, but I think again, it's gonna be...same thing where we grew up. Like we were in Africa, born in Africa, but we were not Africans, we were East Indians with British passports, so I think he is going to be in the same boat, and no matter how smart or how well he would be able to speak English, he would get anywhere with his education, degree, job, but still he will be known as East Indian. Nobody will say he is White Canadian. It'll be always there. I don't think that will you know, change. So it's a good idea to then know your language. (October 12th, 2002, p. 36)

It seems sad to me that after living and contributing to this country for so long, Prabjit does not really feel that full citizenship belongs to her or her son who was born here. She feels that it is only truly the domain of "White" Canadians.

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unconscious and immediate with her subjects.

Prabjit's Story: My Language is the Best Tool I Have

I was born in East Africa, Kenya, and grew up there. There's seven of us. I have two sisters and four brothers. I'm the fifth of the family and middle sister. I have an older and a younger sister. I'm in the middle. We grew up in the city. We spoke Punjabi; that's our mother tongue. If we were home, we'd speak Punjabi in the family, like with my parents. We also spoke Swahili; that's the African language. That's because we grew up in the environment. We had housekeepers to clean, do the chores, so we just picked up the language. We spoke to them in Swahili. We also had to take it as a language in school. I can still read and write Swahili, some words I've forgotten, but yeah, I would be able to. In school, we learned English. All the subjects were in English.

There were a lot of multi-culture people around us, Africa's full of Gujaratis, so we had friends who spoke Gujarati. We did speak Gujarati with our friends. We just picked it up with the friends and then we'd go to our friends' houses and the parents are talking, so we understood. There were also Ismailis; I don't know which part of India they are from, a different culture again, but we could speak a little bit of that, too. It was normal, like the kids, they'd just pick up the language. Nobody would speak English, except for school.

There were all little groups (of different languages and cultures) and they got along very well. If there was a function in the Gurdwara, everyone was invited. Whichever country or wherever they came from, they were all invited. Whatever they celebrate, we all are going to celebrate with them. We are part of them, too.

All the small groups (of different languages and cultures) wanted to keep their language. So the parents encouraged them to speak their own language and speak English only when you're in school or with your English friends who cannot speak any other language except for English. The parents felt that even though we were in Africa, we should know our own language. We are still foreigners here. We're born in Africa, but we're not really Africans. We had British (passports) because the British were ruling Africa when dad first went to Africa. He got British citizenship, so when we were born there, we were British citizens and we had British passports. We really didn't have citizenship or anything like that for Africa. Our background was from India. They (our parents) just wanted to keep their roots. I think that's what our parents felt. My dad always said even though this is your country, where you're born, we will not ever be accepted because of our background. Africa is for Africans, like Black people, not for anybody else. The day might come that we might be kicked out, so it's very important to know your own language. It will be helpful to survive. And we did think it was really beneficial because when we went to India, after Africa, we could speak.

When we did go to India we were not accepted. Even though we were East Indians, and we could speak the language, yet we were not welcome. We didn't belong there either. The people around us thought that we didn't belong because we were born somewhere else and we had British passports. Our thinking and the way we were brought up, and the people that were brought up in that environment, it was two completely separate worlds. The way we were brought up, we were very honest. We would say whatever, very open-minded, but we found that the other people (in India)

didn't do that. Maybe because there's so much corruption, you cannot be honest. You have to survive; to protect yourself, you have to tell lies. We were not used to it. Even my dad, being born in India and going abroad and then coming back to his country, he felt that he could not handle this kind of a lifestyle.

We had a rough time when we went to school because we didn't speak the second language. If we had stayed in Punjab, you know, in dad's hometown, then all the subjects and everything would have been in Punjabi, and English would have been just like one subject. We spoke Punjabi at home, and we did learn reading and writing at the temple (in Africa). Like twice a week, a retired guy took his time to teach whoever was interested. So I did go there. I could read and write, but not at a high level, just maybe the first level. I would just barely read and write. When we went there (Punjab), it was really hard Punjabi, like where I would be sitting in kindergarten, and now I have to do grade 10 level. There was no way I could manage. We stayed just one year in Punjab.

We didn't survive in Punjab school-wise, so we went to Dehra Dun, which is in the north of India. We stayed almost six years in Dehra Dun. We went there because we heard the schools were good, and there were English schools there. But, again we had a problem. I had a problem in grade 10 that I would not be accepted in grade 10 until I pass the grade 10 Hindi level. So, again I am denied. You know, all the other languages, like Swahili, didn't count. Good in English, I could do all the subjects in English, but I had to have second language Hindi at a grade 10 level to pass grade 10. They would not give me a certificate that I had passed grade 10 until I got in Hindi. So we had to get a tutor who came home to teach me Hindi. I had to start right from kindergarten to do that.

I did it in less than one year. My tutor told me that I am as good as grade 11 and 12 level because I worked hard. He came almost three times a week. It was like bang, bang, bang. But the school still did not accept. Because there is again this problem with corruption. So when dad took me the first time, the principal said, "if you pay (so much), we can pass her." My dad could not believe his eyes, that this is what the principal is asking. Dad was shocked that he is asking him to bribe him and I would have a certificate and he said, "I can't believe you're selling education." "You know, my daughter will learn the language. She will get to grade 10 level." So I did that. But because, I guess, we did not pay the corruption fee, they did not pass me. So I never got a certificate showing that I did grade 10. So I had to change schools. I went to another English school, but I had the same problem. They were saying, "No, we are not accepting you. You should pass that level before we can even register you in school." So I struggled, and I think I got really frustrated, and I just lost interest in school. I had no intention of going back there. So I did the 11 and 12 through correspondence school. I just stayed home and got my paper through the mail. I got up to grade 12 and then first year of B. Ed., and then I left. In between, I went for courses like sewing and whatever. I could not make up my mind which way I am going. I think it got into my head that maybe I am not smart.

Then I went to a school; it was an elementary school where my older sister used to teach. I used to go and visit her. My sister was no longer there. I don't remember what I went for. The principal was a British lady who had her own school. She asked me if I could teach the kindergarten children in her school. She needed a teacher, and she

needed somebody like me who was willing to learn and energetic and all that. I was shocked. I told her I am not very smart. I don't have much education. I don't have any teacher training or teacher qualifications, but if you give me a chance I will try. She encouraged me. She said, "No, I think you are the right person, and we want somebody young and energetic who can run around with kids." I think they had older ladies, teachers, for kindergarten. They were close to retirement and they didn't have much energy. The kids were a handful, and they could not manage. And I agreed to that and I started teaching. I did it in English. I did enjoy teaching. I did quite well, even though I didn't have any training or any certificate. I taught for almost two and a half years. They started me with pre-school kids. They had half a day in the morning. I had to do nursery rhymes, playing games, and all that. In the afternoon, I had kindergarten students. After the first year, I believe she had enough trust in me. She knew that I was capable, so she put me in a grade 2 class as a teacher. I proved to her that I can (teach), and they did give me a very good certificate showing that I did this. It's too bad that when I came here I didn't go into teaching. I don't know why.

At that time, we were in northern India where the language is Hindi, but a lot of our friends spoke English in school and even outside. We found that even the parents were talking English, even though they were Hindu. But most of the people around us thought they were more educated, or that they were at high level if they spoke English. Like, if you didn't speak English you were somebody low. There was a famous boarding school there that people from other countries would bring their kids to go to. Like a

boarding school for girls. So there were always a lot of foreigners there all the time and most of them spoke English.

When I left India, I went back to Africa. When I went there, all my school friends and their parents thought that if I was coming from India, I would not be speaking English at all. I would be somebody really backwards from the village. And they were shocked that I can speak English. There were a lot of Europeans there, people from Greece, Germany, Hungary, British...and they all speak English. I remember a friend of mine tried to introduce me to this couple. She said, "Oh, she just came from India, so I don't know if she can talk in English." They were just shocked when I started talking in English. Maybe they had this picture that India is small, or just backward people are there, and they just speak Punjabi and that's it.

I spent just about a year in Africa. I travelled and did get a chance to teach again at an elementary school. But I did not want to do that because I was not going to stay there for good. I had plans to travel around and then come back.

When I came here (Canada), I came as a visitor. I was over 18, so my parents could not sponsor me. So again my time was lost because I could not work. I applied to stay here to join my family; I wanted to live here for good. So, I had to go through that process, and it took about two years. For two years I baby sat (for my brother and sister-in-law). I was looking after Ella's kids. John was only three months old when I came, and then she had Paul. I think they're fifteen months apart.

My brother, Rajbir, did encourage me to take some courses. You know, to proceed, to get into teacher training. He said, "you should go. Go for education. You

can work part time, whatever." But it took so long for me to get status, and I figured that because only Rajbir and Ella were working, I had to support them. It was too much for them to look after everybody. Mom and dad were not working, so it was just Rajbir and Ella, and they had three little kids. So I just thought that my first priority was helping him because he helped me come to Canada. He paid my ticket, and then I was living there for two years for free. I didn't think that was right. I should be self-sufficient and go for my own. I wanted to help out, so as soon as I got my landing (documents), my first job was at 7 Eleven. I was there three or four years.

After that, I got married. So then everything stopped. I went to California. But it didn't work out, so I came back. I was four months pregnant when I came back to Rostang. I stayed home until the baby was born. As soon as Gurdev was a month old, I started looking into further education. I wanted to do something different. I didn't want to go back to 7 Eleven. I wanted to better myself. So, I did go to the U I office and the counsellor suggested I go for a legal secretarial course. It's quite high paying and for a single mom I would get a salary I can live on. I got myself registered, but then I would change my mind. I didn't know if I really wanted to. I think at the back of my mind, going back to school, I didn't think I was that smart that I could do it. I think at that point I needed some guidance, like I needed someone to show me which way to go. I think the counsellor was very good. She encouraged me; she said, "You can do it." She called Nelson College and asked the lady to come and see me at home. She said they would help me and try to get help from the government to pay me extra. Then I didn't understand so much. She gave me all the channels, where to go, how to get a loan from

the bank and all that. So, in July I started. They helped me with the GED. They had a teacher who would help me, but I did it on my own. I would go to see the teacher a couple of times before writing the exam because I didn't want to fail. I didn't want to get hurt again. I passed. I did like almost 80%. In this legal secretarial there was Business English and a lot of harder stuff, and I got very good marks in that, too. I was surprised that after not going to school, I could do it. There were I don't know how many courses we had to take in that whole thing, and I passed all. There were other girls who did not pass their Business English. I was shocked about that. I thought this is their language, and yet they didn't pass. And somebody like me, I had the top marks in Business English. It did give me confidence that I can do it. And I did enjoy studying. It compensated for the time I missed.

After I finished the legal secretarial course, I didn't have any success finding a job. I did go for a lot of interviews. Wherever I went, they would ask for experience. I did ask them, if you don't give me a chance, how do I get the experience? The school, they promised me that I would find a job. When I did speak to (the counsellor) she would say that I have to be really aggressive, and I have to knock on doors every day. But I had a little baby, so it was difficult. Gurdev was about one year when he started getting sick with asthma. So, I didn't have that much time to go looking for a job. Again, I found that I'm not aggressive. I think I started getting a little disappointed. When I got a job, it was only temporary, like when they needed somebody to come in for two months. But I took it because I need to learn the computer, whatever, or I'm going to forget. So while I was working there, I didn't get a chance to look for law firms. And

then Gurdev was sick, so I started to give up on law things. At that point, I thought, "Whatever I get, I'm going to do. I've done my course. I've got my education. I did not fail. I have accomplished."

With my luck, I walked in the bank I dealt with, and the manager came up to me, and he said, "Prabjit, have you had any luck in looking for a job?" I said, "No, I have no luck, and I'm getting really frustrated and disappointed." So he asked me if I want to work in the bank. At this point, I will take any job because I do need a job and I have a little baby to support. I worked as a teller. So I never got a law job because I got a good job, and they paid me really good. Close to home, I could run at lunch time, go see Gurdev; he was with Mami. It was a term position. I think I was lucky. I was there at the right time. I ended up staying 15 months. (The manager) got a promotion, so we got a new manager who was just young. I think he was a racist. I think he did not like me because I was not White. The reason I say that was because there was another Chinese girl who was there at the same time I started, and he started finding things wrong with us. He started saying that I need to have so many customers, and I need to have so much sale in this much time, and I'm not where my goals are. I did get the impression that he's just looking to get rid of me. And I'm like, "Why are you telling me now that I don't know how to do it? I've been working here for 15 months, and now you're telling me that I don't know how to total, or I don't know how to deposit! How come nobody told me? I have had my increase; I have had my performance appraisal done by the old manager." But (the new manager) was quite clever. He knew his way. So he gave me two weeks to leave, that my term is finished; I am not permanent, so we don't need you anymore. He

had done a really good job that it didn't look like....but I knew that he didn't like any different colour people. And I found that in Canada people are more, you know, racist. They do look at you if you're a different colour.

You do feel like you're somebody not that important, somebody with not much value. I thought I would fit in so well; I can speak the language. That's how I realised that even though Canada is such a big country, they're really small-minded. They don't have a big picture; they don't realise what we can achieve even though (this country) isn't ours. We can struggle and be at the same level where they are.

This one person hired me in an instant without qualifications or any experience in banking or anything. One person who was also Canadian; he could see what benefits he was going to have with hiring people from different cultures and different colour. Then this other manager comes, who is younger, who has totally different thinking; he had the ideas that people from other countries are no good, only Whites (are any good).
I don't know if I can say it's a widespread attitude, but it does make a difference. When you keep getting the same attitude then you do realise I am a different colour person, that's why.

Sometimes I think we fit in here; it depends on the people around you. Some are more friendly, more accepting. They will reach out to you. But on the other hand, you could be with this other group where two or four (people) might not...you know, and then you feel it.

With my work now at Consolidated Construction, one of the sales guys, did not like me in the sense that I was different. He always thought why do I (Prabjit) have the

power to suspend his customer. (Prabjit is the credit manager and has the power to suspend the credit of customers who do not pay their bills on time.) It happened once that I did it, and he did not like it, so he tried to make trouble for me. He always came back finding something, and yet the girl who was doing my job before, he had no problems with. Even though I don't want to think about it, I just get the feeling that he cannot accept that (I'm) too smart, and (I) have this power, and I'm a different colour. It's been two years, but I find that he still comes back with that. Maybe he had a bad experience with another woman like me, I don't know.

In general, I think we do feel like we belong, and we have the same living standard or culture style, but I think some of our East Indian people have changed. They want to fit in. They've become Canadians. They've cut their hair. In my opinion, they shouldn't cut their hair just to fit in. Even if they've done that, they're still not accepted as Canadians. They'll still be brown colour and East Indian. On the other hand, I didn't cut my hair. I have my culture. If I explain to my friends, my Canadian friends or co-workers, they have more respect for me, and they're interested to learn. They find it's so neat to know the food, or the culture. I think they accept you more or respect you more if you have kept your culture, and you're sharing (it) with them. You know, I take *chaa*, Indian tea, in the morning and my co-worker asked me, "What is in that big cup?" I told her to try some, and then I would tell her what's in there. So she did, and she loved it, and I had to bring her all the spices. So all the girls at work have started drinking *chaa*. This other girl, she just loves East Indian food, and I go out with her at lunch time to go to East Indian restaurants. She is learning so many recipes! The first time she went to try

the East Indian (food), she had no idea what it was. Then she came back and she asked me, "What is the difference?" She got a lot of information from me and she said, "I want you to go with me next time so you can help me. I would have enjoyed better if you were there." So, it's healthy for both parts to learn each other's background. I find that if you can teach them or give them the knowledge, they can have better understanding, and they'll accept more easily. A lot of Canadians don't have this knowledge. They don't know if they (Canadians) ask them (Indians) are they going to be offended? What will be their reaction? So I explain them, and they say, "Oh, that makes sense. So I find that people can ask me questions, and if I have stayed the way I have (traditional), they feel more comfortable to ask me, "What is the religion?", or "Why are you like that?"

Your friends and people around you are willing to learn, and I think 90, 95% want to include you. I find that they will respect you, but still we will never ever be called White Canadian. You will be labelled as Sikh, or Muslim or Hindu or whatever. Even like all those Muslims who are born in the US or Britain, they're not treated well. We have a friend who's from Lebanon. His father was born here. And now if he has to cross the border, they see (his name) they pull him aside. He has never gone to Lebanon. He has no idea what his country looks like, but his name... He said he got pulled over so many times since September 11th. He could be a nice, innocent person, just like any other Canadian, but he looks different, or his name sounds different, so they're going to pull him aside. It does keep you separated. There is that wall, maybe invisible, but it's still there.

My Punjabi and English are equally strong. I have kept up Punjabi by reading some books in Punjabi and even the newspaper, the Indo-Canadian times. I love to read that because there are nice stories which you don't get in the English papers. I'm also learning new words through prayers and the Holy Book. I would like to learn more because I haven't read the whole Holy Book, and I find there is so much knowledge in there. I do feel guilty that, being born in a Sikh family, and I haven't read all of it. That's my mission.

My writing is stronger in English because of my work and everyday life. In Punjabi, I write letters to family and friends. Or if I like something from the Holy Book, then I'll copy it. Or if I listen to some nice tape in Punjabi I would try to copy so I have something in Punjabi. I want Gurdev to learn (Punjabi), and I'm helping him. I try to help him in writing. He has done the first workbook, and now he's on the second one. I really want to encourage him. He could write to me, too. Maybe we could write something.

When we speak Punjabi at home, I would be thinking in Punjabi. But at work, or with friends talking in English, like now, I would be thinking in English. It just comes naturally. My thinking is the same in both languages; I don't have to switch off anything. Let's say I'm talking in Punjabi, and I'm in that atmosphere because the Punjabi music is playing, and everyone is talking in that language, you do feel like you are in a different environment. And if you are all sitting there, and then a Canadian walks in, I would start thinking all of a sudden in English. Like, I have to not speak in Punjabi because Ann is

not going to understand, so I have to switch. It would change because I want to make you feel comfortable.

English is more powerful in this environment. With Gurdev, for example, if I have to get mad, I don't think if I spoke in Punjabi it would affect him. But if I spoke in English, I would get a good reaction, like - Mom means that! It's serious! Maybe because he doesn't speak or understand Punjabi so well, if I have to give him anything in Punjabi it doesn't sound that good. (The kids) are 80 or 90% in schools and in that (English) environment. So when it comes to home, when you want to give him orders or get chores done (Punjabi) doesn't work. I switch to English to talk to him or explain things. I know that he understands better in English, not Punjabi.

I don't spend too much time talking to him in Punjabi. Because by the time I get home, it's 5:30, so maybe 3, 4 hours. And even when I try to speak to him he doesn't respond as good in Punjabi as in English. I am trying my best, but he doesn't respond that good in Punjabi. I don't know if he will be as good in Punjabi as he is in English, if he and I will be able to talk in (Punjabi) like we did with our parents. Like with my parents, I'm more comfortable talking in Punjabi, even though Dad could speak English. When we speak Punjabi, we do throw in English words, and we have some Swahili words that we are used to using. It's so natural to use that my sister-in-law, who's from Indian background, has picked them up. She gave up on us, she thought, "They're not going to quit; I have to get used to it." Even her kids use Swahili words. Those words just don't go away, so I can't say I'm speaking purely Punjabi at home; I'm mixing.

I don't want to lose my identity. I've been here for so long, but even if I change my style, my everything, no matter what I do, I will still be called East Indian. So I thought it was better to stay that way (traditional) and keep the language because I'm not going to fit in if I just speak English. I'm going to lose my roots and I won't be able to teach the next generation. I won't be able to teach my son what his background is. I think it's important for you to know your language and your roots. That's something I learned from Dad. He always said it's the best tool you can have and the benefit is you can fit in anywhere. I will be able to conduct myself properly, talk to elders; there's lots to learn from the older generation. And then with the family, too, because Mom can't really speak English. She can get around with English, but she's more comfortable talking in her own language.

My son is born here, he is Canadian, but again, I think he will have the same thing like where we grew up in Africa, born in Africa, but were not Africans. I think he is going to be in the same boat, and no matter how smart of how well he would be able to speak English, he will always be known as East Indian. Nobody will say he is White Canadian. I don't think that will change, so it's a good idea to know your language.

Gurdev: Introduction

Gurdev: Interview context.

I was really interested in the prospect of interviewing Gurdev. I find him to be a remarkable young man. He is 12 years old, but he has the emotional and intellectual maturity of a much older person. He has highly developed social skills. He is equally comfortable relating to my 17 year-old son, my husband, or his six year-old cousin. He is very considerate and thoughtful of others and genuinely likes to help people. He contributes a great deal of work to the household, particularly outdoor work. Gurdev loves vehicles and motors and has become proficient at operating the family's large John Deere garden tractor. He cuts the grass, clears the snow, moves sand, earth, and gravel. He can use the attachable rotor-tiller and front-end loader very skilfully.

Gurdev is also an excellent student. He receives high marks (usually in the 90s) in all his subjects, and his teachers always praise him for his love of learning, creativity, and intelligence. He is also commended for his group skills, co-operativeness, politeness, and attentiveness.

Physically, Gurdev is of medium height and very slight. Although his appearance is marked by the *patka* (small head covering) he wears, he is otherwise unobtrusive in his demeanour. Although he does not look bold and athletic, he is willing to take risks and try new things. For example, the summer before last, he and his family visited our home. I took him and his cousin for a ride on our horses, something he had never done before. Most children of his age are satisfied to be led around by an adult while they sit on the horse. Gurdev was eager to ride on his own. After a short lesson, he rode his own horse

out to our 50 acre field and circled it several times at varying speeds. I was impressed by his balance, lack of fear, and ability keep his seat at several different paces.

If I had not known Gurdev beforehand, if I had just read the interview transcript and his answers to my questions, I might not have believed them to be genuine. I might have thought they were too good to be true, that he was just giving the positive answers he thought his family would want him to give, or I might want to hear. But I do know Gurdev well enough to know that his enthusiasm, confidence, kindness, and sincerity are authentic.

Everyone in the family recommended my interviewing Gurdev. They thought he would understand the purpose of the interview and be able to respond appropriately. When I asked his permission to be interviewed, he seemed a little nervous, but also eager to participate. His mother, Prabjit, and I both assured him that there were no right or wrong answers, that he was just to say what he thought. I sat in the dining room to talk with Gurdev, as I had with his uncle, Jagjit, and aunt, Mandeep. It was interesting to talk with him formally, as all of our previous conversations were always informal and usually brief. It gave me the opportunity to get to know another side to this quiet, yet outstanding young man.

Gurdev: Life History Context.

Gurdev was born five months after his mother, Prabjit, returned to Rostang from California at the conclusion of a short, unhappy marriage. Divorce is very uncommon in Indian culture; sometimes a divorced woman is rejected by her family and community. In this case there was no question of rejection. Prabjit had the full support of her family

who value their love and loyalty to each other far beyond cultural dictates or the risk of social censure.

The first seven years of Gurdev's life were spent in the Oaks area of Rostang, where he lived with his mother, Prabjit; grandmother, Mami; aunt, Mandeep; Uncle, Jagjit; cousin, Rosa; and uncle, Arjun; and Arjun's wife, Pritam. As preschoolers, he and Rosa were cared for by their grandmother, Mami. At around age three, they began attending a Montessori nursery school program. There were several other Indian children in the program, and Gurdev remembers sometimes speaking to them in Punjabi. He also remembers that they all mixed up the two languages, Punjabi and English.

As the family expanded, a house was bought for Prabjit and Gurdev in the suburbs. At present, Gurdev lives there with his mother, grandmother, aunt, Mandeep; uncle, Jagjit; and cousins, Rosa and Inderpal. He attends an elementary school in a neighbourhood in Rostang, travelling there by school bus.

As Gurdev indicated, he has travelled a lot in his short life. He has been to England several times. He has visited his mother's oldest sister who lives in a small town north of London, and he attended his uncle Arjun's wedding in London when he was a toddler. He has gone to British Columbia to visit his uncle Rajbir and aunt Ella and their three sons many times. He has also visited California and attended family weddings and other functions there. Six years ago, the family enjoyed a visit to Disneyland and a cruise through the Caribbean. I think, however, the travelling Gurdev has enjoyed the most has been the trips he has taken with his uncles, Jagjit, Arjun, and Rajbir across Canada in their tractor trailers.

Gurdev is very close to his uncles, and I have heard him call his uncle Jagjit, "Dad" on several occasions. I know he deeply misses having his own father. He shares his uncles' love of vehicles and motors. He knows the make, model, and year of every car and truck on the road. He enjoys helping his uncles clean and polish their vehicles, and likes to spend time with them when they change the oil and do other maintenance work. Much of his free time is spent riding his go-cart and dirt-bike in summer and snowmobile in winter.

Gurdev attends language instruction and religious instruction classes at the temple. The language instruction classes are held twice a week. They are taught by the *behangums* in the temple, in Punjabi, and focus on reading and writing. The religious education classes are held on a monthly basis, in conjunction with a full-moon ceremony attended by the entire congregation. These classes are taught in a combination of Punjabi and English and deal with religious history, ethics, and practice. I have noticed that Gurdev takes these classes very seriously and does not take part in the joking and horsing around typical of the other pre-teen boys. He is usually attentive and participates in discussions and question periods. He is almost always able to supply correct factual answers to questions and is quick to infer deeper meanings to a parable. During the arts and crafts period, he alternates between working on his own project and helping the younger children. Again, he takes his work very seriously, and does not make his paper into an airplane or draw cartoons on it!

Gurdev has friends from a variety of backgrounds. He has school friends, children from various Euro or Anglo-Canadian backgrounds, and he has friends among

the children in the congregation. It is interesting that many of his school friends and classmates know nothing about his religio-cultural background. In fact, when I asked him if anyone outside of his family and community encouraged his use of Punjabi, he sounded somewhat amazed as he mused, "Encouragement? They don't even really know what even my language is, what kind of religion I am!" (October 20, 2002, p. 7), then went on to say, "Well, if they don't know the language, how are they supposed to encourage you?" (October 20, 2002, p. 7). From his surprised tone of voice, I gathered that either he keeps his faith and cultural background private, or his classmates have no interest in it. On the other hand, he has never felt that they have discouraged him from speaking his language or practising his faith.

Gurdev and his friends from the congregation generally speak to each other in English, both at the temple and at home. He has one Punjabi classmate in school, whom he occasionally speaks to in Punjabi. He indicated that he sometimes speaks Punjabi with his cousins when he does not want outsiders to understand something. He greatly enjoys having this type of secret family communication.

Unlike the participants who grew up in Canada 20 years ago, Gurdev does not mind if his family speaks Punjabi in public. When I asked him how he felt about it, he replied, "Oh, I don't care. I just talk back in Punjabi. It doesn't bother me that I'm speaking a different language…actually probably better because you can talk sometimes, the people wouldn't hear. That's a bonus" (October 20, 2002, p. 9). This fits with a trend identified by several participants. They described how young people are experiencing a renewed interest in their background; they are starting to rediscover their

roots and take pride in knowing and practising their language and elements of their culture, be it the music, clothing, or history. They are surely creating a new, exciting, and inclusive Canadian identity. Gurdev is not (yet) attracted to the exotic aspects of his background, but he is proud of his family, language, and faith.

Gurdev seems to have all the support and encouragement he needs to maintain his connection to his language and culture. It comes from his family, his faith community, and increasingly, from the outside world, (for example, role models in pop culture, like Indo-Canadian musician Kiran Ahluwalia, even teachers who see the instrumental value of bilingualism.) I hope his participation in this study might even spark some new ideas for him around this important topic.

Gurdev: Narrative context.

Gurdev is the only child whose story I included in the study (although I did interview two other children. They are Rosa, Gurdev's cousin, and Gurcharan, a girl whose family also belongs to Gurdwara Nanaksar. The information I gathered from my conversations with them was not made into life history accounts, but will be included in the thematic analysis)

Our interview was definitely the type in which I asked the questions, and the participant answered them. Gurdev followed my lead throughout the session. He did not take initiative to give additional information or take control of the conversation. I was not surprised by this. It takes a very confident, assertive, mature individual to take the lead in a formal interview and make the story his or her own. Generally, Gurdev answered my questions formally, replying only to what I had asked. On two occasions he

took the opportunity to tell anecdotes to illustrate a point or example. At those times he truly seemed like a 12 year old boy, laughing and telling funny stories. Our interview was relatively short, about an hour long, but it addressed the main points.

I was very interested in several of the points Gurdev made in the interview. I was also interested in the differences between his thinking and the thinking of his mother and aunt, Mandeep. First of all, I was intrigued that he felt himself to be Punjabi more than Canadian.[10] On one hand, it is easy to understand his ethnic attachment. It fits with his family's world-view and way of being. The entire extended family is extremely close and fiercely loyal. They are each other's strongest supporters. They are deeply devoted to their faith and to the temple. The term "pillar" of the temple suits them very well. As such, they follow a strictly prescribed daily routine of religious observances. Gurdev's grandmother, Mami, rises at four a.m. to begin her morning prayers. During the day, she listens to *kirtan* (religious music) on her short wave radio. It is broadcast directly from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India. Every evening at seven p.m., she lights a *jot* (ghee lamp), and every one covers their heads and listens to *rehiras* (the evening prayer). Several family members usually visit the temple on a daily basis, and on Friday evening and Saturday morning the family prepares a meal for the temple. Obviously, Gurdev's felt identity as Punjabi is closely connected to his Sikh faith; after all, when he said he was Punjabi, he also said it was *his only faith,* thereby connecting ethnicity and religion. On the other hand, there is a certain irony involved in this situation. In calling himself "a Punjabi", Gurdev claims ethnicity to a land he has never visited, a land in which his

[10] Mills (2001, p. 390) describes how "an individual may have bicultural competence, but actually may onlly identify with one social or ethnic group".

mother spent only six (unhappy) years as a young adult, and his grandfather no longer wished to call home (on two occasions--as a young man and later as a middle-aged man).

Gurdev's lack of self-identification as a Canadian was underscored when he referred to Canadians as "they" and "them", rather than as "we" and "us". I wondered if his lack of self-identification as a Canadian might have been inherited from his mother's experiences as a child in Africa, where she grew up believing she would never really belong there and with her later experiences with racism in Canada. Prabjit expressed this thought during our October 12th, 2002 interview, stating:

> Okay, he is born here, but I think he will have the same thing where we grew up in Africa, but we were not Africans. I think he is going to be in the same boat and no matter how smart, or how well he would be able to speak English...he will known as East Indian. Nobody will say he's White Canadian." (p. 36)

Although Prabjit has created a comfortable place for herself in Canada, it is clear that she does not feel she is generally regarded as a full citizen with an equal place in society. However, because of her strong identification with her faith and culture, and her place in her community, she does not need to feel a part of the dominant society; she only wants fair and equitable treatment. Prabjit is happy to coexist co-operatively, but separately, from the mainstream. It is quite likely that Gurdev feels the same way. This is evidenced by his academic achievements; his participation in extra-curricular activities; his ease in making friends, especially friends from different ethnic and religious backgrounds; and his willingness to interact with all different types of people. I think it

is people with drive and ambition tempered by caring and consideration that help to make Canada great. It makes me sad that a person, like Gurdev, who at such a young age embodies these qualties, doesn't feel he has or wants full membership in the nation. There is a place for the people who do not feel like "White Canadians", but whose identity is not fully connected with their ethnic or cultural heritage. Young people of all different backgrounds are creating identities for themselves individually and as groups, and surely the name for that identity is Canadian.

It was interesting to note the difference in attitude between Gurdev and his mother (and aunt, Mandeep) regarding his ability in his first language. Although both he and his mother agree that he is learning and making progress, their assessments of his potential differ fundamentally. Gurdev wants to know his first language. He feels he can communicate well now, that his ability in the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is growing, and that he will not forget his language. In fact, he is confident that he will continue to improve, and that he will attain a level of fluency that will enable him to work in his first language as a doctor. His mother, Prabjit, (and his aunt, Mandeep) also feel that it is very important for the children to learn Punjabi, but they are very concerned that the children will not achieve the same level of fluency that they, themselves, attained. Prabjit commented, "I don't know if he will be as good as he is in English…like how we were with our parents" (October 12, 2002, p. 24). The sisters worry that they are not spending enough time promoting and maintaining the language and that English is used too much at home. As Mandeep commented, "all this...(is) in English, so you just tend to carry on without even thinking what you're doing"

(September 1, 2002, p. 36) and "...and the things you do everyday are based on what you are doing here. They're a lot easier to communicate in the (English) language" (September 1, 2002, p.32).

Gurdev's career ambition is to become a doctor. It was interesting to note the reasons for his decision. Like many others with the same aspiration, he wants to help people and make good money. He sees knowledge of Punjabi as a means of both helping people and giving him an employment advantage. His primary reason for wanting to study medicine, however, is to make his grandmother happy. She has been encouraging him to be a doctor, "any kind of doctor" since he was young, and it is important to him to fulfil her dream.[11] He also sees the potential demand for Punjabi speaking physicians in places like Vancouver and Toronto, cities that have large immigrant populations.

Gurdev speaks English articulately for a child of 12. In the interview, his sentences were generally fully-formed and complete. He did not demonstrate the speech mannerisms (over-use of expressions like: "you know"and "like"; rising intonation for affirmative statements; use of inflection to indicate particular "trendy" meanings of words, for example saying: "hellooo" to indicate that another person is slow to understand, etc.) that are common among his age group. The only times his speech was not completely coherent were the times that his thoughts and explanations were not yet fully-formed in his mind. One other, small interesting and endearing characteristic of his speech during the interview was a tendency to repeat, somewhat musingly, a key phrase

[11] I am reminded of Dalbir who told me that every Indian parent wanted their child to be a doctor, comparing having a medical degree to being the president.

or affirmation from his last utterance. It gave me the impression that he was discovering new and interesting things about himself as he described them to me.

Gurdev's Story: I am Punjabi

I was born in Rostang at the Queen Elizabeth hospital and I lived in my old house on Levesque St. in the Oaks area. Now I've moved out near Circle Trail. We live in a newer home with a bigger yard. I've stayed here in Rostang all my life, but I've been to many places. I've been to B.C. many times, England quite a few times. I've been to California many times and all Western Canada in a truck. We stopped at some of the places, but we didn't really tour around or anything. We went to Disney World and the Bahamas. We went on a cruise, so we went to all those islands. That was fun.

I started off learning Punjabi, at first that was all I learned, but soon it was mixed up with English. I learned English by just listening to my mom or anybody who could speak it. People would come in, and you would listen so you could find out what the words were and learn a bit. From television, definitely, I'd learn new words. When I went to school, I would get mixed up. I would say Punjabi words, and people would go, "What?" "What are you talking about?" It was kind of half/half. I kind of knew better Punjabi than English. I was okay in English, but some words I got mixed up.

Now I would have to say I speak more English, because it's all school, but I'm still learning new words in Punjabi. (I'm learning) from Mami, 'cause that's all she speaks. I go to classes twice a week, and I'm learning to read and write and everything. If I listen to *kirtan* (religious hymns) tapes or go to the gurdwara, I learn new words. I listen to conversations when other people are talking in Punjabi with my parents. I can learn from them. I can ask them, and they'll tell me what it means. And from movies, Indian movies and Punjabi movies. In the future, I'm still going to be learning Punjabi,

and it won't take me too long. I'll be reading the *gutka* (prayer book) and all that stuff. If I can get that, I won't forget it. Now, I'm going steadily, and I'm older, and I'm much smarter, and I have a better memory.

I get encouragement from home, from everybody. At the gurdwara, any people there say, "You're good!" "You should do the *path* (reading of the Holy Book), a *role* (a turn reading the Holy Book during a continuous reading)". Mami, always...my mom...*massi* (mom's sister), everyone says I should learn.

I'm not fluent, like I can't read it right off the book. I'm learning new words and the ABCs. If you don't know them all, or you don't know how to pronounce them, you can't learn the new words. I know how to write at least a four/five letter word, depending how hard the word was to pronounce, and I'd just use my memory to get it. I can sound it out because I know all the alphabet in Punjabi, all the sounds. The vowels are kind of hard because I don't know them fully, but I know them all. I could write a word, a couple of words; maybe a sentence or two wouldn't be that bad. It would be kind of hard, but I would try.

I can speak and communicate with people; I can go and just talk with them. Sometimes I say little things that are bad in pronunciation, but still I'm okay. I can translate a little and still have conversations, but nothing as good as English.
I think in my head, sometimes in English, depending on what the occasion is or whatever, but sometimes in Punjabi. It's mixed. I don't know why, but I like it that way. It just goes randomly in my head. It's easy. I don't even realise it. I think if I try to think of (something) in English or Punjabi, then it'll be harder.

It's good to know Punjabi because I am Punjabi, and it's my only religion. If you want a conversation with any other people that know Punjabi, I can just talk to them. Or to translate in an emergency. It's always good with parents to talk at home. It's really handy if you want to learn a second language. And it's your own language, so it's important to have. In the future, it'll be really important. Because with jobs, if you know another language, it's really handy. If I want to move to Vancouver, lots of people, in Toronto, too. If I want to go to India, that would be really nice.

Even though I was born here and everything is here, I still feel that I'd be more Punjabi than Canadian. I feel good, proud to be Canadian. I like Canadians; they're good people and everything. Canada is a good country, but I still think India would be more of my home.

I speak Punjabi about 30% of the time. School takes up a lot of your time. Always at the gurdwara, at home, especially on weekends, I do (speak Punjabi). My mom, Mami, my *massi* (mother's sister) all speak Punjabi. But some of my aunts and uncles on the other side, they might not. They might only speak a little like me. But my family members, it's always Punjabi when they speak to each other. Speaking to me, Mami will always use Punjabi. My mom will sometimes use Punjabi. My *massi* will almost always use English. Even with my uncles, mostly English, but there is some Punjabi. Punjabi is normal, just like English.

School is fun. There's a lot of stuff to learn. Even though there's hard stuff you might have to do, it's always basically good for you. It's going to help you. You make

friends and all that. My best friend is a Muslim. He came from Bosnia. The kids that I am good friends with are all different religions.

I pretty much like all the subjects at school. There's not one I don't like. Sometimes they're easy to do, then I'm kind of bored of them. I like a lot of things. Working is fun; anything to help anybody is fun, playing around the yard, the go-cart, anything like that is fun. I like reading. Computer's fun. I like running, drawing, basketball, activities like that are fun. Television is okay. I have too much of it sometimes. You get bored of it. But I like the outdoors a lot.

I want to be a doctor, any kind of doctor. My grandma has been saying she wants that, ever since I was small, "You be a doctor, okay? You be a doctor and I'll be really happy." So I want to make her happy, and being a doctor is a good paying job, and you help a lot of people. Maybe I want to be a research kind of a doctor. If I went to BC, being a Punjabi doctor, if there's Punjabi people, I could help out. It would be easier.

Nobody has ever discouraged me from speaking Punjabi. The kids, they just look at me in a funny way, like, "What is he talking about?" Maybe they would just kind of laugh at the words. They'd say, "What are you trying to say?" They would never discourage me, never! I would just kind of laugh back because if I did on purpose, just to see, it would be kind of funny. There is one other kid in my class, he's Punjabi. He's not a Sikh, but he's Punjabi. I sometimes speak with him in Punjabi. But the other kids don't even really know what my language is, what kind of religion I am. The kids don't understand; they're English, and they don't know. But the teachers, they're kind of impressed if you can speak a language like that. Some teachers I know would say, "Yes,

go for it!" "It's really good for you and your jobs in later life." Yeah, teachers have encouraged me. They know about my parents; my mom has talked about it, so they know that way.

There have been concerns that I would forget (Punjabi). My mom's always concerned. They don't want to tell me that they're concerned; they don't want to tell me that. So they say, "Let's go (to class)" "You should practice." "Take up the *wadja* (harmonium) and sing. And (mom) will put on the radio (on a Punjabi station), you know, stuff like that.

Now, my family is happy. They're really impressed with what I can do now. I'm much farther that I've ever been before. Even though I've forgotten, I've come back up to here. They always tell me, "You can do it." "Be strong and proud." They've always been happy that I've done good.

CHAPTER 5

Resonances

In this section, I will examine the major themes that resonated through the participants' stories. These themes are directly connected to the participant's experiences of language loss and maintenance. I identified the themes on an ongoing basis as I conducted the interviews, transcribed the tapes, constructed the life history accounts, and wrote the introductory sections. They were easy to recognise because they appeared repeatedly throughout each participant's narrative (see Bertaux, 1981, pp. 187-88, re: point of satuation). The themes are family relationships (e.g. Dosanj & Ghuman, 1997; Kouritzin, 1999; Mills, 2001); personal and cultural identity (Dosanj & Ghuman, 1997; Ghuman, 1997; Mills, 2001; Guardado, 2002) religion, faith and community (Cole & Sambhi, 1998; Dosanj & Ghuman, 1997); connection to India (Chadney, 1980) and education (Kouritzin, 2000). The issue of racism appears throughout the themes (Ames & Inglis, 1973/73; Chadney, 1980; Cole & Sambhi, 1998; Dosanj & Ghuman, 1997; Garcha, 1992; Ghuman, 1997). The themes that recurred in my study correspond closely to factors identified by Kaufman (Dorit Kaufman, personal communication, April 12th, 2002) in her 15-year longitudinal study of first language loss in three children.[12]

I will describe the themes and discuss their pertinence, refer to relevant literature, and draw on the words and ideas of the participants to illustrate my points. In this

[12] The factors Kaufman identified as contributing to L1 loss or maintenance include: demographic concentration, prestige of the L1, level of education of the parents, the parent's L2 proficiency, religion or its absence, literacy practices in the home, support of the L1 community, and linguistic expectations in the home.

section, I will also include the ideas and insights of three other participants whom I interviewed, but whose stories I did not write.

Two of the participants whose stories were not developed into life history accounts are a brother, Ranjit Singh Johal, and sister, Gurbachan Kaur Johal, who are also members of the Nanaksar congregation. Ranjit is older. He came to Canada ten years ago, when he was 16 years old. At that time, he had finished high school in India (grade 10). Once in Canada, he completed grades 10, 11, and 12, and went to college. Ranjit is completely fluent in all aspects of Punjabi, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. He speaks English very fluently, but with a marked accent. His grammar, syntax, and usage also show a Punjabi influence. His world-view is largely Indian, with strong Western influence in terms of appreciation of individual freedom and rights, and critical thought. Ranjit speaks English at work, and Punjabi at home. Most of his spare time is spent at home with his new wife who recently arrived from India, or at the temple, where he and his family play a very active role.

Gurbachan is twelve years old. She was born in Canada. Although her first language was Punjabi, English is now her dominant language. There are different views on her ability to speak Punjabi. Her brother believes her communicative competence is limited, and she is losing the language. He and his parents also share concerns that because of the gap in language and culture, "she's going to be totally Canadian kid. They think they're going to lose her…she's going to be making her choices, and sometimes kids make some wrong choices…and they're kind of fearful that she'll ruin her life…" (November 1st, 2002, p. 24).

Gurbachan, however, expressed a different view. In the interview, she averred that she could speak and understand Punjabi with complete fluency. She also indicated that her parents would make all the major decisions that affected her. Confused by this apparent contradiction, I asked others in the community who know her about her proficiency in Punjabi. They all agreed with Ranjit's opinion that it was limited. I assume that she told me otherwise in order to protect her family's dignity (*izzat*). She knew how important it was to her family that she maintain the language and culture. By telling me that she was fluent, she was conforming to the cultural value of bringing honour to her parents and being loyal to her family.

Ranjit's and Gurbachan's father and mother, Harbans and Khulwant, are limited in their ability to speak English. They have mixed feelings about how their daughter will grow up in this society. As Ranjit explains,

> They consider both sides, right? They're not that critical. They don't want to make a decision right now whether she's going to live like a Canadian kid or whether she's going to be like, you know…just listen to your parents. Like Indian kids do that, just obey the laws, obedience, right? And everything just "yes, yes, yes". (November 1st, 2002, p. 24)

The third participant to be included in the thematic analysis is Rosa, Jagjit and Mandeep's daughter. Time limitations prevented me from writing a complete life history and introductory account for her, but I feel her views are important to include. Let's begin with an examination of our first theme.

Family Relationships

As with people everywhere, family relationships are central to the lives of the participants of this study. (Kouritzin, 1997; Mills, 2001; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard, & Freire, 2001; Wong-Fillmore 1991). However, it seems that family relationships are of particular importance to people of Indian descent because of their cultural values and lifestyle (Ames & Inglis, 1973/74; Chadney, 1980; Dosanjh, 1977; Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998; Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1997; Ghuman, 1997; Mills, 2001).

Duty[13] and honour are two important cultural values that have important implications for family relationships. First, however, it is important to clarify the different connotations of the word "duty" in Eastern and Western contexts. For Westerners, the word "duty" means an obligation, moral or legal, that one must carry out. Currently, it usually implies something done without joy or pleasure, something we have to do, but would rather not. (For example, if we help someone, and they thank us, we politely answer, "It's my pleasure". That implies that we are helping freely and willingly; it is our choice to help; we are not helping just because we have to. If we were to respond to "thank you" with "It's my duty" instead, the connotation would be completely different. It would imply that we did not really want to help, but we had to, and we would hurt the other's feelings. I think these connotations exist because the Western world is individualistic. We do not want to have to depend or impose on others. We like to think we are independent and self-sufficient.)

[13] The Compact Oxford English Dictionary (2000) defines "duty" as, "a moral or legal obligation, to a task required as part of one's job" (p. 340).

For Indians, the word duty has a different meaning. Duty is not connected with pleasure and choice. One's duty is simply one's job or responsibility, and it is to be done, and done with pride. To be given a duty is often an honour because it indicates recognition of one's ability and responsibility. (I think the situation used to be similar in the Western world.) Two examples of duty in the Indian context come to mind. When my daughter and I were in India, we stayed with a former student and his family. After we had been there a few days, he directed us to give our laundry to his daughter-in-law. I was reluctant to do so, because I did not think she should have to wash our clothes. I could do it, especially since it all had to be done by hand. I tried to insist on doing our laundry myself. First, the daughter-in-law refused then she just smiled, took the clothes from me, and said: "It's my duty." With those words, she stopped the debate. She was not doing our wash to be particularly kind or helpful. She did not feel hurt, or upset, happy, or impressed by my offer. It was simply her **duty** to do the washing and she wanted to get on with it. Another case occurred with the same family, when my daughter offered to help the grandson (about 11 years of age) to carry something home from the market. "No," he firmly responded, "it's my duty." It was not welcome or appropriate for someone else to do it.

Helping, caring for, and looking after one's family members is the primary duty of an Indian person. Every member of the family has his or her own responsibilities (or duties) to do that enable the family to function successfully. Proper completion of duty is a major source of pride and self-esteem and serves to bind the family together. I heard the word duty used several times by the older participants. For example, Jaswant and

Balbir spoke of it being their duty to teach Punjabi to their children and grandchildren. Balbir said it had been her duty to come to Canada to live with her husband. "Duty" was used far less by the younger generation. I think of Sharanjeet who said that he did not care what language his family used at home, "whatever makes them happy." To me, this is far more characteristic of Western thinking.

The term honour, (*izzat*) in an Indian context can be compared to the East Asian concept of "face". It means dignity, pride, and respectability. It is the duty of all the members to protect and enhance the family honour. They do so by displaying respectable behaviour; love and loyalty to the family; and through achievement. The achievement can be in the realms of education, occupation, business, or other recognised pursuit. For example, Dalbir spoke of the importance of educational achievement in her family, "if your son or daughter is educated, your parents will get as much respect as the person" (March 19th, 2002, p. 4), and Gurdev talked about how his grandmother wanted him to be a doctor.

As discussed earlier, Indo-Canadian families live together and do everything together. The family is at the centre of everything; the needs, joys, and pains of family members take precedence to everything else. Several generations and branches of a family often cohabit, as in the case of the Sandhu, Gill, Sahota, Dhillon, and Johal families. They share domestic responsibilities. A number of participants (Jaspreet, Jagjit, Sharanjeet, Gurdev, and Rosa) spoke of being cared for by their grandparents when they were young and using Punjabi to communicate with them.

Elders, like grandparents, are highly respected in Indian culture (Ames & Inglis, 1973/4; Chadney, 1980; Cole, 1998; Mills, 2001). Such respect is not limited to one's own grandparents, but shown to all elders. In fact, the term *mata ji*, which means mother, is used for all elderly ladies. One important manner of showing respect to elders (particularly those who have limited proficiency in English) is by speaking Punjabi to them. This was a point made by all the participants in the study. By using Punjabi, the speaker honours and shows deference to the elder's linguistic and cultural background. The speaker can also use correct terms of address and an appropriate register. Furthermore, by speaking Punjabi, the speaker can avoid compromising the elder's *izzat* (honour) by potentially putting them in a position where they are limited by their language ability.

Sharanjeet explained how his ability to speak Punjabi not only enabled him to communicate respectfully with elders, but also reflected positively on his own parents. Having children who can speak Punjabi properly enhances the parent's position in the community. (On the other hand, if the children do not speak Punjabi, it can be a source of embarrassment or shame for the family – they have become "Canadianised. See also Kouritzin 1999). By speaking Punjabi, Sharanjeet was able to both make his parents proud of him, and increase their social standing. This is true in Canada and overseas. Many of the participants in the study maintain close connection with relatives all around the world, and often visit and attend family functions, like weddings. It is especially important that the younger generations be able to speak Punjabi at these times, because they are events that reaffirm familial bonds and status (Mills, 2001). These events often

occur in India, so on a practical level, it makes day-to-day life easier if the individuals speak Punjabi (or Hindi).

The use of the Punjabi does more than bind grandchildren and grandparents and bring honour to the older generation. It serves to bind the whole family to each other and to their shared roots; it gives a sense of belonging and shared identity (Mills, 2001). Jaswant was especially strong on this point saying,

> The family relations are like the links of a chain. If we break one link and it don't work, the chain won't work at all...having links with the elderly people, your parents, grandparents, is most important...you need the language because they don't speak English...you don't want to break any links for the reason number 1 then they don't know who is who...if we break that link, we're left alone. (November 25th, 2001, p.5)

Balbir, put it very simply and movingly, "...the language, everything, everything is there" (October 18th, 2002, p. 13). Gurdev pointed out that Punjabi was a secret language that he and his family can speak together to communicate private information when they are out.

Along with grandparents and other elders, parents are a vital source of knowledge and guidance for young people. If parents can communicate their wisdom in their native tongue, it will be passed on more precisely and more authoritatively. Furthermore, parents will find it easier to maintain their positions of authority. Children will feel more secure, because they will feel that their parents are in control. They will learn to see the world as their parents do, and they will trust that there is order in the world.

If in-depth communication between parents and children is not possible, parents can lose the ability to socialise their children to become honest, responsible and fully-functioning individuals with a strong sense of personal and cultural identity (see Wong Fillmore, 1991, p. 343, for a particularly eloquent description of possible consequences of language loss). This is exactly what Harbans and Khulwant fear in their relationship with Gurbachan. They are worried that if "she adopts Canadian culture, (we) won't be able to help her...because of the language.... If (we) have any doubt about how much truth she is telling, it's going to be a mystery kind of a thing" because they are not adequately fluent in English, and Gurbachan is not adequately fluent in Punjabi" (Ranjit, November 1st, 2002, p. 25).

When a family communicates in the first language, they are asserting a link that can bind and strengthen them in difficult times. This family bond is particularly important in Canada, where Indo-Canadians are often targets of racism. Many of the participants (Dalbir, Prabjit, Jagjit, Mandeep) described how they had experienced direct or indirect racism, and how damaging it had been to their self-esteem. These incidents (or atmosphere) of racism may account for why Dalbir and Jaspreet used to be uncomfortable about speaking Punjabi outside of home, and why Punjabi was never strongly enforced in Jagjit's home. Dalbir and Prabjit made the point several times that no matter how long they live here, how well they speak the language, or how successful they are, they will never be "White Canadians"[13]. At the present time, neither Dalbir nor Prabjit want or need to be "White Canadians". Through the language and culture they

share with their families, they have created a safe and comfortable place that is connected with the mainstream, but still separate, where they fit in completely. As Dalbir said of the current generation of young Indo-Canadians, "everybody from my brother's generation has an idea of where they are and what they want and stuff...they have their own thing...they don't have the need to fit in" (July 12th, 2002, pp. 1 & 2).

A similar, but opposite, example of this phenomenon occurred with the Sandhu family in Africa where they were also part of a minority group. The family, in common with most other Afro-Asians, also kept their language and culture. In their case, however, their motivations were somewhat different. The Asians in Africa were in a position of economic power and social advantage. They felt their language was more prestigious than the native Swahili. That may have made it easier for the family to maintain Punjabi in Africa. (A sense of political insecurity most certainly also contributed to their desire to maintain their language and culture.) It is interesting to note that when the Sandhu family lived in India, where Hindi was more prestigious, Mandeep noticed that many Sikh youth abandoned their language and adopted Hindi. Mandeep stated that even she and her sisters began speaking Hindi at home.

Dalbir explained how the "balance of power" has changed in many Indo-Canadian families. Traditionally, in India, children feared and obeyed their parents, because the parents were in control at home and outside. They spoke the dominant language and they were conversant in all aspects of the culture. Now, the parents fear the children because the children are more culturally and linguistically at home in Canada

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[13] When Dalbir and Prabjit talk about "White Canadian", I believe they mean people who are part of the dominant society, whom they feel are fully recognised and accepted as Canadian. They believe that

than the parents are. They worry that the children will adopt Canadian values and behaviours that are inconsistent with, if not antithetical to, the values they hold. They also worry that if they push their children to follow the traditional ways too hard, their children will rebel and leave them, figuratively and literally. In Canada, it is normal for children to "leave" their parents, emotionally during adolescence when they are establishing independent identities, and physically, as young adults when they leave their parents' home to establish their own home. The emotional separation is normally temporary. Once the child has become "adult", he or she usually comes to appreciate his or her parents and reconnects with them. If Indo-Canadian children, who have lost their language and whose parents are not very fluent in English, rebel and separate, they will not have a shared means of communication when they do reconnect. This can mean a lifetime of at least partial isolation from those who are most important to them. (In this study, there is one exception to this hypothesis. Jagjit did not speak Punjabi fluently when he was young, and his mother was not completely proficient in English. He said, however, "she always understood".)

It was sheer determination (duty) on the part of the parents (Jaswant and Balbir, Mami and her husband, Dalbir's parents) to speak Punjabi in the home that ensured the younger generation maintained their first language outside of India. (Pacini-Ketchbaw et al., (2001) document Latino families in Ontario who also describe their strategy for maintaining Spanish in the home as not accepting the use of English as home. Mills (2001) reports the same for third generation Asian families.) Jaswant said several times that it had been difficult to constantly insist that the kids speak Punjabi at home, "We

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"brown" people like themselves will always be excluded from this position.

tried our best to speak to them, and they speak with us in our own language. But it was really hard!" (November 11th, 200, p. 10). Jaspreet explained how her mother, Balbir, "would never answer us back in English, she always used to yell at us to speak Punjabi" (September 26th, 2002, p.4). Dalbir experienced a similar situation, but in her case, she lived with two sets of aunts and uncles as well as her parents, so there had been a group of adults consistently enforcing the use of Punjabi at home. Mandeep and Prabjit concurred that the circumstances in Africa had been similar, too. Their parents had been very firm that the family spoke only Punjabi at home. Sharanjeet does not remember being pushed to speak Punjabi at home, but did "pick it up" because it was always being spoken around him, and he needed it to communicate with his grandparents.

Dalbir mentioned how important it was to her that her parents were flexible and willing to compromise regarding language and culture. She stated that generally, when she is pushed too hard, she rebels, so she was glad that her parents did not push her to use Punjabi outside the home. She also appreciated that they accommodated her desire to blend in at school by ensuring she had "nice" Western style clothes, and allowing her to wear her hair in a fashionable style. These factors had made it easier for her to fit in. Other participants also appreciated their parents' flexibility. Jaspreet mentioned that her father liked to speak English when they were out and about. She and her father, Jaswant, both pointed out how the family had celebrated Christmas, Hallowe,en, and a number of other non-Sikh holidays so that they could enjoy the best of both worlds. Mandeep explained that she and her siblings were encouraged to use a variety of languages outside

of the home when they were growing up in Africa. It had been normal for them to use the language that was most comfortable for the people they were associating with.

It also seems while most participants were forced to **learn** Punjabi by their parents, they chose to **maintain** it on their own terms and for their own reasons. Jaspreet took a renewed interest in Punjabi during early adolescence when her spiritual life became very important to her. She taught herself to read the daily prayers and Sikh Holy Book. Dalbir learned to read Punjabi on her own so that she could read stories in the popular media. She also taught herself to read the Sikh prayers. Sharanjeet is still expanding his Punjabi language capabilities in order to enhance his ability to perform music in the language.

All of these participants are now completely fluent in Punjabi. They are grateful to their parents for having ensured that they learned it and can now appreciate the discipline it required to enforce "Punjabi only" households. They cite a variety of reasons why it is important to them to know their first language. Dalbir feels her language is an important part of her personal and cultural identity; it is deeply connected with a set of values that she appreciates and wants to pass on to her children. In other words, it is a link that will bind her to her parents, and her children to her. Jaspreet appreciates how Punjabi connects her to her family, her community, and her faith. Prabjit is particularly happy to have her language to bind her family. As a result of negative experiences in Africa, India, and Canada she feels there is really no one place where she truly belongs. Jagjit is in the process of discovering his "real identity" and his connection to his ancestors through language, culture, and religion. Sharanjeet is glad he

knows his language so he can communicate with family and colleagues in India, as well as being able to sing in his first language. It is particularly through his music that he derives a special, unique sense of identity. Participants also cited instrumental advantages to knowing a second language, such as employment and travel opportunities, etc.

It is interesting to note that the parents relaxed the ban on English when they felt their children had a firm grasp of their mother tongue. Consequently, Mandeep and her father liked to debate in English, and Jaspreet currently has heart-to-heart conversations with her father in English. She also writes him letters in English. (It seems that the mothers are stricter in their adherence to Punjabi only.)

The Canadian-born participants, Jagjit, Gurcharan, Gurdev, and Rosa, speak basic Punjabi. However, they are all endeavouring to learn more. Gurdev and Rosa go to Punjabi language classes at the temple twice a week. Mandeep explained how Jagjit is also taking a renewed interest in his cultural heritage. She explained, "Like for Jagjit, I mean he would now love to go to India and see what it is, who he is, and what his people were all about" (September 1st, 2002, p. 39), and

> ...he is becoming more aware because his grandfather was one of the first people to arrive on that boat that came to Vancouver...that was first turned away...Jagjit sees it in archives, and when they talk about it, he's really keen to see...always searching for clues... wanting to know the connections...where we are and how we did it, you know, despite all the upheavals." (September 1st, 2002, p.40)

English, however, will always be the third generation's dominant language. As Prabjit explained, even though Gurdev is "pretty good" at understanding Punjabi, she speaks English to him when she really wants results. She explained that,

> If I have to get mad at him, I don't think if I spoke in Punjabi that would affect him. But if I said it in English, I would get a good reaction, like, Mom means that...if it was in English, then it's...more powerful. (October 12, 2002, p. 23).

Fortunately, Prabjit is a very proficient speaker of English.

It is also interesting that although Gurdev has expressed a strong desire to learn and maintain Punjabi, English is the language that "means business", even at home.

Currently, the parents of younger children born in Canada (Jaspreet, Dalbir, Mandeep, and Prabjit) anticipate it will be a big challenge for their loved ones to learn and maintain Punjabi.[14] They think it will be harder for them to maintain Punjabi in the home than it was for their parents. They cited a number of reasons for their belief, including the predominance of English around them (more people in the family speak English, and speak it more fluently than when they were young), the fast paced life, and less time to interact in Punjabi with the children, and their increased comfort level in Canadian society.

Interestingly, the younger Canadian-born generation feels much more optimistic about their abilities to speak and maintain Punjabi. Furthermore, the original "settlers",

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[14] Dosanj and Ghuman (1995) conducted a study of child-rearing practices among 40 second generation Punjabi families in the UK. They found that use of English in the home by children of the third generation had increased by 85% compared to the experience of their parents. Many second-generation parents were choosing to send their children to community/religious schools for instruction in the L1 and culture.

like Jaswant, also feel optimistic that Punjabi language in Canada will continue. As he said,

> As long as we go to *Gurbani*, our Holy Book, we have to have Punjabi and Punjabi speaking people. They are not going to end...It will never break; it will never stop…So long as the people…got the links with the old culture, the culture and the language will be alive, it's not going to die. (November 25th, 2001, p. 3)

Finally, it seems that participation in the study caused a number of the participants to reflect more deeply on the role of their first language in their lives, and to consider more carefully their feelings about and motivations for maintaining Punjabi in their own families.

Personal and Cultural Identity

Our idea of who, or what we are, or our identity, is usually not a completely static concept. It is, to some degree, relative to where we are, what we are doing and whom we are with. It also combines our various roles in life, with different aspects coming to the fore at different times. Our self-identity changes as we move through life's passages, gain experience, learn, and grow. Our identity is very closely tied to our background, our language, and culture (Norton, 2000; Mills, 2001; Guardada, 2002; Rincento, 2002). How we see ourselves in terms of our appearance, abilities, and personality, and how we feel about what we see is our self-image. Our self-image is also greatly affected by how others see and react to us, and how we perceive their reaction.

As social animals, human beings want to belong to a group. To feel different and separate from others is usually negative and disturbing (unless it is a positive difference, different in a way that is considered trend setting or avant-garde). Those who do feel different often try to change their behaviour and/or their thinking in order to fit in. Sometimes they look for others who are like them so they can form their own group where they are comfortable. (See Toohey, 2000, for an interesting discussion about how identity and second language acquistion researchers have been influenced by the thinking of Soviet pyschologists like Vygotsky and Bakhtin, and are beginning to examine langauge learning as a sociocultural rather than individual process.)

Issues of self-image, identity, and belonging are very important to the participants in this study, as they are to all people. In many cases, it appears that these issues have been compounded by racism, because the majority of the participants are visibly different from the mainstream of "White" Canadians (See also Puar's 1995 article about identity construction among second generation Sikh women.) As such, many have experienced the painful and damaging effects of racial prejudice and discrimination. They have been made to feel that they do not fit in, and they do not belong. As Dalbir said, "People are going to judge you by what they see...first it is your skin colour" (March 14th, 2002, p. 10) and "I think it really brought you down, like subconscious-wise and self-esteem wise" (March 14th, 2002, p.2), and

> You know, I think what it was, it was you were the only brown person there and you stood out. I mean, out of the whole school, from grade 1 to

6, you're the only brown person, I mean, of course you're going to stand out...it really knocked down your self-esteem." (March 14th, 2002, p. 2)

Although personal identity involves more than cultural identity alone, cultural identity is of primary importance in the lives of the participants, and for the purpose of this study, so we will examine it in that light.

Almost all of the study participants believed that they belonged to both Indian and Canadian cultures. The degree of connection they felt to either culture differed among the participants. It was often, but not always related to land of birth. Balbir felt almost entirely Indian. Jaswant explained that although he, himself, felt Canadian, he felt he was not seen as such by the dominant society. He described how "even though I'm Canadian, I'm here for little more than 30 years, my appearance, they will think "oh, I'm Indian, not that I'm Canadian...they might be thinking I'm the newcomer" (December 9th, 2001, p.3). Gurdev, on the other hand, described himself as Punjabi (although his feelings about Canada and Canadians are positive). Participants also placed themselves in different positions at different times in their lives. For example, Jagjit and Dalbir had tried to disassociate themselves from their cultural backgrounds when they were younger. Both had experienced name-calling and other forms of abuse that had made them feel different, unwelcome, and inferior. Jagjit responded by getting into fights with the kids who tormented him. Dalbir withdrew. She did not participate in the extra-curricular activities she was interested in like drama club or sports. She was also reluctant to be seen in public with her parents if they were speaking Punjabi or wearing traditional clothes. Jaspreet described feeling awkward as a child when wearing a suit, or if her

parents spoke Punjabi in public. She also mentioned feeling ashamed sometimes because her mother's English was not as good as her friends' mothers was. All of these individuals report that they now feel more comfortable with public displays of their culture. They are proud to speak Punjabi publicly, and the women often wear suits outside of the home. They no longer care what other people think. Jagjit still feels a little uncomfortable wearing a turban publicly. In his case, however, the turban is something new, and not something he has returned to. (His grandfather had cut his hair and stopped wearing a turban for a while, and his father never wore a turban.) Sharanjeet felt he belonged equally to both cultures, but when I asked him how he felt when he was in India, he replied: "...it sort of gives you a peace of mind at the same time. 'Cause you know, that's where you came from and you can't really fight that no matter how much you try" (November 5th, 2001, p24).[15]

All of the participants agreed that there were aspects of both Canadian and Indian cultures, particularly cultural values, that they regarded highly. These values play an important role in their lives, and they wish to pass them on to their own families. Jaswant was especially strong on this point, saying a number of times that the reason for Canada's greatness is that we have the opportunity to incorporate the best of the many different ethnic groups that call Canada home. He said, "we have adopted the different countries cultures to be the best one in the world...we respect all cultures, all religions, all people from different countries. That's why we're on top all the time" (November 25th, 2002, p. 8).

Most of the participants (Jaswant, Sharanjeet, Ranjit, Dalbir, Jaspreet, Mandeep and Prabjit) agreed that Indian family values, especially the value of respect for parents and other elders were very important to them, and they wanted to maintain them and pass them on to their children. Sharanjeet commented, "the respect thing, that's a must" (November 5th, 2002, p. 24). Jaswant stated, "this is the way we have to tell our kids...how to talk respectfully, how we talk to the other people." (October 21st, 2001, p. 15). The women, in particular valued the aesthetic elements of Indian culture: movies, music, dance, clothing, and jewellery. Jaspreet commented, "When somebody says culture, that's it, that's what I see...dancing and having fun" (October 10th, 2002, p. 13). And they want their children to enjoy and appreciate it, too. Dalbir stated, "I want her (daughter) going to those Indian parties, I want her dancing to that Indian music" (July 12th, 2002, p. 21). Sharanjeet, in particular, valued modern forms of cultural expression, especially those related to entertainment, movies, television, and music. For Mandeep and Prabjit, it was important to know the history of their homeland (India) and the history of their family as well. Everyone agreed that Indian food was a very important part of their cultural heritage. Everyone, except Jagjit, prefers Indian food and cooks and eats it daily. Everyone agreed that the vehicle for maintaining these cultural elements was the language. As Sharanjeet said, "...language, obviously is the biggest one for (maintaining) tradition and culture. 'Cause you know, that's where you came from. You can't really, you shouldn't really forget that" (November 5th 2002, p. 6). It almost seemed to me that having the language entitled the participants to claim the culture, that

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[15] It is interesting that Sharanjeet felt he had to fight his past, and where he came from. From the context of the conversation, it seemed that Sharanjeet might have struggled with his ethno-cultural background in the

without the language, they would not be considered "real" Punjabis. In fact, several participants (Dalbir, Jaspreet and Sharanjeet) proudly claimed that they could speak Punjabi like native speakers, and that when they were in India, people sometimes thought they were native born. Dalbir and Jaspreet mentioned that their Punjabi was the pure village Punjabi, different from the Punjabi spoken in big cities that tended to be mixed with Hindi and English. The pride attached to fluent and accurate performance of the heritage language by the participants seems similar to the pride (or longing) attached to proficiency in English by newcomers to Canada. In this light, language proficiency can be seen as the key to membership in a culture or subculture. The majority of participants in this study hold the key to participation and belonging in two worlds.

Many of the participants indicated that their counterparts (classmates, etc.) in the dominant culture had little knowledge of their backgrounds. Sharanjeet and Gurdev, in particular, mentioned that no one realised they could speak a different language or asked them about their language and culture. I am not sure if the others were just not aware of their background, or not interested. When others did express interest, however, several of the participants (Dalbir, Prabjit, Jaswant) were proud and happy to share their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Prabjit sees knowledge as the key to understanding. She thinks many "White Canadians" are interested in and curious about other cultures, but afraid to ask,

> be more easy to And they don't know if they will ask them, are they, you know, going to be offended, or what's going to be...their reaction...so I explain them and they say, "oh, that makes sense", so now they have

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past, but has since come to terms with it.

> better knowledge, they can, you know, have better understanding and they'll accept. (October 12th, 2002, p. 34)

The main Canadian values that the participants subscribed to were those related to openness, individual freedom, and opportunity. When I asked Sharanjeet what was important to him about Canadian culture, he explained, "...what I like is everything out of it. You know, it gives you that sort of frame of mind where you can be open about whatever" (November 5th, 2002, p. 8). Jaswant also expressed appreciation of the openness of Canadian society and said that openness was a value he had adopted. He commented on the difference between India and Canada: "and Indian culture, when I look...years back, it was so congested. You cannot do anything at your own. You don't have any choice. You have to listen your parents and do it" (December 9th, 2001, p. 4). When I asked Ranjit what he had adopted from Canadian culture he gave a similar opinion, "Here you can be whatever you like to be, not to make somebody else happy. That's what it was like back there....here you have the own control of your life" (November 5th, 2002, p. 10). However, he also pointed out a drawback to this freedom and autonomy,

> Here we are totally individual...all the responsibilities are mine, working to pay the bills, and taking care of my sister...and I'm still one person. Sometimes I don't have time for myself at all. Over there, you are sharing everything...that's why you're less stressed, less things to worry about. (November 5th, 2002, p. 11)

Mandeep liked the opportunity to get ahead in Canada "...the clean, the chances, education, it's all there. Freedom of, yeah, that if I worked hard, I could acquire all these things. All I had to do was work hard, study hard, you know?" (September 1st, 2002, p. 21). There is an interesting paradox in the participants' opinions. The openness and freedom they like about Canadian culture comes at the cost of the group cohesion, respect, and obedience they value in Indian culture, and vice versa. Perhaps they want a balance between the two.

Participants made a distinction between being Canadian and being "Canadianised". Being Canadian meant being a citizen, being a member of the country. It had positive connotations. Becoming Canadianised had a very different meaning. Becoming Canadianised universally meant adopting what were perceived as negative aspects of the mainstream (involving cigarette, drug and alcohol use, and relaxed sexual mores), at the expense of the heritage culture. It also meant losing the language and not maintaining ties with India. (Ames & Inglis (1973/74) discuss common perceptions of Canadian culture by British Columbian Sikhs.)

Jaspreet realised the complexity of our pluralistic society, and made the following observation about Canadian culture, "I've never really thought about what the English culture is; I always think about what the Punjabi culture is, so it makes me feel like, "I'm in the English culture, I don't know what it is!" (October 10th, 2002, p.14). I think this is probably true for most cultures, when you are immersed in them you realise how much diversity exists in them, and it becomes difficult to generalise or ascribe limits or boundaries.

Another interesting admission made by many of the participants was that when they were younger, they felt no connection to new immigrants from India. In fact, most had little tolerance for them, and often tried to avoid them. Dalbir and Jagjit had felt uncomfortable because they wanted to fit in with the mainstream and not be different, and the newcomers, who were so obviously different, represented what they were trying to disassociate themselves from.

This situation seems sad to me because it indicates how young people of "visible" minority backgrounds are made to feel alienated from others who are of the same ethnicity as they. The behaviour (avoidance, disassociation, etc.) that resulted from their sense of alienation was destructive to both the newcomers, who probably felt hurt and rejected, and the perpretrators of the behaviour, who likely experienced damage to their sense of selves.

Fortunately, the people I interviewed got past that stage. As an adult, Jagjit regrets his former behaviour and feels he has the strength and confidence to respect and welcome newcomers. At the time, Dalbir found it easier to interact with newcomers when asked by a teacher to help them. It's interesting to note how this official sanction changed her thinking and made it "okay" to mix with others of her own cultural background. As she could speak Punjabi, she was also able to be of assistance.

Jaspreet described how children from another Indian family would not speak to her when she was young. She talked about how awkward it was when they would not say "hello" or join them in games, even though they all knew they were of the same heritage. It is a very difficult situation when people feel they will always be different from the

dominant group that they want to join, and then find they are also very different from the group that represents their heritage.

Belonging to two cultures also means living in two worlds, which can be a difficult experience. Jaswant and Dalbir were especially strong on this point. Dalbir explained how when she was younger, "we were expected to act a certain way at home, and we still do it...whereas outside, we act totally different" (March 19th, 2002, p. 14) and "you didn't fit into either world, so you just kind of went along with both of them" (July 12th, 2002, p. 1).[16] She went on to say that this is no longer the case for the younger generation, like her brother, who was born in Canada. She felt that, "for them being outside and being at home is the same" (March 19th, 2002, p. 14). Sharanjeet also did not feel that he lived in two worlds.

An important point made by several of the participants was how the younger generation of Indo-Canadians are creating their own place, their own sub-culture in Canada, one which combines elements of both cultures, and also involves something unique (Dosnajh & Ghuman, 1997, 1998; Ghuman 1997; Mills, 2001). They cite several reasons why this is occurring. First of all, there are more Indo-Canadian youth now. The increased numbers of Indo-Canadians have made it easier for the dominant society to accept them, that is, the "White" Canadians have gotten used to them. Also, there is strength in numbers; there are enough Indo-Canadian youth that they can create their own society; they don't need "White" friends. It also seems that they have made a strength out of what was perceived as a weakness by the older generation. They do not fit either

[16] Paulston, quoted in Mills (2001) cites feelings of anomie by children who grew up in a contact situation of two cultures. They feel they don't belong anywhere.

culture well, so they are making something new, vital, and exuberant. The fruit of this blending can be seen in music that combines instruments, rhythms, and melodies from many different cultures, fashions that incorporate elements from various ethnicities, and the current demand for foods from many different countries in many trendy and "mainstream" restaurants.[17] The creation of something vibrant and vital at the interface of two cultures can be compared to highly productive marsh areas that often exist where land meets water. It is in these low-lying wet areas that life and diversity abound. There one can find both creatures of the land and water, as well as beautiful beings unique to the marsh (e.g., Rosaldo (1989) discusses these in terms of cultural intersections and borderlands).

Religion, Faith, and Community

Perhaps the strongest recurring theme among the participants in the study was the importance of their faith and the place of Gurdwara Nanaksar in their everyday and spiritual lives.

The families who participated in this study are very devout members of the gurdwara and followers of its leader, Saint Gurdev Singh Ji, who is also called *Baba Ji*. At present, *Baba Ji* maintains 16 gurdwaras around the world. Two are in England, two in the United States, one in Kenya, two in Canada (with a third currently being established in Vancouver) and nine are in India. *Baba Ji's* branch of Sikhism is quite different from most others. It is much more orthodox. At every gurdwara, *Baba Ji* has

[17] Mills (2001) also describes situations where a third culture is created as a result of contact of two cultures. She quotes Zentella (1997) who describes a new variety, know a Nuyorican, and formed by the blending of New York and Puerto Rican cultures (p. 390). She also quotes Ghuman (1996) who reported

followers, or *behangums*, who lead the twice-daily worship services (3 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.), which consist of hymn singing, prayer, reading of the Holy Book, and sermons. They also perform services for regular Sikh holidays and remembrances called *gurpurbs,* which mark such events as Guru's birthdays and martyrdoms, and assist with private services which are held in a separate hall in the gurdwara. Most other gurdwaras are run by committees who employ *granthis* (similar to a minister) to lead worship and look after the Gurdwara.

The *behangums* follow lifestyles similar to monks. They are not allowed to cook for themselves (following the teaching of an earlier saint who forbade his followers to prepare food and decreed that God would provide for them), so members of the congregation take turns bringing meals to the gurdwara. These meals are served as a ritual offering for the Holy Book, and feed the *behangums* and any other visitors or guests.

The participating families all have regular turns cooking for the gurdwara. As well, the men all have important regular roles in reading the Holy Book whenever a public continuous reading, or *Akhand Path*, is performed in the gurdwara. All the adult members of the families do *roles*, or take turns reading the Holy Book to assist with private functions. For many months, Ranjit's father, who is retired, came to the temple every morning at 2 a.m. to perform prayers as part of the regular service. Jaspreet regularly cleans, paints, and does many other domestic duties at the temple. Jaswant and his sons, Parmjeet and Sharanjeet regularly do repair and maintenance work. Jaswant is

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the development of a "hyphenated" identity that combines British customs and social practices without rejecting the traditional Punjabi way of life.

on the executive committee of the temple (a lifetime appointment made by *Baba Ji*). The Sandhu brothers, Arjun and Rajbir, have also contributed many hours of service. On a practical level, it is easy to see much of everyone's time is devoted to serving the temple and *Baba Ji*. Because of their faith in *Baba Ji*, and their belief that service, or *seva*, accrues karmic reward, the study participants derive a great deal of pleasure and self-esteem from their work.

The temple also functions as a sort of community centre. Most Sikhs traditionally believe it is their spiritual duty to visit the gurdwara daily. So there is always opportunity to meet and visit over tea and snacks in the community kitchen, or *langar*. The gurdwara is also a venue for visiting religious musicians to perform, and religious films and videos to be aired. As well, the *behangums* hold regular Punjabi language classes and music lessons for young people. They often function as ministers, dispensing advice on spiritual and practical matters. Jaspreet conducts a monthly religious education program. All in all, the gurdwara provides a spiritual and cultural home for its congregation, a place where people can come, contribute, and receive fellowship, serve, and feel they belong, and are needed, and important.

Several people have told me that *Baba Ji's maryada*, or doctrine/practice conforms exactly to the *maryada* of the 10th Guru, who lived in the 1600s. Consequently, the value system and world-view on which it is based is very traditional. Followers are encouraged to be initiated, wear the five Ks or symbols of Sikhism, and follow a daily routine of worship. In order to worship properly, followers must be conversant in Punjabi/*Gurmukhi* (the written form of Punjabi). Knowledge of the language is required

to understand the hymns and sermons and read the prayers, and perhaps most importantly, to read the Holy Book and to understand Babi Ji when he speaks. It is also considered respectful to speak Punjabi in the temple, particularly to elders and *behangums.* Families who belong to the gurdwara take a great deal of pride in the extent to which they have maintained the language. Jaswant believes it is critical for Sikhs to maintain Punjabi in order to maintain their spiritual lives. He said,

> If they lost Punjabi, they're losing the culture; they're losing the religion. If they don't know Punjabi, they can't have religion. If they don't have the religion, there is nothing left...without religion, there is no purpose. (December 9th, 2001, p. 12)

W. O. Cole, a British religious scholar, has spent most of his career studying Sikhism. He has identified a problem affecting Sikhs in the diaspora (Cole & Sambhi, 1998, p.198). That problem is language loss. He states that young people are not learning Punjabi, consequently, they are not able to understand or participate in worship. This situation, he predicts, will reach a crisis, as the younger generation becomes older. They will be unable to take over leadership and worship duties in the gurdwaras.

A partial solution to the problem lies in the translation and transliteration of the Holy Book and prayer books. Many Sikhs (Garcha, 1992) do not believe the Holy Book should be translated because it was actually written by the Gurus themselves, and to translate it would mean adulterating it. Consequently, they consider translation a sacrilege. Furthermore, most of the current translations tend to be literal, and lack the flavour and beauty of the original, which is written in poetic form. The transliterations

are inaccurate, as Punjabi contains many sounds, which do not exist in English. Therefore, someone reading a transliterated copy of the Holy Book would not pronounce the words properly and would not be able to reproduce the rhythm of the poetry; both are vital to the meaning and aesthetic value.

Jaswant explained his views on why complete fluency in Punjabi is required for worship as follows:

> I have read (the *Guru Granth Sahib* or Holy Book) in Punjabi and in English, too. Don't match the translation...there is so much in Punjabi you cannot translate in proper English words...I can give you one quick example, two lines in Holy Book (he speaks in Punjabi). It means, "it is for the human being or the inner soul to wake up and do worship of the God". This is an easy translation. That's "why are you sleeping?" Or "why are you not worshipping the God who gave you this body?".... So if we go by the rhythm, you cannot make that kind of rhythm in English...You cannot sing in English if I translated it the way I translated it now. There's no rhythm in that. (December 9th, 2001, p. 1)

Connection to India

All of the families represented in this study retain strong connections with India. These connections are maintained through Punjabi short wave radio and satellite television; regular contact with family living in India; frequent visits to India; and the marriage of young people to people living in India. (Ames and Inglis (1973/74) and Chadney (1980) report this is common practice for Sikhs living in British Columbia, as well, "...this

pattern constitutes a strategy which attempts to maintain Sikh ethnic identity to a fairly high degree. More "traditional" brides and grooms are sought in order to maintain an identity distinct from the larger Canadian population" (Chadney, 1980, p.35).)

All of the families in the study regularly watch news, movies, and religious programs on satellite television. In this way, they are able to keep up with current events and popular culture, reinforce their religious beliefs and practices, and constantly expose the younger generation to the Punjabi language. It also serves to make India and Indian culture real and important to the younger generation and keep it fresh in their minds.

The Johal, Gill, Sahota, and Dhillon families have many relatives in India that they keep in regular contact with by e-mail, letter, and phone. Instant global communication helps to keep relationships current and meaningful. As two of the participants in the study have married people from India, their networks of relatives have grown larger and more complex.

Most of the participants maintain contact with fairly large extended families. They are always invited to, and often attend, weddings and other important family functions in India. Fairly regular visits also occur. Jaspreet, for example, has visited India twice in the almost four years that I have known her. She intends to continue to visit as often as possible, both for herself and her daughter. She wants her daughter to gain a sense of her roots and know who her family is and where they come from. Jaspreet's plan is to go, "...every year or every few years. My grandparents are around; his grandparents are around.... I do want her to remember them, both sides.... I would really like her to know her family" (October 10th 2001, p. 8). Ranjit also stated his

intention to take his future children to India regularly. He described it as, "keeping seeds for next season. If there's no seeds for next season, how are you going to grow?" (November 1st, 2002, p. 27).

Some participants have businesses and maintain property in India. They go periodically to check on their affairs. Jaswant has been back to India almost every year since he came to Canada thirty years ago. These regular visits keep the participants in touch with the current reality in India. India continues to seem like home, or at least home away from home. This provides strong motivation to maintain the language.

Marriages of Indo-Canadians with Indians occur regularly. Four of the participants (Prabjit, Dalbir, Jaspreet, and Ranjit) have married people from India. Two of these marriages still survive. Jaspreet described how she has continued to learn Punjabi from her husband, particularly idioms and slang. Mills (2001), in a study of bilinguaglism and biculturalism among third generation Asian children and youth, reports that many were unable to sustain "deep" conversations in their first language (Punjabi) because use was restricted to certain topics and contexts, particularly basic conversation. Jaspreet reports the same situation with her daughter, Babli.

Jaspreet's marriage to Mohinder has also strengthened her ties with India, as she now keeps in contact with his family as well as her own. As well, her parents-in-law have immigrated and live with them. They represent another source of "fresh" Indian culture and Punjabi language in the home.

Education

In this section, I will deal with two aspects of education--the attitude toward education of the participants and their families, and the participants' experiences in the educational system.

All of the participants in the study and their parents felt strongly about the importance of education. Perhaps Dalbir expressed it best, "...you hear everyday from morning till evening, you know, "...got to get an education, you know, you got to get good grades. It really starts setting into your mind frame" (March 19th, 2002, p. 1). To this day, her parents encourage her to further her education, offering to pay the tuition and baby-sit for her. Jaswant, Balbir and Dalbir's parents had all been professionals with post secondary education when they came to Canada, and they all were forced to work in other fields or started their own businesses. It is likely that they wanted their children to have the educational and professional opportunities they did not have. Dalbir stated that she connected education with freedom,

> ...freedom from having to listen to my parents. In the sense that "no, you can't do this, you can't do that." I mean, if you were educated, say you like...finished university or when...you do a course after that point, it's like "oh, that's okay, she can do this, she's now working," or "She's done her stuff".... that's a point of respect. (March 19th, 2002, p. 2)

All the families in the study spoke Punjabi at home before and during the children's school years. The participants who grew up in Canada, Jaspreet, Dalbir, and Sharanjeet, all mentioned that their parents had encouraged them to watch children's

television, especially Sesame Street, in order to learn English in preparation for school. Dalbir, whose mother was also a teacher, taught her some formal lessons with alphabet primers.

It seems that there is a difference in expectations between the first generation of parents and those who are currently parents of school children. The first generation of parents, including Jaswant and Balbir, Dalbir's parents and Jagjit's mother, were happy for their children to speak English with their friends and school mates, preferred them to speak Punjabi with their siblings (although few did), and insisted that they speak Punjabi at home and with the senior generation. Parents of the current generation of school children, Jagjit and Mandeep, Prabjit, Jaspreet and Mohinder, and Khulwant and Harbans, **want** their children to speak Punjabi, but **expect** they will speak English. This change in expectation seems to correspond with the parent's own ability to speak English, length of time (and comfort level) in Canada (Taft and Cahill, 1989) and Canada's changing demographic profile, particularly the increasing numbers of Indians living in Canada.

Almost all of the participants who spent their formative years in Canada have some post-secondary education, either in college or university. Only one, Jaspreet, is working in the field in which she studied. Three are working in the service industry, two are studying, and one is in the transportation industry.

Jaswant's opinions about the education system in Canada seem to reflect the thinking of a lot of newcomer parents I have met as an ESL teacher. He feels that

teachers do not have enough authority or control over the students, and the students do not show enough respect to the teachers. In his words,

> The teacher got duty to do. We should allow them whatever they have to do. We should not manipulate them too much by the laws...the teacher is the future of not only this country, every country. I'm in favour, teacher should have those kinds of things to straighten out, maintain the discipline...on the other hand, the parents should co-operate with the teacher...they should more often talk to the teacher...they should discipline the kids at home so that the teacher has less effort to put there...If we help the teacher, we can maintain the society, we can maintain our own language and culture, plus it's helpful for the future of the country. (November 25th, 2001, p. 6)

All the participants who went to public school in Canada spoke positively about their teachers, explaining that they had been kind and gentle and used positive rewards to encourage them to learn. Jaspreet, Dalbir, and Ranjit had ESL instruction in the form of "pull-out" classes. Jaspreet and Dalbir both spoke very little English when they began school. Their ESL experience occurred when they were in grade 1, about 20 years ago. Jaspreet remembers techniques involving flashcards, but little else. By grade 2, neither woman required further ESL. Ranjit remembered feeling discouraged because he had problems understanding English when he started grade 10, shortly after arriving in Canada. He found his ESL class very helpful, because if was a "safe" environment where, in the company of others in the same situation, he felt comfortable asking

questions and clarifying language and concepts. Ranjit found the Canadian style of teaching to be totally different from what he was used to in India.[18] He compared the two methods as follows:

> Over there, they're very strict and they'll keep you right on the track, even though sometimes your mind is not ready for that...here it's more flexible. Relationship is more like a friendship than a teacher and student. The way the kids and teacher, they were talking to each other, to me surprising. Sometimes I think it's good, sometimes not. It depends; it works both ways. There's no right or wrong answer for that. (October 24th, 2002, p.7)

Ranjit reported receiving a lot of support and assistance from his teachers, especially his ESL teacher, and some classmates who were from India and Pakistan. This, he said, gave him the strength to cope and slowly improve his skills to the point that he graduated from grade 12 with a total average of over 80%.

One interesting finding was that the participants who grew up or went to school in the south part of Rostang (Sharanjeet, Jaspreet, Gurdev, Ranjit, and Gurcharan) all averred that overt racism had not been an issue for them. Dalbir, who grew up on the north side, did experience overt racism. Sharanjeet and Ranjit also mentioned they knew of Sikh people in the north part of the city who had experienced racism. They offered two explanations for it. First, they thought that part of the city contained higher concentrations of students from (visibly) different ethnic groups. They felt that the students in the various groups tended to stick together and not mix with the others. This,

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[18] See also Ghuman (1997) for discussion of cultural differences regarding Indian family values and those advocated by Western educational systems.

they felt, probably led to misunderstanding and mis-assumptions that resulted in racially based tension and hostility. Their other rationale was to blame the victim. Some people, they thought, bring it on themselves. For the participants who did experience racism in school, it was a very painful and belittling experience.

Dalbir, Jagjit, and Sharanjit all found that by the time they entered high school, their ethnic backgrounds had become a positive, rather than a negative. Jagjit talked about how his friends wanted to go to his house because of his mother's delicious cooking. Sharanjeet was intrigued by the fact that while he was studying the "White" people's ancient civilisations, the "White" people were interested in his. Dalbir made the important point that having teachers of the same ethnic background in her school, and being asked to present aspects of her culture (dance) for the other students boosted her confidence and made her proud of her background. She recalled, "...it must have been grade 9 or 10, we did *gida*, it's a Punjabi dance, in front of our school. And I think that really changed everything for me, personally. I felt very much pride" (March 19th, 2002, p. 9).

Dalbir again made the point that young people are becoming more confident and proud of their cultural heritage and want to know their language in order to express their identity. She explained how at the present time, there are Punjabi heritage language classes in her area of the city. These classes are offered several times a week, after school, and are aimed at students from kindergarten to middle school. Dalbir's younger cousin attends the classes, and "it's not because somebody is making her do it. I think

it's because she wants to do it now....I guess it's kind of become a thing of pride that it's nice to know" (March 19th, 2002, p. 11).

Gurdev, Rosa, and Gurcharan are all currently attending public school in Rostang. None of them spoke of experiencing overt racism, although Rosa has felt pressure regarding her vegetarian diet. Her mother monitors her school performance carefully, and does not hesitate to speak to the teacher if she perceives any difficulties. These three young people are doing very well in school; their marks are good; they participate fully, and they have friends from all different backgrounds.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Summary

This study has presented life history accounts of nine members of the Sikh community in relation to their experiences of maintaining and/or losing their first language, Punjabi. These accounts put a human face on a process that is traditionally depicted in linguistic terms (e.g., what happens to the language as it erodes?) or sociolinguistic terms (e.g., what factors contribute to language loss? How and why are languages lost?), but rarely in personal, narratives terms that express the meaning of loss (and maintenance) to the individual. It is part of a small but growing body of literature that explores the effects and implications of language loss/maintenance on people's lives.

The life history accounts were co-produced by the participants and me using a process of multiple, in-depth interviews. The life stories were written as edited versions of the participants' words. I wrote the introductory sections based on what I had seen, heard, and experienced through the interviews, and as a result of my relationship with the participants and gurdwara to which we all belong. The participants checked and commented on what I had written and continued to provide information and feedback after the interview sessions were finished.

In general, I found that Punjabi had been successfully maintained by the first and second generation participants who had emigrated from India. Language loss was an issue with third generation participants.

Language loss appears to be a continuum rather than a dichotomy. The continuum is tied to social factors like religion and cultural practice. The continuum is

not static. One can occupy different places at different times. An individual's place on the continuum is determined by personal and social factors that the individual acts on and which act on the individual.

A constant theme throughout the interviews was the importance of the L1 to the participants' sense of self and cultural identity. One individual who had lost (but was currently regaining) proficiency in Punjabi spoke repeatedly of struggling to know *who he really was*, and having to *fight for who he was*. Other individuals spoke of the pride and happiness they felt when their language and culture were acknowledged by the mainstream community. One participant drew on his linguistic and cultural heritage in the performance art that shaped his life.

Family relationships were a motivating force and a causal factor for L1 maintenance. Traditional Indian family structure and values promote the use of the Punjabi with elders. Use of the L1 is seen as a means of ensuring family unity and cohesion. In the families that had maintained the language, parents, grandparent, aunts and uncles all strictly enforced the use of Punjabi at home.

Religion and faith are central to the lives of almost all the participants and they occupy a major part of their lives. The participants belong to a particular branch of Sikhism that is both orthodox and dynamic. They must be able to understand, speak, read, and write Punjabi in order to practice their faith. The faith community to which all the participants belong both nurtures and demands use of the first language.

Almost all the participants in the study maintain close ties with India. They obtain regular fresh infusions of Punjabi language and culture via electronic media,

periodic visits, and arranged marriages. This gives the language a vital role in their everyday lives.

The participants who had come to Canada during their school years remembered the kindness shown by their teachers. One spoke at length of the value of the high school ESL classes he had attended after his arrival. The ESL classroom was a place where he felt safe, with kindred spirits, and free to ask questions and gain information about both the language and culture of his new home.

Interestingly, the Canadian-born participants mentioned that most of their classmates knew nothing of their first language and culture. Many of their classmates did not even realise they could speak another language. However, no one remembered ever being discouraged from speaking Punjabi.

All of the participants attested to the importance their families had placed on education. Education was universally seen as the door to opportunity.

A number of participants spoke openly about the racism they had experienced and the pain and emotional damage it had caused. They attributed the racism to skin colour and intolerance of cultural and lifestyle differences. Racism had thwarted their efforts to fit in and belong, leaving them feeling caught between two worlds and belonging to neither. The participants' responses to racism varied from fighting, to withdrawing, to reaching out and attempting to build bridges and create understanding. In all cases, knowledge of the first language was seen as a source of strength, a tool, a haven or a home.

A new cultural form, created from a mix of traditional Indian culture and mainstream Canadian culture and involving Indo-Canadian youth was described by many

participants. The new subculture blends music, food, clothing, language, and values to produce something new and vital.

Implications

Personal narrative explorations of language loss and maintenance (see also Hoffman, 1989; Kouritzin 1997, Parsons-Yazzie, 1995, 1996; Rodrigues, 1989) have a great deal of power. They take a process that is often characterised by dry linguistic or statistical analyses, and give it a human face, thereby moving us, and creating empathy, and understanding. It is my hope that when someone who has read this study sees a Sikh man wearing a turban and beard, or a Sikh woman in a *salwar kameez*, that reader will think, "There are **people like me**, who are trying to build a home and future for themselves and their families, who have dreams and fears, and who want to belong, **as I do**". Perhaps the reader will think of the challenges they may have faced, and hope their linguistic and cultural heritage are intact and a source of strength for them. Perhaps he or she will feel moved to do whatever is their power to promote language and cultural maintenance.

As described in the literature review, there are connections between studies of language loss/maintenance and bilingualism studies, second language acquisition research, and cognitive psychology (especially the savings paradigm and relearning). Contributions in one field can add to and strengthen the others. There are also important connections between this research and multicultural education, anti-racist education, and studies of identity formation.

Many questions arise from this type of research. Here are a few. What are the connections between language loss/maintenance and the types of studies mentioned above? How can we measure them, and what do they mean? What are the cognitive,

social and emotional consequences for the individuals who lose or maintain their language? What are the different levels of language loss and maintenance, and what do they mean? How do we promote L1 maintenance? Who is responsible for L1 maintenance and to what degree? How can we make policy makers, administrators, and educators more aware of the implications of language loss and maintenance? How can we encourage them to support L1 maintenance?

There are no easy answers to these questions. Suggestions for change will be as diverse as the people who have a stake in the issue. In general, however, there seem to be two ways of implementing change. Solutions can be prescribed from the top down or from the bottom up. In the first instance, policies and legislation can be enacted by governments and implemented down through the ranks of administration to the practitioners. For example, in the 1960s, the government proclaimed that Canada was officially bilingual and multicultural. Laws have been passed and programs enacted that support this policy.

In the second case, initiative for change comes from those directly affected. Parents, children, and teachers make positive changes in their lives and practices and lobby to have these changes recognised, disseminated, and adopted/adapted in other contexts. For example, this summer Jaspreet started an informal Punjabi language program involving the children in her family and the Sandhu family. Other families may learn of what she is doing and wish to become involved. As interest grows, this informal language program may evolve into a fully-fledged summer language/culture/religion camp sponsored by the Gurdwara, involving much of the community, and held on an annual basis (a number of such initiatives already exist in British Columbia).

I believe that both approaches are required for meaningful and sustainable social change to occur. Both approaches have important strengths and limiting weaknesses. The top-down approach serves to "legitimise" social change. By legitimise, I mean that when our leaders and institutions sanction and promote an issue (for example, first language maintenance), it gives credibility to the issue. In other words, the population at large, and the civil service in particular, is more likely to pay attention to and take the issue of language loss seriously if it is raised by our leaders, than if it is raised by only a small segment of society. Official endorsement of an issue and the allocation of resources (infrastructure, funds, etc.) to implement the programs and services needed to address the issue is both enabling and affirming. On the other hand, official support and involvement purchases stakeholder rights in the process for the larger community. Before the authorities adopt an issue, it must undergo a process of scrutiny designed to ensure accountability and coherence with mainstream Canadian values. Rigour and discipline are required to implement such initiatives. Proposals must be designed, then put on paper in a certain format; programs must be implemented and controlled; outcomes must be documented; and funds must be accounted for, again in a specific format. Top-down approaches promote conformity and uniformity.

There are problems with the top-down approach. It can be very slow and inefficient. It can take years for a good idea to become actualised. Undue time may be required for administrative duties, like report writing. The allocation of funds can be governed by bureaucratic and political considerations as much as by actual need. Furthermore, the process itself is culturally tied and may be inaccessible to many

minority groups. In other words, people who are outside of the dominant culture may not know the structures and language needed to access official attention and recognition.

The bottom-up approach has many strengths. It is immediate and responsive. Local initiatives are generated by those with the most at stake in the issue. Therefore, they tend to be most sensitive to individuals involved and address needs most specifically. Furthermore, they will likely be implemented with heart-felt enthusiasm and dedication. Bottom-up initiatives are usually small in scale and by implication relatively inexpensive. The damage resulting from mistakes will tend to be limited. Successful bottom-up initiatives serve as models which can be adopted and adapted to other contexts. They are most compatible with diversity.

There can be problems with bottom-up approaches. They may be idiosyncratic and not sustainable, relying on the involvement of certain individuals and only appropriate to certain contexts. They may benefit only one segment of a group, sometimes at the expense of the rest of the group. They may be incompatible with the mores and values of the larger society.

In an ideal world, the strengths of both approaches would be combined to address issues and problems, like that of first language loss and maintenance. For first language maintenance to occur in a sustainable way, well-intentioned individuals at the local and institutional levels, who are willing and able to speak and listen sincerely, are required to work together to formulate solutions to address all aspects and levels of the issue.

In concrete terms, dealing with the specific issues addressed in this study, much can be done. A number of solutions have been suggested by the participants themselves. These solutions can be classified under the general heading of "*recognition, affirmation,*

and support of the cultural and linguistic heritage of minority language speakers". For example, Dalbir spoke of how her feelings about her first language and culture changed when she saw teachers of Indian background at her school. Feelings of pride replaced feelings of awkwardness and isolation. To generalise, we can say that seeing themselves represented in positions of authority can help minority group members feel they belong, that they have an important place in the larger society. It reinforces the fact that they have important contributions to make. Minority groups should be represented in positions of power and authority at all levels. They do have much to contribute and the dominant society has much to learn. It is the role of policy makers and administrators to ensure appropriate representation of minority group members in meaningful positions throughout the ranks of our institutions and organisations.

When Dalbir was part of a group that performed a Punjabi dance in front of the school, she also felt proud. School officials, who represented the dominant culture, demonstrated appreciation for aesthetic elements of her culture, and Dalbir responded with pride. In other words, when the mainstream recognises and values beauty in minority groups' culture, it affirms the minority group, and both groups benefit from the exchange. Principals and teachers have tremendous power to recognise, affirm, and support the first languages of students and their families. They do this in many ways, large and small. At the "large" end of the spectrum, heritage language programs, bilingual programs, and immersion programs promote L1 maintenance. In terms of smaller initiatives, notes and letters home can be translated into the major first languages of the student body. Curriculum can be designed to reflect and portray history and culture beyond that of western civilisation. Students can have the opportunity to present

aspects of their culture and language to the school, as in Dalbir's case. Community cultural resources, the wisdom, and knowledge of parents, elders, etc. can be incorporated into school and classroom activities. Efforts can be made to involve minority group parents in school decision-making bodies, like parent councils, etc. This may also require modifying the structures and procedures of these groups so that they are truly accessible to individuals from other cultures.

Dalbir also mentioned how she had felt proud when she had studied Hindi at University with a White professor who could speak the language fluently and accurately. Again, a member of the dominant culture had affirmed and valued aspects of her linguistic and cultural background. It changed how she felt about herself.

Jaspreet mentioned how wonderful her friends had been because when they heard her mother speak Punjabi to her, they thought it was wonderful (not weird) that she could speak another language. She also remembered how they had admired her jewellery, hair ornaments and Indian clothes. Her language and culture, and therefore she, herself, was affirmed and valued by these gestures.

Sharanjeet thought it was pretty "neat" that while he was studying the White people, they were studying him, and they were turning to him for information. Again, his background was being recognised, affirmed, and valued.

Affirmations cannot be legislated or forced into action. They must come naturally from well-intentioned individuals who reach out to learn and grow and to build bridges with the purpose of including others. Values of acceptance and inclusion are both taught and "caught". That is they are ways of thinking and viewing the world that we learn formally at school, but also informally through the words and actions, first of our family,

then of our teachers and other role models. This is the smallest and most important form of the bottom-up approach.

In terms of adult ESL programs, like the one I teach in, settlement topics form a large part of the curriculum. This includes issues like education, housing, transportation, health, and so on. As well as teaching facts about life in Canada, I think it is incumbent on ESL teachers to promote values, particularly strongly held national values like tolerance, understanding, and acceptance. As well as encouraging ESL learners to accept Canadian ways, we must recognise that their ways are valuable and truly enrich the dominant culture. This can be achieved through lessons in which language is learned and practised through discussions where cultural sharing occurs. Students can develop their ESL skills in presentations where they share their culture or their impressions of Canadian culture. Teachers should also teach students the language they need to deal with real life situations that may occur when students feel their needs are not being met or their rights are being challenged (situational/functional approaches). Role plays serve this type of situation well. The ESL classroom should serve as a safe place where learners can test their notions about what they are experiencing in their new home and where they feel free to ask any questions about how things are done and how to get things done in Canada. Finally, the ESL teacher may be called upon to advocate for the students, speaking for them in situations where their needs are not being met, or their rights are being violated in the context of the larger society.

Postscript

In the two years it has taken to conduct this study many changes have occurred in the two families whose members' life history accounts have been presented.

In the Sahota family, Jaswant continues to work 70 hours a week, but remains cheerful, energetic, and good-natured. Balbir, however, has retired, and now has time to enjoy her growing number of grandchildren (She has four grandchildren now.) Both her daughter, Jaspreet, and daughter-in-law, Dalbir, have had babies in the past year. Jaspreet had a girl and Balbir had a boy. Sharanjeet currently has a full-time, permanent job, and plans are being made to "find a nice girl" for him.

In 2003, Jaspreet and her mother started a summer language program for the children in their extended family and the Sandhu family. Balbir gives regular Punjabi classes to Babli, Gurdev, Rosa, Inderpal, and Mattu, and Jaspreet takes the children on fun outings during which only Punjabi can be spoken.

Jagjit continues on his spiritual journey, with the love and support of his family. He has, however, sold his prized 1967 Mustang.

Mandeep and Prabjit and their mother continue to serve the temple. They are delighted by the evolving relationship between their family and the Sahota family, and the growth of language skills, cultural knowledge, and pride it has engendered.

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Appendix A.

Explanation of the Study

Who am I and what do I want?

My name is Ann K. Tigchelaar. I am a teacher and a master of education student at the University of Manitoba. I have taught Adult English as a Second Language in St. Vital for 10 years. I am also a member of the Gurdwara Nanaksar. I am currently carrying out a study about language loss and language maintenance in the Sikh community. I am approaching you because your name has been referred to me by _____, as someone who might be a suitable candidate and I would like to invite you to participate.

What are language loss and language maintenance?

Language loss is what happens when people stop learning and forget their first language as they learn a new language. This happens most often with children of immigrants who come to Canada when they are young. It can also happen with children who are born in Canada, if they learn a minority language at home. Language loss usually begins when children enter school and start to speak English.

Language maintenance is when people keep or even develop the ability to use their first language when they live in a majority language environment.

Language loss and language maintenance are important topics because the ability to use one's first language is closely tied to one's personal and cultural identity, and sense of belonging to family, community and larger society. Greater understanding of the impact of language loss/maintenance can benefit everyone who has experienced it and everyone who works with or serves people whose first language is not English.

What does participation in the study involve?

I would like to interview you about language loss/maintenance in order to write a life history account of your experience of language loss or maintenance. If you agree, I would like to conduct a number of in-depth interviews about your experience. During the first interview, I will ask you to tell me about your experience with language loss/maintenance. After the interview, I will think about what you have told me and prepare some questions to ask you that will help me better understand your experience. I will also prepare a copy of the tape and typed transcript of the interview and I will ask you to verify the factual information in both. The second interview will be based on my questions about the first interview. This process will continue until I feel I understand your experience well enough to write the life history account. I will also write an introduction to each interview that describes my impressions of the interview setting and format, and an overview of your life so that your life history can be better understood.

The life histories will be followed by a section that draws out and analyzes themes that are common to all the study participants.

Where and how will the interviews be conducted? How long will they take?

You and I will decide together where and when to hold the interviews. Each interview will take about two hours. Several interviews will be required (between three and five) in order for me to obtain enough information to properly construct a life history of your experience.

The interviews will be tape-recorded. I will also take hand-written notes to help me remember my impressions and reactions and details of the context of our interview. The tape recorder can be turned off at your request. You may also choose not to answer any specific question I ask during our interview.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

I am bound by the rules of the Research Ethics Board to respect the confidentiality of research participants. I will not record or discuss with anyone anything that you tell me in confidence. If a translator is required, it will be someone who is also bound to confidentiality. I will give you copies of the interview transcripts to check for accuracy and make any factual changes you suggest. Your full name will not appear on any of the written notes or tape recordings that result from the interviews. Written and recorded information will be assigned a code number, so that your full name will be known only to me. I will share only coded information with my thesis committee members, my advisor, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, Dr. Natalie Piquemal and Dr. Renata Schulz and, perhaps, an interview transcriber. They are also bound by confidentiality rules. The coded information will be kept in a locked file until it is destroyed.

Although I will respect your confidentiality through the measures described above, I cannot guarantee that you will remain anonymous if you participate in this study. This is because your name may have been referred to me by a committee member or priest from the Gurdwara Nanaksar. Also, due to the small size and close-knit quality of the Sikh community, it may be possible for some individuals to read your life history and deduce your identity.

Some of the results of the study may be published. Anything that is published will be written in such a way that it cannot be directly connected with you. I will not use your real name or any other personal information, and I will change some details to ensure your privacy.

Risks and benefits of participating in the study.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty. You may also choose not to answer any of the questions in the interview.

I do not believe that participating in this study will pose any risk to you, although recounting difficult experiences can sometimes be emotionally painful. Also, it is possible that readers of the study who are familiar with the Sikh community in Rostang may be able to deduce your identity.

Participation in the study will not be of any direct benefit to you, although you may find that describing your experience of language loss/maintenance in the interviews will help you to clarify and understand the experience better. In the future, however, the published results of this study may benefit educators, policy makers, and others involved in the field of adult language instruction, as it adds to the knowledge of language loss. It may also benefit others who have had experiences similar to yours and can learn from your experience.

Questions and further information

If you have any questions or would like further information about this study at any time, please feel free to contact me at , or my thesis advisor, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, at 474-9079.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Ann K. Tigchelaar

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Language Loss and Language Maintenance: Life History Accounts of Selected Members of the Sikh Community

Investigator: Ann K. Tigchelaar

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I have read and understood the information about the study of language loss in the Sikh community. I understand the study procedure. I know that I will be participating in several (4 - 5) in-depth interviews of approximately 2 hours (for a total of six to ten hours) in which I will tell about my experiences with language loss and language maintenance, and that the information I give will be used to write a life history account. I know that the life history will be written in an edited version of my own words.

I realise that the interviews will be tape recorded, and that the tapes will be transcribed. I will receive copies of the tapes and typed transcripts of the interviews. I know that during the interview, I can request to have the tape recorder turned off at any time, and I can choose not to answer any questions at any time. I am also aware that the researcher, Ann K. Tigchelaar, will take notes about the interview setting, and about her own impressions of the interview and my story and that these notes will be used to write an introduction to the life history.

I understand that the researcher will show me a draft of the life history account so that I can verify the factual information in it and ensure that my confidentiality has been protected. I also understand that while I can correct any mistakes or discrepancies in the factual information, I do not have the power to rewrite or retract the story once it is written.

I understand that the information collected during this study is confidential. My full name will not appear on any of the taped or written materials that result from this study. Instead a code number will be used. Other details, like age, address, etc. may be changed or eliminated so that I will not be directly connected with the results of the study. I also realise that because of the small size and close-knit nature of the Sikh community, it may not be possible for the researcher to guarantee anonymity, and that a reader familiar with the community may be able to deduce my identity.

The information resulting from this study may be used for future study or analysis, but my name and identity cannot be connected with it. The data will only be shared with members of the thesis advisory committee. This data will be stored in a locked cabinet until it is destroyed.

I understand that there is not any direct risk or benefit to my participation in this study. I also understand that there will be no renumeration for my participation in this study.

My signature on this form indicates that I have understood to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive my legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, **and/or refrain from answering any questions I prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence.** My continued participation should be as informed as my initial consent, so I should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout my participation.

If I have any questions or would like further information about this study at any time, I should feel free to contact the researcher, Ann K. Tigchelaar, at , or her thesis advisor, Dr. Sandra Kouritzin, at 474-9079.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If I have any concerns or complaints about this project I may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to me to keep for my records and reference.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____

Investigator and/or Delegate's Signature Date

Appendix C

Assent Form for Minor Children

Dear _____

My name is Ann K. Tigchelaar. I am studying at the University of Manitoba. I would like to talk to you and your family about the languages you speak at home, at school and with your friends. I want to know about how you feel about the languages you speak. I want to write a story about your experiences.

I am planning to tape record our conversation so I can remember exactly what we said. I will also be writing about what I see and think during our conversation. After I have taped our conversation I will type out everything we said. You will get a copy of these typed pages. I will read the typing to you if you want. All of the tape recordings and notes I make will be kept in a locked cabinet and nobody but me will see them. When I'm finished, I will write the story about you and your family. I will give you a copy of the story.

You don't have to talk to me and you can stop at any time by telling me or your parents. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. You can quit whenever you want and nobody will be mad at you.

I will not use your real name in the story and I will change information so that nobody will know that the story is about you.

Thank you

Ann

Appendix D

Consent from Parents for Minor Children

Dear _____

The purpose of this letter is to request you allow your child to participate in a research project entitled "Language Loss and Language Maintenance: Life History Accounts of Selected Members of the Sikh Community". Language loss is what happens when people stop learning and forget their first language as they learn a new language. It happens most often with children of immigrants who come to Canada when they are young. It also happens with children who are born in Canada if they learn a minority language at home. Language maintenance is the opposite. It is when people are able to maintain or develop a minority language in spite of living in an environment where another language and culture is dominant. The outcome of this research will be intergenerational life history accounts of families and their experiences with language loss and language maintenance. The project will begin in November 2001 and continue for approximately one year.

I would like to conduct a number of interviews with your child about his/her experience with language loss and maintenance in order to write a life history account of his or her experience. This account will be part of the intergenerational life history I am compiling about your family. It will be accompanied by an introductory section where I describe my impressions of the interview setting and format, and an overview of the child's life so that the life history can be better understood. The life histories will be followed by a section where I write about themes that are common to all participants.

During our first interview, I will ask your child to tell me about his/her experiences with language. After the interview, I will think about what the child has told me and I will prepare some questions to ask him/her in the next interview that will help me to better understand the experience. I will also prepare a copy of the tape and a typed transcript of the interview that your child can keep. I will check the transcript with your child to make sure everything is correct. You may attend the interview if you wish.

The interview will take about 45 minutes to one hour. Several interviews may be required in order for me to get enough information to properly prepare the life history account. You, your child and I can decide together where and when to hold the interviews.

You have the right to withdraw your child from the project at any time/or to refrain from answering any questions you wish to omit without prejudice or consequence. Your child's participation is, in every way, voluntary. Your child may also withdraw from the

research project at any time simply by telling you or me. You may request that any tape involving your child be destroyed.

The material I gather in this project will be held in the strictest of confidence. Your child's full name will not appear on any of the written notes or tape recordings that result from the interviews. Anything I write will be written in such a way that it cannot be directly connected with you. I will change the details to ensure your privacy.

This research project will be conducted by myself. My thesis advisor is Dr. Sandra G. Kouritzin (474-9079). My thesis advisory committee consists of Dr. Kouritzin, Dr. Nathalie Piquemal (474-7032) and Dr. Renate Schulz (474-9040). This research project has the approval of the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. Any complaints regarding procedure can be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 4740-7122 or to the Head of the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at (204) 474-9021.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ann K. Tigchelaar

Consent Form for Minor Children

I, _____, agree to allow my child, _____ _____ to participate, and give my permission for Ann K. Tigchelaar to carry out the research project described above. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the letter describing the study "Language Loss and Language Maintenance: Life History Accounts of Selected Members of the Sikh Community". My child will be interviewed several times by Ann. The interviews will be tape-recorded. My child will receive a copy of the tape and a transcript of the interview. He/she will be asked questions about what he/she said in previous interviews.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to conduct this study at any time without penalty, and that my child can stop being in the study or stop answering questions at any time simply by saying so to me or the researcher. My child's full name will not be used in any written materials, and details will be changed to protect my child's privacy and the privacy of all participants.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appenndix E

Reference Letter from the President and Secretary of Gurdwara Nanaksar

November 2001

Dear

Sat Sri Akal

Our community has been chosen as the focus of a research study. The topic is language loss and language maintenance. Language loss is what happens when people stop learning and/or forget their first language (e.g. Punjabi) as they learn a new language (e.g. English). It happens most often with the children of immigrants who come to Canada when they are young, or who are born here. Language maintenance is the opposite. It is what happens when people keep or even develop their ability to use their first language in a second language setting. Language loss and maintenance are important topics because the ability to use our first language is often closely tied to our sense of identity and belonging. Greater understanding of language loss/maintenance can help people who experience it or people who work with or serve people who experience it.

The study will be conducted by Ann K. Tigchelaar. She is a graduate student in education at the University of Manitoba. She is also an adult ESL teacher and a member of the Gurdwara Nanaksar.

We have recommended your family as suitable candidates for this study because we feel you can describe your experiences with language loss/maintenance with insight and understanding.

Taking part in the study will involve participating in three to five in-depth interviews about your experiences with language loss/maintenance. The information you give will be used to write a life history account. None of your personal information (name, address, etc.) will be used in the life history account. Names, places and dates will be changed to protect your privacy.

We have reviewed this research study and feel it is a very worthwhile endeavour for our community. Please give Ann the chance to explain the details of the study to you and consider participating.

Wahiguru Ji Ka Khalsa
Wahiguru Ji Ke Fateh

_____
President, Gurdwara Nanaksar

_____
Secretary, Gurdwara Nanaksar

Appendix F

Sample Interview Questions

- Please describe what it means to you to belong to a minority language culture.
- Please tell me as much as you can remember about beginning school.
- Please tell me about any difficulties you had because you spoke a different language.
- Can you remember being encouraged to speak English? Explain.
- Can you remember ever being discouraged from speaking your first language?
- How did you classmates react to your first language?
- Can you tell me about how you learned English?
- What things do you now remember in your first language?
- Can you describe an experience that made you realise that you had stopped learning your first language?
- Please explain how you felt at the time.
- Why do you think you stopped learning your first language?
- Describe your relationship with your first language culture.
- Can you tell me how you feel about English language culture?
- What do you feel was your parents' attitude toward your learning your first language?
- Could you please tell me about your educational goals?
- How have your goals changed over time?
- How have your educational goals been influenced by other people?
- What choices do you feel that you have made to attain these goals?
- Do you remember how you felt when you began school?
- Did you experience any difficulties because you spoke a different language?
- Were there other kids at school who spoke the same language as you?
- Did your teachers encourage you to speak English?
- How did they encourage you?
- Did anyone ever discourage you from speaking your first language?
- How did s/he do that?
- Did your classmates encourage you to speak English?
- How did your classmates react to your first language?
- Did your parents encourage you to speak English?
- Do you remember anything about how you learned English?
- What feelings do you have about your first language?
- What do you now remember about your first language?
- At what point did you realise that you had stopped learning your first language?
- What made you realise it?
- Do you remember how you felt?
- Why do you think you stopped learning it?
- Did you have any difficulty remembering vocabulary or grammar that you already knew when you stopped learning your first language?
- Do you feel that you belong to your first language culture?
- Do you feel that you belong to English culture?

- Did you ever discuss language learning with anyone? Explain.
- Did you parents ever seem to be concerned that you would not learn your first language?
- Could you please tell me about your educational goals now?
- How have your goals changed over time?
- What were your educational goals before you began school?
- Who has influenced your educational goals?
- How did s/he have an influence?
- What choices do you feel that you have made to attain these goals?

Questions for Senior Generation

- What language(s) do you use in your home?
- Who do you speak to in English/Punjabi? Why?
- What do you use English/Punjabi for?
- How much of the time do you use English/Punjabi?
- Do all the members of your family speak/read/write Punjabi/English?
- How do you feel about your family members using English/Punjabi in your home?
- Do you want to encourage the use of Punjabi/English in your home?
- Have you tried to encourage the use of Punjabi/English in your home?
- How have you done this?
- Why do you want to encourage the use of Punjabi/English in your home?
- What language do your family members use when they speak to you/each other?
- When did you notice your family members start to use English at home?
- How did you feel when your family members started speaking English at home?
- How do you feel when your family members speak English at home?
- Do you try to discourage the use of English at home? How? Why?
- Do you feel that the use of English/Punjabi affects your family life?
- How do you feel the use of Punjabi/English at home affects your family life?
- Have your family members stopped learning Punjabi?
- Why do you think they stopped learning Punjabi?
- How do you feel about this?
- What does the loss/maintenance of Punjabi in your family mean to you?
- What are the implications of language loss/maintenance to you and your family?