INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI
800-521-0600
BROKEN COVENANT: PUNJABI SIKH NARRATIVES

by

April Kaur Bariana

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Curriculum: Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto

© Copyright by April Kaur Bariana, 1997
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-41541-4
ABSTRACT

This study reflects the metaphorical journey of the kara (a steel bracelet, one of the five baptised-Sikh symbols) expressed in the sense of "self" as it defines the Sikh cultural boundary, shaped, preserved and extended through traditions which have been transplanted from the homeland, Punjab, India to the host country, Canada. The vehicle of this traditional boundary construction, transmission and consequent reconstruction is the six primary data sources: three Punjabi females and three Punjabi males, 19-29 years of age, who, through anecdotal narratives, poignantly voice their individual and collective intercultural angst which becomes the broken covenant. The participants include both the Canadian-born, Punjabi Jat Sikh researcher and the Punjabi Sikhs, who are either Canadian-born or recent immigrants. Their lived reality, profiled through a narrative inquiry study, exposes their visible minority "self" and their intercultural accommodation "self".

The human rewards and punishment inherent in the metaphorical kara, defined by the traditional rites, beliefs and worldview, are revealed in the subsequent repercussions of acts of betrayal and waywardness against the Sikh traditions. This activity is reflected by the mainstream dominant culture's assimilationist forces which impinge upon the Sikh kara's cultural boundaries. These forces include the schooling of Sikh children who represent the next generation and the mainstream social services which constitute the epitome of western culture intrusion.

The question, "Where then, is the Sikh 'self' within the boundary of the kara?" demands an answer. Prophetically, there is none, for that is how cultural adaptation is effected by immigrants caught in the web of powerful transplantation forces. Ironically, their homeland cohorts simultaneously experience cultural change, albeit in a different context and within varying degrees, while the migrated mindset appears stymied in frozen traditions. The sociological dilemma of whether to adapt or not, underpins the rationale of the broken covenant. "Are boundaries meant to be reconstituted and realigned as cultural adaptation occurs, or, are boundaries the sacred relics of traditions no longer viable within a foreign context? Hence, is there a safe zone within which one can exist inside the boundary of the kara, yet still retain a Canadian-Sikh identity? Does this constitute cultural betrayal?"

This study is framed by the Canadian-Sikh researcher's sense of "self" as defined by her grandfather, Sardar Harnam Singh Hari, a Sikh pioneer who deserted the British East-Indian Infantry in Punjab India, in 1903, in exchange for immigrant roots in southern Alberta, Canada. The bond existing between grandfather and granddaughter, as witnessed by the researcher's responses to the graduate student letters, reveals a rare glimpse of the theoretical underpinning of a Sikh mindset and worldview, a fact which highlights the need for scholarship in the universal immigrant experience of clan, caste and kinship-based cultural boundaries.
To the memory of my grandpa,
Sardar Harnam Singh Hari
of
Punjab, India and Alberta, Canada
The locked front portals of my grandpa's home in the village Ranike, Ludhiana district, Punjab, India.

"What makes a people, a culture lock the gate on a birthplace for the uncertainty of another land? What do you take with you and what do you leave behind, knowing in your heart that you will never walk through these doors again?"
v.

Table of Contents

PART ONE
Chapter 1. BROKEN COVENANT: A CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY ---- 7

1.1 Narrative setting for the study: the "self" ---- 7

1.2 Narrative roots of the study: the odyssey of "self" ---- 10

1.3 Narrative snapshots of Sikh reality: our gender "selves" ---- 17

1.3.1 Acka and Tikki: caged solitude and defiant illusions ---- 21

1.4 Narrative Indian authors: boundaries of the "self" ---- 31

1.4.1 Unveiling India... ---- 33
1.4.2 All these years... ---- 35
1.4.3 May you be the mother of a hundred sons... ---- 37
1.4.4 Voices from within... ---- 39
1.4.5 The last flicker... ---- 41
1.4.6 The Sikhs... ---- 43
1.4.7 The collective streams of consciousness ---- 45

1.5 Narrative threads: "self" conspiracies and disclosures ---- 48

1.5.1 Pia’s kara: a conspiracy of pain ---- 48

1.6 Summary ---- 53

Chapter 2. BROKEN COVENANT: PUNJABI SIKH FEMALE VOICES ---- 61

2.1 The dapatta: a veil of mirrors ---- 61

2.1.1 Kaya: the good little girl, the good little life ---- 71
2.1.2 Reva: my shameful defilement, my hollow retribution ---- 92
2.1.3 Ava: the legacy of my keepers: my father, my first husband, my choice ---- 107

2.2 Summary ---- 125
Chapter 3. BROKEN COVENANT: PUNJABI SIKH MALE VOICES

3.1 Land and caste: the male signature, pride and burden

3.1.1 Kame: I am a good son, a good role model

3.1.2 Eli: I am a Canadian and I will not be denied

3.1.3 Sobi: tradition and duty guide my life, there is no escape

3.2 Summary

PART TWO

Chapter 4. BROKEN COVENANT: SCHOOLING, A PRETEXT FOR ASSIMILATION?

4.1 Educate our children: do not "Canadianize" them!

4.1.1 We came here for a better life - not an English life

4.1.2 The community prescribes our daughters’ freedoms

4.1.3 First we give boys freedom; then we rein them in

4.1.4 The Canadian teachers - who are they?

4.2 Summary

Chapter 5. BROKEN COVENANT: SOCIAL SERVICES, AN INTRUSION OR A NECESSITY?

5.1 Our cultural boundaries govern our conduct

5.1.1 How quickly the immigrant dream dies

5.1.2 Don’t tell us how to raise our children

5.1.3 The shame factor hurts our Sikh pride

5.1.4 I deserve equal adult status as a mother
5.1.5 If a man cannot control his household, he is not a man

5.1.6 Why suffocate the girls and worship the boys?

5.1.7 Who is counselling whom?

5.2 Summary

PART THREE
Chapter 6. BROKEN COVENANT: MY VOICE, MY AUDIENCE, MY WORDS

6.1 My voice requires an audience: the letter writing

6.1.1 The wintergreen of my life
6.1.2 My fascination with words: my biography

6.2 Summary

APPENDIX A.
* glossary of terms
* study data
* inserts
* South Asian Women Research in Canada Bibliography Classification (1972-1992) (Naidoo 1994)
* Chronology of Sikh history in Canada (Buchignani et al 1985); Israel 1987); and Johnson (1989)

APPENDIX B.
* CBC: (1993) "Faces of Change: Faces of Hate"

APPENDIX C.
* References
* Related Topic Reading
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to pay tribute to three streams of consciousness which challenged me, encouraged me and consequently gave me permission to achieve the clarity and resonance of the Punjabi Sikh voices within this narrative.

The first is my inspiration, my grandfather, Sardar Harnam Singh Hari, who emigrated to Canada and specifically southern Alberta in 1903. Without his beckoning me to focus my will and mind into appreciating the encounters and play resident within the human landscape of boundary introspection and the translation and reflection of the human voices I had heard all my life - this study would not have been possible.

The second is my advisor and mentor, Dr. Michael Connelly, whose fastidious wisdom, infinite joy and curiosity fired my enthusiasm to undertake such a protracted project with only the tools of a mediocre mind. I also pay tribute to Dr. Milton Israel and Dr. George Dei, without whose personal experience and shared insights into the historical and sociological underpinnings of scholarship, this study would not have come to fruition.

The third is the ambition for the project initiated by the legacy of my Sikh female heritage: my mother Sujan Kaur and my daughter, Cherepal Kaur. My mother’s flowing white hair reminiscent of life’s sweet song of seasons long gone; and my daughter’s flowing, raven black hair, a premonition of life’s promises, the joys and betrayals to come, piety earned and defiled, for what?
Collectively, they represent the human forces which guided my destiny within these pages and allowed me to reflect the kara’s boundary, carefully guarded, sacrificed, denied, teased, immortalized and emulated. And finally, fatally shaped into a reality within which one can breathe and exist and say,

...whatever I am, I have become and so have fulfilled myself knowing there is a Force greater than myself... I now have peace. Let it be...
(researcher, Jan. 1994)

My thanks also goes to all the participants in this study who are to remain anonymous, yet defy anonymity within the context of a shared human journey, the everpresent shadows of transparent skeins delicately interwoven into revelations of the human psyche.

Lastly, I personally accept all responsibility for what I have written herein which constitutes the context of this study.

April K. Bariana
October 1996
My parents, Sujan Kaur Hari and Ojagar Singh Hari and their son Harnet Singh Hari (1929).

PREFAEE

I shall preface this study with an analysis provided by a contemporary Sikh reader, N.M. a transplanted Canadian-Sikh scholar. Here is her letter, drafted after reading the study.

Dear April:

How did we become the accessories to our men? We learn to love, we do not fall in love. I think for women the breaking of the covenant is still a difficult choice, while for men it has been and always will be easier because it is more readily forgiven, ‘Well, he’s a boy, his wife will bear sons for us!’ There will always be distaste in the mouths of people who talk about women who marry out of their culture, as opposed to the men who do the same.

I know your voice but when I was reading this, I tried to imagine your voice reading this so I could hear you speaking because you have a very different style of speaking and expressing yourself. I could hear your very soft voice in certain parts and then distinctly and abruptly I could hear someone else...

I found it very interesting and troubling in some ways because I cannot deny that (female oppression) is the common reality of my culture in some ways...when it happens within your culture it just seems so much more heinous, so this has affected me much more than it would if I were not a Sikh because through the eyes of a Sikh I could see how the story unfolds. That is, except for the boys’ stories where obviously I cannot relate to the freedoms of a male, yet I could still see how the males have to deny and adapt. I found it very interesting. At times, I could not put it down and at other times I was very distraught. At first, I wondered, ‘Why is the Jat affinity so bleak?’ I guess I expected a nice story ... something very refreshing from a woman writer.

I think that you are very different. I have to keep in mind that you are third generation Canadian and so in that sense I often wonder how similar or different you are from me and how... well, I have a very filtered idea of what Sikhism is because my parents brought it to Canada...and so I’ve got to mesh my reality with yours ... How is it that your family has managed to hold onto tradition, I mean, especially in Alberta which is you know, so Anglo... ? So that’s why I wonder about what your picture of a Sikh is and how you (if I only heard you, I would not know you were Indian) relate to the story of, for instance the girl who was beaten. And so, I mean I can relate although I have not experienced it - I’ve never seen violence in my home nor witnessed anyone in the act, yet I know of very traditional homes and I know it occurs.

I think the pictures of your family legitimize your voice - they do, why wouldn’t they? I think your personal history should be expanded. I wonder why you only give snippets or yourself... then near the end I see why you have not explored yourself in depth. Yes, it is imperative that I know how your family got here and why
you think the way you do...I wonder, after four generations, how much of you there is in how you raised your children and I wonder if anything was lost in the covenant, which becomes broken over and over again, and if now you are a product of a blended covenant. Now I know, for that is what you are...

It’s easy for me to read this and accept this but I don’t know if it is for my parents. They may say ‘She’s full of it, how dare she think she knows...’ So that’s why I’m wondering if your being so long in Canada gives you an outsider’s voice?

I asked you who is going to have access to this... This is a snippet...if you lose sight of the fact that these are simply stories of a few people, who by no means provide a generalization of everyone in the culture, that’s fine and you have discussed this. To me, it’s important to keep it in context. Also, I think it’s really important for you to say that this is not a scriptural scholarship. It is simply what it is: a limited reflection within a culture, of its varied human facets.

Your metaphor, the kara, from the beginning is a full circle so in the end it comes back with yourself being positioned within the circle, so you have maintained continuity... You have written a piece of work which will not rest easily upon the shoulders of our culture yet it is long overdue, so let it be and good luck!

N.M.
November 1995

A STATEMENT OF INQUIRY

Why this topic and why am I the writer?

This study is a narrative inquiry into the sense of "self" resident within the Sikh steel bracelet, the kara, which is used here as a metaphor. I became curious about this topic as a result of my chosen profession, that of an educator and due to my birthright, that of a Canadian-Punjabi Jat Sikh. Thus, this study touches upon my personal biography for I am both researcher and participant. It satisfies a need to educate others in understanding why Sikhs find it difficult to assimilate into the dominant society and instead choose cultural accommodation. It also adds to the currently sparse literature available on contemporary, Canadian
Punjabi Sikhs. This study takes place in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and the participants include recent immigrant and first generation Punjabi Sikhs, adolescents referred to as "children", their parents, relations and both mainstream and Sikh professionals. The Punjabi Jat Sikh "self" is the focus of this study, wherein the terms "Punjabi Sikh and Punjabis" are terms used interchangeably for purposes of this study only.

Who am I and where did I come from?

According to Singh (1963: 3-18), Punjab, the land of the five rivers "panj-ab" and the main gateway to India, is a state located in the north-western corner of India. The massive Himalayas separate it from the Tibet plateau on the north and the Indus River, on the western side of Punjab, which flows downstream 1650 miles into five streams: the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and the Sutlej rivers. A chain of mountains, the Hindu Kush and the Sulaiman, flanks the Punjab on the west, providing a separation from the countries of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. The eastern boundary separates Punjab from the rest of India and the Sindh desert (see enclosed map)\(^1\). Punjab is an area which slopes down from the mountains in the north and west to the desert in the south, an area across which the rivers flow, resulting in intra-fluvial tracts known as "doabs" between the Sutlej and the Jumna rivers. Punjabis reside within these three doabs making the area between the Chenab and Jumna rivers the homeland of the Sikhs.

Oberoi (1994) describes the "crystallization" of the Sikh tradition, especially rituals which marked the milestones of one's birth, initiation and death.

...the territories in which the Sikhs lived, the languages they spoke, the agrarian festivals in which they participated, the ritual personnel they patronized, and the symbolic universe of their rites of passage - all were shared by numerous other communities within the Punjab (Oberoi 1994:48) ...according to the 1868 census (the second under British administration) Sikhs were 6.5% (1,144,090) of the total population; Muslims were 55% (over 9 million) and Hindus were 22% (around 6 million), for a total of 17 million people within central Punjab or the doabs between the Chenab and south of the Sutlej rivers (Oberoi 1994:42)...here, Sikh identity markers in the personage of the ten gurus emerged.²

...the initial guru period following the death of Guru Nanak

² The ten gurus were: Guru Nanak (1469-1539), Guru Angad (1504-1552), Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), Guru Ram Das (1534-1581), Guru Arjan (1563-1606), Guru Hargobind (1595-1644), Guru Har Rai (1630-1661), Guru Hari Krishan (1656-1664), Guru Teg Bahadur (1621-1675) and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). Each took the title and functions of a guru on the death of his predecessor (Oberoi 1994:48).
provided identity to the Sikh Panth: a) allegiance to Guru Nanak and his nine successors; b) identification with their teachings (bani); c) the foundation of congregations (sangats); d) the setting up of elaborate pilgrim centers such as Goindwal and Amritsar; e) the convention of a communal meal (langar); f) and, the compilation by Guru Arjan, of an anthology named the Adi Granth, the major sacred text of the Panth...
(Oberoi 1994: 49).

The shaping of the Sikh covenant:

The ideal Sikh or disciple was the Khalsa, which signified symbolic purity and Sikh brotherhood begun by Guru Gobind Singh. Khalsa identity gauged Sikh loyalty to the gurus, through rituals. (Oberoi 1994: 59, 62). In the early nineteenth century, the human conduit which dutifully transmitted the Sikh texts, myths and symbols included three categories of men who were priests, politicians and soldiers. They included members of guru lineages, men recognized by the Sikh membership to have descended from the Sikh gurus of the khatri caste but different gots (exogamous caste

---

grouping within the zat); holy men (Bhais, Sants and Babas who interpreted the Adi Granth and so became professional granthis, who were revered for their mediation and piety; and traditional intellectuals meaning the Sikh ascetic orders who exemplified and interpreted Sikh tradition). The guru lineages controlled the major, sacred shrines, were highly venerated, dispensed charity and protected the familial, holy relics. Over generations, many guru lineages became patrons of large Sikh, kinship groups and commanded power from commoners. Collectively, they mediated between God and man (Oberoi 1994:108-136). Yet, how did they construct "Sikhism"?

The shaping of a Sikh identity required a unique values and belief system: popular saints, goddesses and village sacred sites (the worship of miracle saints and pilgrimages to their shrines); evil spirits, witchcraft, sorcery and magic healing; astrology and divination (folk healing was dependent upon strict method, ritual and symbolism); calendrical festivals, rituals and fairs (Baisakhi, Diwali, Holi); and primitive protest meaning opposition to the popular religion through textual and cultic, ideological dissention (Oberoi 1994: 139-203).

Village religion constituted the oral culture of the Sikhs in the belief that there are supernatural forces, which if appeased, could intercede in human affairs. It was believed that the cosmos was inhabited by good and evil spirits, making people believe that they must align themselves with the merciful spirits and pacify the vengeful spirits. Since the rituals of birth, initiation and death marked the milestones of man's relationship with "self" and God,
one may ask, "What place did rituals play in the everyday life?"
Rituals allowed human participation in enacting the drama, in experiencing and reinforcing the sanctity and therefore in shaping their destiny as Sikhs. The infusion of Sikh rituals in daily life underpinned the necessary, philosophical mindset (Oberoi 1995:165).

a) Soon after birth, a child underwent his first initiation by drinking sweetened water touched by the feet of five Sikhs; his hair was to remain uncut and his name was to be selected from the Adi Granth, after which he was bathed in curds. Thus, a distinct Sikh identity was fashioned.

b) The "khande ki pahul" ceremony signified the baptism of a male teenager with sanctified sweetened water, the saying of five quatrains and the warning to be prepared to bear arms and keep his hair unshorn.

c) The Khalsa Sikh weddings followed traditional caste and lineage customs: both sides were Sikh or males had to convert to Sikhism before marriage; both bridegroom and bride's families enacted rituals and the couple circled the fire, which as deity witnessed the marriage.

d) The body of the deceased was to be left with the head unshaven. During the period of mourning, the Adi Granth would be recited in its entirety, including the singing of the kirtan and the display and observance of charity (Oberoi 1994: 58-66).

Singh (1963) offers a brief overview of Sikhism, allowing the reader to profile the development of contemporary Sikh symbolism.

...Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and his nine successors developed the Sikh religion from the Muslim and Hindu religions which shaped Punjab nationalism. Guru Nanak opposed ritualism and the caste system and so developed the Khalsa, meaning a community of the pure and baptised Sikhs who were to keep the five "k's", the panj kakke which includes unshorn hair and beard (kesh), a comb worn in the hair (kanga), a steel band or bracelet (kara), a dagger or sword (kirpan or gatra), and a pair of shorts to allow freedom of movement while fighting (kachhaira)...by having his followers wear emblems which made them easily recognizable, the guru wanted to raise a body of men and women '...who would not be able to deny their faith when questioned but whose external appearance would invite persecution and breed courage to resist it...' (Singh 1953:31)
Sikhs, consequently, dropped their caste Hindu names and adopted new names. For men the name "Singh" signified the lion and for women the name "Kaur" signified a princess. Sikhism was to be a society and culture of gender equality wherein the Jats of Aryan stock commanded the farming and soldiering occupations. The "others" were hierarchically designated by the Aryan, caste system to preserve their racial purity through racial distinction and discrimination resulting in the dark-skinned people becoming a servitude class of the lowest caste (Singh 1963: 1-31).

The performers within the Sikh covenant:

Singh (1963) provides a synopsis of the historical profile of the invasions throughout the Punjab, which will assist the reader in grasping the complexity of cultural emergence in the Punjab.

The Indian civilization in the Punjab is one of the oldest in the world, as suggested by the evidence of human habitation found in the Punjab from 300,000 to 500,000 years ago. The cities of Mohenjodaro in Sindh and Harappa in southern Punjab, excavated in the 1920's, show evidence of existence between 2500 B.C. and 1500 B.C. Both cities were later destroyed by the Aryans, who came into Sindh and the Punjab fifteen centuries before the birth of Christ. The ensuing invaders included the Aryans, Persians, Greek armies, Bactrian invaders, Scythian tribes, Indian Guptas, Mongoloid Huns, then the Muslim tribes, the Mahmud of Ghazni, the Afghan tribes, Mongols and Babar plus others. The mountain passes between the Hindu Kush and the Sulaiman mountains in west Punjab provided the entry for these invasions. The Jats and the Rajputs were the dominant agricultural tribes which lived in the Punjab, site of endless battles between the conquerors and the locals who spoke Arabic, Persian, Pushto and Turkish. From this area and culture(s) emerged the Punjabis who became divided into the two dominant religions, the Muslims and the Hindus... (Singh 1963; 1-10).

The role that both Hindu and Muslim worldviews would play in the emergence of the Sikh identity would be enormous and indelible.
Grewal (1990) discusses, in depth, the ethnic plurality within the Punjab, from the era composing the third millennium before Christ. The city of Harappa, a major urban center for five hundred years was on the left bank of the Ravi river. This broad pattern of settlement persisted until about 1000 B.C. Then, through the usage of iron implements, a migration up the river valleys and into the Himalayas occurred. As a result, new cities such as Taxila, Sialkot, Jalandhar and Lahore plus many villages emerged in the doabs. The introduction of artificial irrigation wells with the Persian wheel, after the Turkish conquest of the Punjab in the beginning of the eleventh century, spurred this northward movement. Thus, the nomadic Aryans’ influx into India during the second millennium before Christ, revived the previously declining Indus culture with republics and monarchies which were spread all over the Punjab, in order to escalate the agricultural economy.

After Alexander’s invasion (fourth century B.C.) the Punjab became part of the Mauryan empire which stretched from Bengal to Afghanistan thus allowing Taxila, linked by a highway to Bihar, to become an essential trade center with Iran and the Mediterranean. In the second century before Christ, the Greek king Menander ruled over the western doabs of the Punjab, followed by the Scythians and then the Kushanas in the first century before Christ. They, in turn, were overwhelmed by the Sassanians of the early third century after Christ. Then the Huns, in the fifth century, reigned supreme in the Punjab. The Punjab, however, from the eleventh century became part of the large, Afghanistan and Central Asian empires for
one hundred and fifty years. Yet, before the end of the twelfth century, the Ghurids, the new rulers of Afghanistan would conquer the whole of northern India followed by three Turkish dynasties which would rule Punjab during the thirteenth century, followed by the Turks in the fourteenth century. Ultimately, in 1526, for over two centuries, Punjab would be an integral part of the Mughal empire in India.

Political changes affected the character of the tribal peoples in the Punjab: the Kharal and Sial tribes claimed the Bari and Rachna doabs; the Gakkhars, Awans and the Janjua tribes claimed the Sindh Sagar doab; and the Rajput clans took possession of the border along Rajasthan. However, the largest agricultural tribe was the Jats who, having moved up from Sindh and Rajasthan along the river valleys, displaced the Gujjars and the Rajputs from the rich, agricultural fertile valleys.

Thus, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Jats became the dominant, agricultural tribe strategically situated between the Jhelum and Jamuna river valleys. (see Grewal 1990:2. map 2).  

---

The original inhabitants of the Indus valley, however, remained visible through some of the dark-skinned, privileged caste Brahmans and the particularly unprivileged Shudras. The descendants of the Aryans included most of the Brahmans and the mercantile Khatris and Aroras. Thus, ethnic plurality underpinned by caste differentials constituted the cultural tradition which flourished in this period. For instance, the Vedic-Aryans interacted with the Indus culture tribes to produce a social system based on caste and to evolve religious beliefs and practices which combined the simple worship of nature gods and the established cults of the Indus kinships. Next, Buddhism dominated the Punjab for several centuries, nurtured by the patronage of non-Aryan rulers, only to decline in the seventh century. This era was followed by the religious belief and practice of the Shaiva and Vaishnava cultures, which preceded the Turkish invasions of the Punjab. Finally, varied Islamic religious beliefs and practices emerged during the centuries of the Turko-Afghan rule thus merging the Vedas and Puranas to the Koran (Quran).

Cultural dominance also dictated the scripts that Indus valley cultures would use. For example, the Arabic and Persian scripts were added to the Sanskrit script, as were the Greek and Kharoshthi and later the Brahmi scripts. The resulting regional dialects which emerged from the seventh to seventeenth centuries were used for daily commerce and conversation. That is, Lahauri, the spoken language of the Lahore region became the Punjabi language, although Multani which was another Punjabi dialect,
remained the literary mode of expression. Sikhism as a culture, historical tradition and religion would evolve in the late fifteenth century with the birth of Guru Nanak (Grewal 1990:1-6).

Next, I question the role of narrative writing, the basis of my search for the Punjabi Sikh "self" within the kara, by examining the questions which arise from the chronicled, Sikh history.

**Why is narrative the voice which speaks of my people?**

A narrative is a plaintive voice which emerges above the din of our everyday existence to grant us respite so we may hear the clarion call, so we may sense the vibrancy and torn edges of the colours of human emotion and keenly observe how these residues interact, extract, bounce and remain isolated within the boundary of the metaphorical kara: the boundary which defines and shelters one culture from another, one shameless "self" from another.

...the human activity of observing is an observance in itself. It is an activity, a journey, an experience, an awareness, a vicarious sensor of a ‘self’ in perpetuity. Also, it is invisible, when and if you desire it to be so, for it reflects what you have the courage to see, what others force you to see and what you wish you had never seen. This is the journey in which the kara’s boundary of Sikhism takes me. It is that, much more than that and not even that! I am not certain what it is but I am certain I must seek it, for the seeking is a journey in itself. A narrative takes all these historical landmarks and symbols and translates them into a living, breathing person, a transmutable ‘self’ - a Sikh, of which I am one...
(researcher Jan. 1995)

Boundaries can be oblique transparencies of cultural overlays which reflect narrative inquiry regarding migratory, Sikh history. These cultural overlays question what is tradition, logic, adaptation and necessary transformation, as follows:
xxii.

a) What were the forces which generated the evolution of Sikh identity? How can human intellect and emotion reconcile cultural invasions which prescribe historical, socio-political and religious mutations circumscribed by caste designations? Is the caste system not an elitist, man made boundary within boundaries of collective cultural identities?

b) Which factors shape a unique identity: language, script, genetic inheritance, displays of symbolism, codified behaviour, worldviews or others’ reflections of same?

c) How is the absorption of multicultural symbolism (beliefs and rituals) positioned in the migratory culture as it decides what will be protected and perpetuated and what will be abandoned, aborted and finally atrophied?

d) Why is the need to portray the Punjabi Sikh culture as being more pronounced in host countries than it is in the Punjab, a sacred and consuming priority for the boundary gatekeepers?

e) Is cultural adaptation resulting from repeated, historical conquests and invasions, the same or different from cultural adaptation resulting from dominant cultural forces experienced in a migratory, host country?

The preceding, narrative inquiry threads reflect parameters of cultural adaptation which circumscribe the experience of most minorities. How, then, is the covenant’s vulnerability defined?

The Sikh covenant of kinship tradition is transposed upon the metaphorical kara’s circular boundary; yet when assimilation forces bombard the kara’s boundary, the covenant apparently breaks. In reality, however, covenants cannot break, for it is our “self” which absorbs the shock and it is our own cultural boundaries which rebound and become stronger. The Sikh covenant signifies cultural steadfastness which determines and reinforces the moral fibre of its people, for life constantly tests our mettle. This study reflects the universal humanity we share yet label as differences, which we must, for therein lies our unique identity, or does it?
A broken covenant signifies the cultural loss experienced by Punjabi Sikhs and their faith, Sikhism, as the culture migrated from India in the early eighteenth century, bringing with it what would become the "traditional birth culture" of immigrant Sikhs. The covenant is the Sikh scripture embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib, which encompassed the traditions and customs surrounding birth, marriage and death; the maintenance of the Punjabi language; and the overwhelming spiritual need to thwart the tentacles of mainstream, cultural contamination by withholding our secret and sacred stories. The children of the migrating generations became the priceless, irretrievable sacrifice, a spiritual loss which constitutes the theme of this study, the cultural erosion and cultural adaptation of my people, my faith and my "self".

As I do not wish the theme of this story to self-destruct in the politics of the telling, I simply held up a mirror so that Sikhs, non-Sikhs and fellow Canadians could educate themselves about their common humanity and sense how it is framed in Sikhism. If fear of others’ differences diminishes through the reader’s journey within this study and consequently the unknown becomes known, then this study will have meaning. That is my goal.

April K. Bariana
October 1996
The potato pickers - proud, robust and Sikh!
The sandy soil of Hoshiarpur, Punjab produces the rich sugar cane, spinach, potatoes and other foods used daily in the cooking of Indian, vegetarian meals. The raucous laughter and embellished tales of gossip emanate from the communal bond of women who work the fields. These sounds echo across the fertile plain, the rich soil of promise and compromise.
Life resounds and defies redemption!
PART ONE

THE BROKEN COVENANT

(1928) Alberta, Canada. My young mother with her new Canadian family.

PART ONE

Part One of this study reveals the obvious - the face of the broken covenant, how we relate to the broken covenant, the curse of the broken covenant and our defiance towards the broken covenant. We hear voices of the "self" within the kara participating in a wilful, sweet fratricide juxtaposed within the soliloquy of their soul. Thus, Part One allows the actors to view the rationale behind their actions, historically scripted upon the tenets of Sikhism, steadfast and immutable within the tension of the kara's boundary. Yet, how does one define this tension? I offer a possible definition.

...I feel our thinking reflects and is reflected by a monoculture in which mass hegemony prevails; and yet, the concept of monoculturalism is very dangerous. That is, if you have a basis of comparison, as in the Punjabi Sikh culture and in the dominant Canadian culture, there is no consent. Could this be the conflict in the participants' lives? I see each person attempting empowerment inside and outside of the kara. This implies a human will to consciously survive the moment, heal by thinking, self-stabilize, analyze the present, consider the options, and see the future in positive ways and view yourself as an instrument of change. The 'self' then is given permission to absorb, reflect and react. Whether these actions create passivity or passive-aggressiveness depends upon the personality of the individual. Passivity, especially as it applies to the 'self' delineation within the kara is often related to the distance between you and the issue...

(researcher, Dec. 1993)

Could the tension translate into the distance between the assimilative forces or issues and the person's desire to adapt? I believe it could. A covenant is a promise of the perpetuation of the Sikh tradition. Yet, traditions exist in a state of flux, an integral reciprocity between traditional beliefs and applied convenience, a dilemma enacted from the beginning of human history.
Hence, the permeable design of cultural boundaries threatens the cultural containment, to varying degrees, of both those who choose to stay in their birth country and those who choose to emigrate to a host country. Hence, a broken covenant is a rupture in the boundary - a broken promise which then realigns the modified boundary, strengthening its resolve. Traditionalists, however, interpret this rupture as contamination, a purposeful defilement and erosion of those fundamental scriptural beliefs and values necessary for cultural uniqueness.

It is this "preciousness of sense of self" which resides within the metaphorical kara, which Sikh traditionalists feel is being attacked by mainstream acculturation and assimilation forces from without and by cultural betrayal from within. How ironic that change is viewed as a threat to cultural maintenance; yet, without change, cultural maintenance and cultural bridging would be non-existent. Why is change so difficult to rationalize?

...human beings possess a tremendous sense of curiosity. We observe people’s behaviours and look for the motivation behind their actions. We also look for relationships, rationale and logic in people’s actions, thoughts and feelings towards us. People watching people is the activity most of us engage in throughout our lifetime. Yet, there comes a time in life when opportunity and necessity allow us to analyze the core of our being. For me, it was the revelation that stories of Punjabi Sikh youth, their families and their relationship with the kara were missing in the literature. Thus, a need appeared in my life and I was poised to fulfill it...
(researcher, Oct. 1993)

Part One of this study includes Chapters One, Two and Three which discuss the context of the study and the Punjabi Sikh female and male voices which trace the poignant journey of transplanted Sikhism as it is lived today. Chapter One reveals the narrative
setting and roots for the study, snapshots of Sikh reality, the context of Indian authors and self-conspiracies and disclosures. The "self", an immutable and invisible force, views fragile realities shaped by cultural baggage, bondage and hesitant boundaries.

Chapter Two, the women’s chapter, curses the broken covenant; for within its stillborn boundaries reside their sallow lives, throbbing with the blood of uncut umbilical cords -- their link with humanity, their historical past and present, their sacred oppression, imposed and self-declared. We bear witness to female disclosures of compliance and compassion, abuse and betrayal and the mandate of male keepers, a woman’s fateful legacy. Hence, their dupatta, a required headcovering, becomes the metaphorical evidence of their existence.

Chapter Three, the men’s chapter, deifies the sacrilege resident within the broken covenant - manhood, pride and control. The signature of a man is ownership in land and caste. The bhangra, a dance of male pride and potency, justifies ownership. Women, who drive the economy of men’s lives, who produce their precious sons, the salvation of their souls, ultimately become dispensable and tend to waste away -- or do they? We bear witness to male disclosures of the good son, the defiant son and the dutiful son, all inescapable male fates begging for the reluctantly restrictive redemption inherent in cultural pride and inevitable cultural suffocation.
Thus, Part One defines, locates and examines the Sikh covenant; Part Two explains how well-intentioned youth and their parents emotionally rupture the boundaries of beliefs; and, Part Three caresses the broken shards of crossed boundaries which constitute our lived realities, and speaks to the covenant.
Chapter 1

BROKEN COVENANT: A CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

1.1 Narrative setting for the study: the "self"

The thesis of this study was contextualized in the social sense of "self" revealed in the narratives of Punjabi Sikh, recent immigrant or Canadian-born youth. This study explored the reflection of "self" both inside and outside the boundary of the Kara, used here as a metaphor to mean the lived reality inside the Punjabi kinship structure and outside in the mainstream Canadian culture. In itself, the Kara is not a metaphor and has no more and no less significance than the other "k's" or Sikh symbols. However, in this study the Kara symbolizes the invisible yet permeable boundary separating the inherited, sacred Punjabi culture inside the Kara as opposed to the assimilative, mainstream cultural forces outside the Kara. Also, my identity as a Canadian-born Punjabi Jat Sikh allows both myself and the reader to experience our cultural roots through the journey inside and outside the Kara.

---

5 The terms "Sikh, Sikhism, Canadian-Sikh and Punjabi-Sikh and Punjabi Jat Sikh" signify religion, birth country, host country and state, kinship, caste and religion. See Appendices for further clarification.

6 Mainstream culture refers to a) the white, Anglo Saxon derivation Canadian, dominant consensus culture; b) any European derivation fair skinned culture; c) the mixture of multivariate cultural groups no longer defined by skin colour, that is minority cultures who are becoming the mainstream of the twenty-first century; and d) any consensus or majority culture who wields the institutionalized power within the country.

7 Baptised Sikhs are required to wear the five k's (panj kakke) which include the Kara, a steel / iron bracelet worn on the right wrist; the kesh, unshorn hair; the Kanga, a comb kept tucked in the hair; the Kachhaira, specially designed shorts; and the Kirpan, a ceremonial dagger worn with a strap of cloth (gatra) (Ontario Council of Sikhs, 1994).

8 The lived realities and viewpoints expressed by both Punjabi and non-Punjabi participants, randomly chosen for purposes of this study, should not be generalized, as each person speaks for himself/herself and not for the whole ethnocultural community of Punjabi Sikhs, situated anywhere in the world.
This study highlights the Punjabi Sikh parameters of "self":

a) How can one locate and identify the "self"?
b) How can this "self" be recognized by others, both Punjabi and non-Punjabi? and,
c) What defines the personal inquiry of the writer and reader(s) as both discover the Punjabi Jat Sikh "self"?


...the self can be both subject and object... The individual becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved... The self is essentially a social structure and it arises in a social experience...

(Mead 1934:25).

Here, the "self", an organic interaction between "self and others" in a social context, validates how you are perceived by others thus underpinning the necessary fragility and resilience of safe and unsafe boundary crossings. These crossings constitute the lived reality of Punjabi youth, purposely groomed to separate themselves from the inclusive and self-absorbed mainstream world outside the kara. However, necessity and convenience determine the price of Sikh loyalty. The human desire and need for cultural boundary affiliation and self-identification, inside, outside or on the boundary, has to be earned. If not, it must be demanded or stolen for it necessarily shapes our destiny and imprints upon our minds, the image of our collective and individual "selves".

Thus, the kara’s boundary appears impermeable to some and permeable to others. Where one is situated at any given moment is echoed in the Punjabi youth voices herein, reflecting the apparent dissonance in kara, gender-defined realities, which
confirm what is safe and appropriate as they ask,

...what shall I believe, adapt and internalize and what shall
I hide from my kara, my people and my God ?...
(researcher, transcript conversation, la Jan. 1994)

Sikhism, for me, identifies who I am, who I was meant to be
and who I will next become. This "self" is perpetually in a state
of "becoming", for "to have arrived" is to have completed the
journey for which no witness is required. My beliefs, my worldview
and my personality are a contrived complement of genetic
inheritance which collectively defines what is salient, sacred and
superfluous in my paltry existence. Thus, I speak only from my
vantage point, not that of others, for they will speak for
themselves in this study.

Sikhs, as parents, are consumed by their children. We either
passionately suffocate our children with love or we emotionally
ostracize them to instill the spartan pain of humility and
introspection. To be shunned is the ultimate rejection, for we
cannot exist alone. If our children betray the faith, we exhibit
an irrational hatred of their weaknesses but if they comply within
the faith, we exhibit an outburst of relentless and irrational
love for them. This emotional cocoon insulates most Sikhs against
pain; but it can also abort free choice and destroy images of what
might have been. Either extreme is charged with pathos, guilt and
remorse wherein humility is relentlessly sought while being
repeatedly rejected as a supreme, human weakness. The cultural
demands are rigid, requiring immense courage to preserve one’s
sanity in the unforgiving boundary which encapsulates the "self".
1.2 Narrative roots of the study: the odyssey of "self"

This study reflects a spiritual odyssey of human need, for we are all spinners of stories and in the spinning we embroider our retelling to balm our pain and justify our fragile yet elusive humanity. My obvious challenge includes:

a) my desperate need as a researcher / participant / narrator to tell the story;
b) the heartfelt need of my participant narrators to share their story with me;
c) and the vicarious need of our readership to experience our common stories.

There is no other story I could share with you which could sear my soul as does this one, for it is also my deliverance; my religious odyssey within the spliced chambers of my mind replete with hollow retribution, sacred solace, then eventual and eternal peace. To believe otherwise for me would be sacrilege; and for you, it would be blasphemous, for it would breach our common humanity and render us spiritually impotent. I have a need to believe and you have a need to witness my belief in myself. This is our sacrament, noble yet fraught with misconceptions and innuendos; for that is the state of a shared human experience. This also defines the role of "self" within the metaphorical kara of the Punjabi Sikh youth which drives the narrative inquiry of this study.

The purpose of narrative discourse is self-evident? Human beings learn by vicariously experiencing each other’s traditional, oral journeys which are transparent branches of interlocking narrative boundaries enclosed inside the heart of the "self". The heart beats relentlessly and irrationally within the kara, guiding the rituals of response by monitoring and adjusting the tolerance
levels of selective, cultural adaptation. This is how the "self" self-narrates and reveals the ambivalence and hypocrisies therein.

Clandinin and Connelly (1995: 3-35) describe the world of teacher’s professional landscapes which represent personal experience research as public inquiry. Personal experience methods are human methods, crucial to the text in locating itself in public discourse by allowing the voice and signature to become the conversations among participants, researchers and audiences.

I believe the narrative discourse in this study begs the interactive actors, the participants, researcher and readers, to transcend the Punjabi language, faith and culture by recontextualizing their common landscape - the familiar and safe relationships among people, places and things. The result is an intellectual and moral panorama of boundary crossings within the kara stylized to fit a Punjabi Sikh mindset, as inferred above by Clandinin and Connelly. The Punjabi landscape is one of contextual kinship ties among gender, caste and clan underpinned by a patriarchal hierarchy and affirmed by prescribed behaviours. It is a panorama which is envisioned from inside the kara’s boundary to the outside mainstream culture; rather than from the outside, mainstream culture to the elusive core of Punjabi Sikhism.

This landscape becomes the narrative vehicle which queries and safeguards the "self", for it permits the researcher to play all the roles: storyteller, author, researcher and participant. For if the researcher were not sitting inside the kara’s boundary how would you recognize my voice, my integrity, my pain, my landscape?
...I hear their voices, my mind unleashes the accompanying, traditional imagery of context. The symbolism inherent within the (participants') voices spews forth from the labyrinths of my Sikh upbringing and Sikh scriptural teachings...
(researcher, transcript conversation, 1a Jan. 1994)

Can a landscape recontextualize the boundary which lies between the kara and the outsider's culture? Questions abound:

a) Could it be that narratives are culture bound and so appear immune to language transference, or does one wilfully suppress one's own language, or the other's language?

b) Could this be the "reflexive relationship between living a story, telling a life story, retelling a life story and reliving a life story?" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995).

c) When do both narrator and listener begin to experience the immediacy, the pulse and rhythm of the experience?

d) Could narrative discourse be the defining factor demanding constant repositioning of one's "self" inside and outside the kara's boundary?

e) What happens when you cannot recognize your creation: the landscape of the kara's boundary you have created in which to situate your reality? Is it then surreal?

Narrative inquiry may not demand I answer, but it will demand that I question. This study is a living, organic work, for I demand the reader's interaction. I request the reader to formulate his/her own questions harkened by the voices which resonate in our common, human, cultural conspiracies. Is this too much to ask?

...if life is a continuous study of experiences and therefore, narratives, then we are perpetually constructing and reconstructing the curriculum of our lives. We add, disregard, change, grow, extend, associate, learn and relearn and dismiss and remember. This is how we learn how to learn, just as this is how we live what we learn, then relive it through narratives...
(researcher, transcript conversation, 1a Jan. 1994)

Narratives mould themselves to carry the burden of our saturated and expunged emotions. Thus, we, Sikhs are given
permission to define our lives without apology because we have earned the existence we have drafted. The burden of proof becomes redundant. The intent is not to shape a theoretical framework in which to place the data (Punjabi Sikh lives) but to find constructs of emotions and images (Sikh traditions and values within the kara) through which Sikh culture may be experienced and internalized and recontextualized. This is empathetic education for it defies measurement and closure. The kara provides in this study the interactive shared metaphor of our lives.

...life is a story we live... Dewey (1938) felt education equals growth equals inquiry...it is not done to people, it is something they do to themselves and in doing so they become educated...people make meaning of their lives through stories which confer meaning...teacher education involves an ability to tell and retell stories (which becomes) a continuous process of learning...

(Connelly and Clandinin, 1994).

How does the narrative mode affect my relationship with my audience? How presumptuous of me to serve as a conduit for the Sikh voices I hear; yet I cannot wear a mute invisibility.

...this holistic approach is natural to me as I find the continuity easy to wear and the threads of research, though rigorous, are more easily reconciled because I am a participant. I am a Sikh and as a writer of my own people, I require no consensus. Thus, working in a narrative inquiry milieu, although quite emotional, results in much peace and quietude for me as a writer of Punjabi Jat Sikh narratives...

...perhaps one is purged as one writes of the lives of others; communal commonplaces of ordinary lives resonating with the richness of human courage and silent despair. I try to attach a subjective, shared, emotional sequence within the narratives as I feel that there is nobility in every aspect of human life, wilful or not, and it is not for me to say which experience is more worthy than others. That is the decision of the storyteller(s)...for it is essentially their rendering of their story which may or may not be affected by the filter of my psyche...

(researcher, transcript conversation, 1b. Jan.1994)
At times I feel one should only observe not write -- but is that not an apology for a narrative which needs time to ripen? How does one splice human thought and wrap it into six tidy, narrative chapters based on open-ended, taped interviews or rather conversations and fieldnotes with sixty participants, in eight months?

One does so very uneasily, for human journeys are rarely clean, intact and are easily aborted. I met with people who approached this study with variations of fear, disdain, ridicule, empathy, angst, curiosity and pride. Their human variance expressed profound insight into disclosures, trusts and bonds which educated me in the art of recognizing boundary realities: boundaries which were crossed, diverted, hidden, lied about, transgressed and gently placed aside. I entered their bedrooms, kitchens, trucks, stores, schools, gurdwaras, and other sacred places of solitude. I cannot decide if being Punjabi shaped their narrative or whether their narrative shaped their Punjabiness. Perhaps this is the universal, human quest within any landscape - the dilemma of boundary crossings?

...dilemmas are conflict filled situations that require choices because competing, highly prized values cannot be satisfied..." (Cuban (1992) cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 1995: 6)

I was searching for their highly prized values; I was searching for their cultural dilemmas; I was searching for their permission to look inside my own human dilemmas - but first they demanded I journey with them. This journey required a consent form which signified a mutual understanding of the bond, the purpose and
the closure of this exercise, in both Punjabi and English. The signatures ranged from a precariously nervous "x" to a quietly, penned artistic script. Some retained their birth names, while others anglicized it; others were pained to sign, to claim ownership over brutal disclosures which might later haunt their memories. Identities, apparently, resonate long after fragments of human sightings fade away. I invited conversations with people in a target group, some at random and some for precisely what their character portrayed: varied backgrounds, relationships, experiences and ideologies. The youth voices (18 to 29 years) were either emotionally insulated by their extended families or ostracized from their families due to internal strife. Some hesitated to disclose sacred, cultural intimacies; others embraced my audience for they had their own private demons to exorcise within the covenant.

...the Sikh society is very insular, protective and secretive, open first to its family members, and second to the same kinship, caste and clan members. Some youth were fearful to participate because they feared reprisals from home. Some adults were wary because they did not want to be profiled as divulging confidential information and so wished only to enhance their Sikh profile for non-Sikhs. Their attitude of 'I will tell you only what makes my community look good.', though a natural human response had to be reconciled through gaining their confidence. At times I felt being a member of their culture was a definite benefit and other times I felt it was a curse because the role of researcher made me an outsider, a foreigner, a traitor ...
(researcher, transcript conversation, 1c. Jan.1994)

Home interviews with females required caution because some elders acted as gatekeepers, standing invisibly between the female voices and myself, imprinting the fury of their cultural betrayals.

---

9 See Appendix A. "Study Data ".

...in the Punjabi language a question is asked in a round-about manner, because blunt conversations, devoid of context and scenarios are considered rude. This jargon-specific dance and posturing appeared to reflect the Sikh culture's personality... each interview represented an individual's perception only at a given time and place because Sikh participants may respond differently under different circumstances, where their responses may be power or gender-based or where fear of reprisal may be a factor. My challenge was to become entrusted to enter their world as a researcher, as a Sikh, as a woman and as a kin...
(researcher, transcript conversation, 1d. Jan. 1994)

Would I disfigure their translation and use the torn pieces to adorn my pride? Or, would I enhance their delicately-framed views and affirm their sanctified life choices? My burden of reflecting their heartfelt resonance felt awesome. How does one commit to paper a spoken moment which simply yearns for silence and reverie?

...my goal in researching this topic was to do so without causing any disturbance among members or posing any threat to their powerbase. They, in turn, felt their contribution would help others inside and outside the culture to learn, forgive, understand and validate what we, Sikhs, collectively valued and believed. Another goal in researching this topic was that the youth participants not feel an inappropriate dependency upon me, making it difficult for us to conclude, part ways and go on with our lives afterwards...
(researcher, transcript conversation, 1d. Jan. 1994)

"How does one evaluate narrative inquiry?", a question which Clandinin and Connelly (1990:2-4) attempt to answer,

...narrative (inquiry) relies on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalizability... the language and criteria for narrative are under development (wherein) each inquirer must search for and defend the criteria which best applies... apparencency, verisimilitude and transferability (as possible criteria)...
(Clandinin and Connelly 1990:2-4).

To me, this means each participant's story is valid. It is real because it reflects their humanity, unique and personalized and so becomes their signature. It occurred, therefore it is.
Each narrative has a beginning and an end which is transfixed in the storyline. Whether we can appreciate it or not, it exists:

... an example of this is when a Punjabi Sikh immigrant student is asked to conceptualize and generate discussion around the religious context of Margaret Laurence's novel, *Stone Angel*. The teacher may be the only one who has the appropriate frame for analysis due to his / her ethnicity and faith... The salience of contextual clues defies the student's religious and cultural experience which cannot grasp the fine, silken threads of layered shafts of meaning resident within the author's paradigm... (researcher, transcript conversation, 1e, Jan. 1994)

What is truth and what is meaning? Space and time define meaning which is attached to experience, so each is an integral part of a confluence of emotional rhythms of memory, tangentially arranged and rearranged within a circuitous flow of beliefs. Truth defies measurement, as it should, because it cannot be replicated. This satisfies a need to believe the participant voices.

1.3 Narrative snapshots of Sikh reality: our gender "selves"

To journey into the Punjabi selfhood, I am asking you to suspend belief and travel with me into my biographical "self" to ground my credibility as a Sikh narrator. My kara signifies my ethnicity, being Punjabi Jat Sikh, third generation from southern Alberta, Canada, where my paternal grandfather planted roots in 1903.  

---

10 Refer to the following:


In this historical time and place my personal narrative acquired shape and substance and foreshadowed my destiny to be lived inside and outside my kara. I would feel its forceful guidance throughout my life and I would respond accordingly.

...I was raised in a rural environment and grew up with the Eden Valley reserve aboriginal children near my home at the base of the foothills, beneath the majestic Rocky Mountains. I was also raised with the children of my grandfather's friends, the generation from the Japanese internment camps in Lethbridge, Alberta. However, in this farming and ranching community, it was the predominant local European ancestry which formed the contextual faces of my life. I never saw anyone who looked like me, so I had no one to identify with, other than my family who belonged to my kara's culture... a misty cloud of invisibility descended upon me as I responded to the life I was meant to live within the parameters allowed by my faith...my grandfather carried and transplanted the threads of our faith which he selectively groomed into the core of our being - our collective 'selves'...
(researcher, Oct. 1993)

I reasoned that being British East-Indian, as grandfather termed it, was no different than being Jewish, Mennonite or Oriental as the reflection of our difference became our identity. My elders had considerable land and so employed Canadians which made my family's status negotiable, irrelevant and consequently safe. Your occupation, not your features, gave you inclusivity. Thus, my shared experiences of warmth and humour in a farming and ranching community became the prairie bonds of my childhood and adolescent life. The sense of cautious assimilation was transposed into every aspect of my life except religion and intermarriage - the invisible taboos embedded in my psyche. This to me was the first revelation of why some issues were better kept locked inside my kara and so formed my first kara experience.
I do not want to make an issue of my gender, however, it appears that Sikh women extract their status from within the broad context allowed by their significant Sikh men, usually elders.\(^\text{11}\)

This determines if and when a female will possess control and power within a patriarchal kinship.

...I feel the Punjabi Jat Sikh woman possesses tremendous courage which is shaped by the united family system. When I discuss my womanhood, I see myself reflected in the courageous Sikh women of my family. These women have tempered my passion and sensibilities, have shown grace and humility, have faced tragedy and accepted the will of God and have shaped my selfhood into that of a Sikh woman... I am in essence what they have reflected is appropriate for a woman to be, to become and to be satisfied with being...traditionally, Sikh culture reveres males and begrudgingly tolerates females... what happened to me? ...

(researcher, Oct. 1993)

Women were considered to be a burden, weak in body and mind, and a financial and economic burden because they required dowries and education and often did not produce essential male heirs. My grandfather, however, reversed the order. He openly promoted and esteemed the women in our home and made us self-sufficient, secure, confident and contributing. I am a product of his philosophy and my narrative reveals the courage of the Sikh women with whom I was raised and whom I am raising.

\(^\text{11}\) a) See Bumiller, E. (1980). May You be the Mother of a Hundred Sons. New Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd. "...India is a country where the birth of a girl was often viewed as a calamity and where almost every woman has heard this Sanskrit saying. '"...may you be the mother of a hundred sons..." a well known blessing given to a Hindu woman at the time of her wedding. which I (Bumiller) began to see as a curse..." (Bumiller 1990: 10).

b) Ibid. p.16. "...The Rig Veda, a collection of 1,017 Sanskrit poems helped form the basis of historical literature which describes a society in which women married late, at seventeen, did not live in purdah, took part in clan gatherings, had prominent positions at religious rites and most importantly were in charge of cattle raising...made bows, arrows and other weapons for the men who went to battle. For some strange reason, over the next two thousand years the position of women gradually eroded. Girls were married off at a younger age and were barred from religious rituals and widows were not permitted to remarry. Between 200 B.C. and A.D.200, the upper caste law codifier known as Manu, produced the first compilation of Hindu law which assigned to women the status of chattel...from the cradle to the grave a woman is now dependent upon a male: in childhood, on her father; in youth, on her husband; in old age, on her son..."
20.

The generations of the women in my family span eighty years in Canada. Through it all, they chose to adapt, accommodate and bend - but essentially survive as Sikh women. My Sikh faith has allowed me to survive the moment and survey my past, aware of the tensions of the present. Could this be termed spiritual courage?

My second kara experience generated the seed of this study. In my work as an educator I counselled and assessed immigrant and special needs students. Their biographies, life circumstances and educational and emotional gaps intrigued me. I found the student's self-perception, others' perception of them and their feeling of having power or not having power, dramatically affected their lives, in and out of school. This was not a profound revelation, but it made me question my role as a visible minority professional dealing with students who did not fit the Canadian, mainstream mould. When I translated immigrant students' psycho-educational assessments for their parents, I sensed how parents and their children are judged by irrelevant numbers and graphs which dictate lives and dole out self-esteem. I reflected upon this professional assault of the kara as contrasted with the socialization or "invitation to assimilate" experience which eagerly awaited the student. I wondered what irretrievable cultural patterns would be lost, postponed, or enhanced for the greater gain? To me, this became a test of the kara's boundary because I needed to find out who decided what would be sacrificed?12

---

12 My experiences as an educator, working with adolescent, recent immigrants included both visible minority students and "white" minority students. Interestingly, both situations resulted in similar transformations of student and parent identities of deficiency in psycho-educational reports. (researcher).
21.

I questioned, "How can we remain culturally intact yet move within the forces of outside change?" To understand this question I had to analyze the metaphor of selfhood as defined by the lives of two Punjabi Jat Sikh students living their cultural script.

1.3.1 Acka and Tikki: caged solitude and defiant illusions

The following is a reconstruction of the lives of two Punjabi Jat Sikh youth, Acka and Tikki, female and male, respectively. 13

**Acka's story**

Acka is an eighteen-year-old student who was born in Jullunder, India and has been in Canada for three years. Her family lived in a rural, village setting and she attended a local school where she completed eight grades. The subjects studied were Hindi, English, Punjabi, history, science and math. She wore a Punjabi suit uniform to school. Her father was a farmer and was happy to stay in India; however, soon they were sponsored by an older, married sister living in Canada. Acka explains,

...we came for the Canadian life. We came for the opportunities, the education for the children, the better lifestyle and the better jobs so that we could make more money and have nice things...

(Acka, Nov. 1993; transcript 1:3)

When asked how the family copes in Canada, Acka explained,

...it wasn't easy for my married, nineteen-year-old sister to put up with my family, my mother and father, my married sister and my brother-in-law. My mother takes care of the two small children and takes care of all the cooking and cleaning and my married sister buys all the grocery. I just go to school. They want me to get an education because everyone else has to work to live in

---

13 The names of all participants and any other specific details which may identify the personal narratives in this study have been changed to ensure confidentiality (Acka, November, 1993; Tikki, December, 1993).
Canada. Also, if I want to marry a nice boy, I should be able to have a good job. We all help to pay the house payments and we all live in a very, big house...
(Acka, Nov. 1993; transcript 1:3)

Acka and her family have retained the Indian value system and go to gurdwara every Sunday. Also they attend many marriages and religious festivities. The family rules include not going out with boys or girls, staying indoors, learning all about the kitchen (including the cooking of Indian dishes such as keema, subzee, pilau and dhesi mattaii) child-rearing and training for a trade as soon as possible so that she can earn money. In her home, the men do "men's jobs" such as outside work, garbage and yard work, and the women do all the rest. When asked about family members left in India, Acka explains,

...my parents send monthly payments back home to my grandmother. The reason is that this money pays her for the expenses of my remaining three brothers and one sister in her care. They cannot come because of problems. This is causing us much pain and problems. My brothers failed the immigration interview even by having a 100% blood type match with my parents. Every month we send about $100.00 Canadian dollars to my grandmother for looking after our family...
(Acka, Nov. 1993; transcript 1:4)

Acka then discussed her present life.

...I need challenges. For four years now, I have been studying ESL courses and still I am ashamed and embarrassed to speak English. It is not so easy. At home nobody speaks English and we do not need it, just outside we need it. The counsellor says that I will not be able to do general level courses but I just want a chance to try, even if I fail it's okay... I like English and history but I do not like math and science. At home I have a typewriter and a computer...but I am poor in oral English and I am also very shy...
(Acka, Nov. 1993; transcript 1:5)
When asked how she feels about Canadian-born and immigrant students, Acka replied,

...I would like to make Canadian friends but my English is poor and I am very shy. Our parents have separated us from Canadian kids because they are afraid we may marry each other. I do go to relative's parties, gurdwara gatherings, weddings and engagement parties. This is the way our parents look for our marriage matches. This way we can see and others can see us and then the parents talk to each other. Indian-born parents are not educated and if we do not obey them, they will yell at us or hit us and then the family has many problems with much pain. So, it is best to go along with what they want and to just do it...

(Acka, Nov. 1993; transcript 1:6)

Tikki’s story

Tikki is an eighteen-year-old student who was born in Toronto, Ontario but went back to India with his mother and returned two years later to begin school. He makes it very clear that he was born in Canada and that he is not an immigrant student, even though he has become an orthodox Sikh, wears a turban and kara and is studying the scriptures.

His father’s nephew, an unskilled thirty-five year old farmer, came to Canada in 1968. Tikki’s father, after spending fifteen years in the Indian army, decided that he wanted a better life so he deserted the army. He left for England but he couldn’t get in. Then he tried to get into Canada where his nephew was living. In 1970, in Canada, he was employed and so he sponsored his wife to join him in Canada. Tikki’s two older sisters remained in India with their grandmother after his mother came to Canada. After Tikki was born, both mother and son went back to India and then returned two years later with all the family members. Tikki explained:
...Dad cut his hair because he was discriminated against when he went for a job. I used to have cut hair also but after the siege on the Golden Temple in India, I decided to keep my turban, hair and beard. I also openly began to speak Punjabi to fellow Indian classmates and began attending the gurdwara regularly. Now, I do what I want. I don’t care. Those kids who used to ridicule me before are scared of me now...

(Tikki, Dec. 1993; transcript 1:1)

Tikki then began to discuss what his present life encompassed. He witnessed attitudinal changes in himself and others:

...there are more of us now. Some stick to groups. Me, I go everywhere. I’m friends with the same kids I grew up with. They don’t treat me any differently. Kids speak more Indian languages in groups. It’s great. During lunch, I get a bite to eat and find a card game and join my Indian friends. They have to stop being scared of other people...that way, they won’t get picked on...

(Tikki, Dec. 1993; transcript 1:3)

...whenever I see an Indian boy or girl smoking, I go over to them and say that they should stop...I remind them of our faith and tell them that they should have more pride. It usually works. It makes me feel good. That’s power. It’s so great that I am equally relaxed with Canadian kids as I am with Indian kids although I have more in common with those of my faith. But I don’t like some of the habits of the Indian immigrant kids...no one in my group does. They must try to fit in but they don’t seem to know how to do it. Either they act too Canadian or they act too Indian. They should learn how students act in the classroom in Canada...

(Tikki, Dec. 1993; transcript 1:3)

When asked how he and others perceive him, he replied,

...I’m a leader. I’m a good influence. I’m influenced by God. I’m Indian and I think that blacks and Indians are together...it’s the whites who are alone. Some white kids laugh at us when they are in their own crowd but one on one, they don’t laugh. I think this way...if I want respect, I have to give respect. I am mature and some of the kids are not. You need a goal in life. My goal is to get into medicine in university. I have an 80 % average in Physics so far. If you work hard, nothing is too hard...

(Tikki, Dec. 1993; transcript 1:4)
Tikki felt that the education system should change. He felt that teachers give out too many handouts (typed lectures or summarized notes) and don’t allow the kids to work at learning.

...they teach a lesson every two weeks. That’s too slow. We need discipline, we need homework. I think we should segregate the kids; let the kids who want to learn go to one side and the kids who don’t want to learn go some other place...schools and teachers are too soft...we should be learning much more and much faster than we do now...

(Tikki, Dec. 1993; transcript 1:3)

The story of loss and gain experienced within the kara by these two Sikh youth reveals traditional, gender-based grooming. Acka is stereotypically shy, obedient and passive, whereas Tikki is self-confident, aggressive and proud. These personality traits are purposely nurtured to fulfil the double standard scripted in the Punjabi childrearing practises. That is, males are encouraged to explore and have freedom of movement whereas females are groomed for passivity. Females must be kept docile, virginal and chaste because female defilement becomes the collective family kinship stigma. Tikki needs to be in control of his life, whereas Acka has never had control and doesn’t expect to have control over her life.

Acka responds to her restrictive lifestyle through housework, religion, caretaking and schoolwork in a dutiful manner, masking her imprisoned spirit of youthful expectations. In an Indian extended family home, where many generations live in one building, these duties specifically mean: cooking the chapattis three times a day, feeding, bathing and babysitting the younger children; ensuring that the elders’ hygiene, food, medication and perpetual tea requirements are met; washing, folding and ironing and perhaps
praying twice a day, once in the morning after bathing and once at night in a special room in the home, the Guru Granth Sahib room; sewing Punjabi female suits (salwar kameez) and acting as a family mediator and interpreter in the outside English world which includes banking, speaking with teachers and immigration personnel and making medical appointments.

The male, if a student, may have a part-time job or no job while older males will work many shifts to provide for massive homes, vehicles and trips to India. Women will also work to earn incomes, although in some homes they will be asked specifically to stay at home. Tikki may take out the garbage, attend to the car and chauffeur the females to their jobs, school, gurdwara, shopping and visiting excursions. Recently, however, more females are becoming daytime family chauffeurs for elders which makes driver education a survival skill. In situations where a male escort is needed, a family member is delegated to accompany, drive, chaperone, and interface with the English world of men where the presence of a female is deemed inappropriate. Again, many women are increasingly taking over this role, thus blurring the role-specific boundaries.

The male will have freedom of movement, freedom to drink alcohol, to visit, to shop, to socialize and to drive around at will. Males are not expected to assist in housework, cooking, washing or childcare, although some may choose to do so. It is considered women’s work.

The disparity in Sikh gender differences is nurtured and defined within the kara, visible in the way each approaches his/her
role, accepting yet contesting the cultural rules, expectations and unsatisfied personal desires. Roles do overlap where necessity demands, but gender-specific roles still remain steadfast.

Acka’s role in her family, where post-secondary education for women may pose a threat to their compliance within a subservient position, is then centered around marriage preparation. She must be groomed for a traditional alliance of families. More liberal types of marriage arrangements are dependent upon the elders’ philosophy of life. Some families encourage women to become educated for economic reasons, personal satisfaction, family status and marriage marketability status.

Acka’s marriage grooming is based on her acceptance of serving her in-laws, becoming a partner in their extended family home, doing all she did in her home and more for her husband’s family, and possibly working and delivering babies at the same time. Women who are not groomed to accept this lifestyle cannot cope in an extended family home and their marriages are tragic, so grooming is essential. The highlight of her life and her reason for being is to satisfy the needs of her husband and in-laws.

At this point, her womanhood and self-identity are displayed on the market for the mothers of the prospective, husband-candidates to appraise. The girls will be shown, will have tea parties and will be openly betrayed, rejected and criticized. Only the most beautiful, talented, fair-skinned and charming, but not too bright or too aggressive will capture the reward - one of their sons. Their diplomas, degrees, special training and job skills will
be analyzed and weighed according to the needs of the boy’s family. The boy’s education, earning power, permission to live alone or demand to live in an extended family home will determine the girl’s family’s decision to reject or accept this proposal. Problems occur after the vows have been taken, if either side was not initially candid and now chooses to reverse the expectations.

Some mothers-in-law want their daughters to have the freedoms enjoyed in a separate married home; however, they insist that their daughters-in-law live with them and serve their lifetime needs. Again, the double standard exists, for the status of a daughter of the home and the daughter-in-law of the same home, are different.

The parents with the more precious commodity are the boy’s parents because they can choose, reject and choose again. The girl’s parents are at their mercy unless their daughter is especially lovely, educated or accomplished. The lifestyle of the in-law’s home is dependent upon their education, status, liberal views and degree of religious fervour. The end result rarely varies. Acka will most likely become increasingly introverted and will turn into a babymaking machine, doomed to drudgery and spiritual bankruptcy. However, today in liberal-minded homes, this attitude is being challenged with a vengeance by some young women who refuse to comply and demand their privacy and freedom to exist.

Tikki, accordingly, will one day accept the role of suitor who, accompanied by his mother, will participate in the dance of mate selection interviews. Also, both Acka and Tikki see little reflection of their culture in the school curriculum or teachers’
ethnicity, for they exist outside the Punjabi experience in a Eurocentric world. South Asian teachers may be more sensitive towards the immigrant experience; however, they are mysteriously under-represented in the school system. Although Acka and Tikki represent opposite ends of the academic achievement spectrum, each appears dissatisfied with the content, delivery and personal ownership of their education. Acka’s English language inhibitions may underpin a psychological inhibition towards the English culture which may be an attribute purposely cultivated to guard against the assimilation of her children - the next generation. The tentacles of tradition appear to oppose cultural fusion in an attempt to contain and nurture one’s Indian being - one’s sense of "self", separate, distinct and unique from others.

English language fluency will increase Acka’s status in the marriage market, because marriage and child-raising will require her to be self-sufficient as a homemaker. Her parents are aware of the dilemma: the need for English numeracy and literacy survival skills and the subsequent threat posed by these skills in maintaining female dependency upon men within the kara’s boundary.

Tikki has experimented with non-Punjabi choices and now has decided to accept his position within the kara. He chooses to lead wayward Punjabi youth by role-modelling excellence. I view Tikki as a crusader within the Sikh advocate role. I feel he perceives there is an evil which lurks about, poised to destroy Sikh traditions by tempting Sikh youth to cross boundaries. Perhaps he needs to reflect that the evil is within us, or it is the enemy we
conveniently create. He should try to be more cerebral and possibly reevaluate his views of Sikh superiority to redefine loss and gain and objectify his personal biases and indoctrination. Denial is necessary to deal with the conscious awareness of reality as we shape it - not as others shape it for us. This story initiates several questions:

a) Will the traditional values grooming of Punjabi Sikh youth guarantee the preservation of Sikhism and their inherited legacy in a supposedly foreign and threatening land?

b) Should the parent’s cultural dilemma in their adopted country become their children’s dilemma in their birth country? Or, does the transference of values and beliefs between generations defy explanation?

In essence, at what cost does the individual and then the collective reject the burden of cultural transmission for future generations? In doing so, how does the "self" within the kara, adapt?

To probe the range of scenarios possible in this quest, we must appreciate that cultural transmission and adaptation is a universal issue, encountered and accommodated for daily. Next, we visit the human face of this accommodation through the narrative of Indian authors who reflect this human defence mechanism, and the conspiracies of disclosure which spiritually bond people in a shared burden of secrecy.
1.4 Narrative Indian authors: boundaries of the "self"

Who are you? Where are you from? Where are you going? The responses to these questions constitute human conspiracies; the sounds of Punjabi Sikh voices transplanted in a foreign culture - the Canadian "mainstream" culture, whether it is the white, middle class, consensus culture or the collection of emerging minority cultures. One segment of the latter being Punjabi Sikh, self-identified and traced through the traditions and variant "selves" which reside in, emigrate from, and return to Punjab, India. Self-identification at a kinship level is evident in the traditional dance of the mothers-in-law which reinforces the ritual marriage bonding of two families, as they publicly embrace the spirit of their karas in the Sikh covenant.

The kara's power is displayed in the extended, open palms which reveal hennaed patterns of suppliance, humility and spiritual deference, offered by each clan mother as she competes for her kinship's status in a vision of white silk, chiffon and gray hair.

---

14 a) The official languages of Canada are French and English reflecting the two founding nations of Canada (although the Aboriginal people take issue with this statement). However, due to mass immigration waves, the present Canadian identity is multicultured and includes people from all over the world.

Next, the biographical "self" of several Indian authors who invite the reader to experience the Punjabi male and female psyche and to appreciate the profound sense of belonging which saturates their daily existence and resonates to others their stark truths.

The salient issues include:

a) A comparison of the Punjabi kinship paradigm and the Eurocentric, western paradigm regarding patriarchy, family, gender roles, women’s liberation and castelike social structures.

b) An appreciation of Sikhism as a lifestyle, integrated, immersed and defined by culture and faith, reflected upon by Sikh, non-Sikh and Christian authors.

c) A reflection of how Sikhs view themselves: within India where they constitute a minority; within Punjab where they constitute a majority; and outside of India where they represent a distinctive, visible minority of first and second generation immigrants.

d) And finally, an appreciation of the universality of cultures regarding power, self-perception, role and gender parameters, cultural transmission in child-rearing and the inevitable acculturation and assimilation attributes worn by generations.

The following authors’ voices reveal collective streams of Sikh consciousness, including the female psyche which reflects upon women’s social reforms, empowerment and educational reforms. This is contrasted with the male psyche which is centered by patriarchal allegiance and alliances revealed through the multifaceted and devious, sacred threads surrounding land ownership, village life and cloaked religiosity.  

---

b) Ibid., p.32. "...India, by contrast, is a land of religious diversity. Contrary to popular impression, due to the distinctive appearance of Sikhs, India’s main religion is not Sikhism. Rather, the divisions are as follows: Sikhs (1.7%): Hindu (85%): Muslim (10%): Christian (2%): Buddhist (0.06%): Jain (0.05%) and Zoroastrian (0.03%)
1.4.1 Unveiling India...

Anees Jung (1987), the daughter of one of the closest advisors to the last reigning Nizams of Hyderabad, was brought up in strict purdah, yet studied in American graduate schools and writes of the lives of varied caste and social classes of women imprisoned and liberated within the closeted, female psyches of Unveiling India.
Jung’s early purdah life is revealed in her narrative. 

...my mother remains absent in the only family portrait which rests on the last page of the album...Where was she when this portrait was taken?...My mother, like all the other women, was part of a landscape I never questioned or tried to explore...My father’s will governed the essential patterns of our life...He set paths for us to travel on...He gave us names which were to become our identity...The black plymouth that drove us to school had dark drapery. We emerged every morning from our house...in many ways like a citadel (high white walls and courtyards)...Once I pulled at the dark draperies and tried to peer out. The ayah (children’s maidservant) rebuked me. No one was to see us, she warned gravely, for we were little treasures to be claimed in time by those who had earned the right to it...


Jung, as a journalist, records what it meant to be a woman in India: marriage and widowhood, unfair work practices, sexual servitude, bearing and rearing children in poverty and the religious discrimination and exploitation of women. Jung also records the kara’s joys: marriage, children and the experience of hard won freedom from the bonds of tradition, ritual and religion. The steadfast thread of relationships between men and women, husband and wife, companions, cohorts and kinship generations are highlighted through her life’s cultural metaphors.

...fifty long years thus have passed and then the hour of twilight when he lies dying...She asks,‘Why had he wanted her to place a needle and a bowl of water by his plate?’... He replied,‘If the grains of rice had scattered while she served, he would have speared each grain with a needle, washed it in the bowl of water and have eaten it.’ But that never happened... The mound of rice stayed whole; not a grain slipped away... the needle and the bowl of water remained unused and the woman never asked her husband why they were not... placing them by her husband’s plate had become as much a part of the act as the serving of the food. The ultimate recognition of his needs, combined with reverence of a man she had never questioned, constituted her duty...

(Jung 1989:118-119).
The solid mound of rice is symbolic of the solid marital relationship. Servitude is a sacred privilege - a homage to one's need to please and thus become necessary. The serenity of compliance in this marriage denies the vagaries of western, romantic, unrequited love - illusory and shallow.

1.4.2 *All these years...*

Raj Thapar (1991), in *All These Years (A Memoir)*, exhibits her journalistic, Punjabi intellect regarding women's reform contextualized in the last forty years of post-independent India.
Thapar chronicles her narrative journey alongside her prominent journalist husband, through the lens of an historical journalist, participant and observer of Punjabi life realities:

...in 1945, my life...had been hemmed in by the affectionate rigidities of a middle class Punjabi family. Father in government service, mother traditional to the last; yet surprisingly free from the bondage, in many ways an original feminist with a burning zeal to equip her daughters with all that had been denied to her - from school, to tennis to swimming to other social props required to stand on your own two feet in that imitative, mixed up world...Married off without having set eyes on my father, excited at the prospect of life in a big town... my mother refused to live on my father’s unearned income and compelled him to complete his education. This he did in England over two years, returning to Lahore to start his own accountancy firm. But the stay abroad left no visible marks on either of them. Their only westernization was in the clothes my father wore...and my mother’s marginal and halting use of the English language... (Thapar 1991: 1-2).

Thapar speaks of social class, that ubiquitous quality ensnared within the human psyche. She speaks of women:

...I sat with the women who conversed in hushed voices until finally Her Highness (wife of Karan Singh, Maharajah of Kashmir) arrived, also dressed in chiffon, head covered... tall, graceful, strident in some ways, skin like porcelain, the slightly upward Mongol eyes and bathed in an aura of aloofness...

And she speaks of men:

...they (Prime Minister Shastri of India) hadn’t reckoned on the effect of the army withdrawal order upon one western command, senior commander, Harbaksh Singh, this towering Sikh sardar who was not to be deflected or defeated... who courageously volunteered his men to go forthwith in a valiant struggle against the Patton tanks... (Thapar 1991: 208, 247)

Thapar speaks of charismatic, banally motivated heroes and mercilessly blasphemed upper class men and women, whose preordained lives resonate with the thwarted passion of exultation and premonition. Within this maelstrom, she locates her voice and
screams of social injustices which entwine her moral existence - the angry rhythm of her hypocritical and alienated blood, her gender’s blood and that of her country - disturbingly convenient and conveniently explosive!

1.4.3 *May you be the mother of a hundred sons...*

A foreign woman’s voice emerges from Elizabeth Bumiller (1991) in *May You be the Mother of a Hundred Sons*.
As a reporter for the *Washington Post*, she came to India with her husband, a correspondent for the *New York Times*. Bumiller, during four years of research, travelled to all parts of the country examining the paradoxes and realities in the lives of India’s women.

She felt the female pulse of marginalized yet powerful village women, the midwife’s role in the life of the mother whose body refuses to house and nurture the sweet fratricide, the male child, the mother’s salvation; the Hollywood prototype, caricature moviestars, the sallow-faced little girls who pout and pretend, whose reality, as they perceive it, is not defined and staged by a manager, a father, a husband or an uncle - when, in fact, it is.

Bumiller also witnessed the raunchy and sedate female artists, poets and passionate film directors who actively exhibit the prescribed, ascetic conscience of hysterical vigilance and infuriated scorn; the redemptive and religiously rigid Muslim, female police officer; the rational yet intellectually paralysed active crusader and the village heroes pathetically redundant in the cities. In essence, Bumiller found that Indian womanhood is most profoundly centered on contradictions.

She found that while the illiteracy of women was rampant, many held powerful positions in the world of politics and the arts:

...I sensed that the population problem of India was the most profound symbol there was of the powerlessness of women... (they) have to lift themselves out of their bondage to reduce maternal and infant deaths and to establish equality and justice for women... as alien as their lives were from (mine) ... their problems of work, marriage children, poverty and aging were any society’s definition of womanhood... (Bumiller 1991: 278-279).
39.

Bumiller looks through western eyes at the seasoned-with-age, toothless vegetable seller; the ornate, British-accented, former maharani; the beleaguered and blasphemed, yet strangely necessary prostitute; and the modestly seductive widow - not with jaded expressions of a priori knowledge, but with the absurd yet patriotic morality of being one of them. Bumiller walks in their beaten life-path and flinches with their pain, a woman’s pain but not a foreign woman’s pain - for pain itself is an eclipsed and tubercular emotion, devoid of xenophobic ambiguity.

1.4.4 Voices from within...

Karlekar (1991) is a Bengali sociologist, educated in America, who in writing Voices from Within (Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women), is intrigued by gender social issues concerning women’s education, inequality, reform and historical presence as evidenced by narrative data contained in women’s diaries, letters, interviews, life stories, reforms and political newspaper articles. Karlekar narrates the stages of the women’s reform movements which include social custom changes, the introduction of female educational reform and the resulting male/female relationships and status, both individually and communally:

... when western education came to India at the beginning of the last century, early recipients were middle class boys and men ... At the same time, the rejection of social practices such as sati or widow immolation on the husband’s funeral pyre, child marriage and polygamy by social reformers ... brought with it an appreciation of the need to improve the status of women...
(Karlekar 1991: 3-4)

Karlekar traces the narrative of women who challenged the system for women’s right to an education by demanding change
in the apparent male need and right to control female sexuality.

To do so, she documents the emergence of feminine consciousness through the exploration of women writers in the nineteenth century, the search for identity, the notion of audience for their writings and the constructions of femininity and reading as a woman (Karlekar 1991: 1-30).
Karlekar underpins her insight by the phenomenon of the antahpur tradition, typical of the Bengali households yet replicated with variations throughout India.

...literally translated to mean ‘inner house’, the antahpur consisted of a set of rooms, courtyard, terrace, roof and kitchen in which women lived and worked. Only children and a few kinsmen had access to these areas. The principle of seclusion normally resulted in the women’s quarters being less exposed and open to fresh air. In practical terms, this meant that these rooms were ill-ventilated, dark and humid...the antahpur was symbolic of the physical and emotional experiences of its inhabitants. It was the world of the lying-in room, rituals and endless repertoire of food items being prepared according to specific rules, in which the in-marrying woman’s identity was shaped and organized by the norms dictated by senior, female affines... it was literacy which allowed women to finally have access through reading and writing, to the unknown, public world of men... the bridge between the antahpur world of secluded women and the literate world of the ‘outsider(s)’ ...
(Karlekar 1991: 9-10).

Karlekar underscores the social context of the mid-nineteenth century female world which transposes itself through education, legislation and reform into today’s conventions.

1.4.5 The last flicker...

Gurdial Singh (1993) a Punjabi university professor, in The Last Flicker, examines the sacred thread of his Punjabi village life as a precocious child and sexually charged adolescent. He recalls the nostalgic literary vigour of truths, half-truths and untruths which become truths - a litany of narrative dry heaves. This narrative biography reveals the male compulsions and perceptions of virility, the culturally-assumed male leadership and status rights bestowed, not earned and the emotional burden therein. The consequences of human bondage as perceived by a man are simple and exacting as he states:
"Man, you were destined for ten turns of fate in your lifetime. The first one came and consumed you, what happened to the other nine?" (Singh 1993:11).

Singh begs the question, "How is it that the relationship between a man and his land is sacred and often self-destructive?"
...since his birth, Jagseer had a special attachment with this piece of land. He had seen his father plough it as if it were his own. After his father’s death, Jagseer ploughed it as if it were his own. But in reality it belonged to Dharam Singh, whose father had brought Jagseer’s father from the ancestral village to work on the land of Dharam Singh’s family. Besides wages, he gave Jagseer’s father half an acre of land to keep (thus cementing their relationship). However, the legal transfer of that one half acre of land to Jagseer’s father’s name became stalled and (therein lies the sacred and secret story...)
(Singh 1993: 19)

Must the land define the man? Or, can the man forestall destiny and bequeath ancestral land, male progeny and marriage to others? What happens to those who dare to circumvent the culturally exacted parameters of heredity - the immortal paralysis of traditional expectations, the infuriation and shame of generations steeped in self-sacrifice burdened by the everpresent yoke of caste and lineage? Singh examines the fragility of male bonding allowed, accepted, internalized and sanctioned in the travesty of self-destruction. In his biography, the winner is the land not the man, who is dispensable. Singh looks for his other nine lives in vain. He looks for the vigilant conscience, the earthly passion and paradise, the alien barbarians of one’s fantasy - he looks for himself and finds, as he expects - nothing!

1.4.6 The Sikhs...

Khushwant Singh (1984), Punjab and India’s premier writer, publisher and wit portrays in The Sikhs, a visual presentation encompassing the voice of scriptures, behaviours, immolations, and immense variations within the Sikh faith and culture. He shows the kinship threads tightly bound, self-imposed and self-denied.
sacred reflection - an elderly lady reads the Sukhmani or Psalm of peace, composed by Guru Arjun, by the side of the Golden Temple...Women join their menfolk in affirming the morcha, the movement launched by the Akali Dal...On the way to Amritsar, an entire Sikh village on march to the holy city...Most Sikh women wear the traditional salwar kameez with a dapatta to cover their heads...pastoral Punjab - a picture of peace and prosperity at monsoon times...Village boys play hide and seek under the branches of a fallen banyan tree...
(Singh 1984:2-39)

Singh reflects that most Sikhs live in hamlets and villages, in comfortable ancestral homes with expansive, communal courtyards
where their cattle are tethered. Also, joint family households abound where the patriarchal grandfather, father, son and grandson and their respective families, live under one roof until their land is divided. Thus, communal living and division of labour result in prosperity which allows farmers to own their own tractors and tube wells. The village center is dominated by the gurdwara site, recognizable by its tall flagpole. Singh further discusses the robust Sikh diet, behaviour and mental attitude: Punjabis consume wheat, buffalo milk, milk products (butter, buttermilk and curd) lentils, vegetables and chicken or goat. However, in spite of religious sanctions against smoking and drinking, alcohol abuse is a distinct, domestic issue (Singh 1984: 33-34). Religious observance, through scriptural participation in the Guru Granth Sahib room in the home, is an integral part of the Sikh psyche:

...a small prayer book (a gutka) of daily prayers (nitnem) is to be found in all Sikh homes (which constitutes praying to the guru). Though idol worship is forbidden, pictures of Guru Nanak often become objects of devotion...
(Singh 1984:5).

These religious conventions psychologically control the "self" within the kara from the contaminants outside and readily punish those who dare challenge this covenant.

1.4.7 The collective streams of consciousness

The collective voices of authors who write about Punjabi Sikhs have made us cognisant of various streams of consciousness:

a) Women raised in purdah became socially conscious and literate and thus overturned traditions and laws regarding the following: child marriages and polygamy; male control over the female reproduction years; female infanticide; sati or female immolation; widowhood bondage; and the subservience of women to males as heirs, landowners and kinship signifiers.
b) Powerful women, literate and illiterate became mobilized through grassroots politics regarding issues of social injustice, health, education and women's reform movements.

c) Upper class men and women learned how to cope within the enclosed, bureaucratic and hierarchically estranged levels of power. They enjoyed the seclusion and protection of the minute, upper class Indian social strata sustained by their British, institutionally-shaped experiences. Thus, their safety net of schooling, friends, family connections, marriage alliances and intellectual pursuits become exposed to us, as evidenced in the post-colonial Indian period.

d) The challenging and diverse career lives of women became affected by education abroad: by the changes in society's perceptions of prescribed, traditional lifestyles for women; by the personal freedom, experienced without guilt, surrounding issues of marriage, widowhood and careers; and by the display of freedom and permission in living alone, meaning living with an aging parent and/or a young child. The startling revelation in recognizing the validity of an individual's life, lived outside of marriage and kinship constraints, shaped the new reality.

e) A broader analysis of the inherited, male role expectations preordained by caste, culture and kinship, disallowing cultural adaptation, now became a viable area of dissention. Now, the male-heir relationship with inherited, ancestral land and the expected transference of same throughout generations could be challenged by women. Another issue of contention became the male right to be the sole, kinship leaders, a situation which nurtured and promoted the male abuse of power, oppression of minors and an irrational control of females.

These streams of consciousness reflect cultural transformation which occurs whether a people remain in their birth country or emigrate to a host country where change is naturally incorporated by the first born generation. People tend to fear change; yet are attracted to it because it necessitates creative and critical thinking, encourages individuality in human behaviour and readjusts one's self-identification and relationships with others. Cultural change which is internalized through interfaith, interracial marriages reflects the most common human defining experience of boundary reconstitution - an issue feared by Sikh traditionalists.
It appears that the boundary within the kara harbours a racist view of culture retention, which is common to specific cultures whose worldview is based upon religious tenets.

Although this study deals with Punjabi Sikhs in Toronto, Canada, the questions which deal with the identity of "self": Who are you? Where are you from? and, Where are you going? could easily be asked of Punjabis in Punjab, India. In each place Punjabi Sikhs represent a minority class so perhaps we should ask:

a) Is a visible minority culture a microcosm of the bits and pieces which make up the macrocosm of the host country, majority culture?

b) Is one compatible with the other? If so, how does one bridge cultures within the kara? Is this bridging called the conspiracy of pain?

The traditional dance of the mothers-in-law reinforces the ritual bonding of two families; but what happens inside the ritual dance between a Sikh man and woman as they manoeuvre within tradition? How is the transported Punjabi cultural baggage shaped to fit a Canadian image? It is shaped with transparent pain which taunts a woman, who is denied by prescriptive marital boundaries, defined by her kara and against which she is powerless and motionless.

The plaintive literary voices of Jung, Thapar, Bumiller, Karlekar, G. Singh and K. Singh resound with human longing for what cannot be. Human betrayal underpins the free will of those who dare defy, alter and redefine their existence, their dreams and their destiny. The human conspiracy of pain thus contrives the mystic reality of those trapped in its plaintive, self-serving web.
1.5 Narrative threads: "self" conspiracies and disclosures

What follows is an actual transcript of Pia's kara: a conspiracy of pain, a telephone conversation with a participant, which includes her husband the gatekeeper and myself the researcher. Second, an examination of the face of bitterness, a figment of my imagination simultaneously mythical, surreal and dangerously brutal. It speaks of human disclosure and the dangers therein, especially of disclosure between two Jat Sikh women who know the penalty of betrayal. The apparition of Pia is what my psyche experienced on a metaphysical level, after the actual telephone conversation. Pia could be the voice of either researcher or participant as our roles become interchangeable, eased by our shared realities.

1.5.1 Pia’s kara: a conspiracy of pain

I had her telephone number and I knew she was expecting my call yet I sensed impending danger, the kind that makes your mouth dry and engulfs you in a pact of secrecy without your knowledge. The time had come, the call had to be made. Where would she be? God willing she is just now passing near the telephone.

A. I dialed the number.
P. She spoke. (Relief)
A. Are you alone? (Narratives demand the solitude of aloneness.)
P. No. (Dare I continue? I must because I have a desperate need to know!)
A. Is your husband in the house? (Why must we ask the obvious?)
P. Yes. (This response represents my fears and becomes the obstacle I must overcome. It is amazing how one word can contextualize her life in my imagination and stretch it over the canvas of my sensibilities.)
Why does it prickle my memories?}

A. I guess it's pretty difficult. Do you want me to hang up?

P. No. (She needs me as much as I need her. How can I dare to endanger her, yet I must. Has she given me permission, I don’t know. So many potent forces are resident in this word. Her fear is demanding a quiet, yet steely alliance within my humanity. The forces within our karas are speaking.)

A. Is there anyone else in the house?

P. No. My parents-in-law have gone to India.

A. Do you think he will allow you to meet me Saturday at 10:00 in the morning? I will tell him in Punjabi that I am writing a story about our Sikh youth and that you are transcribing the Punjabi tapes into Gurmuki so that I can read them. Okay?

(P. must make him acknowledge me as one of us, only then will he trust me alone with her.)

P. Okay. (to me)

P. Here, my Punjabi teacher wants to talk to you. (to him)

(Her speech to him is so brittle, dry and empty. It resounds of their wilted relationship.)

(Pia 1:3a, A. (April); P. (Pia) transcript conversation, Dec. 1993)

I then understood that my initial fears were correct. I had to speak with him to win him over, to prove that I posed no threat to his masculinity and authority. Why am I speaking to myself? Why am I rehearsing what I know in my heart must happen. He can either trust me or not. It all depends how much he fears the "others" who are outside of his realm of control.

H. Hello. (He spoke naively, as if to hide the shadows of his intense curiosity.)

A. Hello. Sat-Sari-Akal (the Punjabi salutation). I am Mrs. ______. I am a teacher who is collecting the stories of our Punjabi Sikh youth and I need Pia’s help in transcribing the tapes into Gurmuki. Can I pick up Pia on Saturday morning at about 10 o’clock, then we can go
to the Sterling Library to do the work? Is that alright with you? I don't want to do anything which is against your rules, that's why I am asking you for permission, but I really need her help, if you don't mind?

(Ask, acknowledge his authority, plead, then close discussion. The pattern rarely changes for a woman.)

H. That is fine. I understand. Sure you can take her for two hours. But call before you come because then she can be ready. I understand. **You can use her.**

(Her! Has she lost her humanity? Has she become a commodity to be used with his permission?)

(Pia 1:3a, H. (Pia's husband) transcript conversation, Dec. 1993)

I don't know if he believed me. Will he let her go or does he sense a stranger, an intruder, a threat? Why must I phone him again, is this a trick? Did I miss something...is he stalling for more time to question her or is he trying to second guess me?

Words mean everything and nothing. They hide what we feel. Their context is blurred in the vagaries of our consciousness for others to translate and extract what they will. Is this what he has done? I said goodbye to her for there was little else left; I understood the silence. The silence of obedience, the silence which tells you that you are second class, you do not matter. All that matters is your master, your father, your brother, your husband. You do not exist. Stop whining and bury your tears in your heart for they must lie frozen in time and remain a memorial to your existence. You were here but you were not allowed to make a difference. Your mind, your brain, your consciousness will not release you from your frozen tension as your invisible wall goes up higher and higher. Anything to ensure that he will not hurt your
soul, the only thing you can control - your hatred towards him. This is what he cannot take away from you. You own it, you gave birth to it and you nurture it daily. It gives you the strength to survive another day in which to eat your neverending bitterness:

...Pia's misty apparition clothed in raw silk, her dappatta covering and contouring her face came before me with her hands folded in salutation. As she lowered her eyes, she touched my feet and I shivered before her mystic sharpness. As she rose before me her eyes softly opened and she offered her still folded hands into mine. I gently clasped her folded hands, shaken by her humility of presence and pried open her cold, silent fingers which revealed in her palm that which my heart feared most - her bloody, throbbing bitterness. I screamed in rejection as I covered my eyes from her stare.

She gently replied, 'You cannot know me if you cannot eat that which is my shameless pain. Take my bitterness and eat, for I cannot journey with you unless we are one.'

I raised my ashen face and spoke, 'When I was young, I ate the bitterness of my childhood friend. Her burden of pain I have carried throughout my lifetime and it has made me vulnerable. I have searched for her soul endlessly and I have carried her guilt but have found no respite. Now that I am older, I fear pain, for it is a lonely slice of memory shaped by the voices of my youth and the faces of my innocence which beckon me. I cannot eat your bitterness for I must eat my own.'

She smiled through her dappatta and took my hand. Without my knowledge my fingers held the bloody mass of her emotions and I tasted, through my veil of silent tears, what she offered. Our journey had begun. Pia had won... ("My imagination ", researcher Dec.1993)

Two days later, the telephone rang. It was her. My senses flared in alarm. She whispered to me that she was alone, so it was safe to call. He had gone out shopping. He never takes her. She is rarely allowed outside the home. I listened as I became detached from my "self". The sounds of her words numbed my mind. I recoiled as her voice echoed in my mind from a faraway place, transfixed in time I wandered away from the present, aimlessly drifting. The
resonance of her maimed fragility touched my consciousness, my haemorrhaging soul. My emotions writhed in torn shreds of remorse. Her palpable fear transcended my vulnerability and grounded my vigilance.

...I don't think I can meet you on Saturday because he doesn't think it's a good idea. He always agrees with everyone but then he tells me no. He does not want me out of his sight. He is very suspicious and it could be very bad for me, you know... but I can meet you somewhere in the weekday to talk. You need my story and I need you because I have no one here. I was married to this man in India when I was sixteen, then we came here to live with his parents. It was then that they decided I should go to school to learn English so that I could work and make money for them. I have struggled to get an education in school because he was saying it was a waste. When his parents are here, he is fine. When they leave he makes my life very difficult... he takes me to the school door and picks me up right after school... there is no trust or respect... Everyday, my heart is breaking because I can tell no one what is happening to me inside... my parents live abroad so they are of no use to me. I need to talk to you, please don't give up on me. My karma is not very good... what to do?... (Pia 1:3c, transcript conversation, Dec. 1993)

She punctuated her despair by the rationalization of her fate, resulting in no one to blame. Blame is so elusive and painful. We fear instigating it as much as we fear becoming a victim of it. She therefore blames no one. It is her fate! We agreed to meet the next week. I told her to be very strong, that our life is not easy and we must cope. She obliged by saying she understood.

I don't know what possessed me to say this. My mind was shocked by the injustice, yet my words were denying what I felt. Why does this happen to me when I am speaking Punjabi? As I put the telephone down, I realized that my mouth was very dry, my heart was beating fast and I felt warm. Was my body registering the repugnance of what had transpired? If so, how closely our
emotions and body state are aligned. How could this happen to her?

How to describe it? Was there not a long English word for it?

...disclosure places the listener into the journey of another’s pain. I felt her betrayal as that against all women and I cried for her and for me and for all of us. Who would share my burden of disclosure? Her transparent pain was too brutal. What kind of logic could allow a woman to be transformed into such a pathetic creature, living an oppressed life dictated by an abusive husband her master, owner and demi-god? ... what logic of faith had placed her in control of a man only a few years older than herself. An arranged marriage had rearranged her destiny. Why is this co-dependent arrangement of power and abuse perpetuated in kinship?...

(Pia 1:3d researcher transcript conversation, Dec.1993)

I then realized that our relationship had to be a secret alliance, a kinship pact which could not risk betrayal by either one. Another fear came across my mind. One day the research would end but her life would not. Would I have the courage for closure or would I remain her confessor? What will happen to me? I only have so much energy - how much can I give away? I need to pace myself in order to complete this journey. Is that selfish? Am I a traitor? No, I am not. I have needs also but I have made a commitment. How can I walk away from the jagged shards of lives which begged my trust and wrenched my soul with their stigmata - their kara's signature? Intimacy at what price?

1.6 Summary

Chapter One introduced the kara, which in its metaphorical sense, represented lives lived inside, outside or on the boundary of the circular bracelet. The broken covenant signified the imminent, cultural betrayal - the price of assimilation which daily frames the lived reality of minority cultures.
...the sounds of Punjabi Sikh male and female voices which resonate throughout this study speak of their courageous absolution and resurrection. Quietly, they attempt to realign themselves within their inherited, gender-prescribed kara and religion-prescribed covenant in which the dance embraces the historically amorphous yet culturally contained rhythm of life...

(researcher Jan. 1994)

Chapter One shaped the parameters within which the narrative in this study will reflect the Punjabi Jat Sikh "sense of self": how to locate and identify the "self"; how the "self" is recognized by others, Punjabi and non-Punjabi; and, what defines the ongoing personal inquiry of the writer and reader(s)?

Chapter One also defined my spiritual odyssey: my need to tell the story, the participants’ need to share the story and our readership’s need to experience our common stories. Collectively, this quest defined the framework of this study, driven by narrative inquiry which interfaces with our Punjabi voice, image and pain. In doing so, Chapter One revealed the narrative setting, roots and vivid snapshots of Sikh reality and Indian authorship which thread into disclosures, the present pain and future hope of salvation.

The signature of narrative inquiry:

Chapter One discussed the context and methods of research used in this study which include our soulful voices and plaintive certainty. These emotions erupted in "Pia’s story" entangled in conspiracies and disclosures, the signature of narrative inquiry.

...although Pia’s fate defined her betrayal, every woman’s fate is different according to her karma so an assumption of typical lifestyles must not be assumed, although the telephone conversation is quite real...the tenets of Sikhism appear to define Pia’s life cycle as her script sets the stage for duty bound male and female action and reaction. A reader who is unfamiliar with a patriarchal headship in marriage must
contextualize similar experiences for himself / herself. This single human experience of disclosure and conspiracy becomes the central core of a narrative inquiry anecdote, an accumulation of which constitutes a lifetime. The inquiry never ends, because the story is perpetually retold and relived. The listener becomes the narrator of a narrative and the reader encapsulates the repetitive frames within the mirror of his / her mind until it is imprinted...
(researcher, Jan. 1994)

The narrative inquiry focuses on the participants' experienced realities as they manoeuvre inside and outside the kara. To break the covenant is to share this pain with others, to challenge the curse of rituals and sanctified vigils, to trespass upon the secret chambers of one's relationship with "self", husband and God.

...the heart, it appears, is indeed a lonely hunter maligned in oblique references to appease the guilt-ridden conscience of humility and vested tradition. To break the covenant before an insider brings shame to one's soul; to break the covenant before an outsider brings shame to one's caste, clan and kinship, for the broken ethics, then, appear barren and raw, palpitating with an uneasy rhythm before foreign eyes...the resulting cultural pressure to absolve the disclosure accordingly dissipates. First it flows in a trickle, then in an irrational torrent of erotic emotions as the phoenix of one's pride proclaims the shards of salvation. These movements perpetually change boundaries... that is, the relationship between personal practical knowledge and the choices an individual will dare to risk are interrelated. Also, since the narrative involves the researcher, participant and reader in a mutually exclusive interpretative act, the resulting cultural context provides a new forum for a new relationship, now underpinned by varied personal and culture-bound frames of reference...
(researcher Jan. 1994)

Lastly, this journey entails personal risk because it involves becoming one with the participant which brings closure to the interpretative relationship, through the generation of data which is consistent with the focus of narrative inquiry. Yet, one may ask, "How is it that specific data can be consistent with a particular inquiry method and who decided that this is so?"
To answer this question, we must experience the narrative inquiry relationships within the voices: disclosure, pain of conspiracy, and the allegorical vision in a dissected shard of human life such as that reflected in Pia’s kara. Her pain assumes and carries:

...the narrative, (being) both phenomenon and method...we call the phenomenon ‘story’ and inquiry ‘narrative ’... the human presence in inquiry...
(Clandinin and Connelly, 1995: 11).

A caution to the readers:

Chapter One also introduced a cautionary responsibility:

a) Participant responses may not be representative and so ought not to be culturally generalized. Any culture exhibits varying degrees of traditional and liberal thinking.

b) This study is not a template of all immigrant experiences.

c) Discourse surrounding cultural values and beliefs requires critical analysis to appreciate how the "self" adapts and retains its integrity. This analysis, however, is not a denigration or devaluation of a culture. Rather it provides a greater awareness and sensitivity towards lesser known cultural behaviours and beliefs.

A brief overview of the chapters in the study:

A brief overview of the chapters in this study begins with Part One: Chapter One (Broken Covenant: a context for the study); Chapter Two (Broken Covenant: Punjabi Sikh female voices); and Chapter Three (Broken Covenant: Punjabi Sikh male voices).

Chapter Two will discuss the reflections of three Punjabi Sikh females between the ages of 18 and 29 who relate their dreams, fears and hopes lived inside, outside and on the edge of their kara. They also relate the consequences of the choices they have made within the inherited and predestined religious worldview to which they have surrendered themselves. Each female is framed
within the parameters allowed by the patriarchal society which defines her selfhood. That is, her market value, her desire and psychological need to duplicate intergenerational tradition, her shameful defilement, her necessary hunger for compliance and rebellion and her poignant transference of allegiance from father to husband. This bonding between females and their fathers is further explored in the legacy of frozen traditions and the reluctance of the next generation to comply with exacting traditional models. This chapter also reveals the Punjabi metaphor of the dapatta, wherein the mysteries of womanhood abide, as it exposes their dutiful guilt, presumed shame and role-defined oppression.

Chapter Three, accordingly, will discuss the lives of three Punjabi males between the ages of 18 and 29 whose collective karas govern their sense of duty, inherited leadership and marriage choices. Marriage appears to be the operative tradition-bearing vehicle whether one participates in the heart-rending act of non-compliance and marries a non-Sikh or a marriage of convenience thus perpetuating chain migration. The male metaphor of "land" thus represents both the signature of a man and the obligatory burden of a man, defined through his caste status, pride and duty. Ironically, patriarchal roles are imprinted through the fastidious shaping of male children by dedicated female elders living in a male driven household. Thus, adult males are conditioned to demonstrate the attributes of governance as they voice their defiance of inherited status. This state creates chaos in the human
spirit and seeks resolution in either acts of great nobility or acts of grave injustice.

The next overview of the chapters in this study includes: Part Two: Chapter Four (Broken Covenant: schooling, a pretext for assimilation ?) and Chapter Five (Broken Covenant: social services, an intrusion or a necessity ?).

Chapter Four will discuss the schooling experience of recent, immigrant and Canadian-born Punjabi Sikh students as viewed through the lens of their mainstream, Canadian-born teachers and administrators. We will see the Punjabi parents’ rationale for resisting the white-schooling assimilation process underpinned by the mainstream need for "Canadianization". This fractured equation reveals parents and professionals, each well-intentioned, yet worlds apart and proud of it. This cultural interface raises moral and ethical issues regarding the purpose of the machinery of schooling. Is it to blend immigrants and their cultures into the mainstream culture ? Or, is it respectful of the immigrant desire to maintain cultural distinctiveness through cultural distance ?

Ironically, most teachers were once children of immigrants and so they, as adults, relive the immigrant experience through their students’ lives. Chapter Four exposes and appreciates the minority culture’s transformation through schooling, the socializing instrument !

Chapter Five will discuss the limitations of mainstream social service professionals and the advantages of their Punjabi professional colleagues regarding their common Punjabi Sikh
clients. Both appear inextricably linked in a quagmire of cultural insensitivities and legal parameters which frame the Punjabi Sikh, traditional boundaries against Canadian, societal laws. Punjabi family life is therefore scrutinized and rationalized. This chapter asks, "If Canadian society includes an abundance of cultures, which at some point in history have adapted, why is this culture not willing to do so?"

The last overview of the chapters in this study includes:
Part Three: Chapter Six (Broken Covenant: my voice, my audience, my words).

Chapter Six presents a dialogue between myself as researcher and my graduate student audience, underpinned by my philosophy of life shaped and framed by my childhood experiences with my grandfather. Thus, the study comes full circle as does the kara and I question whether the covenant was ever broken and if the "self" remains intact. But that is for you, the reader to decide, not I.

An explanation of the literature sources:
I feel that a brief explanation of the literature sources is necessary at this point. Appendix A contains a "Glossary of Terms" which alphabetically lists and defines the Punjabi words used in this study; the "Study Data" which includes six tables of information regarding the study participants and a Letter of Agreement and Consent; the "Inserts" which include copies of abstracts and tables with footnoted sources; a classification list of "South Asian Women Research (1972-1992) Bibliography Keywords"; and lastly, "A Chronology of Sikh History in Canada" with sources.
Appendix B contains an unabridged script of the CBC video, "Faces of Change: Faces of Hate" (1993) concluding with a short discussion.

Appendix C contains a section termed "References" which lists sources which have a direct bearing on this study and a section termed "Related Topic readings" which lists sources I have used as background information. The latter provides the reader with a wealth of contextual, background information which is necessary to appreciate in the reading of this study.

Additional references which the reader may find invaluable include the traditional history of Sikhs and contemporary sources.


Also, I have requested print permission for all the sources copied and used in this study.
2.1 The dapatta: a veil of mirrors

The dapatta, used here as a metaphor for the women's chapter, represents their life source, life contribution and sacredness in life. The dapatta itself, is a two meter long fabric either of woven cotton worn as a shawl to protect oneself against the sharp winds and bitter, cold nights in Punjab villages; or a lustrous, billowy softness of French chiffon worn to complement one's salwar and kameez, the traditional dress of one's ancestors. A poor vagrant woman's earthly reward may simply be a pulla (an end portion of a cotton sari) riddled with dust and dirt used to "swish" away the flies, smear the tears, scrub the face and shine the joy on a child's face. The dapatta bears witness to a woman's pain and joy in a tapestry of sacred threads. A dapatta speaks volumes to those who recognize its mystic meaning.

---

1 See the following:

These authors offer insight into the meaning of the dapatta when it is used as a metaphor of women in traditional, colonial and post-colonial India (researcher).
A dappara can be drowned in cool, fresh well water and then

researcher, February 1994

Fale, that of distastewing a mistace in the mirrors of the wett,

more, for not preveting an extrangished life from this cursed
dreams. The mother sheds tears of repentance for not proucting
origin of its source, its mother, now damned of tears and
be burned it Moslem, will have fulfilled the role of child for the
whether to be burned upon the funeral pyre it shyn or mundane, or to
image which once struck on empery, yet wittlind breas. This child,

The child’s stile, flaky brown skin is stretched over the

researcher, February 1994

shrunkon hear, forever damded of life.

researcher, February 1994

face and weeping sors, parating one’s future, sorcecatina

the antmonsities of poverty cling within the rythm of the

The dappara, a well of mirros, reflects tortured passion.
from head to toe while one sleeps under the shade of billowing trees in the mid-day sun, escaping flies, locusts, tiny chameleons and dust winds. The loose weave of the dapatta separates the loose weave of the skin from nature’s invaders, both cooperative residents of timeless interaction. The veil of mirrors journeys on,

...this cloth is mine, see I can stretch it, twist it, squeeze it and shake it but I cannot do that with my life because it encompasses my soul which disallows violation within the melancholy mists of my karma, my sallowness, my absolution, my reckless cowardice...where hollow retribution eats my misery... the veil’s mirrors pity my illusions...

(researcher, February 1994)

The dapatta can hide the face of a woman from her elders, the men, the masters; it can distinguish thus between wisdom and folly, sarcasm and obedience, personal slights, insults, teasing, anger and flirtation. The dapatta veils a woman’s face from an evil encounter, a surge of emotion, an indiscreet retreat, a subtle recognition hidden in the delicate folds of colour and texture framing the countenance, allowing fragile wisps of images and denied rumours to pierce the veil and yearn into the eyes of arched ambience. The dapatta separates a woman from her "self" and others’ "selves", crossing boundaries with a grotesque and private fascination of "knowing, yet not being known." She acknowledges nothing, lest it escape and pierce her privacy, her sacred sanctum:

...I cannot see you, you exist for yourself only...go away with your agonizing wail, your wild vigilance, your pitiless salvation...mock others, others who like me are hungry for a mute conscience, a chant which bedevils the dirge within my soul...my communion is my passion, my hunger subsides and bursts forth in cries of ecstasy, exalted stupor of benign passion and passionless fantasies - lost, drifting, forever ripe in my mind’s eye for me alone...colour me invisible...

(researcher, February 1994)
The dapatta's veil reflects a feminine transparency, a camouflage against intruders' eyes and her own eyes, a spectre in repose, an idol preparing to idolize. Her eyes dance within the folds of the veil, generating a rhythm of existence, distinct from itself - an aborted phantom, a memory of recurring hypocrisies, a supine and paltry anonymity. The veil challenges vigilance:

...I suffocate under your censorship, a limpid appendage of aborted rule, the male rule of undefined posturing, wilful and resolute, benign yet fruitless...images of a malicious phoenix captured on the threshold of banal perversity...beware my cursed wiles will camouflage your alienation, then where will you hide your nakedness?...
(researcher, February 1994)

The dapatta hides the rhythm, shape and movement of her profile as it dreams, schemes, defies, instigates and aborts the remnants of womanly pleasure: sacrifice, neglect and constant yearning. The colours of the dapatta follow her body: saffron, magenta, turquoise, kelly green, basque and mustard yellow but not white. This is the colour of age, when pleasures wane, when the dreams have been spun and when the elders are consumed by their ancestral dance of retribution and reincarnation. Then the veil's mirrors shatter, for they have witnessed a life which is no more:

...I wore the white when he died, I wore the white when she died. I wore the white when there was no one left to die but dying itself. Then the white transcended my body and became a cast of paralysis around my voice and limbs, taut and barren, violated in the life lived for the dying...I wore the white until it wore me. Is living an extension of non-life or an instrument of the transmission of life?...
(researcher, February 1994)

The dapatta becomes the pulla (a bright red or magenta rectangle), which the father places in his daughter's hands, to be held tightly and the other end he gives to the groom. Seated in
front of the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book of scriptures), the couple hold fast their metaphorical bond as the female follows the male around the Granth (laawaan) four times, assisted by her brothers and male relatives. The veil of mirrors bonds life:

...the linear movement of the twisted pulla, the umbilical cord, the lineage of Sikh generations, the linear nalla (the cord used to tie the salwar, a woman’s garment), the rikree, a red thread worn on the wrist on ceremonial occasions allowing the sister to demand a monetary token from her brothers...the link between a man and a woman, a different family within the same clan, same caste of the same kinship...

...the lines, the threads, the twists, the cloth, the dapatta, all swirl in the circular image of the kara in which, her life, his life, their lives are dutifully bonded, ritualized and cleansed, purified of bad omens, bad karma...the family bond outlives each member. The bond may rupture, but never breaks for it is steadfast...

...resolute in its earthly paradise, its mystic meanings, plaintive chants, not raagis’s songs (professional Indian singers) but hymns from within the heart...merciful absolution, peace, fulfilment and joy restored, sanctified. The kinship tested and strengthened by the tirade of loyalty and blind devotion. Families marry - individuals are merely necessary actors...
(researcher, February 1994)

The dapatta has also adapted into the phulkari, a traditional female headdress revealing one’s status and wealth. The women of the villages and cities adorn their bodies draped in this cosmetic brilliance. Some women without value simply cover their bodies with a phulkari made by a lesser God who denied them significance. For them it is a veil which covers their shadows in life. Thus, the dapatta displays its signature of style and status versus subservience and oppression, together constructing the elusive, female narrative. The phulkari is equivalent to the chadaras used by Moslem women to drape their bodies. Amazing how tradition and
custom translate into a garment’s status and social significance, forever shaped and defined by men:

...the phulkari was originally a khadi (rough cotton) fabric two meters long, dyed a brilliant magenta, embroidered with pure golden, silk threads...now a bedecked, brilliant array of rich colours, threads with sparkles which hide a bride’s repose and mystery...a treasured garment linking her father’s home with her husband’s home, through her clan motifs...
(researcher, February 1994)

The dapatta, a veil of mirrors within women’s narratives, questions readers in their ability to read its embroidered boundaries. The readers become the narratives they read, which is what happens in this chapter, for that is the purpose of the veil of mirrors. Readers may well question:

a) "What are the other signifiers of a woman’s status?" the dapatta asks. The answer is," They are the signifiers found in the inner sanctum of the ‘self’ which resides inside the kara, the heart of our Sikh kinship, caste and culture."

b) "How is this ‘self’ revealed to us?" ask the Sikh and non-Sikh readership. The response is, "The revelation of women within the Sikh covenant reveals itself through narrative disclosure and conspiracy as reflected in Pia’s story."

Karlekar (1991), a Bengali sociologist, frames a context for these questions in the revelation of women writers through their notion of audience, through their construction of femininity, and through their need to be read as a woman’s voice.

The following narratives personify Karlekar’s notion of audience which incorporates the dimensions of space and time.

...letters occupy a ‘middle space’ between writings written for oneself (diary and journal) and fiction... an individual writes for the other which may be one’s split or divided self, the mother-in-law which one hates or for a specific public audience...journals display a sense of contemporariness, an immediacy... a ‘synthesized memory’...
(Karlekar 1991: 17,18).
What is a synthesized memory? Perhaps in letters the reader can become the narrative he/she is reading, for the author’s voice is closer to the reader’s memory of others’ experiences. Often, women’s lack of status or self-esteem underpins an incomplete or dissatisfied memory - the memory of betrayal:

...there are voices of women being asked to be taken seriously as individuals not merely as victims in an unequal society...women as victims (becomes) the history of oppression...therefore, the reconstruction of women’s lives includes personal narratives and the recording of (lived and oral) histories (which) helps in understanding categories such as gender, woman and femininity... (Karlekar 1991: 17).

Karlekar relates women’s need to be read as a "woman’s voice", defined and shaped by their inner voice text:

...we have become an ‘interpretative community’...individual readings are then to be viewed within the framework of how others similarly placed, perceive the same or similar text... (Karlekar 1991: 20).

I have framed this inner voice as the dapatta, the veil of mirrors. Let us now explore this veil in the Punjabi Sikh female voices of Kaya, Reva and Ava who challenge their Punjabi covenants against the forces of a Sikh traditional worldview and a western culture worldview - the places within their sacred boundaries in which they study, work, socialize, grieve and love.

Narrative 1.

Kaya is the classic good little girl who is educated to be obedient. Since her two siblings have married non-Sikhs, she has decided to remain Indian, true to her Ramgharia caste, in the midst of the more common Jat Sikh caste community. She takes us with her on a voyage of semi-arranged marriage interview adventures. Kaya
has willed herself to reflect her father's tradition, yet she displays ambivalence towards the opposing concept of a love marriage and/or a mixed faith marriage. Introspection feasts on her soul as humiliation is revisited by each encounter with potential suitors. Her dreams of unrequited love are juxtaposed among the fantasy and curiosity of love and marriage. Brutal awakenings result as the eternal quest remains unfulfilled. She asks, "Is the pain of rejection a universally experienced and necessary human aberration?"

Narrative 2.

Reva decries her shameful defilement, her hollow retribution as she envelops us in her ascribed and consequential pain of having broken the covenant, of having crossed the boundary outside of her kara, of having recklessly permitted her "self" to investigate the boundaries of her Sikh covenant. Reva, tormented by her abusive father, yet languishing in her soulful need for his forgiveness, is juxtaposed between an abused mother and an irrational father. All three desperately grasp for the invisible shards of their violated humanity; however, these shards are conveniently shrouded in the covenant, the inherited tradition of conformity versus free will. Reva asks of herself, "How is pain measured, how does one survive the moment? How does one pacify the wild anger, the barren wasteland of one's soul?"

Narrative 3.

Ava discusses her melancholy transformation through the kara's mute and unrevealed "sense of self" as defined by the Sikh
covenant. Ava enacts the traditional script of her first, arranged marriage; then her violent hunger for a dismissed youth; and finally, her precariously positioned and deserved role outside the boundary of the kara, beyond the tentacles of the Sikh covenant in a Christian marriage. Ava and her parents are emotionally ravaged by the fateful injustice they collectively endure as they manoeuvre from inside the kara and bypass the sacred boundary, thereby collectively rejecting the covenant which has so brutally betrayed them. They learn to self-heal and forgive their karma for they have now formed another covenant between the Sikh and mainstream culture. Ava asks why she must desire what can never be, for the fantasy precedes the need to believe, the need to be spurned, the need to yearn - relentlessly.

These three painful threads are stretched across the canvas of human emotions, voicing the cries of universal womanhood, defined by manhood and his laws which govern their conduct and shape their destiny. They, thus, result in tangential wisps of memories floating over chasms of neglect, shame and self-sacrifice -- but never indifference. The reader’s sanity explodes with the question, "Why? Why? Why?", as the narrator explains:

"...because it is thus within our covenant, our ‘self’ within the kara...we endure the phoenix of our scripted lives as prescribed and welcome the hysterical solitude of inner turmoil which it brings, for this tests the mettle of our paltry lives, thereby ascribing meaning to it...
(researcher, February 1994)

This existence was reflected in the taped and transcribed text of participant conversations. After each participant had an opportunity to review their text, I paraphrased their story and
their significant other's story and wrote the following interwoven tapestry of their lives.

The following schema outlines the collection of files:

**Kaya**

a) Kaya's narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-7, dated January, 1994;

**Reva**

a) Reva's narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-6 dated February, 1994; and

**Ava**

a) Ava's narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-8 dated March, 1994.

Following each narrative I have voiced my reflections of their lives as perceived through the lens of my life journey, framed by our common Sikhism, western education and universal womanhood. My premonitions of religious rigidity and its heartrending absolution appear stark, for their painful voices writhe inside my raw vulnerability and license my shame, my anger, my bitterness!
2.1.1. Kaya: the good little girl, the good little life

My caste is Ramgharia Sikh, not Jat Sikh. My parents were born in Punjab, India. We didn’t have an opportunity to know our grandparents very well. My Dad’s mother came from England to visit, and I met my mother’s father when I was in India in 1979. My father is a retired electrician and my mother is a housewife.

My father went from India to Kenya, Africa, where he learned a trade and photography. However, we three children were born in England where he had previously married my mother in 1964. We emigrated to Canada in 1975.

England is one of those countries where there is a degree of racism, so my Dad had always dreamed of coming to Canada. He had always said, "If I get to Canada, I will become a baptised Sikh." Since we have no relatives here, we live as a nuclear family. Most of my mother’s family lives in India but she has brothers who live in England. We are the only family, from our relations, who lives in Canada, a fact which may have enhanced our closeness:

...I am a twenty-five year old engineer and I work in the field of electronics technology. Although we began school in England when I was seven, my brother was nine and my sister was five, upon coming to Canada we were ahead of the other kids. England does not have kindergarten, instead they have nursery school which elevated our skills...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:2)

My parents are simple, uncomplicated people. My father did not have a turban and beard in England; however, he always dreamed of coming to Canada and promised to himself that if he came to Canada he would become a traditional, baptised Sikh. This meant he would now wear the five k’s: the kara, kesh, kanga, kachhaira and kirpan.
...my father was always a very religious man and he regularly goes to gurdwara every week, but he also feels you can pray at home. We are all able to recite the Sikh scripture prayers, although we do not have a Guru Granth Sahib room in our house. My mother’s religion is not practised openly because she is a very private person. My father daily completes his morning and evening prayers and does not eat meat or eggs or drink alcohol. He is very comfortable with his faith and as one grows older you tend to live a simpler lifestyle...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:2)

My brother had his hair cut in England, yet came to Canada at nine years of age and followed my Dad’s example and kept long hair, a turban and beard until Grade Ten. Then he decided to cut his hair, and although my father had no real objection, he was not pleased but accepted his son’s decision.

...my brother is clean-shaven right now and I don’t believe he will wear a turban. No, he is not religious. He is getting into it more now that his daughter is five and a half years old and they go to the temple sometimes. His wife is Indian...she is Malaysian-Hindu, which means her great, great, grandfather was from India. She is one of those people who does not speak her language...If she could have spoken Hindi...my parents would have been able to communicate...but they do communicate in English...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:2)

My brother was treated in a special way because he was the only son in a family of three children. He enjoyed more freedom so as a teenager he declared his independence by not accompanying the family to the gurdwara or shopping trips. When he happened to meet (his wife to be ) my mother always knew about it because my mother and brother are very close. I think that’s the norm in Indian families. The difference was also shown in curfews, where he could stay out until two or three o’clock when he was seventeen. However, we, girls, had more freedom in different ways compared to other Indian females, because my father was a tolerant and kind man.
He believed that:

...women are in fact supposed to be very close to an angel type-of-state because women can have children, so we are respected even more so than men...most Indian families don't really think of that respect as much as my father does. (Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:2)

My sister and I were not over-protected as most Indian girls are, meaning the norm where parents want to interrogate every move and motive of a young female. The parents' interrogation syndrome of, "Where were you? Who were you with? What did you do? When are you coming home?", was evident in our girlfriends' lives, but absent in ours. Perhaps this was due to my parents not having the time or inclination to police us. I think these kids' parents are well settled and have all the time to "hawk" over their children.

I have never experienced this behaviour and I feel it is very destructive because it translates into spying, fear and lack of trust, which is a common attitude towards females in Indian homes.

...I have a Muslim friend whose parents are doing that all the time. They would know that she has a class at 3 o'clock, she will be out at 4, she should be home at 4:30. If she was home at 5:30, the questions come: 'Where were you? Did you get stuck? How was the traffic?...'...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:1)

Our family's mutual respect, trust and love resulted in a more relaxed life. My mother explains that Indian girls require supervision because they could "get into trouble" meaning become pregnant because only they can carry children. Perhaps this explains why males have freedom and females do not. Also, the social stigma of Indians gossiping about where someone's daughter was last seen and with whom, is a factor.
I believe my parents are more relaxed with us because we are in a unique position; there were no relatives around to point fingers at us and make us feel uncomfortable. Definitely, that moulded our less worrisome lifestyle. If my uncle were here and lived in the same city, we would be raised much like my uncles’ daughters with traditionally arranged marriages, children, family life and beliefs. I question if a traditional lifestyle would fit my personality. Our social isolation from other Indians was magnified because we lived in a small rural town, where I was the only Indian girl in school. Then we moved to a large city and at the local university, I found an abundance of Indians. My sister who recently completed high school and university had many Indian friends, so times have changed.

...I became aware of my difference, my ‘Indianness’, when someone yelled out ‘Paki’. Then it becomes very visible. I didn’t experience anything like that in Canada but in England when I was five years old, kids would just pull my hair which was in braids. England harbours overt racism whereas Canada has covert racism. I loved school here and I had no problems. People have never called me anything...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:1)

It’s only when you look in the mirror that you see you’re actually different in your appearance, emotions and culture.

...but you do feel different to some degree, for instance, if I were going to a dance in Grade 7 or 8 usually the kids ask their parents who say it is okay. But we only went to dances in Grade 13 and there were two of us girls going, so there was the safety factor and my father wasn’t worried about us. I would say that my parents were more suspicious than most of the other kids’ parents in the Canadian crowd - more suspicious and worried more about us - ‘where are we going’ type-of-thing, but less than other Indian families. But that’s normal when you have teenage daughters...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:3)
My sister is also breaking with Indian tradition. She is going
to marry an Ukrainian guy who lives with us. That came about out of
circumstances. They met in university and went out for two years
when she decided to tell my parents because she had had enough of
sneaking around. We are not supposed to have a boyfriend and go out
on dates. However, she is very headstrong and was twenty-two years
old. She needed the psychological permission from my parents, in
the form of their blessing, before she could plan her life.

...the reason being that our parents are an integral part of
our being, our psyche. Also, we live with our parents everyday
even into adult life so they are a consistent, everpresent and
powerful social and cultural influence in our lives. It pains
us if we betray, disappoint or lie to our parents. Even if
disappointment occurs, there is a tremendous psychological
need to appease them and influence them to accept you and your
deed. Acceptance is essential because our familial bonding is
very rigid and deep. My sister wanted that. She wanted them to
accept her decision...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:3)

Also, she felt they could accept it because our brother had
already married outside of our religion - and she was right. At
first, naturally, there was a lot of anxiety on both sides, so when
she told my parents, they wanted to meet him right away. She then
brought Mack over and my father explained the obvious, that Mack
was different, that he was Canadian and we were Indian...

... Mack's family came from Vancouver and intended to live
here. However, circumstances did not allow this to occur, so
they moved back west. He did not want to go back with them. He
and my sister were worried if their relationship could survive
the separation. They felt it could because they had been going
out for two years. Also, since Mack would attend a local
university, he decided to stay. The natural question of
where he would live arose. So, my sister and Mack asked my
parents if he could live with us until he finished university.
That was the original arrangement. However, he now works in
the daytime and studies at night...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:3)
It is obvious to all how much Mack respects my sister and that’s really important to my father. My father is removed from our Indian community on a daily basis because he works with Canadians (meaning whites). He knows about our Indian culture clashes and domestic, kinship family problems, but in a remote manner because we do not live this way. Our lifestyle is closer, in some respects, to the mainstream culture, inspite of the fact that my father wears turban and beard and both parents look and behave in a very traditional, Indian manner. Also, by including Mack as a family member with whom you live, my parents have gained more insight into Canadians. My parents believe that it’s not all Canadians (whites) who are the same, just as not all Indians are humane and respectful. So they have gained tremendous insight into another individual and mainstream culture through the experiences provided by Mack. In fact, they like what they see, although there are always a few glitches. My sister had never thought about an arranged marriage so she is doing what to her is natural.

An arranged marriage was discussed at length for my brother but he quickly rejected this alternative.

...he did his own thing. He did not go out with a lot of people though. That’s the thing. He was always dedicated to one person - to go with and hopefully marry that person. My mother has said on occasion that he could have married a nice, Indian woman, and that we could have found a nice Indian woman for him. But what would have been the point, if he wasn’t going to talk to her. Even if she was sitting outside and he did not talk to her and did not love her, what would be the point of having that marriage...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

My father’s philosophy is that you develop emotional attachments to those who happen to be around you, thus Mack met my
sister. But also, father believes that arranged marriages, even if you don't know the person beforehand, allow you to learn to love them. As an analogy, even if you have a pet, you grow fond of it.

My father has definite dreams for me. He would like at least one of his children to marry into the Indian culture. Since my sister and brother demonstrated independence, if I were to comply he would be pleased. He wants to see Indian grandchildren, although my niece looks very Indian, to him it's not the same. He wants to have a relationship with a Punjabi family through marriage.

I would love to meet someone who is wonderful and I would marry that person, whether or not he were Indian. But I think an arranged marriage meeting is very good also, but only if you are allowed to get to know the person in advance. That would be ideal. However, if I met a non-Indian, that would not be a problem:

... out of the three children, I am the one who likes Indian culture and Bhangra music. I find it interesting, whereas my sister and brother laugh at it. I don't know why I like Indian things. I would like to know how to write the Punjabi language just because I am interested in languages. However, I only wear Indian suits to the gurdwara...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

Recently, I bought an Indian sari-dress, which is beautiful. I would love to wear it, even to a Canadian party.

Yes, I am actively looking for a possible candidate for marriage. You look when you feel you are ready for marriage, which for me, meant the right age and attainment of my education goals.

...now, I am twenty-five years old and age is a factor for parents because they believe that for a female, twenty-two or three is the ideal time to get married. After about twenty-eight years, for an Indian female, what happens is that the Indian male prospects are married, resulting in less choice...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)
As it is, our caste has less choice than does the Jat caste, which is represented in overwhelming numbers. Although marrying within one's own caste is the norm, I do not feel this restriction.

Looking for an arranged marriage partner is nurtured in stages throughout one's life. For instance, when I was fifteen-years-old there was talk of someone in India, that one day I might meet him and marry. At fifteen, the idea was ridiculous so it never really materialized because there was no interest. It was a friend of my father and he had a son in India, who has since come to England.

...I would say we really seriously started looking several years ago. We did meet someone, I guess someone my parents knew from... a family friend. They are just there. It's usually from your temple you meet people. My parent's social circle is limited which is why we have gone to the newspaper and that's why I am looking statistically, who was right, who fits right. Fit means someone who is the right caste and if not, would they accept my caste... There are less Ramgharia, definitely. If we were Jat, we would have no problem. Well, it has not worked. I would say that the few people who did write when we put in an ad two years ago, one or two were not really educated. But my parents really don't have anything against that...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:3)

...I have something against that to some degree. If the person is thirty-five and not educated, I don't think that's promising, as much as someone who is twenty-five and not educated, just because I think someone who is twenty-five will get that education. The older person may not have any interest in education at all...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:3)

We recently met a person who sounded just wonderful. My father talked to his parents on the telephone and he appeared right, because we were the same caste. We went over to see him and his parents who were wonderful, again everything looked great; however, I sensed he was very quiet which was bothersome. Then we discovered that he and I would be attending the same university, so
I was pleased because then we could meet. My parents weren’t demanding an answer from me but his mother always wanted to know if I liked her son. I felt pressure from her:

...well, the pressure is that you have to know, yes I want to continue this process or no, I don’t. The process you’re in is whether you want to decide if you want to get married to that person, or not. And you’re supposed to really know after the first meeting or so. It is expected. I remember when the mother and I, we walked out of the house, she was putting her arm around me and asking me, well, how did I like her son. Well, you know, I like everyone I meet in the beginning but do I want to spend 60 years of my life with him, that’s a different story. Well, he asked me a few questions, my future plans, education wise, what I was looking for in a husband, questions that were pertaining to marriage, which was good. But he didn’t actually talk a lot. We spoke in a separate room, in their den. It was an all day type of meeting. We had flown in from Toronto to Montreal, but we had no intentions of staying there all night... Go there and kind of do the lunch thing and come back. So we had lots of time. We talked and his younger sister was there. It turned out that his older sister was married to a Canadian so we thought that was just wonderful because then their family would accept our family because our family is also very non-traditional... Oh, it is very important to the other family that they accept our having a mixed marriage, because if they don’t, then they won’t choose you because they want a traditional family (with no mixed marriages)...  
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

People are honest and usually it is a question of, "We’ll phone you, we’ll get back to you." with the understanding that if they don’t phone, they are not really interested. In this meeting everything was fine, but when we met at university, he avoided me and did not give me his phone number. Apparently, his parents initially asked him if he would like to meet someone. At first, he declined, then he agreed because he was curious to meet a beautiful Indian female, in this social situation. But when he returned to his Canadian friends and school environment, he changed his mind:
...he realized how he had changed and that he couldn’t oblige his parents, at least at this point...he felt that’s not for him. Like a lot of guys, he was chicken too, so he just did not want to tell me. I told him that he had to tell his mother the truth because she was phoning my parents daily for an answer...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

It was essential to me that he tell his parents the truth because he could, for instance, spread lies about my reputation in order to get himself off the hook. I find Indian men quite insecure and afraid of telling their parents the truth about what they desire in a mate, the fact that they do not wish to marry Indian, or the fact that they are already living with a Canadian girl. If the male lacks courage and cannot accept the emotionally painful consequences; it usually plays out as the emotional expense of another person’s reputation, to save face within his own family.

The arranged marriage interview process does not bother me. We are still in the process of looking. It’s ongoing, but it doesn’t affect my life dramatically. Arranged marriages are based mainly on physical features, the focal point being how European does the woman look. An attractive woman is one who has fair skin coloring as opposed to dark skin coloring. Thus, if you are dark-skinned and less attractive, there may be problems in finding a mate. Education also matters a lot. The need to acquire professional, academic degrees and diplomas has reached a competitive pitch, where a person’s capacity to earn, in a status profession, buys more bargaining power. This is true for both males and females. Another positive consideration is if you agree to live in a united household, where several generations of relatives live under one
roof. I simply avoid answering this question because it is impossible to answer. It is difficult to answer yes or no. Perhaps I’d just like to live on my own with my own children and have everything new and fresh. People look at you in a superficial sense, they rarely take the time to really know you because there is no time allowed to do so. I feel you must go out with the person for at least six months and decide if you are right for each other. You must have them come over to the house and get to know them, but that’s almost unheard of in an arranged marriage set up. Parents expect you to decide directly after the first or second meeting, about a decision which will affect your lifetime:

...the girl is normally asked if she can speak, read and write in the Punjabi language, cook Indian food, and dress in Indian clothes, because they want to know how you will fit into their family. If they go to temple they want to know if you would go and if they eat Indian food, they want to know if you can cook it. However, people can twist the truth to make sure that they fit in, or they simply do not answer the question...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:5)

...for instance, if I am not happy to live in a united family situation I can answer it in a very vague manner. Both sides can try to be vague if they do not want to answer. I am always asked if I can make roti (Indian food, and Indian bread) and I resent this question because I feel, are they looking for a cook and cleaner type of thing...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:5)

The more educated women are not marrying just to cook and clean for the whole, extended family. Rarely do you get to the stage where you have to answer this question, because my father would discover this in the phone conversation, and if he senses no compatibility, we do not pursue it further. My mother reviews the ads and my father phones to ask questions from a list regarding caste, age and education, then what they want in the girl.
For instance, do they want an educated girl to work or stay at home, or a less educated girl to be a cook and cleaner for the extended family. Then he asks about height, which I feel is essential, but my parents do not. I like the idea of perfection:

...my mother puts on a lot of pressure... wants to know right away...You should know, she says because in India, you don’t even get to meet the person...I never saw your father and she compares it with her own life...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:5)

I’m not sure how our relatives feel about my sibling’s marriages to non-Indians. Since only one uncle knows and the rest are not in close touch, I don’t think they know or are concerned. We are not close to our relatives which is rare in an Indian family. My father knew they would be disappointed and he hates gossip, so it is better this way.

My sister’s wedding will be very small with immediate relatives only, and in a church where she’ll wear a white gown.

...they could have had a gurdwara wedding but my father does not want the people in the Indian community to know. I mean whether they find out or not is different from my father actually showing off both of them and showing our community that he is accepting it openly. There is a difference. It is different because he finds that if they are together and Indian people see them, that’s one thing, that is their business...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:5)

My father feels if he accompanies them, it means he openly accepts them which he does not want the Indian community to witness. So, he would prefer not to have a traditional, Indian gurdwara wedding because it would publicize, what to him is a private matter. He will accompany them wherever they ask him but not to something like an Indian function. He doesn’t feel
comfortable because people will ask questions and will discuss it. He doesn’t feel it is any of their business.

I believe our family is quite different from the regular Punjabi Sikh family living in Canada. Since we have no relatives here, we are free to do what we want. I think some young, Indian people like that and wish their family could live like that. But I question what they would do with that freedom. Men and women look at freedom differently:

...what scares men about an arranged marriage is that they may have a girlfriend ... yet, they feel they can’t go against their parent’s wish. The parental, psychological grip has a lot to do with the bond between the mother and son...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:5)

For example, a young man I know decided that if his mother wants him to marry Indian, he will go to India and marry. He did it and is back here with his wife, who could not get along with the family and now he has moved out of his parent’s home. So the mother’s expectation of happiness remains incomplete. Her dream has not been fulfilled because now her family is split up. The pressure on both males and females to comply is enormous, even if the end result is quite costly and acceptable to neither.

Perhaps it is the pressure of the Indian community which places pressure on Indian parents. I think people who marry non-Indians feel conspicuous in Indian functions, so the social deterrent is visible interference and intolerance. The intolerance is racial, in that only a same category (caste, kinship, clan) person is acceptable, and a non-Indian mate (depending upon skin color) has higher or lower status. This status is confirmed by the
internal, deep-rooted racial prejudices of the Indian community, not the mainstream or immediate family of the couple. Indians tend to be judgmental and state their preference for who is acceptable (included) and not acceptable (excluded) in their beliefs and philosophy, without any first hand knowledge or experience of the person. Conversely, when they have experience of the "outsider", they tend to become advocates for that person and appear to preface their biases:

...if a man of a lower caste marries you, of course he is happy because that brings him up in caste, but it brings you down in caste. The kids, I guess, are non-status, or I guess they would inherit the caste of their father. I don’t really know...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

If I fell in love with a Canadian (white) person there would be hurdles. My parents, at first, refused to speak to my sister. But, in time, I believe my parents would agree. They only want someone who will respect me and not marry and desert me. They feel that Canadian people are not faithful or trustworthy because of the high divorce rate. They feel Canadians do not have the solid, family values that Indians have; that they will not stay with you forever; and that they have a different culture and lifestyle.

...if there is a possibility of a good Indian suitor, they will say, well, why wouldn’t you marry him, what’s wrong with that person and they would want to compare. Seeing Mack in the family, they feel he is trustworthy...now whether they can generalize this to all Canadians is the question...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

I think it would be wise to marry in my religion and caste to appease my parents. For marrying a lower caste, like an Untouchable caste would be a battle I haven’t the strength to win.
If I were to compare my "self" with my Canadian cohort "self", I would say there are differences and similarities. I think my values frame my relations with other people. My values tend to look rigid in comparison with Canadian values. I don’t think it is wrong to date, but I think there are certain things you should reserve for marriage. Now mainstream culture does not believe that. They feel that you should experience everything. So people may think my values are very prudish, but we are raised to believe this way. So, a relationship with a Canadian might be a problem if he expects the same behaviour and values from me as he would from any other Canadian female. However,

...the mainstream is part of my daily life...I work with a lot of different sorts of people, some visible minority but mostly mainstream...some Canadian people are the people I am talking to all the time so they are just a part of my everyday life... (Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:4)

My caste is Punjabi Ramgharia Sikh, however, the predominate caste here is Punjabi Jat Sikh, as evidenced by the matrimonial advertisement requests. I may marry within the Jat caste, but not the Untouchable caste, as explained to me by my parents. That is because of the hierarchy of the caste structure, with the Untouchable being the lowest member, thus carrying a low status stigma which reflects upon the marriage partner and their family.

...once I met a very nice young man from the Untouchable caste. He was very nice and very educated. I thought it would be very interesting to get to know him - not that I would marry him, but I wasn’t sure. My parents basically said, ‘No, we’re not having anything to do with him’... (Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:6)

Well, it goes back to the roots of India’s caste structure based upon occupation. The Jat caste is the farming class, the
Ramgharia is the carpenter caste, and the Untouchable is the lowest caste because they touch leather and animal products and clean latrines. The migration of outmoded caste structures into another generation which is removed from the structure and country of origin is a strange phenomenon, and yet it defines the parameters of suitability in arranged marriage partners:

...it is ingrained in our parent's minds and I would say a lot of the recent immigrants who are coming to Canada have the same caste theory...they are marrying into their own caste. My parents are happy if I marry out of my caste but it must not be a lower caste...because we are supposedly lower than Jat but where we fit into the Jat scheme is debateable. They would prefer that I marry someone who is white, anything but this caste, because if you marry into the Untouchable caste, it is worse than to marry a white...marry a Jat or Ramgharia if you marry within our religion or marry someone who is very different like a white person because they have no caste... (Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:6)

It appears that some people solve the caste dilemma by marrying into an ethnicity which professes no caste or as some matrimonial ads proclaim, "caste is no bar". This is not to say that intercaste and non-Indian marriages are not successful or are not sought by some people. However, in the final analysis each person makes choices - at a price. These marriages are called "love marriages" where love, perceived to be an irrational state of mind, relieves the person of any caste barrier pressures.

...I do not want to perpetuate caste thinking in my children. It is against our religion to believe in caste...my father feels the pressure of what his brothers will feel if his child marries into the untouchable caste...They will ask, 'Weren't there enough Ramgharia? Weren't there enough Jat for you to pick out of?'...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:6)

If I were to marry a Jat which is supposedly a higher caste, I would be happy, but I think the Jats may feel that our caste is
a lower caste. I'm not sure. It's very close though, so my father may believe that a Jat may welcome me or my caste, or me as a person; but perhaps in a heated argument my spouse may use this to insult me. My father fears this humiliation, this denigration.

I don't know how the younger generation feels about caste delineation. Whatever thoughts they have are their parents' thoughts, obviously. They may not sense the difference but I am certain their elders do, for their role is to train the children:

...many people in my age group are aware of caste. Definitely, they come to Canada at the age of 15, 16, which makes them very Indian and they will not marry someone that they don't have permission to. They marry in an arranged marriage situation. And they are aware of caste. I'm sure their wives are Jat Sikh. My generation, say 25-30 have so much family in Canada there's no doubt that they will try to perpetuate that caste or ... Also, the pressure and influence from relatives ... actually forbids young people to break caste. There is no way they will allow their daughter, and definitely not their son to marry out of caste...

(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:6)

Caste, sexism and gender differentiation are all related to hierarchies and a sense of inferiority and superiority. These are inbred, philosophical characteristics inherited by generations of Indians, especially the Punjabi Sikhs. I've seen situations where an eight-year-old nephew already "knows" that he is better than his sister because as these male teenagers reach the 25-30 year old generation, they know they can use sexism to their advantage. It keeps filtering down because if you can make your nephew feel he can have more liberties, then by default the niece doesn't have that freedom. This discriminatory attitude is perpetuated in gender selection technology. The birth of a male child in an Indian home is cause for jubilation, whereas the birth of several female
children is cause for depression and grieving. The traditional rational unfolds as follows:

...because traditionally your sons take care of the parents and your daughters are yours only until they get married and then they go to another family... daughters live with the husband’s family and because of that, as the parents age, there are fewer younger people to take care of their needs... (Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:6)

I have recently replied to an Indian newspaper article in which the author discussed the catastrophic experience of a family when the birth of "yet another baby girl" is announced and the congratulations experience of a family when the birth of "a boy child - the miracle" is announced. The inequity of demeaning females before males is a traditional Indian attitude which is filled with poignancy due to its gross injustice. Consequently, I replied:

...there is another practice which I believe should be recognized as undermining the status of women and relegating them to second class citizens. Much interest has been generated in our community in gender selection technology - a so called breakthrough which allows the couple to choose the sex of their child before fertilization. Yet, in a patriarchal society such as ours, there is little doubt that an overwhelming majority will choose to have only sons or a disproportionate ratio of sons to daughters. Gender selection technology only propagates the belief that a son is more valuable and desirable than a daughter. This technology is only one step away from the practice of aborting unwanted female fetuses...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:7)

My letter then went on to discuss the major, traditional issue facing Indian women and generations of their daughters:

...It is time to come to terms with the real issue: the inequality of women. This issue will never be resolved while women (in general) and mothers (in particular) participate in the degradation of their own sex by choosing sons over daughters... Women must be given a sense of their own self-worth which is not dependent on their ability to produce a son
...Society needs to eliminate inequality and this will not be achieved through the elimination of women...
(Kaya, January 1994; transcript 1:7)

My point in responding to this newspaper article was to highlight the views of my generation and our desire to stop gender preference attitudes and practices. I believe that more dialogue is required to force Indians to reflect upon the consequences of this experiment, especially outside of India. I feel that financial constraints surrounding the dowry given to girls may be the underpinning of this argument. The boy’s side accepts, the girl’s side gives. For some families, there is no limit to their greed!

Some people in the Canadian culture, it appears, also like to have a firstborn son and then a daughter; so biases cross ethnicities. Perhaps all cultures would admit to gender preference; however, Indians have historically had greater publicity regarding this cultural issue.

My reflections:

I chose to interview Kaya because she is Punjabi Sikh but a different caste; so her viewpoints regarding the Jat caste would, I felt, add contextual understanding to the manner in which she identifies herself and other Punjabis and how she copes with the rigor of her life, especially regarding arranged marriage prospects. Kaya is positioning herself within and without the kara. She is the last child capable of fulfilling her parent’s wish of marrying Indian; she is an articulate feminist, scholar and engineer; and, she is a member of a visible minority, and within that, a female who senses gender inequity in her culture. The
"self" for Kaya revolves around the definition of the personalities of both her and her father. The defining difference in their lives is that they happen to be "distanced" from Indian relatives and the Indian community which allows their individual and collective free will to flourish. This has enabled her parents to function both inside the kara for their personal, religious and cultural identity; and outside the kara for their children's personal desires and their Canadianized identity. The dynamic movement required in their positions allows for adaptation, change, personal daily satisfaction and resulting control over their environment and their lives. The experiences in their daily lives which impinge upon and are affected by Punjabi Sikh religious and cultural beliefs include the following: the father's feelings about his daughter's interracial and interfaith marriage and how the mainstream and Indian communities choose to define it; and why a prospective marriage for Kaya precludes the boy's family knowing that a non-Indian marriage exists in her family!

The marriages of their two children, one to a Malaysian and the other to an Ukrainian, have permanently altered the family identity and genetic composition. This change requires identifiers which must be noted to accommodate the thinking of people whose impression is important to them. It is interesting that when the father was invited to participate in this study, he declined.

In spite of having two children married, the parents and Kaya still feel incomplete. There is a need to satisfy their culture's self-identity within the same caste, clan and kinship. To what
degree this is an emotional sentiment, conditioning or personal inclination, it is difficult to judge. However, I sense the attraction towards Sikhism for the last child is the ultimate statement for the continuation of their Sikh lineage; however imaginary or concrete this feeling might be.

Kaya also reflects what her generation of women feel about the blatant injustice of gender inequality as she has experienced it in three situations: how her brother was raised; her prospective marriage partner’s attitudes; and women’s choice surrounding gender selection. These areas of awareness, especially how sexism defines their choices in life, I feel, must be assessed by her generation as they in turn position themselves and their daughters, within Sikhism, in the twenty-first century.
2.1.2 *Reva: my shameful defilement, my hollow retribution*

...the worse thing you can do to a child is to love the child to death and then take that love away...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:1)

I love my culture, Punjabi Jat Sikh, but there are a lot of things that I don’t agree with and I want to voice my opinion to help other people who are in my position. I really care what happens socially to people and I am talkative although recently, I’ve become very reclusive. I’ve moved from school to school just to avoid people because events in my life have changed my attitude and personality in the last six months.

I’m eighteen-years-old, yet it’s not just one thing that happened the day I was born, born to be a Sikh, to carry on the tradition. That pressure was always there, even before my birth:

... when I was growing up, my Dad and I were great friends. I then did not have a brother so my Dad treated me like a son. But as soon as I started to become a young girl and not his ‘son’ anymore, our relationship fell apart. He was my life, my Dad...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:1)

You know, when you become a teenager, you want to rebel and some of those things he did not understand or did not want to understand which resulted in physical, emotional and verbal abuse. He began to hit me and blamed my mother for my rebellious changes, which hurt me very much. So, I just stopped being myself.

It began gradually. I had friends and I went out a lot, especially after school until about eight or nine in the evenings. My grades were average but my Dad had the impression that I was a really smart kid so he expected an 80% or 90 % average from me.
I have this average now, but I did not have it then. When you begin high school, you don’t think about school right away. My social life filled my life. Also I talked on the phone a lot.

...he didn’t like the way I dressed, the way I cut my hair, the way I talked, anywhere I went, or anything about me. He would always find something wrong with me. He just hated me for some reason. Maybe it was the fact that I was growing up. He would look for any stupid excuse just to get ‘pissed off’ at me...

(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:1)

Then one day, I had had enough of it. I wanted to go out and be like everyone else. That first and last incident happened a year ago when I went to a dance without Dad’s permission and he caught me. Actually, it was my cousin-brother who caught me. My cousin-brother, whom I call my brother, is really the son of my uncle in India. My brother was adopted by my parents because they had no son and so he lived with us; but he dropped out of high school at sixteen because he had only two credits. Dad didn’t ever say anything to my brother, who could do anything he pleased: he busted up the garage, was involved with the law, quit school and then finally moved out of the house and worked as a bouncer at these dances. My Dad paid a bundle to get him out of problems while he stayed with us, but not a word of criticism was spoken to him.

...I never thought my brother would not be on my side. I never thought he would betray me. But he did betray me, to my Dad. My brother brought me home from the dance saying that I had made him feel ashamed...

(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

My Dad found out I had gone to the dance because my brother phoned him on the cellular phone and said, "Look, I have Reva here and I’m bringing her home." So my Dad was up and he was preparing
what he should do to me, by saying "I'm going to kill her." The first thing he did was to run upstairs and beat my pregnant Mom who was sleeping. Since day one, he has always beaten my Mom because he heard rumours that she was in love with someone else before their marriage.

...for eighteen years my Dad has beaten my Mom. He always fights with her and so I know that as long as I live, he will never forgive me, because he cannot forgive my mother although she is innocent...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

My brother and my Dad both ganged up on me, except that my brother didn't hit me; only my Dad hit me. I had to lock myself up in my Dad's bedroom, and I made my brother sleep near me that night for protection against my Dad. My Dad couldn't get to me but I felt if my brother were not with me, my Dad would have killed me.

...my Dad came into the room, opened the door, picked me up from the bed, by the hair, and threw me down on the floor by the bed. Then he punched me and kicked me... because he pulled me up by my long hair, I have a scratched cornea. My brother got him off me, but if he hadn't, I would have died...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

After that, there were other incidents. There were so many things happening because of the dance incident: problems at school, schoolwork and peers. Just being Indian, word gets around because Indian girls talk a lot. Since I was fifteen years old, I had a boyfriend who was Indian, but a different caste from me. He was a Ramgharia Sikh, not a Jat Sikh. We often got into arguments. We were going out for a year and two months and then I broke off with him. At about that time my life was really falling apart. My grades were really low and I was skipping school so I was depressed and was sleeping in a lot. My Dad went to my school and checked my
attendance record. When I came home, he beat me in front of my uncles, aunts and the boarders who lived downstairs.

...this was really traumatic. It was like a drama. I felt it was not real. I realized that if he kicked me one time, nothing would stop him from doing it again... I had bruises and scratches. I didn’t care. Even after the beating I tried to repair our relationship... Now, I have almost a 90 % average... I am taking OAC’s but my Dad doesn’t appreciate it... When I have a last period spare, I come home at two o’clock and he’ll ask, ‘Why are you home from school ?’ and if I give an explanation... it’s like, ‘Shut up!’ Nothing I say matters anymore... he cannot hear me...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:3)

Well, at school the teachers saw my bruises and called me down to see the police officer who called my Mom and said that if he sees me again, he is going after my Dad. There is also the Children’s Aid Society. If they hear anything they are going to come and take our kids and charge him because the children should not live in this environment. My Mom says just be hush about this because she doesn’t want our family to break up.

...once this moment in my life is gone, it is gone forever. He has ruined it. I feel for my innocent baby brother and sisters... all because of me. I triggered his hatred for me and he is taking it out on all of us. They are innocent but he is going to be like this forever...and they will suffer....
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

Counsellors can’t help: no one can help. We all talk about it, but I know nothing will change him.

...he yells at me to take the kids to the park. He forces us to have fun and if I dare look sarcastic...everything has to be done on his terms, on his time and according to his emotions, moods and whims...that’s what has to happen. I am an emotional nothing - that’s what I am...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

The teachers don’t notice because I act. I only have two good friends and I don’t tell them anything, because I don’t trust them.
I can’t be fake to people, but when your mind is preoccupied you can’t talk to people and listen to their problems.

...she (my younger sister) is my Dad’s favorite now and she doesn’t listen to anyone... She will be worse and then he will hurt her also...like he hurt me...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:3)

An Indian social service lady came to my school to speak with me, but I feel the school has violated my privacy. They called me out of class:

...who are they, what do they know about me. How can they help me if I can’t help myself? I don’t know if I am a product or a victim of my culture ... what happened, something went terribly wrong which should not have gone wrong and now I don’t know how to make it right. What I need is to figure out how to make it right...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:3)

I think a lot of Indian males feel that they will love their daughter as long as she does what they want, as long as she obeys. So, it is a conditional love. There are always strings attached. You are never free. Fathers feel that if the daughters do what the fathers want, then they will love them to death; but as soon as the daughters start growing up, then it changes. Then the fathers say, "It’s my way or the highway." I know in my heart that my Dad will never forget what I have done - not ever.

...I can’t be good enough. Good means she doesn’t have a bad thought: she doesn’t do anything to disgrace me; she doesn’t go out of line; she knows her culture and she is good at school...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:4)

My Dad wants me to be a superwoman, who, like daughters in India, do all the housework and get top grades in school. But in India that’s all you do because you have no other choice. The pressures on a daughter in India, are immense.
I told my Dad that mid-terms are coming up and I would like him to go to Parent-Teacher night with my Mom, not her always alone, because the teachers have good things to say about me. He replied back that I was lying, the teachers were lying and that I couldn’t be doing anything good in school. It’s funny that my one wish in life is to make him happy, but he always finds fault in me.

I don’t know why, but the way I was raised was to live for him. I felt like that was my duty because since I was a little kid I was Daddy’s favorite little girl. I always did everything to please him. Now I feel hatred towards him. I feel I am worse off than people who are tortured because at least they can cry out and say, "I hate you." But I can’t say that, because he is the person I love most in the whole world, so I am caught in the middle. I have such mixed emotions about the man who calls himself my father.

I think in his mind, my Dad believes he is a good Indian father if he keeps demeaning and depriving me, because then I will work harder to earn his love and approval. He doesn’t realize that it is lost. I feel he doesn’t know how to be a father anymore and when you lose that, I don’t want you as a father anymore. I want my old Dad back: a Dad who loved me like anything. Now, suddenly, there are all these conditions on everything.

The few times I use the phone now, he always seems to catch me. Now I have only two girlfriends and the rest are guys who are family friends. My group is very tightly knit. I don’t go out anymore. Before, I used to have a social life to kill; I used to be out all the time. Now, I don’t go out anywhere. I have nothing to
do but stay at home and feel depressed. Now, I’ve put all my energy into school and you know if I don’t get that one mark, it just kills me. That is all I have now - just marks.

Indian men stick together. My uncle, Dad’s brother, lives in India and has marital problems because he and his wife used to argue a lot. So one day two years ago, she left him. This is something you would think a woman would not do in India. My uncle did not care; he did not go to get her from her parent’s home. He just left her there. Then my Dad went to India and brought his sister-in-law back to her husband’s home because he knew his stubborn brother would not do it.

...my Dad is always looking out for everyone’s feelings except mine. My Dad gave my brother ten thousand dollars to get himself out of trouble but I can’t have lunch money. When I ask for money, he says, ‘You can do without. You waste electricity and water and I work so hard.’ It’s always my fault. He always puts the blame on me... (Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:4)

I’ve decided to finish high school in four years. Next year is my last year and then I will apply for a security-guard position. I heard they make pretty good money and might hire more minorities and women. I would like to work as many hours as I can, save up for my own car, which my Mom will help me buy, to make me a little more self-sufficient. (You can see from the smile on my mother’s face that I have discussed this topic before.) That’s why I’m doing my OAC’s; that’s why I am trying to speed up my life so that I can get out and help my mother, baby brother and sisters get out, too.

I don’t know about marriage, but I don’t ever want to have kids because I don’t want to bring a child into this Indian
society. I don’t even want a shadow of this Indian society to affect my child’s life.

I know I’m suppressing all my feelings. I don’t cry but it seems so hard to make myself happy now. It’s so addictive and destructive, what he has done to me and what I am doing to myself.

...he has planted such a seed in my soul that I can’t even see where the seed is growing - how can I get rid of it? The funny thing is that the more he hates me, the more I love him ... the more I want to make it better...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:4)

I don’t want to get married because every man I see, I see my Dad in him - like the devil. He is what every man can become and I don’t want that, rather, I want to stay away from that. My boyfriend was like my father. That’s why I got scared of him and ended the relationship.

My Dad is stubborn. He doesn’t want to listen to anybody. That’s the way he is. He hasn’t talked about his problem, he has only talked about my problem. It’s me the attack is on and indirectly he is attacking my Mom. My Dad has a liver problem. I am so angry at him for this because it is due to his drinking habit. He could die if he doesn’t stop drinking, but why do I care, I ask myself. Ever since I was a kid he has been drinking and gambling. He doesn’t like us to criticize him. He feels he can do and say anything he wants to us, and we have to just take it. So we say nothing, but we keep it all inside. He no longer speaks to me.

...my Dad was so brilliant. He could have gone on to university (when he came to this country), but he gave up. For seventeen years he regretted that he did not get his education when he should have and now it is too late...
(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:5)
I came to a point where Mom and I had packed up the kids and we were going to leave, but he would not let us leave and he will not move out either. He doesn’t care about his family; he only uses us. We only go where he wants to take us. Mom and I would like him to leave us, so that he cannot blame us. His money means nothing to us because Mom has a good job.

...I wouldn’t want my enemy to suffer like this, it is horrible because it eats away at you. It’s different from an attack from the outside, but when you attack from the inside, there is nothing left... society attacks me from the outside and my father attacks me from the inside; so wherever I turn, someone will get me... I cannot escape. So what can I do, just close my eyes... ?

(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:5)

If I run away from this house, he is going to haunt me. He has physically hurt me before and I can take the pain, but when it comes here (points to her heart) I cannot take it. It doesn’t matter how much I talk about it, I can’t get rid of the pain. The only way to get rid of it, is to gain his acceptance. I am his victim. We are chained together. He is powerful and I am powerless.

...it’s more like he is my father, my idol, my God...every concept I learned is from him, including who I am. It is all from him...I am nothing without him...and he knows it...

(Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:5)

I don’t know how to beat him at his own game. He has placed me at a dead end. I am not a part of his life, because he is no longer an influence in my life. He has made me invisible. I have to be in bed before he comes home. If we all decide to leave him, I will feel responsible for my family and mother. They may blame me and say I made them lose their father and family name. Then I will become their shame. How can I live with such a lifelong burden?
Reva’s mother:  

Reva’s mother discussed her dysfunctional marriage and her alcoholic husband. She was pledged to marry a man in India, whom she later found was unable to communicate or feel secure in a relationship. (The following is translated from Punjabi.)  

...he is a man who cannot take shame...when we got married in India it was an arranged marriage so maybe he wanted to marry someone else. I was in Canada before. He started fighting with me in England. We separated. He took me back...I thought I must go on with my life for better or worse...  
(Reva’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:6)  

She discussed how she coped with his irrational behaviour.  

...when Reva was born we were separated, then I went back to him. Now I must stay because of my small son and seven daughters. We are a very big family and they need their father...that is what we believe. Twenty years ago times were different, now we are suffering because I did not leave then...  
(Reva’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:6)  

She described her husband’s painful manner of humiliating her.  

Father: ...you were the first mistake, if it wasn’t for you ...(He says to Reva.) ...(Then when she cries, he says...) Let her cry, there are lots of girls. Look at how many girls you have given birth to. I don’t want or need any of them...  
Mother: You wanted a boy, now you have a son.  

Father: ...who told you I wanted a boy, I don’t care...  
(Reva’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:6)  

Reva’s mother explains her difficulty in understanding fate.  

...I am a mother and I have so many children and I should know what to do. Why is it that I don’t know what to do? I want to fix everything and stop the pain for their sake and for mine but what do people do in my case? ...I have looked inside my heart and I cannot forgive him; I don’t care what our culture says. There is something very wrong when one person can cause so much pain to others. There is no honour in that. There is no pride. There is nothing...The son was for him. Where did I need such a large family? But that was still not enough...  
(Reva’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:6)
The emptiness of her life and the relentless abuse she suffers is wearing her down; yet she is all the children have.

...there is always more. You always have to jump higher and higher and higher until you can no longer jump. For what? She (Reva) was a child and she made a mistake but he cannot forgive her...instead he is blinded by the dishonour he feels she has brought to him. What about the dishonour he has brought to our souls? Does that mean nothing? Who will forgive us, if he won’t? Perhaps this is our karma and we must live it, no matter what! ...

(Reva’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:6).

Reva’s mother is living the script inherited from her faith and culture, which elevates the male beyond criticism and blame. Also, she rationalizes and tolerates the events in her life, which are caused by alcohol and abuse. She feels powerless because of her belief that her life is pre-destined. Destiny, to her, is something which is inevitable, for it is non-negotiable. Rather, it is accepted as a woman’s burden -- her duty to bear in life in exchange for marriage.

My reflections:

I chose Reva to tell her story because every culture closets its share of defiled shame and polite restitution. These storied lives compose the sacred and secret covenants within our karas. Reva’s mother suffers because she and her culture lack the courage to face our inhuman neglect and abuse of womanhood. Reva represents the generic icon of womanhood - caught in a mysterious cataclysm of patriarchal domination, male control and abuse, which in fact becomes self-abuse, or a case of the victim blaming the victim.

...the females in this story experience their fate collectively: Reva and her mother suffer at the hands of their male household head who is a father and a husband; the sisters suffer an inevitable fate at the hands of their father who
appears to want revenge against their gender; and the males (cousin-brother, the baby son and the father) are either already abusive, in training to become so or have become patriarchal pawns in their inherited kinship. Gender grooming is required for both males and females, however, must it include aggressor and victim role-modelling?

(researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:1)

Reva’s is a classic case of some Sikh parenting wherein ostracism is used as a traditional, sadistic ploy. I view Reva’s story as a universal odyssey of women and not simply a Sikh issue.

...her melancholy dirge sears the soul with her brutal lament of that which was so untimely ripped from her ‘immature’ selfhood - her quest for love and acceptance. This was not the wild and erotic yearning of adolescence, but the quietly nurtured bond of steadfast love and eternal trust between a Sikh parent and child... especially the sacred love shared by a father and daughter...was she the son he could not have or was she the precious toy, the female child who would love him forever?...

(researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:1)

Do we make of our children that which we lack and aspire towards? Symbolically, is the child not only a reflection of oneself but also a reflection we readily command, shape and define at will? Control of this shaping becomes the manifest power of control, which in essence controls us, resulting in ravaged pieces of humanity, unwilling and unable to define the granite edges in which our lives are cast. What price is this flesh and blood?

Who decides the worth of a woman: how much is her torment worth?

...I wonder to what degree deprivation is a violation of one’s rights in a parent-child relationship. Yet, it is one of the most potent and most readily used forces by adults to subdue and immobilize the young...what is the subliminal message delivered by withdrawing love from a child? I assume it is to arrest the emotional and psychological development of the ‘self’... Such an abrupt withdrawal appears to be a sacrilege, for the immature ‘self’ palpitates with a relentless yearning for security and acceptance...

(researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:1)
Reva's father follows a scripted behaviour pattern. As the patriarchal male in control of his family, he feels he must abuse and verbally vilify his daughter's actions thus showing disgust for her betrayal. By withdrawing his love for her, he is punishing her, thus showing significant others such as his Sikh family and friends that he has regained control in his house. This action also serves as a warning to his wife and daughters. His virility and leadership capabilities must be shown to be reinstated, for him to save face in his community. The irony is that, he, in fact, may be suffering as much as his daughter Reva, but he cannot show it. For his image to must remain intact, Reva must be sacrificed - there can be no forgiveness. (However, not every Sikh father responds accordingly.)

The kara nurtures and sanctions the grooming of males to perform in a demonstrative fashion, hopefully as fully responsible and positive males with a strong sense of "self". However, human nature exists within a broad boundary of behaviour patterns. In effect,

... he feels he must punish the perceived offender who threatens his self-esteem and status. Apparently, revenge is not only sweet but culturally necessary...this perpetual realignment of an adult Sikh male's powerbase monitors his role and status and so gauges his ability to maintain tradition, conveniently skewed to mean irrational, religious sanctions against your own blood...

(researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

Obviously, there exists a lack of cultural permission to validate the forgiveness of a child's mistake. The issue then becomes, how to accommodate Sikh cultural ethics, such as face-

---

2 It is not the intention of the researcher to generalize that this is how all Sikh males are groomed, or how any male is groomed by his culture, Sikh or non-Sikh. It is simply an observation, from my experience in this culture, of a belief system within the Sikh tradition which openly and proudly displays a double gender standard wherein males possess power, status and control. Thus, Sikh male role models attempt to display the characteristics they feel are "manly" or as some would term today "macho" (researcher).
saving, while practising positive culture-sensitive parenting in Canada? I feel each parent must come to terms with this issue.

Nonetheless, males supervise and control every aspect of a female's life, a situation which is gradually changing through negotiation-based family dynamics and increased female education and economic independence. Males control their children through:

...childhood allegiance and compliance, arranged marriage compliance, reproduction (especially in the bearing of male children) and obedience towards husband and male elders... a daughter is the delight and burden of responsibility for the father, older brother, uncle or grandfather, if she is single. If married, however, the perceived burden of a daughter is shifted onto the in-law family of male elders which includes her sons and sons-in-law, as she ages... The relentless female dominance by males is focused and fuelled by a religious fervour enacted with a vengeance... Thus, a female's trespasses reflect the weaknesses of her male leaders rather than her practise of free will... the trespasses of a male are rationalized, forgiven and ridiculed as rites of passage of manhood, whereas a female's past life at marriage is critically examined... a male's past life is exonerated due to the immunity of his education, family status and gender... (researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:2)

Reva grieves for the loss of a father-daughter relationship in which her sense of "self" was formed and nurtured. She cannot heal herself when the object of her life source -- her father, daily punishes, rebukes and profiles her unworthiness. He nurtures her stigmata to insulate and redeem his Sikh self-image before himself, his family, his community and his God. If his personal self-worth is restored, it matters little how others suffer.

...Reva becomes the millstone which grinds him, the mother who nurtures his barren soul. She is an emotional nothing because this is her fate. She is at the mercy of a mad fantasy. Reva lacks that which I, the researcher, have - a center, my 'self' has a secure center nurtured by the humility and grace of a loving God, not a fearful God... my pain resurrects and pacifies my intellectual and spiritual 'self' and signals my malfunction. Reva's pain, however, is a barometer of the
steadfast state of her significant male, her father ... her pain is actually a signal of his malfunction, not hers... (researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:3)

Arranged marriages perpetuate what Reva suggests is the essence of Indian society - the code of kinship and behaviour whose maintenance underpins the subordination of the female psyche, to varying degrees, by significant males, in most families. The instrument of control is the faith which nurtures male dominance and psychological control of the victim through his / her internalized guilt.

...the male capacity for potential violence is an overriding threat because he holds the economic and kinship power through his family name and standing... Hence, Sikh females do not hold religious office and few females are single parents, widows or career women and fewer still remain single throughout their lives. However, this view is in a state of transition as younger, educated and more culturally-accommodating Sikh women are demanding more choices in their lifestyles. The majority, however, still exist under the patronizing and oppressive influence of a dominant male or a female elder...

(researcher / Reva, February 1994; transcript 1:4)

Consequently, the combination of double standards for males and females and the need to instill fear, dependency and a lack of independent thinking, will allow the negative traits of this traditional, patriarchy kinship to survive into another generation. This can only be overcome if damaged children, such as Reva, learn to forgive and acquire the skills of child-centered, positive parenting practices for the next generation. If not, then Reva will also be a victim, a product and a perpetrator of ill-parenting as she assumes motherhood and her place in the Canadian Punjabi context.
2.1.3 **Ava: the legacy of my keepers: my father, my first husband, my choice**

I am a twenty-nine-year old Punjabi Jat Sikh female, divorced and remarried, first to a Punjabi Jat Sikh and then to a person of mixed black ancestry. Taylor, whose father is West-Indian and mother is French, is a stock broker and a Fundamentalist Christian. I studied journalism at university and now work as an assistant television producer.

**Father:** ...I came to Canada in 1969, after leaving India for Germany. My family followed me about fifteen months later. The children’s ages were 5, 3 and 1... My purpose in coming here was to look for a better life. It was very hard in the beginning but I think that I have met my goal and I have achieved what I was looking for. Now whether all of that is good or bad, that remains to be seen... (Ava’s father, March 1994; transcript 1:1)

I was born in India and came to Canada at five years of age. My father had moved to Canada a year prior to the arrival of my mother, sister, brother and myself. We lived in downtown Toronto.

In Canada, we were one of a few Indian families in this area. In school, I was the only Indian in my class with others sprinkled throughout the school.

...it was hard for me to think of myself as Indian because no one pointed out our difference. I just blended in with everyone else. There wasn’t the racial tension evident now... (Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:1)

We seldom went to the gurdwara due to the violent, political gurdwara tension reported in the newspaper and evident among the gurdwara committee membership. Our parents always spoke Punjabi and English at home; however, we tended to respond in English and so we understand Punjabi, but we do not speak it fluently. We did not understand the language in which the gurdwara scriptures were read...
and so felt no meaningful bond with the words spoken. However, throughout our lifetimes we have attended the gurdwara and appreciate its reverence in our lives. Yet, there was a definite language barrier and perhaps another barrier which I was to experience later in my life.

Father: ...the children were okay because they have got their education here but they are not orthodox Sikhs... I think they have assimilated into the Canadian society very well. The only thing they do not understand is the religion because they are not fluent in, nor do they use Punjabi... since they cannot follow what is being said, they don’t have much interest to go to gurdwara unless I request them to go. Otherwise, they are just like regular Canadians...
(Ava’s father, March 1994; 1:2)

Then we left the inner city and lived in the suburbs where I was exposed to more Indian people and their Indian culture.

...in high school there were many Punjabi people, a fact which made me realize that I was Indian - meaning there was a distinct difference between me and ‘other people’...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:2)

My parents were orthodox in their thinking so we could not date, yet many of their friends had interracial marriages (mainly Indian males and non-Indian females, or mixed caste marriages) and they were welcome in our home. They became the inner core of our parent’s social circle. To me, this meant that interfaith and intercultural marriages were acceptable to my parents but this was not so when it came to their children. I internalized that mixed marriages meant gender equality and lack of caste categories, but I would be proven wrong.

At this point we were teenagers, so my father decided we had to experience and appreciate our culture in order to secure our
visible minority identity. So we returned to the weekly, Sunday
gurdwara excursions wearing our Indian salwar and kameez.\textsuperscript{3}

...the people there, seemed rigid. They behaved in a
regimental manner and appeared to be going through the
rituals, either absentmindedly or with a vengeance depending
upon their religious observance...they were recent immigrants
...I did not understand their thinking... my own people
appeared foreign to me; whereas the whites, blacks and others
who were my high school friends were much closer to my way of
thinking...

(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:2)

\textbf{Father}: ...by raising my children in a Sikh family the
only thing they know is what I have explained to them
about our beliefs, morals and faith...I have not been
successful in making them full-fledged Sikhs but they
have followed the good Sikh ideals...all three are clean
from alcohol, drugs, bad habits and they are very hard
working and responsible...they have also acquired a good
education...

(Ava's father, March 1994; transcript 1:3)

The gurdwara exposure and my father’s religious instruction at
home did make us feel more Indian because we learned about the
history of the evolution of our faith in a language we could
understand - English. As we began to learn more and identify more
with our faith, we adapted an Indian mindset which we wore inside
the home. However, in spite of Indian movies and music at home, I
did not feel Indian and am not certain what "being Indian" means.

\textbf{Father}:...back home in India, my father did not give us
children his time. Maybe he had no time or maybe he did
not know he should. He thought he should only put food on
the table and his job is done...but no, there is much
more. I, from my side, have tried to spend time with
them, to speak with them about life, religion, my
background ...I did not only want to give them money and

\textsuperscript{3} It always amazes me that whether at the gurdwara or any social formal or informal occasion, there is
an expectation that Indian women will wear their Indian clothes (salwar/chemise or sari always with a dupatta) while males of any age wear western style clothes. This appears evident in India also, where males wear western
garb outside then may change when at home into an Indian pyjama (loose cotton shirt and baggy pants). In the
rural area, however, males tend to wear their Indian pyjamas or ethnic variations of same (researcher).
then walk away... I also wanted to play with them, talk to them and watch tv with them...
(Ava’s father, March 1994; transcript 1:3)

...I never really thought about what I was. I thought I was a Canadian... before high school, I had no contact with Indian culture, teachings or way of thinking... when you did things you just thought it was normal. You never thought - where was all this coming from, why are my parents making these decisions and why are we being taught to act in this manner?
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:4)

One of the taboos was dating. The girls were not allowed to date. However, my father had always taught us that people were equal in race and culture, and that if we ever found anyone we loved, we were to tell our parents. The person we chose did not have to be Indian, although he preferred a Punjabi Jat Sikh.

... we were not allowed to date which was funny because how can you find a suitable partner if you cannot date the person? The idea of a mutually arranged marriage was stuck in our mind but we did not know where the rationale for this idea came from...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:4)

I was also confused because as a Sikh I should have uncut hair and act in a demure manner but I couldn’t because I was not raised that way. Our father, who is not a baptised Sikh, is clean-shaven with cut hair. He explained about the five k’s but he did not feel it necessary for us to follow these traditions.

Father: ... being Sikh in India is very easy because you are born there and the people and the atmosphere is Sikh and you do not feel like an oddball ... being a Sikh outside of India is difficult. Only at the gurdwara do you see a large gathering of all Sikhs ... otherwise you might see one or two at work. Then because you speak English all day long and it is the common language of all students in school, it is difficult to practise Punjabi with kids in your daily life. But I think this happens to all cultures in Canada, not just Sikhs...
(Ava’s father, March 1994; transcript 1:4)
Then, our father experienced ill health which caused him to change. He became more religious and held regular prayers at home which felt odd because I did not feel he was a "religious" man. Yet, he was religious in his own way. Now, he conducted religious ceremonies at home. I understood that Guru Nanak taught us to believe in what we chose to believe in and allowed others to do the same. My father's involvement in religion taught me what other Sikhs wanted from our faith and what I should also want from our faith. But, I still do not have a clear idea of what I want from it, what it is supposed to do for me and how I should feel?

My first marriage was a crisis waiting to happen. It was an arranged marriage as both of us were Punjabi Jat Sikh from similar Indian backgrounds. The parents, siblings and relatives mixed well and all was in order. The failure occurred not because of religion but because of cultural differences.

...I went into my marriage, I guess with the ideals and hopes, wants and desires of a white Canadian culture which believes in true love, in a love forever and in the myth that your 'prince charming' is waiting right around the corner...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:4)

Father: ... arranged marriages are our custom yet we are here in Canada and so we are changing also...it is not like in the olden days in India where you meet or don't meet and you are promised to marry each other according to the elders' desire to cement family relationships or powerbases ... now the idea is to bring young people together, then they decide... but they cannot date. They can only visit in the company of elders and then must make a decision to marry or not to marry...
(Ava's father, March 1994; transcript 1:4)

Before my marriage, we seemed like the perfect couple: it was someone my parents liked, the family was ideal and I would fulfil my role of dutiful daughter. This is the image which was culturally
created for me and so I participated fully in realizing these expectations. I believed what I was taught to believe.

...he was brought up in Canada so I thought he would be more understanding of the white or Canadian values and culture and the impact of this culture on children raised here - like myself and himself...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:5)

What happened in fact was a painful, lengthy betrayal.

...the parent’s influence on this young man was as strong as when he was a child. In most people’s lives between childhood and adulthood you grow, you stretch and exert independence. When you are a child there are things you must do but as an adult you have choices. Your behaviour should change to extend this awareness...but in his case it was ‘arrested development’... I wanted the perfect marriage and felt that my Indian in-laws were a big part of the package...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:5)

...you leave your birth home and attach yourself to your husband’s family because that’s your home now...but many things they expected of me I was unaware of, although I was ready to comply. I did not know the Indian family rigid manner of controlling each member and that roles were hierarchically defined, leaving me at the bottom, at the most submissive and vulnerable end...I had not been raised in this manner. My parents were very open and honest but my in-law family operated in a very secretive and cliquish manner...I was punished for not being able to decode and interpret their expectations and intentions, and act accordingly as a dutiful daughter-in-law and wife...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:5)

My confusion resulted in an eerie, negative feeling which overcame me and I was immobilized. I could not adjust because I did not understand what it was I had to adjust to. I was constantly trying to interpret their game plan and I was constantly losing. I was stunned to discover that the control in my marriage was in the hands of my mother-in-law, not my husband. He was emotionally tied to her mindset and she used him to extend her influence upon both of us. As ten months unravelled, I said nothing to my father
because I was guilt-ridden and suffered from shame and loss of face. How could I not be happy? My father had fulfilled all the obligations of a Punjabi Jat Sikh father towards his daughter, his community and his faith.

I even lived in a separate residence, so what could go wrong? I truly believed that this is how all arranged marriages must be. My husband believed he had played the role of the groom to perfection, according to his mother; but in reality his life away from her home revealed the dark side of his soul. He felt abandoned by his mother and punished by being cast adrift with a strange woman with whom he had to learn another role. He began to live a double life, that of the consistently dutiful son and the resentful husband. Finally, our aloofness translated into indifference and one day he packed his bags and went to his mother. It was over. The arranged marriage had become a disarranged travesty.

I was shocked because Indians do not normally consider divorce - it is the ultimate stigma of shame and failure. I didn't think I had done anything so horrible to warrant his behaviour. At that point in my life, I thought the label of "divorcee" was my punishment. Later, I found it was my salvation because it forced me to break out of the kara’s grip. I was happy that it was not I who had walked out of the marriage; rather, it was my husband who had sacrificed what was sacred. It was not my fault, or so I thought.

Divorce is rare among Sikhs, so it is a frightening experience because we have few role models to guide us through the emotional upheaval process. Breaking the covenant of our karas requires
immense intestinal fortitude because no one nurtures you through
the healing process; for we stoically endure suffering and pain as
our predestined punishment. Since it is our lot in life, moral
injustice must be quietly absorbed and rationalized!

...I was not guilty so I thought I would not be blamed. I did
the best I could but it was not good enough for him...but
that’s fine because he made the decision. I did not have the
courage to decide to walk out. He did. I was not raised to
walk out. I was raised to grin and bear it... perhaps I was
waiting for him to give me permission to leave...when we both
left the marriage there were no memories to salvaged because
we hadn’t made any...there had never been anything there...
Two strangers packed their bags...the ‘long weekend’ of our
marriage was finally over in ten months...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:5)

What now? Well, now we had to find me a new Sikh husband.
Punjabi Jat Sikhs know all about how to conduct an arranged
marriage, but there is no reference on how to conduct a divorce
after an arranged marriage, or how to arrange another marriage!
Why? Because you are not supposed to divorce. The psychological
control of the kara is supposed to curb any modern day thoughts of
divorce. Therefore, I quietly hid my scars and postponed the
healing process, for the final act of the divorce took many years
to complete.

...I felt I had let people down, but I was wrong because our
family had tremendous support from our relatives and friends
and common friends. Punjabis do not experience divorce just
between the couple...it is essentially between the two
families within the kinship. The familial knot had to be
untied and it was messy...not only were the dowry and their
materialistic tallies to be reckoned with, but the kinship
loyalties, both on my side and his side, had to be delineated.
Also, the community gossip, alliances and fears had to be
confirmed or denied in order to restore, not my confidence as
a participant, but the community’s confidence in the
institution of arranged marriage...the community did not
recognize my pain, for they were too busy absorbing their
collective irritation in a situation which culturally
malfonctioned... before contamination spread, they had to immediately restore confidence in the tradition of Indian marriages... the tradition could not be blasphemed... it was simply a matter of two people with faulty karmas... they could be sacrificed but the tradition could not... the faulty karma rationale became a courtesy to us. This way we could all save face... and face saving is an acquired art among Indians...

(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:6)

In truth, the divorce would be a long painful process and would leave my family stigmatized and changed forever with each member having to reorganize his/her religious and cultural beliefs. Now the job at hand was to find me another Punjabi Jat Sikh husband, not only to accommodate my obligation but to renew interest in the merits of this tradition for my siblings, who appeared equally traumatized. However, since the emotional shock expired our daily energy reserve, finding me a new husband was postponed. Soon it was not an issue because no one could mount the energy required to make a divorcee marketable in the eyes of Sikh males, who appeared critical and wary of such a woman.4

I was shocked to find my culture did not blame me for the dissolution of my marriage. I knew I had my parent’s support but I was shocked to find other people saying, "...good thing you got out before there were any children..."

Father: ...I would say in one word that what I went through in my daughter’s marriage breakdown and divorce was ‘hell’... every action taken by the other party was aimed at hurting us financially and emotionally. We had no idea about the mother’s hold on her son... my family

---

4 I have observed and experienced that it is by far easier to arrange a marriage for a male, divorced, widowed and/or with children, than it is for a female in the same situation. A woman suffers a stigma in the arranged market field if she is in her 30’s, divorced, widowed, a single parent, has a dark complexion, is overweight; or is a mature, career woman which means she may be assertive, economically independent, in control of her life and outspoken. Perhaps, this is due to a lack of eligible males or perhaps women are considered to be second-hand goods. If divorced, and so are only good enough to raise the children of divorced or widowed men. It appears that a gender-based, double standard exists in reference to divorcees (researcher).
was traumatized and my health suffered incredibly...my daughter was shaken by the betrayal which resulted. I am hurt but we believe in karma. This means that in a past life you reap what you sow. My daughter was paying for some transgression committed in her past life, so what happened was beyond her control. Something went wrong in her stars and this match was not meant to be and that’s why trouble was coming from all sides... my daughter felt obligated to this man because she had taken a sacred vow; he in turn rejected the vows...
(Ava’s father, March 1994; transcript 1:5)

...it was a blessing not having people blame me. I wonder where and when I had internalized in my mind that, as a woman, I would bear the brunt of my community’s wrath...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:3)

Even my grandparents in India were supportive when I went to visit. They were just so loving. They held me and talked to me and said that whatever happened was for the best.

...I decided to become independent. I just did not want to get involved with anyone because it hurt too much...in the Canadian culture you start dating at fifteen and you know different people who will come into your life, and you’ll be hurt but you’ll be alright and you’ll go on to the next person...but when you’re twenty-five and it’s the very first relationship you’ve had and it wasn’t just a boyfriend / girlfriend...this was a marriage and it’s gone forever and it dies...it’s like putting that final brick on a cement wall...it separates you from the rest of the world...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:7)

You don’t want to leave yourself exposed to pain again, so you fabricate a stronger personality. You become an independent, rational and caring person who will not allow anyone to demean your self-esteem again. Henceforth, you question what you are and who you are - a self-definition for protection, the necessary shield.

...I started going to the gurdwara at six o’clock on Saturday mornings...it was so peaceful to hear the opening prayers, not that I could understand the scriptures...it gave me strength...it was a good feeling to know that you belonged to something so powerful and wonderful - to God... There was somebody looking after you...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:7)
For a while after my breakup, I went through a wild period. I hung out with friends who would be out all weekend, partying, smoking and drinking; but I never really got involved although I would have a few drinks. I was always very honest with my parents. It was just that I was rebelling -- for the first time.

...lashing out at what I was not allowed to do as a teenager, so I was a twenty-five-year old teenager. My parents did not exactly forbid us from going to parties but they did not encourage us either...

(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:7)

Father: ...I don’t think the idea of arranged marriage fostered what happened, anymore than a love marriage would have... but the experience definitely made you suspicious of Indians, their motives, truthfulness and real intentions... I still blame the boy and his mother and I cannot forgive them although I will not take action against them. It is done. The story is closed. The matter is over... She took another chance in a healthier situation...

(Ava’s father, March 1994; transcript 1:6)

When I came back home to live, my parents gave me respect and adult privileges but I was also their child -- wounded, but still their child. The responsibility of unspoken guilt hung heavily in the air but they gave me a lot of space. I think they were at a loss, too. They blamed themselves, although I told them not to because it had absolutely nothing to do with them. They did not make me marry him. We had several arranged meetings and felt we liked each other but no one forced either of us to marry. We were encouraged to marry but only if we felt everything seemed to fit the schema of expectations necessary for our success and happiness.

I was given the basement which was made into an apartment for me. I was experimenting with my new-found freedom. What was I? I was not single or married, I was in-between, without a category.
Indians have no category for females in this situation. My freedom was encouraged and overlooked. My friends came to visit in my private space. It was as though I had returned to claim the teenage fun I had missed and was forbidden to have before marriage. Now guilt had changed all the rules - now they only wanted to see me happy, to appease their collective conscience.

...I was more social now. It took me a long time to decide that I was ready to date. For a couple of years I was not remotely interested in anybody, then after that I liked a few people, but I had never been put into that situation before so I did not know how to approach them. Every male I had been in contact with in high school was just a male friend. I couldn’t make the transition from being a ‘buddy’ into being a ‘potential date’... it was just too great a leap for me...

(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:7)

At work, I was promoted to an administration position in a highly competitive business which separated me from my colleagues. Also, there existed a rule that you could not date someone who was working for you. The workplace social rules seemed to be as binding as my culture’s religious rules.

Then, Taylor came into the picture. He was very persistent about dating although I told him I was not interested. Later he explained that he understood our culture because he had gone to school with Indians. I found him arrogant, which I later realized was confidence. After we had been going out for a year or so, he told me that he actually wanted to approach me before, but then found out that I was engaged, married and now recently divorced. Now, he realized I was available and so decided to approach me.

After my first marriage, I decided I would remain single but dating Taylor brought back the need to nurture and bear children.
I found his family background of religious, family-oriented people to be similar to mine and we knew that if this relationship developed, it would result in marriage. This relationship changed me and gave me back my youth because his maturity and our courtship experience allowed me time to enjoy learning about another person, at my own pace. Maybe, this is what was missing before. I noticed changes in my personality. Now, I have confidence and I read people better and refuse to be submissive. I don’t pretend to please people anymore without feeling a genuine desire. I no longer play the role of a submissive or dutiful daughter.

...it’s nice to have someone you can rely on... he is caring and we have a mutual respect and understanding. We work together, live together, go shopping and do housework together. He helps me around the house... we don’t have major disagreements. We are best friends. I talk to him about everything. We’re just so good for each other... and to me that’s what marriage means. You find someone you can connect with...I like being married to Taylor. We want to be together. I went to India two years ago for four weeks... the longest weeks of my life because I missed him and wanted him to share in the experience of my people and my country...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:8)

My mother disapproved of us dating, while his family was absolutely delighted because they had experienced mixed marriages.

...Mom had a stereotypical, negative racist view of what black culture signified... also Indians tend to be obsessed with ‘fair skin’ as a marriage requirement...he also sensed this so they (Mom and Taylor) worked it out and now are very fond of each other... our families socialize and respect each other...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:8)

Father: ...I feel that in an interracial marriage, from my experience with friends and my own daughter, people have more respect for each other... there is little, if any interference from the in-laws and the couple lives a separate and independent life. This is healthy. I feel since the other two kids found their own Punjabi Jat Sikh mates, it is fate... our kismet guides our life ...
(Ava’s father, March 1994; transcript 1:7)
Taylor is affectionate in public, which is his personality, but I have asked him to change, because I think one has to be sensitive to others’ feelings regarding decorum which is uppermost in Indian minds. Taylor is very nonjudgmental about my people and my culture. We have discussed the issue of religion and children. We have decided that they will be brought up as Fundamentalist Christians because Taylor feels comfortable in his church, which I also attend. He appears to be well grounded in his faith through scripture, bible study and social solidarity; whereas I am not that grounded in Sikhism. His faith appears to be more organized and involves his generation; whereas mine is traditional, does not involve my generation and is not taught in English because it regards socialization as unnecessary. This is my experience.

I would like my children to appreciate my faith through their Sikh family: my parents, brother and sister and their spouses. By attending gurdwara functions they will, hopefully, realize what Sikhism means and how they can feel a part of it. They must find out how it fits them - not how they must fit into it.

...just because I am going to raise my children as Fundamentalist Christians does not mean that I am going to stop going to the gurdwara and stop celebrating or attending Sikh functions...my children will attend gurdwara services... (Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:3)

At one point, I didn’t really like the Sikh community and that was a backlash from the experiences of my first marriage. I wanted to distance myself from the culture and did not want my children to experience it. The traditional constraints of my faith had hurt me deeply and I generalized this feeling towards anything representing
121.

the faith. I didn’t want them to follow the cultural beliefs, for as much as I believed culture and religion should be separated; they are in fact intertwined. I don’t personally have any problems with my children believing in Christianity. Perhaps this is due to the religious tolerance taught to us by my father.

...religions all say the same thing basically. It’s people’s interpretations regarding what the book says which creates the difference. But most say to believe in one God, be good, and mind rules regarding injustices against humanity. Guru Nanak also said that you should not put down or try to convert someone who is not Sikh. You should allow them to believe what they want. That’s why I personally do not have a problem in following Taylor’s faith...the one issue I cannot accept is that Jesus Christ is God...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:3)

Ironically, I have a greater appreciation for my culture and religion now, after marrying a non-Sikh, than I did when I was married to a Sikh.

... pain required distance for safety and a healing period... now I have renewed my spirit and feel whole and so I can accept what happened to me in perspective and I can appreciate the goodness of Sikhism... hopefully, in another fifteen years or so, I will have placed the ghosts behind me...I have become a better person for it...
(Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:3)

My reflections:

I chose Ava to tell her story because she has endured what few Punjabi Jat Sikh women endure and survive - a divorce. A divorced woman is never innocent again; however, a divorced man is as much in demand as a single man. Indians are cautious to marry an Indian divorcee, a prejudice which possibly allows them freedom to marry anyone else they choose, perhaps a non-Sikh or non-Indian. The perceived rationale is that mainstream white culture experiences
frequent divorces, so the karas boundaries must be fortified from this contamination - this western acceptance of divorce, the ultimate taboo.

Several issues emerge in Ava’a story. First, she finds difficulty in positioning herself within the frame of being Indian, that is, her sense of "self" does not appear to mature into an Indian identity. Or if it does, she does not realize it. Also, her resolute acceptance of Punjabi Sikh tradition will not allow her permission to dissolve her dysfunctional marriage. She is shamed into staying. I wonder, is it fear of her father or fear of her God; or is this the same fear? Her name and reputation appears less soiled, due to the fact that the young man left her. He blinked first, apparently, because he had reached his emotional tolerance threshold. So, one day, he made a choice between two women: his wife or his mother and his mother won. He betrayed his sacred marriage vows for emotional release, while Ava resigned herself to the quiet erosion of her soul -- her martyrdom. Shame and loss of face are the major deterrents for abiding in one’s life role - in residing within the boundaries of one’s kara.

The second issue to emerge in this story is, "What is the status of a divorced daughter who has come back home to live?" She became their guilt - their cultural betrayal. She became a soiled, refunded female, who now had to be recycled. Now, a new status emerged in which she was an adult, a peer, a wise person, a seasoned warrior... innocence lost and painful, maturity gained - at what cost? Her divorce, or failed marriage, now had
to be reconciled by the family because two more children had to be married. However, since they married their personal choices from within their Punjabi Jat Sikh generation, apparently nothing was lost -- or was it? Had they learned something about compliance? Yes, there was something lost, never to be retrieved. It was their collective pain and innocence, betrayed by the kara's boundary.

The third issue was marriage. Whom to marry, inside the faith or outside the faith? Again Ava asks for her parent's permission and blessing because she cannot bear to hurt them again. They could not tolerate it a second time for they all, desperately, need to heal. Since experience is the greatest teacher, they accepted Taylor, a person whom their daughter loved. She had earned the right to happiness; however and wherever she had found it. They could not gamble with her life again. With courage they crossed the boundary of their kara, holding their child's hand, shielding her from community judgment, knowing that this time it was her choice.

...their collective center, their Sikh psyche had lost the balance of credibility, necessary to believe, due to their collective pain and spiritual betrayal... and that is how it is between parents and their children... they, as a family, had been collectively divorced and gratefully reprieved... (researcher / Ava, March 1994; 1:1)

Ava's narrative highlights issues concerning divorce and remarriage, as perceived by Sikhism.

a. What does it mean to feel "Indian"?
b. What is the status of a divorced daughter as opposed to that of a divorced son?
c. Whom does one marry next and who would want to marry a divorcee?

These are issues of philosophical positioning inside and outside the kara because they test the Sikh boundary of tolerance.
Their present emotional status and belief system has redefined the meaning of marriage. A Sikh has betrayed them and has caused them pain. However, a non-Sikh has brought them immense happiness and has restored their faith in their daughter, the institution of marriage and in their parenting role. In short, they have undergone a costly education.

...adaptation here was not by choice but by predestination ... it was meant to be thus, or so it is rationalized. The covenant had to be broken before healing could take place. This Sikh family has experienced firsthand what gifts adaptation, or boundary reconstruction can bring...however, if they did not have to interact with a non-Sikh man and his family, I doubt if they would have been so accepting of him. They experienced a rebirth because now they could begin again, they could begin to heal and enjoy life...
(researcher / Ava, March 1994; transcript 1:2)

Their faith has been shaken yet adequately rationalised through the acceptance of their karma, and now their belief in "outsider" marriages became stronger through personal experience. The empty spaces in their lives have been filled with wisdom - not revenge, guilt or blame. In short, the covenant has come full circle once again with a restructured boundary, one that is more flexible and forgiving and allows the retrieval of a child’s soul.  

I wonder, are Punjabi couples who are in Ava’s position necessarily the children of a lesser God ?

---

5 It is important to clarify that Sikhs do divorce, remarry, or remain single. but it is not a Sikh societal norm to do so. Marriage is an assumed Sikh lifestyle. Also, today, divorce is viewed as a viable option in an impossible situation: however, since it is a taboo and not the first option, there are social consequences. On a personal note, I am not passing judgment on the issue of divorce nor am I saying that what happened to Ava, happens to every Punjabi female. Hence, Ava’s story cannot be generalized to all individuals in her situation (researcher).
2.2 Summary

The salient theme in this chapter is the narrative of the lives of Punjabi women, the human signifiers of the male role. For without women, who would produce the esteemed, male child (often at the expense of the female-child); and whom would these men groom, imprison, marry, possess, oppress and often discard as the preceding profiles indicate?

The transplantation of a Punjabi Sikh female child or adolescent from her birth country to the host country demands a cultural boundary surveillance and security of her preciousness, her sacredness; for she must not be violated by the outside, brute force of cultural change and freedom. Ironically, although Sikhism touts patriarchal dominance, it is the Punjabi woman who ultimately decides the historical shape and frame of the inherited and preserved traditions she chooses to value and perpetuate in her ensuing kinship generations. Upon her rests the burden of proof - her Sikhism, her mothering, her transparent alliance with deceptive cultural change and its dire cultural consequences inflamed by her indignant passion, her calm resignation and her dutiful compliance.

...it is the mother who craves harmony. She lies to protect her sons who signify her life, her pride, her legacy and when necessary, she fabricates and reinforces a facade of her family profile within her clan. She absolves the friction in traditional bridging between cultures for her adult children. She also weeps at the loss of historically traditional sentiment as she reviews the passing of her elders and she shares the pain of her husband's imbalance in a strange land with strange rules... Most importantly, she is shocked by her new role: that of a wage earner, a grocery shopper, a translator, a bill writer, a car driver, a school supporter and inevitably, a research questionnaire participant ... She rightfully asks,' Why are they so curious about us ?'...

(researcher, June 1995)
We recognize the faces of these women in Kaya, the obedient and consummate woman; Reva, the rebellious and emotionally co-dependant woman; and Ava, the fatalist, the pragmatist woman.

The contemporary literature, especially from the last fifteen years, abounds with studies of South Asian women and their identification with issues: feminist issues (Srivastava 1992; Dhruvarajan 1991; Szekely 1990); reproductive rights and sex selection issues (Thobani 1992; Basavarajappa and Halli 1986); arranged marriages, inter-ethnic marriages and youth-parent acculturation issues (Vaidyanathan and Naidoo 1990; Filteau 1980; Wakil 1988; Kurian 1987); gender oppression issues (Naidoo 1990; Dua 1992; Thakur 1992); social self-perceptions, discrimination and stereotyping issues (Razack and Vaidyanathan 1991; Das Gupta 1986; Naidoo 1987; Indra 1981); and, employment barriers, societal attitudes and gender exploitation issues (Ray 1992; Ralston 1991; Rajagopal 1990; Naidoo 1990; Ng 1990; Aggarwal 1987). (The South-Asian female, family health and gender issues will be discussed in Chapter Five with reference to social service benefits or intrusion.) Ironically, the above scholarship reveals more about Canadian research trends, data collection techniques and purposes such as political justification and economic planning, than about the collection of immigrant acculturation insights. For it is not the participant who prepares the questionnaire but the researcher who decides which issue will become "an issue".

In the seventies, Canadian research regarding South Asian females and their family structures was focused in gathering data
from: the tradition and change in a B.C. Sikh family (Ames and Inglis 1976); the East-Indian farm workers in Vancouver, B.C. (Cassin 1979); the children of immigrants (Minde and Minde 1976); and the intercultural counselling (Marshall 1979), to name a few. This body of scholarship attempted to justify the rationale behind the federally mandated, multicultural policy; the vertical mosaic mindset; and the resulting Canadian perception of foreigners, specifically, the South Asian traditional culture preservers - the visible minority, immigrant women.

In the eighties, the South Asian, psychology-based research busily contrived a plethora of questionnaires, aimed at topics which probed Naidoo’s (1994) bibliography keywords (Appendix A):

a) What constitutes their (visible minority) difference, their pain, their stigmata, their steadfastness in traditional values and beliefs maintenance ?;

b) What constitutes their explanation of themselves and us and their desire or lack of desire to assimilate ?; and,

c) What constitutes their perceived neglect in displaying personal attributes of competition, individuality, self-promotion and participatory change ... ?

After the questionnaires were collated and the profile of "difference" was established, researchers initiated another thematic study which involved the following discussion:

" Now that we know how they are different, why don’t they want to become like us ? Then they won’t be so different !"

These studies transcended polite cultural interference - they smacked of ethnic elitism and racism! Accordingly, the research of the nineties responded by challenging previous scholarship and changing the foundation and frame of future scholarship.
At this point, the rising educated, middle class visible minorities discussed in their places of worship and in their newspapers:

a) What is so morally threatening and abhorrent to mainstream Canada that we cannot abide cultural differences within Canada?;

b) (or the converse argument) Since we are hyphenated Canadians and this is now our homeland by birth and adoption; why should we and our children continue to submit to (or be questioned by) a white, paternalistic society of pseudo-scholars?;

c) (or, paraphrased in another manner) When is being different and looking different, of little consequence or interest in Canada?

The reply to these questions ushered in the voices of the human rights activists and grassroots, middle class, visible-minority organizations; which collectively effected a political push for justifiable inclusion within the white males' domain of institutionalized power and control. This push was underpinned by legislation which mandated the implementation of anti-racist and equity reform in institutions where it was previously implied; yet purposely not actualized. Literature regarding this anti-racist educational reform is discussed in Chapter Four: the analysis of relationships evident in the teacher/student/curriculum dynamic (Dei 1996).

The signature of narrative inquiry:

I believe the Sikh interpretative community is a readership which identifies with the text of life, allowing the dupatta to reveal the history of a woman steeped in custom -- for it is everpresent, all her life, draped on her head. It shields her not only from poverty, stillborn children and an unfaithful husband; but also from the judgment decried by the relationship between her
"self" and her God, within the boundary of her kara. It signifies her status, her value and her purpose in carrying and delivering the seeds of the next generation - the next generation of believers. In essence, she transcends her mortal function and becomes the symbolic vehicle of the transmission of values, worldviews and belief systems.

...again, 'What are the signifiers of a woman’s status? ' and 'How is the woman’s ‘self’ revealed to us?' are answered by the response, 'It lies within the interpretation of Sikhism and it is revealed to the readers through women’s disclosures. Karlekar (1991) feels the vehicle of these disclosures is contextualized in the notion of audience, in the construction of femininity and in the need to be read in a woman’s voice ...
The dapatta signifies the women’s voices in this chapter whether they wear it or not, it symbolically follows them throughout life, as evidence of their existence...
(researcher, Feb. 1994)

The interpretative community thus initiates a relationship among the text, the tradition and the interpreter. This viewpoint is parallel to my personal quest in exploring this study: my need to tell the story, my participants’ need to share their story and the reader’s need to experience our common stories.

Where have we come from and where are we going?

Next, Chapter Three concludes Part One of the Broken Covenant in this study. To review, in Chapter One we experienced the form and function of narrative inquiry as it is naturally found within the human voice of disclosures and conspiracies, inside the kara’s sense of "self"; and in Chapter Two, we experienced an in-depth display of provoked and aborted, female boundary repositioning within the kara, which appears to be male-prescribed. Again, the narrative inquiry reflecting disclosures and conspiracies displays
a tapestry of interlocking male-female relationships, dancing within the threads of their stark, lived realities, exposing their predestined human plight, as perpetually witnessed inside the kara.

In Chapter Three, we will experience the male dominance positionality symbolized by ownership: the ownership of land, caste and kinship. Is there an assumption here that family members, especially women, may also be owned as part of a male’s birthright? We, then, question what divine intervention allows and absolves such egocentric male governance? Let us journey forth.
CHAPTER 3

BROKEN COVENANT: PUNJABI SIKH MALE VOICES

3.1 Land and caste: the male signature, pride and burden

What does it mean for a man to own land, to own his womenfolk, to own his name and to own his ancestral caste? Ownership, to a Punjabi man, is a predestined state of mind. It is his birthright and his burden. Punjabi men appear proud because they are nurtured from birth to take pride in their gender; they are the man child, the messiah of their family, without whom the clan lineage and identity would be diluted and eventually forsaken. A man is identified by the men who preceded him. At his marriage it is announced who his grandfather was... and who his father was...; the women in his family are rarely mentioned. Why? because it is a patriarchal society in which brute strength, virility, charisma, authority and fearlessness are admired, sought and nurtured. The military history of the Sikhs attests to the status of these attributes.1

How does this relate to the Punjabi Sikh Male narratives

---

1 See the following:
Refer to Appendix C. In the sections: "references" and "related topic reading" for other sources related to this reference (researcher).
within this chapter? It relates in a profound manner because one son must fulfil his dying father's expectations; one son must submit to the betrayal of his faith, his tradition and his father for the love of a woman; and another son must fulfil his duty to bring his family to Canada through adoption, arranged marriages and finally chain migration. Each case reveals personal and spiritual sacrifice. The denial of personal gratification is justified if a greater good results - if a male can assist his clan, kinship and caste. Those who dare to betray this axiom are punished; they languish in a spiritual suspension awaiting a miracle, an absolution. They are branded, shunned then accepted back into the fold for they cannot exist without redemption, so strong is the faith. If they are not Sikhs, then what are they? The allegiance is ground into the fibre of their being - they cannot be partially Sikh!

In the Punjab after the harvest season, Sikhs celebrate life for they are people of the earth, they are the landowning class, they are the zamindars.

...wildly beating drums in rhythm with the flight of male dancers swirling in saffron, magenta, blood red and fushia - the bhangra has begun! Irrational, wild abandon fed by the hunger of indescribable joy in having brought in an

---

2 See the following:

a) "...Bhangra - the harvest dance performed by the Punjabi monfolk incorporates Cossack dance movements...about 12 million Sikhs live in the Punjab area...they can be seen all over India: driving taxis and trucks from the north (Kashmir) to the south (Kanyakumari) and from the west (Bombay seaport) to the east (Manipur jungles)...they farm lands in the remote malarial swamps of Nepal Terai and the once desert wastes of Ganganagar (district of Rajasthan)...they are shopkeepers, tradesmen, industrialists, academicians, lawyers, doctors, civil servants and many other trades and professions, all over India...the largest concentration is in New Delhi (the capital of Punjab, their homeland). Mainly, Sikhs farm with over 80% of the community living off the land. Next to farming, soldiering is the favourite occupation. At one time, almost 1/4 of the British Indian Army were Sikhs; today one out of ten Indians in uniform is a Sikh... " (p.7)

b) The Bhangra photograph (study page 133) is from Singh (1984:72-73).
the hunger of indescribable joy in having brought in an abundant harvest, a blessing to be sanctified by drink, dance and dhesi khanna. Virile, handsome and alive, the Sikhs saturated in the ritual of the bhangra, praising their inherited land, their inherited signature...the rich, black fertile land which gorges out its annual crop of resurrected life for the generations of landowners, the zamindars, the Punjabi Jat Sikhs...the masters of their soil, their precious life force, their ethos -- their covenant...

(researcher, March 1994).

The spectators become the spectacle. The dance of regenerated maleness, the ownership of land and the robust satisfaction in the need to witness its fruitful harvest become the song, the drumbeat, the rationale for one's existence. Appendages of a man and his land abound - the tractor worshipped for its aggressive maleness; the bullocks revered for their tenacity and willingness to observe and distance themselves from the machine; the honoured tube wells vigorously quenching the thirst which lies within the seeds planted within the earth, deep down inside the bowels of life itself; and the banyan trees distributing their precious shade, standing sentry duty beneath the burning ball of sunlight which crisps the human skin into a leathery mass of baked, brown peaks and valleys, the nerve endings of maleness - proud and poised.

...Bravo, my lions! He touched the bullocks and they responded briskly. For thirty years his father had ploughed this field; for thirty years his sweat had saturated this soil; and now when Jagseer ploughed it, he smelled his father's sweat. He had never experienced such a smell from any other field of Dharam Singh (the owner of the land). Ploughing the field flooded Jagseer Singh with many fond memories of his father who had never sold one grain of wheat grown in this field. The crop was used only as seed and for consumption at home, no matter how great the need. If Nandi (Jagseer's mother) ever objected to this craziness on his part, his father would say with great seriousness:
‘My dear, have you ever seen a blessed farmer selling the milk from his own cow, or selling his son ...’  
(Singh 1993: 22).³

Why this relationship between a man and his land? The land is his sense of "self", his karam and his kara, entwined within the meaning of who he is, who his people are and who his son will be. An identity framed in the soil of his ancestors, the Jats, those who inherit the soil from which burst forth precious grains.

Caste, clan and kinship are the lifeblood which run through the veins of every Punjabi, marked by the demarcations of birthright, marriage selection pools, land inheritance, occupation, elder worship, dialect, food preferences and birth and death rites, whether in Punjab, India or Toronto, Canada. These tentacles of psychological control elicit fierce pride and defiance which challenge and contain the "self" within the kara. Consequently, the Punjabi Sikh males see all others in relation to their hierarchical caste standing. Outside of India, Punjabi Jat Sikhs view themselves in comparison to others whose migration identities profile a "a British Sikh ", an " East-African Sikh living in Britain ", or an " American or Canadian Sikh ".⁴

---

³ See the following:  

⁴ See the following:  

a) "... the most salient source of conflict amongst Sikhs everywhere, is personal rivalry...the negative consequence of otherwise egalitarian leadership appears to threaten their honour and autonomy...as observed in Sikh networks from the central management committees of the gurdwara systems, down to members of a village descent group. The next most significant source of disunity is caste: for despite Guru Nanak's explicit disavowal of (castes)...it remains alive amongst Sikh rules of endogamy, links between caste and occupation, kinship caste-specific ties, contradictory class interests such as between merchants, peasants-farmers, craftsmen and landless labourers, all of which have kept the caste/class system alive over the millennia..." (p. 203).
How can one "self-identify" in the kara when there are countless mutations of "selves" scattered worldwide? What is the common thread with which they duplicate these boundaries? Many authors, Indian and non-Indian, have probed the Punjabi Sikh psyche, snippets of which are revealed in the male narratives: rivalry, competition, self-sacrifice, coercion, caste maintenance and negation. Is this the baggage our participants have inherited?

Ballard (1989: 201-205) believes inter-caste rivalry is a result of competition for material assets in the Punjab, a sectarian division between orthodox Sikh theology and spiritual leaders and personal rivalry between caste, class and sect.

...how is this rivalry viewed by the participants who identify with inter-caste, lesser-caste and out-of-caste and kinship status? This would explain why there is not a generic Punjabi Sikh but hierarchical levels of status Punjabi Sikh identities which would then reside within the kara ...
(researcher, March 1994)

Bhachu (1989:) compares Punjabi Jat Sikhs who came directly from India to England and Punjabi Ramgharia Sikhs who were conscripted to assist in building the African railway at the turn of the century. They stayed seventy years but when African independence was declared, they migrated to Britain. Hence, Bhachu feels the Jats are "direct migrants" and the Ramgharhias are "twice migrants".

...(East African migrants from India) belonged predominately to one caste group, the Ramgharhias (the artisan caste) ... represented skilled labour...had mainstream skills (language,

---

5 See the following:
education, familiarity with urban institutions, capital and bureaucratic processes) ... they lacked the myth of returning to India the homeland as did other Asians... (Bhachu 1989: 234-244).^6

Caste migrations appear to be the status symbol. How do you measure one's degree of "Sikhness"? Already, we can see that an hierarchical value system is occurring in the kara's boundary. The closer to orthodoxy; the closer to racial, cultural purity?

...ironically, British Jat Sikhs believed that the Ramgharia's familiarity with the African British during seventy years had separated them from Sikh pride and observances. To prove their Sikh loyalty, the Ramgharias in defiance, in Britain, became 'more Sikh than Sikh 'as manifested in their keeping turbans, observing marriage and death rituals and embracing Sikh orthodoxy with a vengeance. Thus, they were refuting the Jat caste perception that only Jats represented 'true Sikhs'... (Bhachu 1989: 243).

There appear to be immense ideology issues present in the labelling of Sikhs within the kara's boundary. Could crossing the boundary be any less chaotic or emotional? Could it be that locating and living your caste label inside the boundary is more complex an issue than labelling outsiders (non-Indians) because they possess no caste? That is, is it more acceptable to marry a white person than to marry a person of another caste within Sikhs? One of the narratives, in this chapter, deals with this dilemma.

Next, Barton (1987) in her memoirs of an Indian bride in England, records the young lady's caste experience.

...my father and mother were both of the tailoring caste. This is a middling sort of caste with some above us and some below us...we have to marry within our caste...at home in the village, the Untouchables live just outside in their own

---

^6 See the following:
hamlet...these people are poor and are allowed to do only the most menial work. The men are often field labourers. They may handle the grain but must not touch the flour as it would become contaminated...they also must not touch the food or possessions of people of higher castes...the women clean out the cesspits and the stables and wash the streets...They are not usually paid in money but in food - left over food and old clothing...They may never enter our houses so they must bring their own dishes and we hand them the food outside ...We do not really believe in caste as we belong to a special sect...When I went to school I was friends with a girl who was a Harijan (Untouchable caste) in my class...I was walking home from school one day and she took my arm. I was quite happy about this but my mother saw me and made me take off all my clothes and wash all over...she could not stop herself... (Barton 1987: 6-27).

This excerpt describes the impossibility of erasing caste racism where conditioned behaviour overrides ethical and moral issues. One questions, is this what the kara's boundaries are meant to reinforce, both inside and outside India? Marriage in caste, out of caste, or without caste presents dilemmas.

Mathai (1993) describes the construction of the self-identity of an Anglo-Indian woman, born in India now residing in Britain.

...she was not a pukka (full blooded) Indian...Anglo-Indian was the term the English in India chose for themselves...By the time of the First World War, the term Anglo-Indian had come to stand for those of mixed race, although back in England it continued to be used to describe the English who lived and worked in India...they had been left behind but with an unconquerable sense of their superiority which together with their inheritance of light skins, hair and eyes, was to set them apart from their Indian countrymen...The cantonment represented the acme of perfection, for in every military town like Bangalore and Shahpur, it was where the English lived, where everything with the exception of some irresistible tropical flora and fauna, was made to resemble England... (Mathai 1993: 6-33).

---

7 See the following:

8 See the following:
Mixing of the castes and mixing of the races appears to present issues of disequilibrium in Sikh behaviour boundaries. The narrative participants question, "From where comes this sense of ownership over racial purity or ethnic superiority?" The responses appear to make oblique references to discrimination both inside and outside the kara, an attitude which demands:

a) What is a Sikh and what is an Anglo? Does it matter?

b) Yes, it matters in the beginning and then, who knows? For some males this is so and for others it is not.

The young bride in England explains what her villagers taught her about the British.

...white people were very immoral and we should not mix with them; that white men and women mix freely, smoke and drink and go dancing; that husbands leave their wives and children and get divorces...

(Barton 1987: 73)

It is amazing how the person outside the kara’s boundary appears exotic and fearful until one demystifies the prejudice. The ethics and morality surrounding the identity of a Sikh, a Punjabi or a Punjabi Sikh in comparison to how the mainstream culture identifies them as generic "people from India, or brown people" present issues of boundary migration and transmission.9

What are the underpinning questions these narratives profiled?

a) In Canada, does caste play a role in your life, if so, when and why? Are you able to make a conscious decision to disallow negative and discriminatory attitudes regarding caste, from directing your life?

---

9 See the following:
b) If you betray your cultural dictates, do you possess the emotional fortitude required to internalize the consequences and yet remain emotionally intact?

c) Will you know when you can’t make any more sacrifices; or conversely, will you know when sacrifices are no longer required?

The following narratives combine participants which include a son and his mother, a man and his wife and a brother and his relatives. Each arrives at a boundary dilemma which causes emotional friction affecting his / her significant other, the mother, the girlfriend or the wife who position their identity according to that of the significant male.

**Narrative 1.**

Kame describes his selfhood as riddled with age appropriate self-doubt as he emerges from his teens, faced with his deceased father’s shoes, which he is destined and determined to fill. He will not only be the good son, but the most efficient son one could wish for. His personality profile perpetually conflicts with the everpresent youthful rebellion exhibited by his siblings. They grow to resent his power underpinned by exacting expectations as he drives their / his financial, educational and career goals sanctioned by a grateful, yet, less demanding mother. Kame pays a price for this destined inheritance of position - his personal freedom from the family and its struggle with him for leadership which will allow them individual growth instead of perfection.

**Narrative 2.**

Eli, a Punjabi Jat Sikh and Anna, a non-Sikh, ultimately achieve what is coined a love marriage as opposed to an arranged marriage. To achieve this, Eli feels compelled to participate in
the betrayal of his parents by pretending to be interested in Indian-style marriages to keep the peace in his parent’s home. Thus, he is forced to live a double life. Eli commits the ultimate sin - he falls in love with a person who is not Indian, which poses a dilemma. He must now choose between his parents and the woman he loves and since Eli can’t choose, he postpones the inevitable. This allows him time to strengthen his bond with Anna and to graduate, which necessitates a move away from the family. This respite allows them precious distance and time to reflect upon what has now become their common dilemma. He fears the consequences of betraying his Sikh ancestry. He fears that his parents will destroy what they do not want to understand; and consequently cannot accept, being his freedom of choice in marriage. Have they lost their precious, educated son - their prize, their reward in life? How will this event have consequences in their old age?

Anna provides a perfect counterpoint as she reflects Eli’s emotional turmoil. As the foil in this situation, Anna, a secondary character, portrayed by Eli’s parents as the villain and contaminant in their Sikh lineage, is an immutable force to be reckoned with at some point in their lives. Eli’s parents are informed of the liaison yet refuse to discuss it; then deny it exists, then avoid it and eventually lose control over it. Meanwhile, the couple arrange a Catholic wedding and eventually become expectant parents.
Narrative 3.

Sobi carries the burden of chain migration on his shoulders; the expectation that if a relative assisted you in emigrating, you are duty bound to assist another member of your family. This custom, practised by many immigrants, presupposes that the survival of the group and its needs override the individual’s needs and wants. Chain migration through marriage requires the services of a matchmaker or a matchmaker agency. In Sobi’s case, an agency advertised in Canada for a particular match, in this case two brothers requiring two sisters for marriage purposes. The catch is that one brother and one sister must have landed immigrant status; while their counterparts, a brother and sister who reside in India, will participate in a marriage-sponsorship into Canada. The object is to get all four over to the host country, two who are already here and two who may be entitled to come afterwards.

The following schema outlines the collection of files.

Kame

a) Kame’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-15, dated February 1994;

b) Kame’s mother’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-14, dated February 1994.

Eli

a) Eli’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-23, dated March 1994;

b) Eli’s wife Anna’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-15, dated March 1994.
Sobi

a) Sobi’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-14, dated April 1994;
b) Sobi’s sister-in-law’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-5, dated April 1994;
c) Sobi’s wife’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-3, dated April 1994;
d) Sobi’s brother’s narrative includes the transcribed files 1-1 to 1-6, dated April 1994.

Following each narrative, I have voiced my reflections of their lives as perceived through the lens of my life journey, framed by our common Sikhism and absorption into the mainstream culture. However, readers must be cautioned from generalizing insights found in this small sample of three participants, to all Punjabi Sikh or Punjabi males. These participants represent only the context of their lived realities, lived inside and outside the kara.
3.1.1 *Kame: I am a good son, a good role model*

We moved from England when I was eleven-years-old, so arriving in 1976, I really didn’t know what Canada was about. In England, we had very strong, protective ties to related Sikh families.

Mother: ...I got married in 1965 in India, we went back to England then we came back to India where the children didn’t know Punjabi so they were put back two years. We always thought we would settle in India but we didn’t fit in so we came back to England. In 1976, my husband’s brother sponsored us into Canada. We came to this country thinking it would be easier but it wasn’t. We couldn’t find a job with his hair and turban so we opened up our own business and had no problem because he was the boss...

(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:1).

Coming here we had two aunts and an uncle who would become the core family circle. In England, young Sikh boys would keep their hair in a ponytail over their heads with both sides crossed over. Over here, no one kept that style for boys. Arriving in Grade Five, I was a young boy with an accent, a different way of looking at things and did not fit in. The problems began:

...the secretary of the school, I remember, told my parents that it would be best for me if they would cut my hair. Needless to say, culture appropriate, culture-sensitive political issues were not at all issues in 1976, at least not to me. So I started school, kept my hair like that and went through what continued to be a much more difficult process...

(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:1).

I went from an elementary school to a junior high school where my Dad saw me having more trouble, more fights and a more socially difficult time. I was isolating myself by becoming a social misfit because I couldn’t fit in. My hair had become the issue. I hadn’t had it converted to a putka, which is a turban style. That would have been too uncomfortable and complex for me to do.
in Grade Nine, I went to school wearing a Blue Jay cap to cover up my hair and the first day I didn't say anything or do anything. The teacher didn't say anything and no one else said anything about my wearing a hat to class. I went to all my classes. I went the next day, no one said anything...so I wore the hat all the way through Grade Nine, becoming more of a social misfit, increasingly drawing myself towards a troubled group of friends...
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:4).

Mother: ...when the children were growing up in (Canadian) schools, we had some problem with the boys' hair... so, after five years, we decided they should have short hair. Kame didn't want to wear the juddah. He was wearing the plaits with a baseball cap so everyone made fun of him...he really didn't tell us, he knew what we believed...he wanted to keep the tradition. Then one day he had a fight with a friend...he told us that this is really how he is being treated...my husband said, 'No way I want my children to go through this kind of problem and have this kind of difficulty.' So my husband decided if he is going to keep his hair and wear a turban, which he did all his life, then his sons can have short hair...
(Kame's mother, February 1994; transcript 1:3).

Finally, in Grade Ten my hair was cut. Previous to cutting it, I was far too emotionally upset to make the choice. My father would ask me every year if I wanted my hair cut, while I always knew he did not wish it. After the "haircut", I started to bloom. The next year, I was chosen to go to Camp Bosco for a week for multicultural leadership training and then a week as a student representative at a multifaith youth sports camp.

...I was given (an opportunity) to meet the Canadian senior policy advisors...information about what Canada was about, what multicultural relations were about... Lake Bosco was the same sort of thing only on a provincial basis...so I developed a very strong love of what Canada is and what other things were going on...receiving notification from the Prime Minister,'Congratulations for completing this session.' ...really, really impressed me...
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:7).

In Grade Twelve, I had a stronger sense of who I was and was now included because I had a girlfriend. She was black, a fact
which created panic at home. However, I have always been very pig-headed; and so I defended her when my family said,"...but she’s black..."

...as a sat sangat family, everyone is equal, and everyone has their own path to God and so a human being is a human being - period. I threw that back at my dad. He didn’t like that at first, but then he appreciated it and understood... (Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:5).

Eventually, I entered the social milieu and behaviours of typical, normal kids. Grade Thirteen always seemed stressful because your goal was to enter university. I gained admittance, yet I looked upon my high school experience as unjust. I felt high school was a mirror image of later life, so you had to belong to specific cliques. I could see the inherent racism in the system. I was beginning to fight with Geography teachers over the issues of first world - third world and the "how and why" of this set up.

...I remember in a Grade Twelve English class, some teachers were encouraging exchange which was patently racist, as in the instance of a Chinese student telling a Chinese joke... I was sitting there looking at the white teacher and his white class as I reflected on what was happening to the Chinese student...‘you have bought into this...you will try to join the oppressor by joining in on the jokes’...I’ve learned that the education system will do that whether it is Eurocentric education or Eurocentric textbooks...

(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:6).

My mind was given to investigating curriculum issues for justice and equity according to the education we were taught to absorb. Then, my father became ill, a situation I rejected and resented because it showed my lack of control. Now I had to have a plan. Then disaster struck. My father suddenly died from a brain tumour. As a family we were ruptured, never again to experience what it feels like to be whole and complete.
Mother: ...my husband had a brain tumour, a man who lived a very moderate, clean lifestyle. It was so sudden... Kame had to do everything for a year and a half. I couldn’t manage without the help of my children... after five years I had a major operation and then I sold the business...
(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:5).

That’s when another phase kicked in, the phase where I became an unwilling parent. At nineteen years of age, I went from an unwilling child, to an unwilling young adult, to an unwilling parent within the space of a few months. I became the parent of five: two brothers and two sisters and my deceased father’s thirty-five year old wife, my mother. My mother was content to take a secondary role to the decision maker. She was the accessory, someone you go to after the decision has been made: to correct it slightly; re-analyze it slightly; but never make it; or, if made, to have it rechecked and easily changed. This secondary player had now completely collapsed.

Mother: ...when I was with my husband, I had a different role. I was the passive woman because only one of the parents had to discipline the children... after he died I didn’t know which role to play... I had to be the mother and the father, which was difficult for me, because I had never been the father before...
(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:6).

The aunts and uncle were trying to offer assistance and thereby exert control. My father’s side of the family are very short-tempered, pig-headed, arrogant and emotional. People on my mother’s side are very civilized, cultured and clear thinkers. The adult leaders were in position; but I interjected and took control as the eldest son of my father, the former head of our home. I used aggressive tactics to sideline all the elders who felt they had the
right to exert influence in decision making for my family. However, to accept this role, I had to drop out of one university session.

Mother: ...I do not want people to criticize me and my children. Also, I don’t want to interfere in their lives. They think children should be what the parents want.... In this country, children demand freedom, and if you don’t give it, they will take it and you will be left out. It is very difficult for children to live two separate lives, which happens when parents do not understand, or do not want to understand this culture... (Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:2).

My role included decisions about our money and our survival. I felt it was essential for my mother to know how money is handled, for which she is now grateful. I also forced my younger sister back into school immediately, where she stayed and built a pattern of constant education. I sold all my parent’s stores except one, where mom worked part-time. However, not all family members ascribed to my pace of changing the family and business dynamics. I feel that:

...my younger brother was the forgotten piece of the puzzle, which is something we are paying for now... (Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:3).

The next stage involved liquidating the family business and losing control over my brother due to my sister’s interference, which resulted in my moving out of the family home. I had just landed a job one year after graduation, when I decided my family should have the required space to manage their own affairs; which I knew they couldn’t do very well.

Mother: ...I like my children to have freedom. I do not want to cling to them...the more you cling, the more they are going to push you back...when I got married, I was by myself with my husband and I had all the freedom. Parents who cling to their children want to make them feel guilty...if their parents look up to them that doesn’t mean you have to do the same thing to your children. You can break
the cycle. You have to be independent. I want to live on my own resources, physically and financially even though I had to depend a lot on the children when my husband died. If Kame wants to move out, I think it is time because he did so much looking after his brothers, sisters and myself...
(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:8).

I was active in the university student community where I began an international culture club for law students.

…it gives (Asian university students) something they didn’t have...so people are starting to wield that power - others are beginning to turn it into a social situation...They have a need for such a club, but they can ‘drift in and out’...
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:9).

It helped them deal with the duality, being traditional on one hand and being modern on the other hand. This duality bankrupts a lot of individuals, depending on their self-perception: I ran for political office, had several relationships, and then helped my mother deal with my brother. She protects him from simple chores, like buying a loaf of bread or changing a light bulb. This really bothered me and created problems between myself and the family. They gave me responsibility because they considered it work, which has made them helpless, to a degree. That particular brother of mine has been a thorn in my side.

...Oh, if he failed a class, go to summer school...halfway through summer school, he wouldn’t like it anymore so my sister and mother would conspire to say, ‘Okay leave summer school...he doesn’t have to go anymore, he’ll pick up this course next grade...’ And then he’d sit around all summer which made me very, very upset...
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:8).

It’s not like he’s working, it’s not like he won a scholarship anywhere. He should not have failed the class in the first place. When he couldn’t get into university, I had to push
to make sure that he could get in by having his high school grades reappraised. For four months, he did not tell me he had received failing marks. He kept it a secret from me and when it was too late, I had to unravel his life, as usual.

I was mad because the family had called me in, after the fact, when they should have known better. My brother should have adult responsibilities, if he is an adult, and my mother, as the parent of five children should have the level of assurance and confidence to project that role. They should not count on others to do it. She wasn’t trained; she was trained less than we were. That’s not fair to me - to be used as a crutch.

...I resent the role of father, that my father knowingly put me in...I firmly believe that he put me in this position and would want me to accept the role that I had to...my father had a very well pronounced lack of fear of death...I treat death with curiosity, not fear - but my father had no fear, he understood the concept...He dealt with death by facing it. I dealt with life, after his death, by not facing it... (Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:2).

I put those feelings on hold. It is never the right time, but now the time is well overdue. I need to deal with it before I move onto the next stage. My Canadian girlfriend is a good listener. As I get more stressed at work, I postpone these feelings about my father; yet I keep functioning. I had to be strong because I was present, when others in my family found time to mourn. Even when my mother had her twenty-fourth wedding anniversary, I helped her through it. I supported others, but who supported me?

I didn’t like the way they were functioning as a family: I left and my brother got thrown out of university. He is both selfish and self-centered. If my mother wanted to keep him as a
child to keep mothering, that was wrong. Now he is crippled.

One of my sisters got married, which brought us much happiness and cohesion. However, true to form, my younger brother took off to Japan before the marriage. He got thrown out of university, broke up with his Canadian girlfriend and went on a holiday. Why? Because my mother and sister decided he needed a stress release.

Thankfully, the wedding plans occupied our lives:

Mother: ...my son-in-law is an Ismaili, not a Hindu. We are Kshatriya Punjabi Sikh so when my daughter first started going out, I really didn’t think much about it. I welcome any friend of my children in my home...I want to meet them, talk to them and know where they are coming from...this boy is from a good family...so I gave permission to my daughter to see him and to bring him home. He did not tell his family because he did not know how they would react. After four years, they wanted to marry...by then, of course, his family was agreeable and so were we. He was scared about what will his mother say...but then when she saw my daughter and liked her, it was okay...we were prepared to do two weddings, one Sikh and one Ismaili. However, their custom is to have the wedding (according to ) what faith the girl is. So we could have the Sikh gurdwara wedding. All the Ismaili community came became they were curious to see a Sikh wedding. Also, with all our Canadian friends there, it was really beautiful. But, I couldn’t even sleep a month before; because of the anxiety of being a single parent. It bothered me because I was very, very close to my husband; so I felt lost. I never did such a big thing by myself. My daughter did all the wedding preparations. I was worried too, who would support me in the tradition of giving the pulla to my daughter when her father was not here. I really missed him. We did everything in the traditional way. That was what my daughter wanted...

(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:13).

The wedding came and went. I reflected on what kind of a marriage partner I needed. Part of me needs a person who has the same drive, ambition and need to succeed as I have; and another part of me needs a person who has a sense of humour and is a lifelong learner. She should be outgoing and compassionate.
I love people, but I am very ambitious so I need understanding.

...my mother says I need a wonderful woman who will be behind the man; but I would rather have my daughters look up to a role model quite different from that... (Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:10).

I am very proud that four of us are university-educated with two having a masters degree and of course my younger brother who is still nowhere. When we began graduating, I bought the same type of diploma picture frames so we could put our pictures on the wall. My younger brother’s frame is still empty.

I remember arguing with my aunts, uncles and mother because I wanted my sister to have the right to live on the university campus. I felt she should not be restricted because of their outmoded fear of girls living away from home. I felt that their problem or fear should not become her issue. So, I fought for her rights, which I won. She, promptly announced she didn’t want to move out and leave our mother alone.

...at twenty, she wanted to marry. I told her it was the wrong time... What is the rush? Well, a lot of her peer group was getting married. She’s in a rush to go through life. From high school, she went through four years without taking one break. She paid for her car with cash. I don’t think she had a chance to be a kid. She’s well educated but she knows a lot less about life than I would like her to...she is a teacher... (Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:11).

I seem to be a parent to everyone I meet, even my staff. I feel the present Punjabi generation of youth in Canada are finally getting a culture: the Bhangra, mixed Punjabi and Reggae culture. Now, they are earning their way through school. They resent their traditional culture, yet also recognize that they are part of a non-white underclass.
...they, too, see the system as white...people in power on tv are white... I resent this. I don’t like this... others passively don’t see any part of it and won’t discover it until twenty years down the road; until they hit the glass ceiling because they are not white...and then there is the lost generation, the generation X who will not go to university and will not have labour jobs, because there is nothing out there. The system is not responsive to them...
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:12).

Happily, the Punjabi family structure is changing. However, many families are staunchly tied to old beliefs which is okay, because they are a human time bomb! Soon, they will be exposed to family problems as the pressure to survive in a poor economy affects their personal income.

...you cannot have your grandparents here from overseas, live in an apartment and expect your kids (who grow up here) to listen to your ideals and your parent’s traditional ideals... kids are surrounded by sex, drugs, rock and roll, school, television and everything they are reading...
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:14).

The clash between Indian traditional values and Canadian values for children has not yet been fully realized by Punjabi parents. So, parents apply traditional pressure, not adaptive insight when the cultures clash.

Mother: ...I think the mothers are in a very difficult position. They are caught between the husband, the in-laws and the children. Mothers feel they cannot be the leader and tell all these people what to do, because that is either a combined mother and father job, or the father’s job. They feel they have to take the side of the husband, who often does not know how to play his role... Even knowing that the father’s attitude towards the girls is wrong, the mother will not stick up for her daughters; because if she is wrong, what will happen to her? She is powerless. She has to side with the husband because that’s where the power lies...that’s what the system, the Indian society, the tradition is about! It is with him. But if it is me, I would defend my daughter and make my husband understand that change is normal and natural and will not take away from his role as a parent...
(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript:1:10).
Continuing Punjabi traditions in Canada is impossible as even the village life in India has become less traditional. The patriarchal set-up is deservedly failing because it is not functional in any society.

...if they don’t believe in these traditions, then they are nothing but followers... and you look at them and think, 'You don’t even understand these traditions, so you are already nothing. Why are we putting rice in front of the house and mixing stuff this way and throwing stuff over your shoulder?’ ... the wedding created a huge lack of understanding among all the adults as to what the heck this tradition was from, in the culture...(They did it anyway but they did not know why they were doing it.) You must know why you choose to perpetuate the tradition to which you are steadfastly clinging...

(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:13).

Tradition for tradition’s sake, such as arranged marriages, is morally wrong? Why have them? You have them because you neither trust the western method of courting and dating nor do you trust your child’s judgment. Mind you, the child has never been allowed to experience any decision-making, so how can you trust him/her? You fear for your daughter’s virginity and family honour and you fear racism. Perhaps she will marry someone from a different caste, religion and race. Fears abound!

...what you are saying is that those people of a different caste and religion are inferior. The tenets of Sikhism teach equality across the genders, which is why all our Indian first names are the same for both males and females...it believes in the democratic movement...it believes in the equality of all men and women...but (equality) is conveniently forgotten...

(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:14).

I am wearing a gold kara which is a fashion symbol more than a religious symbol. My understanding of my caste is that as the Moguls were invading, there needed to be an army raised. The Hindu gurus decided to have a new religion emerge. They decided to have
the eldest son of each Kshatriya household become a Sikh, live in
the same household, intermarry and be equal and monotheistic but
not radical. These men would then be called upon to defend the
honour of anyone, in or out of the religion. It was not just
protecting Sikhs from everyone else; it was protecting the weak
from the strong. Whether I romanticize this view, or not, that is
something I believe in. Therefore, I do not have to marry a
Kshatriya or an Indian: I want to practise what I believe.

Mother: ...I have seen more unsuccessful arranged
marriages here, than successful marriages. I think when
the parents see the family set up for their son or
daughter in an arranged marriage; they are not looking at
what the boy and girl want, but at what they want. They
look at the fit between their religion, caste and
background and that of the other family. When these two
people have to live together and there happens to be a
clash; then the newlyweds resent the parents for putting
them through this thing and they resent themselves for
allowing the parents to ruin their lives. Because once
you are married, you are marked... it will never be the
first marriage again. So if the children choose for
themselves, they cannot blame anyone. Children always
want approval, so suggest but do not condemn their
choice without thinking about it, just because it is not
your choice...
(Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:12).

It matters little whom I marry. If Indian, we can eat the same
food and experience the convenience of a shared culture. I am a
Canadian and an agnostic; yet I know there is a God (the Lord).
I will marry whomever I want, inspite of the fact that it may not
meet with my family’s approval. I know my mom would like me to
marry an Indian, but for me it is a matter of the heart.

I feel that my personality and quest in life is an extension
of my father’s soul as I reflect on my position in this family.
...I have a deep need to help people. My father said, '...to help, you just do the very best that you can. No matter what, you must fight for what you want; which means if I am in your way, if I am your barrier, you must fight me. No matter who is your opponent; the bigger they are the harder you must fight. You must be the best at what you do. You must do it well...when I am gone you will miss me because there are only a few people in the world who will understand you...'
(Kame, February 1994; transcript 1:15).

My father's advice has worked for me but many people in my generation are locked into a situation of controlling parents guided by a controlling religion. I see the gurdwara system as having failed this generation. Fewer young people pray at the gurdwara because it does not meet their social, cultural, recreational or religious needs. It was not set up for this purpose, yet it believes it should not change. Its sole function is to perpetuate the traditional patriarchal mindset. I also believe that education and traditional religion have collided. Peoples' needs have changed, so they will go where these needs can be met.

Mother: ...Indian parents should give space for their children to grow. They shouldn't choke them with love...my husband was a person who liked to change with the times - he was not backwards. That's why he got the children's hair cut. He did not want them to grow up with an inferiority complex. He always said that hair alone does not make a good Sikh; it is what kind of a human being you are...you have to be a good citizen with or without hair...Also, Indian parents have to change how they parent. Children come round if you talk to them and persuade them. But if you force them, beat them and throw them out of the house...with boys if you start hitting them, one day they will hit you back; and the girls, if you hit them, they might sit down and take it, but that does not make it right. Children have rights. You have to start very, very early to train them. You have to give yourself as an example. If you come home and say it is okay for you to drink in front of your children; you cannot stop the children from going out and getting drunk. My husband never drank - my children they never go out and get drunk and they do not eat meat. I am not with them. They can eat and drink anything they want. The
children today also do not accept the double standards - it is okay for men to drink but not women; it is okay for men and boys to go out but not for women and girls...When the small girl is growing up she can sing, dance, talk to cousins, everything. Then all at once it is over. She is now not going to take it. If you threaten her she will go behind your back and do what she wants. It is better if you know what she is doing, then give her freedom also... (Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:7).

My family has slowly evolved into our present lifestyle. Look at the family: my mother is a volunteer, my siblings’ careers include a teacher, an administrator, an economist and a lawyer. So, we are all in the public sector, a rarity for a Punjabi Sikh family headed by a single parent - a woman! However, isolation from my relatives helped. We, as a family have five cars, three households and four university-educated kids (the first generation in our family). I firmly believe guidance and freedom have achieved these goals.

Mother: ...it is very hard to approach our people because once the men find out what you are educating the women (because the woman goes home and tells her husband), they will not allow her to go there anymore to listen to you. That is what men can do because they have such control. Women are taught to be very passive, to cook, clean and serve; so this is drilled into their heads. It will take about two to three generations for women to have equal footing, to understand that this is not fair, that it is wrong and must be removed from our culture... (Kame’s mother, February 1994; transcript 1:14).

I feel I can assist others, due to a sense of caring which stems from my Indian environment and my legal education. Ambition is negative if it is simply self-serving; it must reach out to alleviate the oppression and service the needs of others, irrespective of human differences. But first we have to question what defines and controls us as Punjabi Sikhs.
My reflections:

I chose Kame because he is not a Punjabi Jat Sikh: he is from the Punjab and has lived his adolescent life in Canada. Also, I was curious to observe how a single parent family headed by a female is able to counteract the oppressive leadership influences of male elders, from the deceased husband’s side.

Kame’s kara remains intact. He has abided by the Sikh worldview of pride, responsibility and generosity. He is a wise and good son; however, he is ruthlessly judgmental. He has become the father figure who wields power, which allows him flexibility to change the kara’s boundaries at will and according to his leadership goals. He mocks inflexible Sikh behaviour codes exhibited by fickle-minded followers. He, instead, opts for adaptation for he is a most practical person. However, the tension which exists between elements of tradition and elements of adaptation patterns becomes the measure of his leadership. His success lies in being able to read his family’s needs and his failure lies in his intense desire to control their destiny!

Although he negates the philosophy of Sikh rigidity as exhibited in gender roles and lifestyles, he unknowingly adheres to the admirable and noble traits expected of all good Sikhs - he sacrifices "self" for the common good. His family must survive. He can wait. Is the new boundary for Kame’s generation of Canadian Punjabis simply behaviours, attitudes and appearances which satisfy the common good; or, does it go beyond providing an economic base, raising a family, educating the children, arranging their marriages
and praising God? Where are the Sikh societal pressures which sustain insular existences and maintain traditional consequences? Were they apparent in Kame’s family of male, elder advisors? Could that be why he had to assert his leadership - to sidestep the gatekeepers? Kame’s story explains defiance, not abrupt or rude, but steadfast and for the greater good - for an adaptive life in Canada with a single parent.

Kame asks, "What defines and controls us as Sikhs?" I believe how he has chosen to conduct his life thus far, provides the answer.

Kame’s narrative would be incomplete without that of his mother. I view Kame as one who possesses a curious, peripheral mind which perpetually asks, "Why?" Kame is more rigid within the boundary of his kara than he realizes. He finds fault with people, institutions, the mainstream culture, the Indian culture, himself, his parents and his faith. Peace eludes him, for he is busy crusading for justice. He represents the mind of the younger generation, who are becoming the mainstream culture without them realizing it. In his lifetime, he will create, rebuild and destroy many boundaries - but it will feel comfortable because he challenges sacred boundaries everyday and wants change which fits his generation. Adaptation, hence, will be personalized and rapid.

Kame’s doggedness regarding equity, social justice, ethnic pride and South Asian networking follows him to university, where his target audience not only increases, but is more philosophically and socially aware in empowerment and pride. His brother, however, does not worship the gifts that Kame’s leadership commands and
promises. Dissension in the ranks causes Kame great angst, especially as he equates brotherly defiance with faulty leadership and perhaps guilt in not satisfying his fatherly role.

Kame’s revelation after his father’s death is that he must act out the role bequeathed to him by his father. One does not choose these roles in life and all children are not capable of fulfilling the role expectations. Kame soon learns that people often hate what they feel is an irritant in their lives, as he recognizes and repositions himself - now as an outside consultant.

Kame’s views on equality and social justice slice through not only western but also Indian beliefs and values, as he challenges women’s rights and traditional marriage customs. He claims he has no ties and will marry whomever he pleases; yet, I find he is guided by his deceased father, whose Sikh will he cannot disobey.

It appears the kara has a psychological grip upon one’s life even in death. For, inside the kara, a harmonious balance is difficult to attain; for a boundary exists only if it is nurtured, ascribed to, and if breaking it has meaningful consequences.

Kame’s interpretation of Sikhism is logically manifested in his modern mindset of social injustice and personal initiative. I feel his greatest accomplishment is evident in the liberation of his mother’s role, mind and belief system. She is no longer weak and vulnerable. Rather she is businesslike. She defends a contrary position regarding parenting and she is able to objectively analyze why Indian parents attach a guilt-induced grip on their children. She has reached an elevated level of thinking. I do not feel she
would have permitted herself to achieve this state of mind if Kame had not driven off the male elders and given her space and permission to develop her personality.

Lastly, I question if a firstborn daughter would have been allowed to steer the family through those difficult years without the backing of a strong mother? So, I feel Kame still benefits from the Indian double standard which regards females with less esteem than it does males.

His faith and Punjabi culture, whether he wears a kara or not, is circumscribed by his childhood cultural teachings. He lives and breathes what he is, a vibrant Canadian. It is as simple as that and as complicated as that, and that is all he needs to believe.
3.1.2 **Eli: I am a Canadian and I will not be denied**

I am a Punjabi Jat Sikh married to Anna, a person of Canadian-English and German ancestry. My parents had an arranged marriage in Punjab, India, then came to the University of British Columbia where my Dad had a scholarship to study medicine. He was teaching medicine in India before coming to Canada. I was born in the Punjab but my brother was born in Canada. My Dad left for Canada just days after I was born, but my Mom arrived here with me eight months later. My Dad’s parents came to live permanently in Canada after visiting a few times.

...I don’t really understand much about what it means to be a Punjabi Jat Sikh. I don’t understand the differences among the castes, but I do understand that Jats are the farming caste and I guess that’s what our origins are. But, no one in our family as far as I know is actually a farmer, so I guess it’s removed many generations...

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:1).

My Dad has one brother who is also in medicine in Punjab, India. He has two sons, one a doctor and the other an engineer. My Dad’s other brother, a pharmacist, lives in the United States and his sister lives in Canada. My mother’s family is in India, England, the United States and Canada. Most members of my family and their children are professionals.

I am twenty-seven-years old with a doctorate in physics and I live in Ontario. My brother is a graduate student in botany and lives with my parents. In British Columbia, although there is a large Sikh population, where I lived and went to school, there weren’t any Indian children. However, I felt more Indian because of the strong Indian influences at home: the language, cooking, family
structure, religion and social networking. There were regular meetings at our home which included all my parent’s friends and relatives. There was always an extended family around us, although each lived separately, a social situation which added to my comfort level and identity of being Indian. My parents were quite active in the gurdwara community, and so I had lots of friends in the gurdwara whom we met on a weekly basis.

...I felt more Indian when I was younger...once I got to the stage of high school and had more friends, none of them happened to be Indian. Then it starts to become less clear, and I guess then I saw myself as a Canadian from that time on... (Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:2).

Outside of the home, at school, there weren’t any Indian friends, especially where we grew up. So, all my friends were from other cultures. Most were white, Anglo Saxon but some were Chinese and Italian. This is where most of my adolescent influences, which were crucial to my growing up years, came from.

Anna: ...well I guess just like any girl growing up in Canada, I always imagined I would marry someone of my own colour. It never occurred to me that I would find someone who wasn’t white, whom I would fall in love with. It was completely out of my realm of reality, especially with my mother steering me towards the proper men. My parents very much play the roles. My Dad is very paternalistic. He takes care of the household in terms of the running of the finances and he is very committed to work, and to provide for his family. That was very important to him. He felt his family came before everyone else and that was the way he approached life. He always gave up some of his pleasures in life to provide for the family... (Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:5).

My Mom in contrast is just very mothering. She was always at home except for a couple of years when we were younger and then she worked at home just to be with us, to be there when we were
going to school or coming home from school. My mother is an emotional person, very caring and always went out of her way to make sure that she could do everything for her children. She is very devoted to the family.

Anna: ...it was always very important to my mother that I marry the upper middle class, well educated Catholic man. Social status is very important to her and although I love her dearly, she is a real snob. I think her generation of Canadians grew up very bigoted. Also, her personal religious history defines the situation between the Protestants and the Catholics, so it was expected in her mind to stay within her religious boundary. Also, since I am my mother’s best friend and the only one of six children even remotely Catholic; she could never imagine this model child betraying her and her faith. One of my mother’s biggest sorrows was that Eli wasn’t a Christian. For if he were, it would have been much easier for her...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:1).

My father is relatively orthodox. He shaved and cut his hair when he was looking for a job in Canada, because in 1969 he felt it was difficult to find a job as a visible minority. However, he started to keep his hair, beard and turban about twelve years ago. Cutting his hair for the sake of a job was something he regretted. He felt he had sold out his religion for a job. Both of my parents are relatively orthodox in appearance and sometimes in thinking, yet, that is more difficult to ascertain:

Anna: ...my father who is German has always had a less strong voice in our family. He is the financial stability in the family while my mother raised us by instilling morals and values into us. My father looked at Eli first for what he was, although my father who would not ride in an Indian driven taxicab, still was prejudiced. As time went on, he became increasingly more accepting of Eli and at one point he told his friends that his daughter was seeing an Indian young man, thus making a cultural connection. My father was not really a problem or a support. He never fought for me. He remained neutral...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:4).
My parents gave us freedom in the choice of friends.

...we could choose our friends and associate with whom we wished to associate with. They didn't put a lot of pressure on me to always have Indian friends or anything like that. The only real important thing to them was that we always had to go to gurdwara...

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:3).

They were always welcoming to my Canadian friends. They welcomed them into the home and actually, genuinely cared for them and do still care for them. Also, when it came to the teenage years, when young men will be young men and do whatever they do such as dating, dancing and bar-hopping; my parents were accepting. They believed that I could never betray our mutual destiny.

...it was just a period when I was having some fun, but not to take it too seriously. So there was always that implied understanding that everything was alright with me up to a point, and then they were going to rein me into their more orthodox ways. I think that's what a lot of young, Sikh men find. That they are given a lot of freedom at a younger age, then parents bring them back in when they are thinking of getting them married; in an attempt to get them back under control again...

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:6)

Anna: ...nobody really gave me credit in my family for having a legitimate relationship with Eli, except my sister, who had lived in India for seven years. She was very supportive and fought for us. My brothers said I was only going out with Eli because I knew I couldn't have him. That it was just a novelty. They were the generation of racial jokes and staunch conservatism, and so it took them a while to adjust to the situation...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:3).

I believe that if I had a sister, they would not have allowed her equal freedom. It would have been completely different. From the way my Mom gives advice to my uncle and aunt who have daughters; I can tell she thinks in an orthodox manner regarding females. Her advice exemplifies all the cultural fears.
there is no way that girls should be allowed out of the home. They should not have any friends who are males and definitely dating and going out in the evening would be out of the question...
(Eli speaking for his Mom, March 1994; transcript 1:8).

She treated younger females differently. No matter how progressive they were, they would have to help with the cooking, dinner and cleaning up afterwards. So, I think it would have been different with daughters. My Mom always wished she had daughters. She always felt badly because girls would perhaps have been closer friends with her.

There was only one person I met that I eventually really fell in love with. Before that I had never really met anyone so important to me that I was willing to sacrifice all that is important to a Sikh male. This includes the love and support of my family and their interest in my life. The pain they would be caused was a determining factor. I knew they would be angry and hurt and would not be able to deal with anything outside their Sikh norm. Lacking their presence in my life would also hurt me very deeply.

Anna: ...my parents were at their winter home when I met Eli, so I told my mother all about him over the phone. She was delighted and couldn’t wait to meet him. Well, when she saw him at the door, she was shocked. I didn’t tell her about his ethnicity because I did not want to make skin colour an issue. However, to her that was the only issue. My mother was hysterical and worried what everyone would think. She immediately told me I could not marry him. She resisted bitterly for a year and then accepted us...
(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:6).

My parents had been hinting about the investigation into arranged meetings for me quite steadily as I neared my last year of university. However, we had not openly discussed how I truly felt.
...well, even at the time when I met Anna, I still was of the thinking that even if my parents would be incredibly hurt, I could not fathom the thought of being in an arranged marriage...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:9).

I thought it was ridiculous that I would marry a person I had only met on a few occasions without having shared any time or experiences. Their explanation did not sound logical to me.

...okay, you meet this girl, meet a couple of times with us around and then you come to a decision about whether or not you want to marry her...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:10).

I never felt that this was right for me, so always there was the nagging feeling that I was going to resist their attempts at an arranged marriage for me. Even when I met Anna, I don’t think there was a dramatic shift in that view. When I did meet her initially as friends, I didn’t think much would happen between us, but then as time went on - one year, two years, three years, four years before we got married; then I had made a definite decision to reject an arranged marriage. I was overwhelmed by the battle which lay ahead.

...I felt I would have to afford the potential risks, the potential losses for being with her. I guess, just, ah, eventually, I thought my parents would come around. I was not going to give up Anna for them...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:12).

Anna: ...my family put a lot of subtle pressure on me to get out of this relationship. At first my mother criticized Eli. She tried to get to me through psychological ways by saying negative things about his personality, ‘He is so quiet. How can you talk to him. He has no personality.’ She really criticized the root of his character which I thought was very cruel. For two years she said, ‘You’re not going to be happy with this man. He is not the right kind of person for you. He won’t make you happy.’ What I believe really hurt her was that he was not Christian and he was not white. Then my mother even found an acceptable young man for me to date, over whom my siblings made a great fuss. But after one month
of casual dating, I kept crying because I missed Eli. So when my mother realized how unhappy I was, she said I should go back to Eli and then the whole family made a determined effort to welcome him into our family... (Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:7).

Well, I was always very reluctant to mention Anna because even at high school, female friends were not welcomed to call me at my home. My parents would be rude to them and there would be the inquisition. They would ask all these questions and so all my friends who were girls became annoyed and stopped calling. Rather, I would call them and arrange things if we wanted to do things together. So, I always knew that they would not appreciate me having friends who were females. They felt I had guys who were friends - that's fine. Without discussion, I knew what they feared. One time I asked a Jat Sikh girl out to a movie and a party, a year before I met Anna. My Mom found out and was furious with me:

...you know, that's not the kind of girl I want you to marry and if you date her once; her family is going to be coming after us saying that you have to marry her... (Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:13).

She ranted and raved about this potential dilemma endlessly. So, I henceforth became shy about telling her anything and stopped confiding in her or responding honestly to her interrogations. This changed our openness to, "Yeah, that's what I did. So what? What's the big deal?" Once I started dating Anna and a few other girls prior to that, I did not discuss with my parents what I felt they did not need to know. When I started dating Anna, we were just dating with no underlying meaning, so I did not think I should upset them. Anything I mentioned about females appeared to upset their lives a great deal these days.
As the months progressed we became more involved and then I thought seriously about telling them many times, but I was too scared because I knew they would overreact, not understand and would not hear me through their pain. About eight months into our relationship my Dad got wind of something second-hand and asked me if I was dating this girl. I replied, "Yes, of course. I’m not going to lie to you at this point!"

...he became so physically upset and depressed for about a month that I thought there is no way I can tell them anymore...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:14).

I believe they always knew in their heart but had denied that I was seeing Anna. So anytime I discreetly brought up the subject of, "What would you think if I were not to marry a Jat Sikh girl?" they would overreact. My Mom would be in tears and my Dad would be yelling at me so I just kind of shied away from the subject. It was better for all of us to pretend we did not know, leaving us nothing to face or resolve.

Anna: ...well, all the time we were breaking ground with my family, Eli’s family was completely unaware of my existence and I never phoned. I never dropped by because we knew if they ever found out about us they would do everything in their power to break us up, and we didn’t want that to happen. We had to give our relationship a chance to strengthen so that when we finally did have to bring them in, we would be strong enough to fight it together. If they had been involved from the start, there would have been too much pressure from all sides. Then anything could have happened...
(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:8).

They did not arrange for me to meet Indian girls at that time because I resisted it with excuses. I learned how to stall the inevitable. I said,
...'No, no, wait until I’ve done my graduate studies’ and so I kept using that just to keep them at bay, so to speak. I could just say, ‘Well, I don’t want that interfering with my studies so...’ they laid off until it came time when I graduated and at that point they really started putting on the pressure...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1: 11).

Anna: ...by the time that Eli’s parents began to be a problem, my family side had become very supportive of Eli and had taken him in. Even my mother made a genuine effort to accept Eli. We were just grateful that both of the families did not reject us at the same time...
(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:9).

About eight months before I graduated when it came time to apply for a position, I had made a very conscious, deliberate decision to leave British Columbia because I needed freedom.

...now, I was feeling that they were really starting to pull me back in, to close in, as I mentioned earlier. I think they sensed there was danger. They were resisting anytime I went out asking, ‘Where were you? Why?’... I did not have them meet Anna because I was so scared. I didn’t know what would develop. At first, when Anna would call me at home, the questions made me angry so I really tried to keep the peace at home. One reason was that it kept my parents stabilized and the other because I could not face what was inevitable...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:7).

Again, nothing was resolved, we played games and postponed our truths and emotions. Finally, we all met at my graduation party.

...I said, ‘This is my date, we’ve known each other for quite some time.’ They were nice enough to her but it was always with the idea that it was because she is just a date - she didn’t really mean much. They really didn’t say much about it...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:14).

Anna: ...the first time we met was at Eli’s graduation party with three hundred of his classmates who all knew our position and knew that we were leaving B.C. together. We got the word out that his parents were not to know and that we were playing a role that night. I sat beside them but they did not acknowledge me. They did not engage in any conversation and it was very nerve-wracking. I did not know what to do because this situation was new to me. I guess they couldn’t imagine what they could possibly
say to me. But they did pay a lot of attention to another girl, whereas to me they did not even say hello. They may have suspected something but I think we pulled it off... (Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:10).

Eventually, we both moved out here together and that's when things really started to become treacherous because we were living here together without my parent's knowledge. This, I believe happens more and more all the time now because Indian young people are fearful of telling their parents, what the parents do not want to hear, much less believe. Instead, they lead these double lives.

Actually, both parties lead double lives because an aura of goodwill and normality must override issues no one has the courage to face. They found out from someone that we might be living together, so when we went home for Easter they accelerated the arranged marriage pressure once again. This time a girl came from England to meet me; however, I had told them months before not to do this without speaking to me first. I was completely unaware and felt very guilty. Then, I explained everything except the fact that we were living together because I felt it would hurt them too much.

Anna: ...when Eli had to meet a young lady arranged by his parents, I was very neurotic because there was so much uncertainty. Eli did everything to allay my fears but I was not confident that he could hold up under the pressure. I felt why would he choose me when he has so many options open for anybody. It would be so natural for him to go to someone from his own culture, to reject me and make peace with his parents. There was a lot of doubt in my mind. I could not phone him so I sat by the phone and waited for the verdict. I was a complete mess although he tried to console me... (Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:11).

I told them to stop holding hope and praying that I was just being difficult but would eventually come around and comply.
I wanted them to stop dreaming the dream they had designed for my life. It was not going to come true. The script had been changed but they could not adjust. I told them nothing could break us up.

...my parents were incredibly upset, so upset that the week was just spent in constant fighting and then eventually we came back. We didn’t talk about it again. It’s kind of funny that they put it out of their minds for a whole year. I said I was still seeing Anna so they knew I was involved, but thought it might pass with time. Then another year passed which took them through a denial phase, again ignoring the issue. Then they had a plan of sending me to New Delhi for a meeting with a young woman. I said, ‘No, you know you wouldn’t approach the subject with me whenever I brought it up; you acted as if it never happened. I definitely will not go because I am very serious about this girl...’

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:15)

My Dad finally asked me," Are you going to marry her? " and I said, " Yes " and then everything hit the proverbial fan. This initiated many visits from my uncle and aunt in Washington, D.C. trying to figure out what to do with me. I told them that we live together and then they were very suspicious if we had children. My uncle came and verified that we did not have children. He was very supportive, but my parents felt he disapproved. I think maybe he could tell me how he felt but he could not tell his older brother. Maybe he played a role, but I don’t think he would gain my confidence and use it against me. I then decided to go home and explain once again, because I felt guilty for keeping our living together a secret. I met my mother’s people, another uncle and aunt who wanted to know what was happening. My parents informed me that they didn’t know anything about my having a girlfriend until a couple of weeks ago. That was their story and my uncle and aunt were there to act as mediators. Again, nothing was accomplished.
However, my uncle was very understanding and he wanted to know how this situation resulted, because he has two boys and he wants to know what may happen with his kids. He seems to be quite progressive in his thinking.

...in all the discussions, Anna was not present because they did not want her around at all. She was back then too. I asked if both of us could speak together. My parents had said that she could not step into their home at all. So they had taken the firm Jat Sikh stand. They said she could only come into the house ‘over their dead bodies’...(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:16).

Again, nothing was resolved and I left for home. Shortly after, my parents came to my home to settle this situation. My uncle and aunt from Washington also came as mediators. We met for a brief time one Saturday afternoon, at our place. They wanted to know what we intended to do. Since this was the first time Anna could be present, I think my uncle applied some logic as Anna was involved this time.

...my Mom and Dad wouldn’t look at her and nor did they speak to Anna...they spoke with me or my aunt or uncle, and they spoke Punjabi most of the time so that Anna couldn’t understand what was going on around her. They were speaking Punjabi and my aunt and uncle were speaking in English, trying to balance it out. Again, nothing was accomplished. They ended up leaving quite unhappy and distraught. The whole time they were here, they lived in Washington and flew up to see me... (Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:17).

Anna: ...then when I met his parents at our home it was a totally different situation because now I was a factor, something they would have to deal with most of their lives and we both knew it. As they came into the house they were crying. I said hello but was ignored. When I offered drinks they looked past me and did not answer. No one acknowledged me and when I spoke no one responded. I was both uncomfortable and afraid of them. I didn’t know if they would yell at me and if they did how I would handle that. It was very controlled. We sat in a circle. No one spoke for two minutes then finally Eli’s uncle spoke. I wanted Eli to speak. I wanted to be dutiful.
Eli’s uncle finally asked me what I thought. I said that even if they did not accept me, it was important that they accept Eli into their home and that I would do whatever I could. I would learn the language... the uncle explained it wouldn’t matter, there was nothing I could do because I was the wrong culture, meaning colour. Eli’s aunt was supportive when she said, ‘How can you ask them to explain love?’ According to Eli’s parents, it seemed that love was so trivial, how could it matter in such an important decision? His father did most of the talking and spoke to us as though we were children... not mature enough to make decisions and had our heads turned around by this irrational and foolish love business. Then, when I spoke, it backfired, for the next day they said I was aggressive and outspoken and so wished to see Eli alone...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:12).

The next meeting they only wished to speak to me without Anna. They wanted to hear from me that I wanted to marry her. They felt I couldn’t be myself with her because she was dominating me and trapping me into a relationship. So we met alone. Eventually, we ended up having a huge fight and they left quite upset. They made some very rude remarks about Anna and I became angry and said, "You should not be saying those things about someone you do not know. Get to know her first." I then said we had decided to get married but had not finalized the date. Meanwhile, my relationship with Anna’s family was strengthening and they helped arrange the whole wedding.

...I’ve known her family all along. I guess that was easier because she lived at home and that was our meeting place... They weren’t very supportive at the beginning either because Anna’s Mom didn’t like the idea of her marrying an Indian. Anna’s Mom is of Irish-English Catholic background and her father is German. She has a very Catholic background. Her father is not that religious. They are British Catholic and so there was reluctance for her to be associated with an Indian, a non-Christian. So, that took about a year to two years to reconcile. So, at this point they were very comfortable with our situation...

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:18).
Anna: ... getting married in a gurdwara was something I wanted to do. I thought it was something which was very important for Eli especially, and for us as a unit. I didn't want this marriage from a Christian viewpoint only because that's only half of us. I felt really badly that Eli had to stand up there in front of the Catholic priest and say, 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit... ' because that's not natural. But in the end, I thought the whole wedding was very beautiful and meaningful...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:13).

Anna’s parents were very saddened by my situation with my parents. They felt very sorry for me. My parents were the unknown element. Anna’s parents had heard all the sensationalized stories about Sikh murders in our community: a triple murder in British Columbia and a double murder in California. They were anxious and fearful about our relationship and Anna’s safety when she was with me. Not knowing my parents, they looked on the situation with fear and dread. Anna’s mother had long since realized that either she will lose her daughter or she must accept what Anna is doing. She felt it was sad that my parents had taken the opposite view. My parents had made it clear that they would rather lose me in their lives, than accept what I am doing. Just last year, Anna’s parents said that they’d like to meet my parents because they have also been through it, but my parents just said no to everything.

Anna: ...we waited five years for Eli to make up his mind because he had to make the decision - there was too much at stake here and we both knew it. I did not want him to resent me in the end, and so I always left the door open for him. Anyway, when we finally did get married, I was so happy because I was marrying my best friend...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:14).

It was very difficult for me as I was constantly juggling two lives. Now, it’s better because my two worlds are coming together.
Well, I think right now I can live with it but I’m not too happy.

Finally, we proceeded to finalize the wedding plans:

...in June, I stayed at home before my wedding. They knew about it for six months. When I first presented the idea to them that we both want to do it very traditionally, and we had talked to the Catholic Church here, that we wanted both the Sikh gurdwara wedding and a Catholic wedding...and not knowing the logistics if it could be done, we presented it to my parents. They said they wanted absolutely nothing to do with the wedding. They said they were not going to come and that none of our friends and family were going to come. So that was the stand they took. Many, many times I tried to get them to rethink. I flew back again in September as a last ditch effort to get them involved but they refused to acknowledge that this was happening. So when we went home to get married, we tried to get them to come to the wedding itself, or even at that point, that we could arrange a small wedding at the gurdwara. They just said, ‘No!’...

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:19).

They simply did not approve and that was it. Then, they blamed me for their not coming because they were not involved at the beginning. I said, "This is something I wanted you to do but you refused." Having them at my wedding would have meant so much to me. Then they said, "We also can’t attend because we don’t want to ruin the day for you. We will be hysterical and we won’t be able to deal with it that well." I understood that.

Anna: ...there is so much to be learned from this. I think right from the start that Eli and his brother were set up for this crisis because they were raised in Canada, immersed in the Canadian culture and surrounded by Canadian friends as role models. I don’t think Eli’s parents ever understood him. They felt they could keep the dominant culture away from their children. I think they wanted to come to Canada for the opportunities. But I don’t think they thought through how holding onto their children, through their culture, might be threatened even though they have such a strong cultural community. I think in their own minds there is no reason why their children should not be insulated and isolated within the community. Eli’s father mentioned that he had absolutely underestimated the powerful role of the dominant culture in the lives of his children. I think his parents would
like to believe that this is all my fault. But they do not realize that all children grow up and lead a double life, if the circumstances warrant it. And, that is what each of us has done in our parent’s home when it was necessary...

(Eli / Anna, March 1994; transcript 1:15).

In the end, I think it probably was better that they didn’t come because it would have been very upsetting and it may have caused the day to be ruined. For me, it was not as enjoyable as it would have been with them there and fully supportive. However, my brother was there. He was the best man in terms of the Christian wedding and there were about ten Indian friends there, so I felt better. Without my family members, there were one hundred and ten people of whom seventy-five were our mutual friends.

...so it was special in that way. Now, life goes on. Now they ignore me. When I call, they don’t really want to speak to me. They say a few words and say bye. I haven’t spoken to them in over a month now because they are in India... I don’t know where to get a hold of them there so... they said they would be in touch when they got back. So now that’s where it stands. It’s at a point where they do not really want to be a part of my life - right now...

(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:20).

My brother who is living at home feels the effects of my decision. He deals with it on a daily basis and wants to leave the home. It’s tough on him because he is taking the brunt of their pain. He is the only one they can take it out on. They are always angry with him and bothering him about getting married. He, however, is involved in a similar situation which is just as bad or worse than mine. His girlfriend is a Malaysian Moslem, a religion Sikhs avoid marrying into, at all cost. She calls him and my Mom fights with her and it’s terrible. It’s the same situation all over again. Mom feels that outside forces are pulling her family apart.
...I think their pain is magnified because they feel like they are losing their dreams or not realizing their dreams with both sons. My brother is in the same situation; however, he and his girlfriend broke up for about a year and now they are back together again and are thinking about marriage. But I don't think they have worked out the religions because they are both strong in their religion, so I think they've got some hurdles ahead of them ...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:5).

We've worked out the religion differences. I've never ever been involved in religion; however, I very firmly believe that I am a Sikh. I know that is what I am and that is what I feel. Nothing can change that. I think I would be most pleased if my children understood that and took that same pride in my heritage. I don't really think I am a religious person but I feel it is important for them to have a sense of spirituality and religion. Religion is the basis of moral teaching. It teaches people how to deal with themselves and others. I believe in a one world religion.

...I think my parent's stand is underpinned by religion and culture, with Sikhism being tied into the Sikh culture. That encompasses the intolerance they feel and demonstrate...
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:4).

They think I've completely sold out that part of me which is my Sikh being and that I'm not a Sikh anymore. My Dad is most heartbroken that I have betrayed my Punjabi Jat Sikh upbringing and religion. He feels I'm not the same person they raised, that I've changed beyond their grasp of reality, because they have complete intolerance towards anything different from Sikh culture. At first, they were burdened by what the Sikh community would think of them. Would the community accept my betrayal of my family's wishes? I felt that whatever the community thinks, they'll soon forget it and go onto new scandals, in time. I had to live my life forever!
179.

...they feel betrayed and ask why I went against their wishes and why I couldn't do that one thing for them... they keep saying that, 'You know that's all we wanted you to do was to marry a Jat Sikh girl. That's the one thing in life we asked of you.' That's what they kept saying until the day we got married. "That's the one thing we wanted and you didn't do it..." 
(Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:21).

I see myself differently now. First, I am a husband and second, I will soon be a father. I think I treat it the same way as my father did. The family comes first. This is my family that I have started anew and I don't want to let this one down. I still have many obligations to my parents but I hope with time that things will turn around. I think with the addition of children, things will improve. Anna is eight weeks pregnant so I think now with a child on the way, this is my priority. Our first child is completely planned. This is one of the reasons we got married because we wanted to be parents. We had lived together for two and a half years, which is long enough. We have always treated each other like a married couple because we have always had commitment.

If my son were to do what I did, I don't know how I would react. I'm in a completely different situation from my parent's situation but I think there would always be hurt feelings. I can't see myself being totally resistant to it. I don't really care what other people think if the people involved are happy. I feel I would accept it but that's my bias because I grew up here. It would have been great if my parents had accepted and supported me but I always knew in my heart they could not do that. That was what held me back. I was always reluctant to commit to caring for Anna until I was completely certain of my next step.
... we have a lifetime commitment and once I came to that decision, well then I knew I had the strength to go on and deal with my parents. Until then, I did not think that it would work. I always felt that they would sabotage the relationship somehow and not give us the chance I thought we should have. That was one of the fears I had to live with... (Eli, March 1995; transcript 1:22).

I don't know if there is any other way to handle something like this. Looking at my brother whose situation has been known to my parents for three years, I feel his year long breakup with his girlfriend delighted my parents. However, once they became a couple again, my parents fought it and worked away at destroying their relationship. If his girlfriend calls, my mother insults her by saying, "Leave my son alone. What are you doing with him? Can't you find someone like you, your type and your religion and all?"

... Moslems are a very different faith from us yet they do physically look like us. You can't tell the difference. However, it is out of caste, out of everything. No one is acceptable to my parents if the person is not a Punjabi Jat Sikh. It is very, very specific. A Punjabi Sikh person, if out of caste, would still be an incorrect choice. This inflexible attitude is impossible to rationalize when you grow up with a Canadian mindset, where you look for someone like the people you meet and if you don't meet a Jat Sikh girl, you are not going to end up with one. However, to my parents, life is much more complicated than that... (Eli, March 1994; transcript 1:23).

Throughout all of this I can only say that our Sikh faith must be extraordinary to have such a grip on our being, in that its betrayal causes one such heart-wrenching pain. I cannot believe the suffering I have gone through and I that will go through - for what? For marrying someone I care for and want to have my children with? Is that such a crime?
My reflections:

I included the interviews of Eli and Anna because they represent the greatest breach of the kara’s boundaries. Their marriage represents the taboo, an interfaith and interracial blending of two people who share the dominant culture through schooling and socialization. The Sikh culture expectation is that the son/daughter will study for a profession and then participate in an arranged marriage which excludes dating, courtship and love. Eli was given full freedom because he was a male, with the unspoken understanding that he would be reined in after graduation to fulfil his parent’s expectations. At this point, had Eli confided in his parents, they would surely have broken up the relationship. Rather, he acted the role of a dutiful son and lived a double life because his happiness was threatened. Eventually, he had to choose. Eli rebelled, crossed the boundary and constructed a new boundary in which his parents became the students and he became the teacher. He helped in guiding, accommodating and conditioning them along the way while they experienced the various stages of grieving for their lost dream, the fulfilment of their combined destiny - their son’s marriage within the faith with a female of similar status. According to their perception, they had lost everything: their child, their dream, their status within their community, their racial purity, their "racially pure" Punjabi Jat Sikh grandchildren and their expectation for care from this son, in their old age. Their son’s rebellion, perceived as a travesty, has defiled their ancestors, for the genetic link is forever ruptured.
182.

They have collectively broken the covenant, entrusted and passed down to them through generations with the promise to keep it intact. This shameful betrayal causes their relentless grief, their spiritual blasphemy. There is no balm for their searing pain.

Two issues emerge here. First, if the Sikh covenant is broken, can another blended bicultural covenant replace it, in the eyes of the parents? Second, when a Sikh male breaks the covenant, is this issue more poignant and painful than if a Sikh female were to break the covenant?

I believe a bicultural blended covenant, with the Catholic faith in this case being dominant, is possible and occurs daily. However, the parents need time to heal and to realize that life goes on. This fact can be best demonstrated by the progeny of this marriage. When pride, love and the moral responsibility of grandparenting assume precedence, only then will the outsider be accepted inside the kara. The degree of reconciliation which occurs will be dependent upon: one’s personality, their geographical proximity, the outsider’s desire to comply and the son’s desire

---

10 It has been my observation that in a bi-racial marriage, the Sikh partner, whether male or female, is undermined in the religious teaching of their children by the dominant Christian culture and faith of their spouse. Perhaps this can be attributed to the Sikh spouse lacking the following: a lack of understanding of the Sikh scripture, a lack of fluency skills in speaking, reading and writing their first language, a lack of scholarship and experience in the history, celebration of religious festivals, holidays and significant dates in the Sikh scriptures (The Adi Granth), and a lack of familiarity in regular gurdwara attendance and therefore identification with the gurdwara committee, congregation and philosophy. Also, there may be a discomfort with the inclusion in the gurdwara experience of one’s “Canadian” spouse and children due to the lack of social, entertainment and recreational activities associated with this faith, as opposed to other organized faiths. Most significant is the sense of one being looked upon as an “outsider” in the gurdwara if you are not Sikh, because for most Canadians it is a foreign environment. Unless one is a converted Sikh, dressed in full garb and possessing fluency and scholarship of the scriptures, few people feel the need to consistently participate in the gurdwara setting. (These are my personal reflections.) This may account for the children participating more so in the dominant culture faith, or not participating in an organized faith at all. This is not to say that all Sikh children from Sikh families naturally appreciate and understand the gurdwara experience. So there are many delineations of categories regarding how people experience Sikhism and whether they are regular gurdwara attenders or not. The choice is very personal and people who do or do not attend have rationalized their reasons and these choices should be respected (researcher).
to assume all the duties of a married Sikh son. Factors which will assist in this process will be the support group each party has and the conciliatory attitude of each person. Again, will they regard each individual’s spiritual sacrifice as an appropriate penance?

For some Sikh families, there is a difference in the degree of angst felt depending on whether it is a son or daughter who chooses to cross boundaries. However, for others there is no difference. Perhaps, the custom of expecting sons to take absolute responsibility for their aging parents underpins this gender-related double standard. For it is not considered respectable for elderly parents to live in their married daughter’s home, if they have sons. However, there are exceptions which happen in life.

How are the new boundaries purposely created within the kara? First, Eli and Anna have declared themselves to be a new, self-sufficient, economically independent unit. Second, they live across the country from either set of parents, so distance nurtures their unity and privacy. Third, they now live in a large metropolis where anonymity is guaranteed. They have left their roots, memories, friends and relatives behind. They have purchased a home and are to become parents. In short, they have become rooted and must rely upon each other for sustenance. These factors permit independence and free will in thought and action, much like the Canadian lifestyle and value system. These same values, however, threaten the interdependence network within a Sikh family, and so challenge the kara’s boundary of inclusivity. In time, the Sikh parents accept what they cannot change; but it will always be a substandard
compromise, for Sikh boundary inclusivity can only be a birthright!

Nothing remains the same for the parents either. They must now come to grips with a new paradigm. Their son has married a foreigner and so has put at risk their standing in the community. It will be acknowledged by all that they lost control of their son, a reality which questions their parenting skills, provides a weak example, and forces them to face the humiliation in their community. The son’s betrayal becomes the burden of his parents.

Eli’s parents cannot envisage his world of love, romance and adventure. Conversely, Eli cannot appreciate how his parents could knowingly raise him within the mainstream culture with full freedom of movement and now demand compliance in a semi-arranged marriage. It appears that this family lived in the same house but each member lead double lives, one inside the kara and one outside the kara. Each family member underestimated the influence of the mainstream culture. They had been betrayed by the double standard: males are allowed more freedom than females because males cannot become impregnated; however, the Sikh parents underestimated the role that mainstream culture played in Eli’s "Canadian" life.

Anna’s parents were also shocked. However, according to Anna, they received an educated young man from a wholesome and educated family - a man who would be able to provide for their daughter. Their one regret was that he was neither white nor Christian and could never become Catholic.

According to Eli, his parents probably saw in Anna an opportunistic temporary liaison, a flaxen-haired, skinny girl who
knew nothing of their tradition. They were not impressed. Their son
denied them the Sikh community’s praise and symbolic rewards. Here
was a white woman who would produce white children - how could they
be proud? This was the ultimate betrayal for they centered their
lives around their children, to whom they had denied nothing. Also,
where would they live out their golden years, since Eli was their
firstborn son? Certainly not with their white daughter-in-law!
To this day, they refuse to meet with Anna’s parents who live in
the same neighbourhood. 11

Eli’s parents had but one recourse. They would ostracize him
and deny his existence, a common kinship strategy designed to make
the victim psychologically suffer, thus allowing the parents
revenge. They recognize his dependence upon their love and approval
so they will practice the kinship ethic of withdrawal, which is
designed to diminish the deviant person’s happiness.

If Eli had been a female, the betrayal may or may not have
been so powerful because females do not carry the family name, are
not expected to house their elderly parents and did not
traditionally inherit ancestral land. Thus, when females cross
boundaries, the resulting damage caused by their betrayal to the
kinship lineage is personally painful but collectively
rationalized. This occurs only if the female marries a higher caste
Sikh male or a non-caste white male. This liaison is rationalized

11 I am purposely stating the most extreme case scenario. It must be understood that all families
differ. Some Sikh families are very accommodating and accept the bi-racial marriage couple without a great deal
of trauma while others have problems dealing with it. One should not generalize about human behaviour
( researcher).
as a "love marriage", which means boundary crossings were made without the blessing of the elders and their kinship traditions. Since this marriage lies outside the boundary of Sikh culture regulation and protection, it is perceived to be the result of an irrational emotion, experienced by a formerly sane individual. It is therefore rationalized and accepted as one's karma.

The acceptance of a non-Sikh, son-in-law is conditional. Most Sikh parents will attempt to incorporate their non-Sikh, son-in-law into their lifestyle. However, his race, colour and faith could become an issue as the perceived preference lies with fair-skinned people. The reason is that a foreigner is perceived to be without caste, will not ask for a dowry and will not assume the traditional male role status within his spouse's family. Again, this cannot be generalized but it is a common observation. The children from this marriage will be considered Sikh only if they are raised according to traditional rules (food, custom, language, behaviour, dress).

The act of cultural boundary restructuring, as defined by the narratives of Eli and Anna, cannot predict the future. However, there are several scenarios which may occur:

a) Anna may produce a child, especially a male child who melts the hearts of Eli's parents;

b) Anna could visit her in-laws in their home with her child, dress in a Punjabi suit, learn Punjabi and make overt gestures to become an insider. That is, Anna must prove she needs to be included within the boundary of their kara and must place their emotional need to forgive and heal, above her needs.

c) Anna and Eli could be totally rejected evermore causing a feud until it would be too late for either side to blink first for fear of losing face. (The kinship ethic of face-saving at all cost.)
d) Or, a middle person, Sikh elder(s) would be designated by both parties to act as a liaison to bring them together for conciliation purposes. (The kinship ethic of consensus and conciliation generated by community pressure.)

Any one of these scenarios will result in a new, blended covenant involving a mixed marriage. This Canadian family unit of a Sikh and non-Sikh is based upon mutual love, respect, goals, values and parenting skills. The foundation of Sikh marriages is based upon caste lineage, education, occupation, land ownership or material worth, family health, a shared culture and kinship rights. Later, it is assumed that love, respect and other trivial issues will occur or will not occur. Nonetheless, one is married and the parents have successfully completed their obligations towards their child. Fate and predestination play a major role in the acceptance of one’s marriage, whether it is a joy or a burden, for divorce is not readily accepted as a viable solution. However, young couples today are opting more frequently for divorce as they embrace western values. This activity is causing the Sikhs much pain. Traditionally, one lives a predestined script and if happiness is not apparent, so be it. Life becomes a temporary existence within the philosophy of reincarnation, for you are simply in transit between one life form and another. Happiness is the reward of good deeds performed in your past life, and pain is the result of bad deeds performed in your past life, for which retribution is now collected.¹²

¹² This is a very simplistic overview of a very complex ideology which Sikhs base their worldview upon. In essence, the reader, if interested, should read in depth regarding the topic of reincarnation and how it affects one’s philosophy of life. I do not pretend to be an expert in this area nor do I wish to devalue the
3.1.3 Sobi: tradition and duty guide my life, there is no escape.

This narrative encompasses the lives of Sobi, a male Punjabi Jat Sikh, his wife, his brother and his sister-in-law. The lives of these four people become intertwined due to their common goal, to find brides for two brothers and also to find grooms for two sisters. Sobi and one sister lived in Canada while Sobi's brother and the other sister lived in India. The purpose of the arranged marriages was to gain Canadian immigration status and life partners for the two people residing in India. Since the Indian culture accepts the tradition of arranged marriage, this was not difficult to actualize because the foursome were already culturally conditioned to marry someone they had not met. This activity is called chain migration and is common to many immigrant cultures.¹³

Sobi wanted to share a united family lifestyle in one home with his family and his brother's family, so he felt they should marry two sisters. This, he felt, would contribute more to familial harmony. Sisters, he felt, would not display competition, secrecy and jealousy; however, two women from different families might be incompatible. Coincidentally, while Sobi was reflecting on his plans, there was a young lady in Canada who was also looking for a match involving two brothers for two sisters.

¹³ See the following:
The main character in this narrative is Sobi who came to Canada because he was adopted by his childless, biological uncle and his wife. Many kinship-based cultures participate in membership adoption for various reasons: the death of the mother; an infertile, married woman's desire to become a parent; a couple desiring a male child to carry their name and inherit their wealth; an adoption for companionship; an adoption of an older child to babysit other children; adoption for economic and social reasons; and adoption for citizenship so that the adult adoptee may sponsor his/her biological family to Canada. Later, in adult life, Sobi would reject the adoptee label and his uncle would consequently disallow inheritance rights.

The practice of kinship adoptions negates the need for godparents and guardians because the child of one person may be raised by any family member. Also, instances of women bearing a child for a kinship couple, who cannot bear their own, is acceptable for some and not for others. The respectful designation of "aunty, uncle, grandmother or grandfather" is given to most elders out of respect, not blood relationships. Birthright allows any child and his/her descendants a lifelong kara membership including all the rights and privileges attached to this culture. Adoption, however, is a painful process, as Sobi relates.

...I was fourteen-years-old and had just finished Grade Eight in the Punjab when my uncle and aunt in Canada 'adopted' me... Their marriage produced no children so they could legally adopt me...my parents and I agreed because it could afford me and my family more opportunities... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:1).
An adoption of convenience is different from the western concept of adoption. Sobi’s uncle wanted to bring out his nephew (son) so that in the future Sobi could sponsor his parents and siblings. It was understood that Sobi was not completely given up by his parents. He was simply living with his uncle in Canada.

Sobi’s experiences in school reflect the clash of two cultures, the orthodox Punjabi Sikh and the mainstream Canadian.

...the first year I did not like Canada or the people. I stayed alone and went nowhere because my uncle did not meet our other relatives. If he was not on good terms with family members, I had to take his side against them. He demanded me to follow... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:2).

Sobi’s physical and emotional isolation of "self" was reflected in the trauma of leaving his childhood friends, familiar surroundings and family ties. He appeared to suffer from arrested, emotional development because he longed for his four brothers and three sisters. Here, he was an only child with a middle-aged couple who were accustomed to living alone and to whom he was ever obliged.

...I don’t know if I can be a real Canadian or a real Indian anymore. I don’t know what this means. I have become, I don’t know what ...I look at my wife who has just come from India and when she cries for home, I think, I cried too but in my heart where no one could see... the pain is the same. It changes as time goes on ... but it does not really go away... and then the memory of the pain... and then the picture blurs and the pain is put in its place to look at when you have the time... maybe that’s where I am now. But now I feel it fresh because of the two people in the house whose memories are so clear...I had to become many ‘Sobis’, one in the school, one at home and one in my mind. I got to know the one in my mind really well and sometimes I bring him out because he is my friend... I trust him. Maybe he is really me, or the ‘me’ I had to leave behind... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:3).
Suddenly, Sobi was snatched from a village child's carefree life and deposited into a demanding and frightening, foreign society; a city life interpreted through the lens of an educated, articulate and overbearing uncle whose motto was "perpetual self-improvement". He was a world traveller who was educated in Germany and England. He was well read and comfortable in Canada, in spite of his orthodox lifestyle, turban, beard and Indian mannerisms. The uncle found in this shy, young man someone he could groom, someone for whom he could role model and try to shape into his own vision. The training included English lessons, driving lessons, high school and then college training in the electronics field. Sobi became a compliant but tragic figure.

...my uncle was very kind and generous and really tried to make me over... today, I appreciate his emphasis on my education, study skills, regulation and moderation in life and learning how to be self-sufficient and confident. I was always very much in awe of him and yet I could not be their companion - the child they both craved. I had lived too long in another life and I could not forget...since I could not be a child, I was not allowed to be a teenager. It did not make sense to me but if made perfect sense to them... now I understand what an adoption of convenience means, but then I resented the whole thing and only wished to go back to my old life - without stress and demands... I never felt emotionally safe in Canada and yet I felt physically safer here than anywhere else... Emotional safety is a part of my life I always protect because my mind tells me this is the part of me that must be protected if I am to accept responsibility for myself and others...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:4).

School presented a great threat and became stressful. Sobi relaxed only in his studies. He loved the maths and sciences which most Canadian students despised, and so he ingratiated himself with his Canadian peers through his academic gifts. He also studied English, which for him became the most challenging subject.
Harassment followed him everywhere and everyday in school.

...I was harassed in school, called 'Paki', 'camel jockey'... The teachers didn't say too much. In physical education class when we went swimming... sometimes my turban used to get wet and this made me really mad... but I had to do whatever they asked me to do. I was a very quiet person... no counsellor talked to me. Then I was allowed to change levels... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:5).

Sobi internalized his anger and never revealed his fragility in response or emotion and never confided in anyone, which resulted in the creation of many "Sobis" or multiple selves. Sobi had a talent for understanding science and math and so he was placed in the Gifted Class which salvaged his self-esteem. Here his Canadian peers accepted his special abilities and individual persona and ignored his turban, skin colour and quiet speech.

Sobi's attitude of passive-aggressive compliance became the wall of protection around his fragile "self" from the threatening environment. Sobi profiled as an introverted, reflective and shy person. He internalized his feelings and spoke little. He felt fear, anger, uprootedness, awkwardness and betrayal. Why was he brought to this strange country? He often wondered if the greater good, that of having landed immigrant status, was worth the agony and emotional frustration he experienced. He was grateful, however, for his special relationship with his uncle and aunt.

...my aunty and uncle did everything for me and I am very indebted towards them... but my uncle was very set in his ways, was very orthodox and liked to have his way. Also, I had mixed feelings towards them. I respected them but we all knew that I never was and never could be 'their child', which is what they really needed at that time in their life... this was never said but I knew it in my heart. I could not be what they needed, yet I needed them far more than they needed me... and we never talked about my emotional needs. We all kept quiet and believed that coming to Canada was reward enough
and we had no right to complain. As time went on, I felt my adoption gave them problems ... because aunty felt that if her husband could adopt a nephew from his family, why couldn't she adopt someone from her family... this 'quiet battle' which I felt everyday in their home, caused them much pain...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:6).

Sobi knew that the Sikh culture did not believe in outside intervention such as counselling so he acquired emotional relief and companionship by living with different relatives. This gave both him and them much needed respite. However, he always felt his first home was with his uncle and aunty because he had bonded with them. He knew that the sense of uprootedness he felt would always carry with it a lifelong emptiness - an undefinable void which could not be fulfilled. Life became a series of challenges to conquer. There did not appear to be any peace, comfort or satisfaction. He felt that Canada was a stressful place in which to live one’s life. His early school stress describes his loneliness:

...In 1979 when I came to Canada, there were very few Indian students and so there was a lot of discrimination - not like now. There were only six Indian students in my school and most were Sikhs but I was the only one with a turban. There were no Indian girls...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:7).

Sobi’s social life centered around the local gurdwara because his uncle and aunty were regular devout worshippers. However, their social circle did not include children who were Sobi’s age. Wherever they visited, Sobi realized that this couple was very much attracted to babies and young children. This was a constant and painful reminder of what they were denied in their marriage and what he could not fulfil in their barren, polite lives. He became passive and obedient and played their game of suppressed reality.
...if we had talked more, I think we could have reached a better understanding... but it was like, it was better to keep inside what you were afraid of saying out loud... so we kept quiet and went through our daily routine, pretending everything was fine, when it was not fine at all... or maybe only I felt this way...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:8).

Sobi and his uncle always worked together while cutting grass, shovelling snow, or cleaning and renovating the house. This was accepted by him because back home in India, everyone worked, lived and shared in a joint family situation. Yet, he desperately missed a social life. His uncle was very strict, religious and determined. He wanted Sobi to have the best education and to become a baptised Sikh. Sobi did both.

...I did not mind anything except keeping the turban because it caused such hell at school...as soon as I was sixteen I learned how to drive from a driving school. My uncle asked me to drive him everywhere so that I could practise. He helped me a lot... first with a driver’s licence then with citizenship papers... he also helped me financially and encouraged me to study as hard as I could. I liked school because I was good in certain subjects...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:9).

English language mastery, which would to a great degree determine Sobi’s success and comfort level in Canada, still eludes him. Although he is fluent in reading and writing English, he prefers speaking in his first language, Punjabi.

...at home uncle and aunty and I spoke mainly Punjabi but in school we had to speak English. English, I found hard. When you change your culture and language, it is very hard...now I see our Indian culture everywhere in Canada...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:10).

Sobi’s modern thinking clashed with his uncle’s traditional thinking regarding the wearing of the turban. His uncle did not experience any problem with wearing a turban so he misunderstood
Sobi’s anxiety. Sobi viewed the turban as the source of his pain at school, which was verified by his clean-shaven Indian male friends.

...my uncle told me I had to keep a turban. He insisted because he wanted me to stay a Sikh and he also had me baptised. That is what caused my difficulty at school. I had no close friend...the Indian boys understood what I was going through and they advised me to get a haircut. Uncle was very religious and so he could not change either... I should have cut my hair because with a turban it was very hard for me. Now, I do not wear a turban. Now people accept us with turbans, but for a job I think it is still hard. But, then I think the Canadian people are used to seeing turbans now ...

(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:11).

Both uncle and nephew quarrelled over the turban issue which became symbolic of an adult’s will over a youth’s desire to fit into a new environment. One was focused upon tradition and the other was focused upon personal integrity and social survival.

...I went from Grade Nine to Twelve then I moved from my uncle’s home into another aunt’s home. At eighteen, I cut my hair. Uncle said, ‘Don’t cut your hair. I want to send you to university.’ I said, ‘I must cut my hair.’ So I left. My cousin and I lived in my aunt’s house which had an apartment. We did our own cooking and cleaning and lived together for a year. We were very independent... I went to high school and also worked in the summertime. I worked in variety stores and factories because I needed money for college. I didn’t like factory work. It was very hard and boring...

(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:12).

After working for a whole year and saving his money, Sobi went to college where he studied electrical engineering technology. He had very high marks and eventually graduated but finding a job was a real problem. He took a few temporary jobs then worked for four years. Unfortunately, the business folded so he was laid off for one year. Now recently married, he is working again as a temporary worker. At present, both couples live together in one apartment which provides them with financial and emotional security.
...my uncle told me to get married when I was twenty-seven. He placed an ad in the Indian papers in India. We went there and the interviews did not go well, then we had interviews here and again nothing happened... my brother now also wanted to emigrate to Canada... so I thought how could I help him and myself... my brother gave an ad in an Indian newspaper and again nothing happened... then, when I was twenty-eight, I placed an ad in an Indo-Canadian newspaper for two brothers wanting to marry two sisters... I thought this way, a sister living here could marry my brother and sponsor him, and I could marry her sister in India and sponsor her... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:13).

Sobi went to an Indian agency, in Canada, to place this ad. He talked to the manager and gave her his brother's picture. She said it might be difficult but she would try. He gave her a list of their personal data and requirements in a mate: desirable ages, height, personality, preference for a good family from a good class of people, a good nature, an ability to cook and speak Punjabi and an appreciation of Indian culture and education.

...our parents would interview and investigate the ladies' backgrounds in India and would tell us if they thought it was okay. We trusted their judgment and then would agree to marriage on their word... we first met in the marriage bureau. That is, I met the lady (who had a sister in India). We discussed the age. There should not be a bigger difference than a few years. That is a big thing... after two weeks she gave us her word (acceptance) for my brother; and I received from her, her word on behalf of her sister, for me. Sight unseen, except in the pictures and on our parents' reassurance, we became engaged. All this time my sister-in-law (to be) and I were allowed to talk freely on the telephone... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:14).

The conversations with the marriage bureau counsellor and the "sister-in-law to be" were quite businesslike. According to Sobi, an appreciation of Indian culture really meant, were they willing to obey their husbands' wishes and allow the men to be the head of the household without interference. That meant no feminist thinking, no equal rights or power sharing, and no veto or dissent.
When parents give their word, it is a breach of trust to dissolve the deal they have struck. This agreement was serious and binding because it contained elements of face-saving, family name, reputation maintenance, and dowry agreements for both families. In a sense, it was a business agreement. If the marriage was successful, both families gained but if the marriage was not successful, both families felt shame. In the Punjab, an unsuccessful marriage is usually blamed on the female due to her perceived inability to adjust, obey and cater to the male’s elders and conduct the household duties. Some dysfunctional marriages can be attributed to male alcoholism which contributes to domestic violence, female oppression and loss of respect in the community.

Sobi’s sister-in-law (to be): ...I originally came from India to visit with my aunt...in India, I married a young man in an arranged marriage... but it broke up in Canada ... now I am single and have to find a husband. Then my parents said that maybe if my sister came to Canada it would be nice for me... so I answered an ad for two brothers wanting to marry two sisters... that night the agency called us that they had a family for us ... (Sobi / sil, April 1994; transcript 1:1).

The sister-in-law had few requests. The man should look handsome, have an education comparable to the woman, and have ancestral land in India comparable in status to her father’s land. Land is paramount because the perception is that, "If things do not work out in Canada, we can always go back to India and live well." Also, since Jats are the landowner caste, possessing land carries symbolic social status. The lack of land initiates suspicion regarding the man’s family caste status. When a woman marries, she inherits the man’s name, kinship and land status.
Sister-in-law: ...then we went to the agency to meet him. He came with two male cousins but no women relatives. Later, he explained there were no ladies to bring because the aunts were working... he looked handsome... then he showed me his brother’s picture... he was not as tall as I liked... then I said I will go home, think about it and call him back... then we mailed the pictures to India... (Sobi / sil, April 1994; transcript: 1:2).

The sister-in-law purposely went to the interview with an uncle and two aunts to allow Sobi and his people to see their family’s physical attributes and personality traits. This initial visitation plus the data collected from India would constitute a profile of the individual and their family. Both male and female profiles include impressions of their health, attractiveness, wholesomeness, social class, education, ability to earn, English and Punjabi fluency, mutual ancestry, friends and relatives, their marriage connections and geographic proximity to each other’s village in the Punjab. Then, each party relays to their parents, elders and other relatives back in India, the particulars of the opposite party so their heredity, kinship, financial status and family structure can be investigated, verified and documented. This profile is necessary before the union of both families can be sealed. This decision can be given by either a middle person acting on behalf of each family or directly by both parties.

...this check is essential because either side may inflate their status or not divulge significant information which may have future repercussions. Insufficient investigation may result in family feuds, generations of liabilities and family stigmas. Once the parents and elders are satisfied, the male and female usually agree to the bargain ... then the engagement ceremony may occur...in the event that a man cannot physically attend his wedding, his turban will suffice as a stand in and the ceremony will be conducted by proxy... as he will be engaged or married by proxy... before the engagement, the parent or eldest male’s promise of acceptance and blessing
will 'reserve' that person for their son or daughter... this happened in the case of Sobi and his sister-in-law in Canada. Their respective fathers in India verbally accepted this double marriage pact on a promise of their word ...
(Sobi / researcher, April 1994; transcript 1:1).

Next, the question of dowry from the female’s people to the boy’s people was negotiated and agreed upon by both fathers. The grooms’ side brought a list of requests and the brides’ side was responsible for fulfilling it. The list included gifts of silk suit fabrics, dapattas, gold jewellery and money for the ladies; money, gold rings and karas, blankets and turbans for the men. The recipients of the gifts on the male side included the grooms’ parents, grandparents, siblings, sibling’s spouses, aunts and spouses, uncles and spouses and many more extended family members. The grooms’ parents gave a list of their relatives, their gender, their age, relationship and their expectation of what the dowry should contain. This list was filled by the brides’ parents. The list can be endless, modest, or nonexistent. It all depends upon the female family’s wealth and the male family’s expectation.

If the couple were to live in India, household items would be given but in this case money was given. The dowry is negotiable and depends upon the resources and reputation of the giver and the demands of the receiver. Often, the female is rejected when the male’s father feels the dowry is inadequate. Conversely, the female’s father may decide that the dowry demands are unreasonable, that he cannot afford them or that he does not wish to form an alliance with such a greedy family. Then, he is free to look for another suitor for his daughter. Often, immense debts occur as the
need to fulfil the dowry requests become burdensome. The woman’s side gives and the man’s side takes, thus creating an artificial preference for male children instead of female children. The belief is that females are a lifelong drain and cannot, according to custom, look after their elders, whereas males must traditionally keep their elders. In some cases, if a respectable dowry is not given, the daughter-in-law may face lifelong harassment and abuse. However, if the woman is exceptionally beautiful, talented or educated, the dowry requirements may be waived, to some degree.

Sobi’s sister-in-law: ...if the woman is very pretty or if the man is very handsome, everyone will want to marry them because Indians like height and fair skin... but what do you look at when you see a person... you cannot see into their heart... some are lucky because elders say the children will be beautiful...
(Sobi / sil, April 1994; transcript: 1:3).

The sister-in-law voiced her apprehension about marrying someone she would only meet one day before the wedding.

Sobi’s sister-in-law: ...I saw Sobi’s brother for the first time at our marriage... I thought he should be taller... he told me later he thought I should have more clear skin... we talked for the first time at the wedding lunch... I asked him what would he like to choose from the thal (serving tray)... we did not look directly... I was so scared the night before, I said what if he is unkind or not nice to live with, or not handsome... I wish he likes me very much... I said what am I doing with my life, I do not know this man... but my parents said it is okay, that is how it is... they are good people... I was so scared, I tell you... in Canada my parents will not come, what will happen to me...
(Sobi sil, April 1994; transcript 1:4).

She wondered why her husband-to-be did not come to visit her in her village when she had left Canada a week earlier, just so that they could meet. Perhaps his elders did not approve. However, that time alone would have decreased her anxiety but according to
him, he had no apprehension. He did not think it was necessary because he was busy working and the marriage terms were set, so why bother. The first day was the marriage of Sobi’s brother and the sister from Canada. The second day was the marriage of Sobi and the sister in India. Then, both couples returned to the brothers’ village until Sobi and his sister-in-law had to leave for Canada.

Sobi’s wife: ... my sister’s wedding was first and so I tried to look at Sobi when we were sitting down and I felt he is very handsome. He was also looking at me but we did not say a word... many changes and no time... I gave up my job and now I will be married and I did not know these people... I was very sad because I love my home very much and now in Canada, I get up early, go to work, come home, cook, clean, sleep and so... but this is Canada, but I cry everyday... I am so sorry...
(Sobi / w, April 1994; transcript 1:1).

It appears that the rationale behind the male gender dominance over females is due to the male possessing citizenship, education, a job and English fluency. Having citizenship, for a male, may excuse his lack of education, his character and his greed.

Sobi’s sister-in-law: ... a Canadian-Punjabi man may be a high school drop-out yet he can get a marriage partner from India who has professional, academic qualifications... then he can tell her that she must work in a factory to pay the bills and buy a big house and tell her he has no money to send her to school... and anyway her Indian education makes it very, very, hard for her to get a job in Canada... sometimes the man can have a woman friend here and gets married to make his parents happy then makes the life of the wife so bad that she will go back home... sometimes the man marries to get the dowry and really does not want marriage... many things go wrong so our parents in India are very scared... they check out everything to see the happiness of their daughter... we are also very scared because we know no one and the ways of Canada are strange... we hear so many bad stories in India and most are true... some marriages are happy...
(Sobi / sil, April 1994; transcript 1:5).

The issues in an arranged marriage appear endless; yet it survives.
The person who lives abroad feels superior to those back in India because he is familiar with western culture and so can expect and demand deference, whereas that same person in India will not feel superior, but equal to his peers. Also, when one leaves the country of origin, time stands still and traditional roles become even more pronounced. Thus, the social roles of men and women in India may be advancing; whereas the social roles outside of India may be regressing. Trust in the judgment of a sibling, parent or relative allows arranged alliances, as Sobi’s brother explains.

Sobi’s brother: ...when I first saw her it was the day of the marriage...we only saw the pictures. First, my brother and I used to look for wives together but everyone we interviewed had some problem, meaning her education was not what we wanted, or looks or background, or her people had lied about her bio-data...this we found out by speaking to her...the ads can say anything. They do this because people are so desperate to leave India. So, we both knew what the other brother wanted: tall, good looking, having a good education, good personality ... So, when my brother told me that this would be a good deal for me... because he described the young lady he met in the agency, I trusted his judgment and said I would agree. Then we exchanged pictures...
(Sobi / b, April 1994; transcript 1:1).

Sobi’s brother relates his first impression of his bride.

Sobi’s brother: ...the first time I saw her at the wedding, I thought her face had an allergy but then when we lived together I found her nature was very good. The wedding took place in her home...
(Sobi / b, April 1994; transcript: 1:2).

Sobi’s brother was refused for Canadian immigration and so he kept studying and became a professional college teacher with a master’s degree. He taught for five years, married, took a leave of absence and came to Canada as a result of his wife sponsoring him. He is filled with a sense of loss, resentment and confusion.
Sobi’s brother: ...it took me eight months to come to Canada after marriage because my wife had to come back to Canada to sponsor me as her husband... the route is to fill out papers here which go to the embassy in India, where I am asked to come for a medical and interview, and after inquiries I would be sent a visa...
(Sobi / b, April 1994; transcript: 1:3).

Sobi’s brother and Sobi’s new bride both left India and their professional careers in teaching to come to Canada, to work in factories and to take "English as a Second Language" at night. They feel betrayed and are perplexed by the stress of life in Canada.

Sobi’s brother: ...the country is nice but where we work in the factory the people and their lifestyle and English is not so good... We get minimum wages and work long hours at very hard work. We work the same as the people who make ten dollars an hour. I hardly meet my expenses with the minimum wage salary and I have no satisfaction. When I was in India, I had the job satisfaction and high regard and I worked with a more educated class of people with better pay... and there was no problem of housework or learning English at night. We, three, go to ESL at night two times a week for three hours each time. We are picking up English but what is the use when we only speak Punjabi at home and we have no place to practise it. At work, we only speak with Punjabi supervisors and workers. Also, when we come home we are so tired so where is the time to speak to anyone? We do not understand the English of these white people because they speak too fast. So, you pick up a bit, but then what to do ...
(Sobi / b, April 1994; transcript 1:4).

Sobi’s brother feels the stress of possible unemployment, especially as a temporary factory worker. In India, jobs are for life and even if you are unemployed, which a great many people are, you can always eat. In Canada, a job means survival. He does however, appreciate the Canadian lifestyle because there is fairness in the justice system, there is human respect and dignity and there are rights and opportunities. Equality and liberal thinking are positives, but joy and relaxation in life are lacking.
Sobi's brother: ... it is very hard for me to work under anyone. I would rather have my own business where I can have full control and my hard labour will gain me the results I believe I have earned. However, if the situation remains as is, then I have half a mind to return to my teaching job in India, from which I have taken a leave of absence... (Sobi / b, April 1994; transcript 1:5).

The sisters felt the Canadian culture provided the greatest challenge. In India, most men and women live within the protected environment of the united family enclave, meaning an extended family in a joint housing development.

Sobi's wife: ... it is so hard for people when you come to Canada. You have to start all over again as an adult. Here people have all the pressures. Earn the money, pay the bills: gas, heat, light, water, phone, tv, car insurance, taxes... there, your parents take care of everything and there are not so many expenses. The fast life here and the new marriage is too much for me... the pressure is more on women because the men want us to follow their thinking but we cannot because we think we know best... like India, the men want us to listen, they are right but they are not right... the woman works too so why she should do the cooking and cleaning... they have hands, they eat... they help, yes, but because they have to, not because they should or want to... (Sobi / w, April 1994; transcript 1:2).

At present, both couples are debating about their financial stability which is linked to future planning. Every choice has a consequence and they have few options to choose from. Both couples want to buy a home jointly, but that means they cannot study to update their qualifications for Canadian professional employment. Also, if they do not develop English fluency, neither schooling nor Canadian qualifications will result. If they buy a home, everyone must work to pay for it. If a couple decides to have children, only shiftwork will allow for one of them to babysit while the rest work.
They are proud and want to succeed without family assistance.

...it is better if we don’t ask for favours from our relatives because then they cannot tell us what to do... (Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:14).

Their situation is no different from that of other young, newly married Canadians. The only difference is that their ability to develop fluency in English is directly related to security in their employment and the realization of a better life in Canada.

Some elements of the mainstream culture amazes the women.

Sobi’s wife: ...Yesterday, I went to the library and I saw young girls, no more than sixteen or seventeen, having their babies in strollers... they are children and they are mothers with new children. Why? Why do these people live like this? It is not great... how can a youngster teach her child what it is she does not know? They marry too young. How do they eat, live... On tv, I see a program... many old, old men they marry young girls like their daughter or granddaughter... why? We do not do that. It is like a father and daughter age marriage... it is no good. Why should they not marry a woman closer to their age?...
(Sobi / w, April 1994; transcript 1:3).

None of these individuals feel they have a close relationship or friendship with any Canadian (meaning a white person). They feel that a Canadian would not like to eat their food. Sobi stated that many Canadians are very nice people and it all depends upon the individual. He feels you must judge them on an individual basis, just as you judge Indians. The difference is that Indians like to stick together and Canadians do not.

Sobi’s brother: ...at work there are Indians, blacks and whites, but the employer is Indian so he has hired many Indian employees. Our people do not want to go to another job. They just stay there. Why? Our people are very jealous and cause trouble in our community. They don’t care to learn or get a higher job or more money... for minimum wage they do not want to lose the factory job... (Sobi / b, April 1994; transcript 1:6).
Both couples agreed that the joint family system was a good system because it provides them with emotional security, financial security and future custodial care for their children. They can’t understand why Canadians choose to live alone. Also, their views on childraising reflect their traditional values:

...our children should stay attached to our culture according to how Indian kids are acting in Canada, at that time. There is much freedom but also many vices here. We want them to stay in our culture, to respect, obey and listen to us. They should not drink or smoke. They must stay in the Jat Sikh faith. If they marry another caste, their thinking and customs will not meet. If you go up or down a caste the hospitality, customs, values, traditions are very different. It is hard to learn them. Why should we? We are Jats. If our child chooses another to marry, we must think how to adjust. We must live in this Canada also...
(Sobi, April 1994; transcript 1:14).

My reflections:

Sobi’s narrative dealt with two types of chain migration, one is adoption of a minor and the other is sponsorship through marriage. He experienced both and detailed his trauma, in one case where he was discriminated against by Canadian children and the other case in which his wife, brother and sister-in-law are discriminated against in the workforce. In both cases, there is a traumatic sense of loss for a perceived, greater gain. What is the price of this gain? This is a question many immigrants ask themselves as they endure the sacrificial, human journey of cultural root transplantation in a foreign land. They appear to be the sacrificed generation, sandwiched between a secure world which nurtured them from childhood and a new world which is filled with promise, hope and danger for their children -- if not for them. However, when their children are able to participate in the rewards
of their suffering, Sobi and his family will battle a new foe - cultural assimilation and possible alienation from their proud Sikh heritage. This is the betrayal they are not prepared for, although they verbalize a hypothetical acceptance of their future. The events in their children's lives will change them forever. Then, they cannot remain isolated and impervious to change, for change means life, and adaptive change means survival. In time, their kara will teach them that one's insularity, though necessary for defence, can become a liability when orthodoxy interferes with the need to accept and respect change.

How Sobi and his family perceive their children's lives has to do with their positive life experiences in Canada, their desire to make Canada their home, and their need to become part of the Canadian community. They must, and will in time, come to the realization that going back to the Punjab is not a viable back up plan. They know in their hearts that they are here to stay, for few immigrants return to their past lives. That is, they must analyze the boundary of their karas and learn to live with inevitable change, underpinned by the dual societies in which they must exist.

Most impressive, in Sobi's story, is the ethic of a sense of duty towards the collective; rather than the pursuit of individual choice and happiness, irrespective of one's obligations towards one's family. Punjabis tend to be a people who live within a collective conscience and cannot subsist alone. Life, then, is not looked upon as a personal adventure but as an obligation, a duty to be performed so one can earn inclusion within the kara of one's
society. The necessity of arranged marriages for chain migrations must be accepted as a cultural "given", for if one begins to analyze it according to western ethics, this concept is difficult to appreciate. Emigration demands that chain migration marriage alliances continue, in order to ensure tradition preservation which reinforces the Sikh cultural boundaries.

3.2 Summary

The salient theme in this chapter is the narrative of the lives of Punjabi men, transplanted from the Punjab in childhood, adolescence and adulthood; existing in cultural turmoil shaped by the inherited, patriarchal signatures of land, caste and traditional expectations, scripted within their respective karas. Kame, the good son, the good role model; Eli, the Canadian who demands his hyphenated identity; and Sobi, the martyr, to whom duty and culture replication are sacred non-negotiables. These Punjabi men collectively inspect their inherited, patriarchal baggage which now appears to be threatened by the desecrating forces of the Canadian mainstream winds of change - inside and outside the kara. How will they recognize and protect their sacred legacy and what part of it will remain intact for their male child to inherit?

Caste and lineage constitute the historical and patriarchal poignancy within the kara, as Oberoi (1994) explained in the Sikh kinship of the "biradari", a brotherhood of fraternal solidarity.

...it existed over ten to twelve villages with a carpenter, a blacksmith, labourers, a merchant and a religious figure, all playing a role in the agrarian cycle ... gained ancestry through a common ancestor, the regular gift exchange and a strong sense of shared 'izzat' or code of honour (Alavi 1972) ...marriage tied biradaris into a network of connections and
alliances...collected revenue through a 'chaudhuri' who belonged to the central hierarchy of the state and the biradari which shaped politics, exerted social control, and judged issues such as land disputes, matrimonial disagreements, cultural and religious practices and the non-fulfilment of a pledge, or any matter affecting the cohesion and honour of the biradari...Thus, a lineage-based society of a myriad of Sikh biradaris resulted... Also, the violation of established caste rules and transgression of the purity, pollution antinomy and food taboos, invited punishment, penance or permanent ostracism from the community and loss of inheritance...14
(Oberoi 1994: 82-82, 106).

Oberoi (1994:265) further relates how these and other Sikh tenets over the last three hundred years were traditionalized, emulated and made sacrosanct by professional groups. These groups included bards, genealogists, storytellers, healers, minstrels, shamans, local saints and diviners who had "mediated cultural conventions". The historical, traditional and tightly codified, early sacred society of Punjabi Sikhs was established to ally a man with his faith, which was entrenched in organic networks of hierarchical caste-defined destinies, which were determined by divine intervention. This is the inherited, cultural baggage which binds the spiritual "selves" of Kame, Eli and Sobi as they recognize the covenant within their kara, and choose to either negotiate or yield to the rhythm of its suffocating yet familiar expectations. What is familiar is the everpresent pain and guilt.

14 See the following:
a) "...from Brahman to Naï, including Chippe and Jhivara (Sudra subcastes), all those who belonged to the four-fold caste system are not allowed to partake in food cooked or touched by the outcastes...This implies that just as the four Hindu castes can be polluted by the Untouchables, similarly in the Sikh Khalsa religion, all persons belonging to the four castes can be polluted also. Those Sikhs who belong to the Untouchable groups (like the Mazhabi, Rahtia and the Ramdasia Sikhs) constitute a separate caste. These Untouchables castes do not have the right to proceed beyond the fourth step in Sri Amritsar (at the Golden Temple). Members of the high caste should take care not to mix with persons belonging to the lower castes. If someone seeks to do so, he forfeits his claim to the high castes..." (Oberoi 1994:106).
The contemporary vision of the culturally-bound morality and ethical dilemmas portrayed in this chapter by Punjabi males, appears to lack sufficient documentation. Instead, ethnocultural relations or theories of intergroup conflict and intragroup cohesion, viewed in the South Asian context, do exist. These studies focus on life lived outside of the kara, as perceived by western minds looking for visible minority group cultural conflicts. These perceptions, intentional or not, "... play a significant role in shaping a minority group’s response to prejudice and discrimination ..." (cf. Buchignani and Indra 1980:149; Troyna 1978 cited in Gibson 1988: 67). Perceptions aside, Desai (1963:83) found that immigrants who work in ethnic groups obviously have less reason to adapt or experience cultural change which leads to tensions between themselves and the dominant group. Conversely, some studies suggest that the aggression portrayed by the majority group may strengthen the ethnic boundaries and communal solidarity, which in turn, reinforces the negative attitudes of the host society (Anwar 1979; Ballard and Ballard 1979 cited in Gibson 1988: 68).

Gross patriarchy, gerontocracy and the subordination of the individual’s interest to the survival and/or traditional needs of the collective or kinship interests are reviewed by Buchignani (1987). He states that sparse research on the parent-child relationship from the child’s point of view exists, although several studies show assimilation with peers (Buchignani 1977b; Sadhu 1980; Chawla 1971; Akoodie 1980). This boundary
conversion, he feels, has dire consequences for it causes the victim much psychological angst which is reflected in the resulting social marginality within the kinship (Minde and Minde 1976; Akoodie 1980). This leverage, Buchignani feels, may be the result of elders forcing their traditional patterns upon the hyphenated generation. However, little comparative literature exists to elucidate this boundary level tension (cited in Israel 1987: 118-119).

The signature of narrative inquiry:

What are the threads of narrative inquiry which profiled the struggles of self-identity within the male, kara boundary? First, I sense that Kame is asking the reader to analyze with him, "What is my purpose? Why am I so driven? and, Is this a cultural or personality abberation?"

...I question, had the firstborn been a daughter, would she have felt the same angst and would she be given permission to assume charge of the family; or would their survival have depended upon the kindness shown by elder, male relatives? (researcher, Feb. 1994)

That is, is a fatherless family unit still an intact unit, whether its leader is a son or daughter? Second, I sense that Eli is living beyond his allowable Sikh boundary as he presumes to shape a new destiny, outside the kara.

...the unborn child, however, holds the promise of peace, or does he/she? The next generation is impatient and requires no permission, for its lifeforce is not threatened by cultural disparity... One wonders, 'Has the covenant been irretrievably broken? '... (researcher Feb. 1994)

Eli's narrative asks if both families need to experience a paradigm shift in how to absorb a "foreigner" into their culture?
The questions which arise in Eli’s narrative include:

a) On whose shoulders lies the burden of proof that this marriage is morally and spiritually unacceptable?

b) Is betrayal of the faith the burden of the parent or the child as Eli’s father confesses, “Did I underestimate the power of influence which the mainstream culture had on my children?”

c) Once the kara’s boundary is broken, can it be realigned along a different schema to allow for a new or restructured boundary, thereby enclosing and insulating the mutation? Is adaptation necessarily a mutation?

Third, I sense that Sobi has internalized the Sikh, male duty of chain migration maintenance. His decision impacted upon the kara boundaries of four people, as Eli’s decision impacted upon both sets of parents and the couple, and as Kame’s decision impacted upon his family and himself. These profiles demonstrate that what happens inside a kara, also reverberates outside it.

Where have we come from and where are we going?

The context of Chapter Three "Broken Covenant: Punjabi Sikh male voices", concluded Part One of the Broken Covenant which defined the covenant, explained the kara boundary expectations, reflected cultural maintenance and the forces which introduced cultural adaptation and, most importantly, allowed us to experience narrative inquiry, disclosure and its conspiracies.

I repeat the questions introduced in Part One, in order to appreciate the nature of a gender-specific boundary:

a) Does the "self" have permission to absorb, reflect and react? and I add,

b) If so, does the male "self" have more status and so a better chance of acquiring permission to readjust his boundary than does the female "self"?
213.

Again, I feel the response to this question is not as significant as the need to voice the question, for some issues such as gender equity cannot be intellectualized. They simply exist and are accepted as traditional boundary parameters.

Chapter One initiated this query by introducing the disclosure-conspiracy tension within the kara. Chapter Two, by profiling the narrative inquiry of women inside the dapatta, which is both an actual object and a metaphor of their lives, described the invisible shame within the folds which restricts readjustment within their kara's boundary. Chapter Three, by profiling the narrative inquiry of men inside their inherited, patriarchal signatures of land and caste, demanded a readjustment because males represent role models and possess the status to negotiate change - or do they? I have no answer, or perhaps there is no answer to be had. Part One has accomplished what it intended: it has defined, located and examined the Sikh covenant.

Next, we will experience Part Two of the Broken Covenant in which Chapter Four will discuss the perceived, assimilative tactics within the Canadian education system; and Chapter Five will discuss whether social services, mainstream and culture-specific services are an intrusion or a necessity. The purpose of Part Two is to understand the Sikh cultural boundary which migrated from Punjab, India as first generation, recent immigrant baggage. This boundary is perceived to be under siege by the assimilators: the Canadian teachers and Canadian social workers, according to South Asian professionals, as they view Punjabis through a Euro-centric model.
PART TWO

THE BROKEN COVENANT

A gurdwara wedding assembly - a fusion of culture, colour, bonds, feuds, negotiations and partnerships
PART TWO

In Part One, the past mocked the illusions of the present. We witnessed heritage preservation attempts by modernist Sikhs whose roots were transplanted through migrations, which forced human boundary reconstruction. Had they then become pitiless outcasts of absolution or had they become the resurrected souls of conveniently, blended cultures? Did it matter?

Part Two exposes this blended culture through reconstructions of private and professional cultural boundaries translated into mainstream frames by professionals such as teachers and social workers. Part Two, thus, exposes the broken shards of our lives.

The culture bound human dilemmas introduced in Part One are extended in Part Two, framed in the context of, "What happens to the shards of the broken covenant?" Resulting questions abound:

a) How do we translate these shards for foreign "others" who then become our keepers?

b) Can I build upon the shard bequeathed me and with it construct a life force within Sikhism?

c) To what degree has my inherited Sikhism remained pure, and if so, would I be able to recognize it...who will absolve me, claim me and forgive me? I have a desperate need to know for I must live with myself and my God, in my own fashion. I must know who I am, to sustain who I was!

The chaos inherent in cultural boundary reconstruction as experienced by mainstream and Sikh professionals; recent Sikh immigrants and their children; and naturalized Sikh, first generation youth is framed in Part Two, Chapters Four and Five.

In Chapter Four, I will outline how schooling is viewed by Sikhs as a necessary evil, a biased, Canadian curriculum which
promotes the internalization of a white socialization experience, thus creating dissonance between the Sikh culture and Canadian culture worldviews. Since Sikhs equate schooling with assimilation tactics, their preference is for education of their children through cultural accommodation. Sensitive areas, according to Punjabi Sikh parents, as viewed through the lens of Canadian school personnel, include the immigrant desire to achieve a better life, not necessarily an English life; the daughters’ reputations which govern community respect, which in turn, proscribes their freedom; and, the dilemma faced by parents obliged to rein in their sons for arranged marriages, after allowing them complete freedom to experience the western culture. Another questionable aspect of Canadian life and schooling for Punjabi Sikh parents is the Canadian school teacher. Since their ethnicity is not South Asian, parents question who are they and what do they believe in? Also, how is the influence of their role in my child’s life of significance to me?

In Chapter Five, social services are viewed by Sikhs as an intrusion wherein areas of sensitivity include the decision to access either mainstream or Sikh culture professionals and the advantages in each; and, the manner in which the Punjabi social worker contextualizes Sikh clients for himself/herself and mainstream professionals. Also, there exists a feeling that traditional, kinship problem-solving responsibilities are being usurped by professionals who are, in essence, strangers armed with institutional power to intrude into your family life, question
217.

your morality, and possibly remove your children. Thus, immigrant alienation is viewed through the lens of Canadian life reality as it impinges upon the immigrant, culture shock period. Examples of which include the parents’ need to perpetuate traditional child-raising techniques; an explanation of how "shame" is internalized by Sikhs; the women’s need to be equal partners in parenting; the man’s right and emotional need to control his household; the double standard in gender freedom; and the professional mistrust and misunderstanding between mainstream and Punjabi social workers.

Part One allowed us the reverie necessary to contemplate how and why Sikhs are different. Part Two allows us the luxury of hindsight. That is, as a visible minority, we do not live in a hermetically sealed vacuum, apart from the invasion of dominant, cultural institutions, services and laws which govern our family life. Rather, a universal commonality of immigrant dilemmas exists: a) What preciousness shall we retain and what shall we surrender? b) What is deemed cultural intrusion as opposed to cultural ignorance? c) How can an outsider examine the shards of a Sikh life and belief system, then make value judgments regarding what is morally acceptable and unacceptable for Sikh children? That is, to what extent can / should Sikh parents be coerced and shaped by mainstream, institutional values and beliefs?

The Sikh dilemma is how to secure their "selves" from the bastion of inevitable, mainstream cultural intrusions perceived to be exemplified by the erosion of Sikh adolescent compliance and the opposition to western culture as indicated by: teenage dating, courtship, sexual experimentation, choosing love marriages, cohabitation without marriage, freedom of movement for girls,
substance abuse including tobacco and alcohol and a lack of respect for elders. Punjabi immigrant parents accept cultural adaptation but want to exercise their parental right to control the process. However, children tend to internalize cultural inculcation at a faster pace than parents are able to control it, or prepare for it as they question, "How can we design a morally acceptable yet modified Sikhism which is more easily worn in Canada?"

Imagining cultural change and the loss which will result is more fearful than the act of experiencing change itself. Let me explain further.

...it would be beyond absurdity for me to presume that life allows us distinct pauses in which to delineate Part One, Part Two and Part Three of our collective, lived realities. Instead we are thrust in the mad ebb and flow of life's tapestry, filled with colour, pain, disillusionment and joy, universally experienced and endured...there are no saviours and there are no messiahs, for we create the mistral, the winds of change we fear yet desire; we create the chaos in which we choose to contrive and comply ... individuals from birth to death are entwined in a fantasy of struggle, survival and challenges ... the boundary of the kara is a metaphorical, mystical and borderless mass of fluctuating degrees of temperance, within which our emotions and intellect become enshrouded in learned behaviour patterns, which shape our defence inside and outside the kara... they shape our amorphous lifeforce, our amniotic link with the past which bridges and shapes our future... (researcher, Jan. 94)

This mad fantasy concludes in Part Three, Chapter Six, in which the meaning of the term "broken covenant" will be explored and quietly accepted as it is woefully experienced - a lived reality without apology.
Chapter 4

BROKEN COVENANT: SCHOOLING, A PRETEXT FOR ASSIMILATION?

4.1 Educate our children: do not "Canadianize" them!

This chapter reveals the composite perceptions of five professionals including two teachers, a teacher/counsellor, a counsellor and an administrator; several group conversations with teachers in staff rooms; plus twelve individual student conversations and several separate, student and parent group conversations. I purposely targeted two high schools near each other in which an unusually high number of Punjabi Sikh students (65%) were enrolled; half being recent immigrants from Punjab, India and half being students who are first generation Canadian born. The community in which these schools are located is predominately South Asian with adjoining same ethnicity shop plazas, services, restaurants, professional buildings, community services, a Sikh primary private school and most significantly a large gurdwara complex (...pride and power...) within walking distance from each school. I feel the perceptions gathered at this site may or may not be as pronounced in other high schools with a higher enrolment of Canadian-born Sikh students compared to recent immigrant Sikh students.
Most of the parents and many of the students interviewed in this chapter were not fluent in English so Punjabi became the language of choice. Hence, I paraphrased their narratives. The specific participants will be quoted and/or paraphrased with direct quotes being identified by the speaker. To consolidate the voices, specific hesitations such as "ah and um" reflecting speech patterns have been culled. The first indentation in the quotes represents the primary participants while the second indentation represents the views of the Punjabi Jat Sikh students. The term "English" represents both mainstream, dominant language and culture; the term "mainstream and/or white" represents the dominant culture(s) including their food, culture, lifestyle, values, assumptions and ideology. In short, it means any non-Indian shaping influences outside of the kara which represent mainstream society.

The purpose of this chapter is to listen to the voices of Canadian schooling: teachers, administrators and counsellors as they describe their daily interactions with recent immigrant and traditional Punjabi Jat Sikh students and parents.

...the overlay of the western, institutional, schooling worldview and the eastern, gurdwara scriptural, worldview is revealed within the boundaries which inevitably cross inside the kara. The human experience of culture shock, misunderstanding and compromise experienced by the school staff examines the purpose of schooling and socializing of foreign culture children. Canadian professionals are forced to learn about a culture which refuses to be assimilated or dismissed and instead initiates change.1 (researcher, Dec. 1993)

---

1 See the following:
a) "... The next generation of Punjabis will also continue. I predict. to pursue the strategy of acculturation without assimilation..." (Gibson 1988:183).
We feel the forceful impact of the Punjabi culture in the public school system through the students' frustration, the parents' apprehension and the teachers' agendas.

4.1.1 We came here for a better life - not an English life

The context within which Punjabi Jat Sikh parents and their children choose to participate in schooling initiates questions from teachers regarding the parent, teacher, student relationship.

a) Who are the parents? Who are their children?
b) Do we as teachers care? Can we understand and if we don't, does it matter?
c) What do they want from us? What can we deliver according to the manner and style they find acceptable and culturally non-obtrusive?
d) Are these students one and the same person: recent immigrants, Canadian born, traditionalists, modernists?
e) Do they act differently throughout the day in school and at home?
f) What do Punjabi Sikh parents and students think of the school, the curriculum, myself and our purpose of interacting here?
g) Do their parents trust us, accept us, or just ignore us?

Schooling redefines some immigrant parents' dreams of a better life in Canada with obedient children who pledge allegiance to their country of origin. However, when the stark realities of cultural accommodation, which their children increasingly accept as their Canadian heritage, challenge the parents, then culture conflict stress results. Then they quietly ponder the consequences of cultural loss and gain and question what went wrong. What did they do to deserve such a fate?

a) What shattered this dream and who will pick up the pieces and make the family whole again? Is this possible?

b) Why does the advanced, western schooling for which we came here, now set out to destroy us and our values, beliefs, traditions and our sense of "self" within the kara?
Some teachers are challenged by these queries because their mandated role is to translate and personify the philosophy which drives the socialization process in the immigrant student's life, inside the school environment. The dilemma is that some parents are confused by the influence of western schooling on their child; and some teachers are confused as to how to appreciate and balance the cultural issues in educating the student. The will to compromise often determines if teachers and parents will be adversaries or partners, as an administrator explains:

...immigration comes in waves... the first wave would bring in the doctors, the lawyers, the professional people and the upper class population... that wave has gone through this community... these students were very intent upon learning... about 40-45% went to university. Now it is about 18% from this culture in this area. This area is now into its second and third wave of immigration... the blue collar worker, the farmer from India who is here with his family trying to get a start. The kids who come here now do not have that same type of motivation for higher education that the first wave did, so we start to see the emphasis on education, lowered. Now we are into a situation in which these kids do not want to be in school... they want to be out with their parents who have jobs and if those jobs are warehouse jobs, that's fine... money for materialistic things seems to be where it's at today...

(Administrator, Nov. 1993)

The efforts of schooling are usually maximized by students who are in a position to be full-time students, which excludes some immigrant students who are faced with economic survival or the choice of early school leaving. For these students, literacy and numeracy survival skills become goals. Again, not all students who come to Canada experience their lives here as an improvement over life in the Punjab -- a fact they find shocking, as a counsellor relates:
...immigrants suffer depression...I know kids who said they hated it in Canada because it was all work, work, work... One boy said in India he lived on a farm. He'd go to school, come home and play with his friends...here, he'd go to school, come home and work in a factory...they are giving up so much...you expect where you are going to be better...
(counsellor, Dec. 1993)

...back home I had fun. I was important and loved and had freedom...here I am watched, locked up and feared for...only my home is safe because it gives me what I had back home but I am learning so much, so fast, about the English world...and I am changing inside of me...
(student, Dec. 1993)

Once here, the child becomes the parent, echoing a familiar pattern in immigrant families where English fluency means status:

...the parents live where the majority of the population is like them, so they get exposure to the Canadian culture and can retain their own more easily. The kids who came here at twelve or thirteen assimilate fastest. They come into conflict with parents who haven't caught on as to what is right or wrong, or good or bad...
(teacher A, Jan. 1994)

...I speak all the English, pay all the bills, go with my dad everywhere - but then I'm a boy. My sister, mom and grandma look after the house, the inside things, the private...sacred things...my sister protects the people inside the house from the 'English world' outside...
(student Jan. 1994)

How the student changes roles during the day is evident in the following counsellor's description:

...when the students leave school and go home, the girls change clothes so they even physically look and play a role in school, different from the one at home...
(counsellor, Dec. 1993)

...I have school clothes and Punjabi clothes, just like I have school bread and home dhesi khanna (Indian food), English and Punjabi languages, the classroom and the gurdwara (classroom)...I just change as I need to, have to, want to, but I don't want to be forced...it's happening so fast...
(student, Dec. 1993)
When the home and school cultures clash, they force an adaptation pattern upon any immigrant family, not just Punjabis.

a) Both students and parents must adjust their values and forge new alliances, veering slightly away from the boundary to attain the Canadian power symbols: English language fluency, the job, the money, the big car, the big house and the big dreams.

b) Schooling means enculturation of dominant culture skills and values. Does this imply the shaping of an Indian personality into some semblance of a Canadian personality incorporating traits of competition, individualism, skills of social interaction and employment, confidence, motivation and educated consumerism?

Education is the equalizer in a host country, but is that what the parents came for? Not quite. Parents appreciate the need for competitive, economic success, yes, but not for the push for culture and values adaptation. Schools, conversely, do not deliberately set out to offend, betray or reject the student’s culture; yet it often becomes demeaned and subordinated in the process, as several teachers concede. Examples of this include anglicizing the student’s name to make it easier to spell and pronounce; peer pressure to conform in clothes, hairstyles, cosmetics and music; and the assumption that one should "want to" fit into the dominant, middle class structure and values.

Recognizing this, the parents and elders reinforce Sikh influence and control in combating assimilation by presenting a strong will, which is identifiable through the wearing of the kara.

...the Punjabi identity, the ‘self’ within the kara resides within the steel bracelet. It is a visible reminder of the covenant, the psychological framing of, ‘I am special, I am different and that difference is precious and must be protected.’ The kara, shaped either as a thin, modest steel ring or a heavy, multigrooved steel band with a spiked point, although it is worn by students presents teachers with a visible reminder of the students’ difference, the students’
first allegiance to their God, the supreme teacher. To some
teachers the visible presence of the kara symbolizes an
affront to their training, curriculum and their esteemed
English culture. The kara and the curriculum, both symbols and
tools of assimilation (albeit for two different cultures),
meet, recognize each other, define their territories and stake
their claim within the psyche of the child... usually, the
child is able to harmonize the two - if not, does the winner
takes all?...
(researcher, Dec. 1993)

Parents realize they must be vigilant for their small numbers
cannot compare to the overwhelming force of mainstream society. For
most Punjabi parents this vigilance becomes a lifelong obsession.

Why Punjabi parents become more traditional in Canada:

The school philosophy models socialization skills through
group work, mediation, drama, sports, school spirit and extra-
curricular activities. Teachers are in the business of
fostering independent, creative and analytical thinking skills and
behaviour. This is diametrically opposed to the Punjabi parents’
role which is to keep their youngster dependent and childlike so
that he/she can be controlled by parental authority and tradition.
This parenting model attempts to duplicate how children are raised
in India. However, two issues appear to be overlooked by Punjabi
parents who emigrate to Canada:

a) Indians in India have adapted with the times by relaxing
their parenting model to include more independence; and

b) a culture which migrates from the birth country appears to be
freeze-framed because it experiences isolation and
discrimination which force the membership to emphasize the
maintenance of traditional values for emotional security.

Some teachers understand this rationale yet their role is to
instill Euro-centric, Judao-Christian values which represent the
values of Canadian schooling. They do recognize that Punjabi
students are caught in a triangle of emotions and loyalties: attempting to satisfy the school, parents and themselves.

The desire to maintain one’s culture is common to many immigrant cultures, as a teacher explains:

...some of the girls even said that their parents were quite liberal in India but when they arrived in Canada their parents regrouped and went a bit backwards. This is reflective of the Italian anxiety about what the Italian community would say. You become frightened by the host society. That is, you do not understand it so you go back to what you once did understand and train your kids. You just keep them under those values and systems and this is what’s happening with the Punjabis...
(teacher A, Jan. 1994)

Within each immigrant culture there appear to be rigidity levels in parenting; some parents will be abusive and compulsive and other parents will be more relaxed, yet still cautious about cultural adaptation, as the following teacher explains.

...even in my own community, when we heard of _____ kids who were being beaten up, my mother would speak of their family as being backwoods _____. They were people who were not as well educated or informed about certain modern notions of Canadian values, which take a lot longer to reach someone like that than someone who was modern and educated...
(teacher C, Jan. 1994)

It appears that parenting, especially immigrant parenting, is defined by cultural parameters whose sanctity must be guarded.

Parental academic expectations:

Some teachers ask," What do the parents want from us and from their children?" Punjabis only want what most communities want.

... professional background parents demand more... success meaning university (equates with ) having done a good job raising children... the community sees your children are successful...the student’s interest, ability and self-fulfilment (are ignored)...the community is the controlling factor in the expectations regarding their children’s fate...
(teacher B, Jan. 1994)
...my Dad says I am smarter than my cousin-brothers who came from the Punjab three years ago. I work really hard in school but the English is tough. I like the maths, sciences and biology but the English writing and reading takes a lot of work because we don't speak that much English at home, not like the other Canadian kids. My parents say get a good education so you can get a good job and marry a good, educated girl. Then both of you can work, make money and be happy...
(student, Jan. 1994)

Punjabi parents appear to have a wish list of what their children should study, the uppermost being medicine for the money and status. When a child does not possess the aptitude or interest for academics, it is the family business which absorbs the kinship children. According to the Punjabi participants, from birth to death, it is kinship which moulds the character, arranges the marriage and creates a lifestyle - a philosophy which the new generation is trying to redefine.

The psychological need for parental approval gained only by academic excellence forces students into situations which do not promote independence, responsibility or positive self-esteem.

...I have so much pressure on me from home to achieve, that sometimes I cheat on a test or exam and I don't feel guilty because I want it so badly...I want it for the approval I will get from home..if I don't do well, there are consequences...
(student, Dec. 1993)

Universally, the panic felt by students to excel in academic performance has little to do with ethnicity, for unrealistic parental expectations exist in abundance outside of the Punjabi Sikh culture. This relentless, cultural "push and pull" within the forces of the "self" resident in the kara, produce friction. Issues of student responsibility are explained by another teacher.
...in teaching advanced, senior level English, I find that Punjabi Sikh students want to go to university but I feel they demonstrate a lack of the necessary commitment and diligence that university requires. Males especially do not care about the writing process and the various levels you must master before you reach the finished product. They tell me each level of their work has to have a mark of excellence or their parents will be very angry. This is not learning... (teacher A, Jan. 1994)

Teachers feel that students waste time manipulating them for higher marks instead of spending time working on the writing task and improving in their writing skills. Students feel they are not responsible for assignment due dates by using the excuse of family obligations, as a teacher relates:

...my frustration comes from seeing students who don’t value their education for intrinsic purposes but only perform to please their parents or to compete with their cousins... Since self-motivation is lacking, this attitude creates difficulties in the English studies classroom where the process of writing essays is as important as the finished product...
(teacher B, Jan. 1994)

Some students appear to lack a dedicated, loyal work ethic. This ethic is not to be generalized to the whole Punjabi community; for the bulk of the students are very conscientious achievers as the following scholarly assessment explains.

...Punjabi students seek to sidestep anticipated social disadvantages in the job market by securing training and credentials beyond their white peers...formal education (from their parents’ perspective) is the single most important key to job opportunities...they learn from their parents to apply themselves in their studies, to avoid trouble with their classmates and to heed their teacher’s advice. Punjabi parents provide strong support for education although they themselves have little contact with school officials and rarely become involved in school affairs...
(Gibson 1988: 28)

First generation immigrant students must initiate the dream, for they were the reason why so much was sacrificed.
Why Punjabi parents hesitate to participate in school life:

Most Punjabi Sikh, immigrant parents feel they did not come to Canada to become assimilated or to interfere with the school system. They express implicit faith in the teachers and administrators, have no urge to convert or control outsiders (teachers) and do not have a burning desire to practise citizenry. School staff have difficulty with this cultural viewpoint because they expect parents to share their middle class, partnership values. Teachers often question, "How can Punjabi parents be partners in education when they do not understand English, have never entered a school building; and perhaps have not even had a school experience and work two shifts a day just to survive?"

According to Gibson (1988: 177) Punjabi parents practise a non-interventionist strategy which contrasts with the school staff’s culture which demands interventionist strategies:

...Punjabi parents who have little or no formal education are unable to help with their children’s homework or even to read to their children at home....few ever visit the school...nor do they volunteer for the myriad of activities...parents see no need to intervene directly in what they see as the school’s business and the teacher’s authority and expertise...

(Gibson 1988: 177).

Perhaps the next generation of Canadian schooled, Punjabi parents will bridge the gap; however, today’s immigrant parents are perceived as experiencing cross-cultural chaos, as teachers explain,

...'Parent’s Night’ is one way of bridging the gap, however, most Punjabi parents do not attend even if translators are available...my concern is not that Punjabi students are not capable of the work but whether or not they and their parents are fully aware of what options are available to them, if they invest their time and effort...

(teacher B, Jan. 1994)
...if parents come in the school and see what their eldest child is learning, their reluctance to participate in schools may be diminished...also, parents, when they make the choice to emigrate to Canada would obviously want to become Canadianized so reading, speaking and learning about their English environment would be beneficial...

(teacher B, Jan. 1994)

Firstly, the teacher and parent values are different. Punjabi parents did not bring their families here for the culture; they came here for the opportunities. Secondly, educated parents know how to advocate on behalf of their children while other parents have implicit faith in the school system. Also, some parents do not investigate why their child has an academic impediment, instead they consent to early school leaving for the workforce.

...Parents ask, ‘So, why come to a building if you do not understand what is going on (and are not an expert in it) ? Isn’t it then a waste of your precious time ?’...

( parent, Dec. 1993)

Some parents valiantly face reality because they cannot afford the luxury of losing a potential wage earner to failing grades in school, simply to satisfy their family’s ego.

The variance of adolescent cultural compliance in the Punjabi Sikh community is equivalent to the variance experienced by any adolescent, in any community. Teachers perceive a problem and look for a solution. The Punjabi parents do not feel there is a problem. However, some school staff members have gained insight, through their students, about the nature of Punjabi home culture conflicts:

...understanding the Punjabi home culture is important but I feel different groups must work at home with the parents so that the symptoms of a dysfunctional family can be addressed. The focus should be the parents. However, this society closes the door on help because according to its cultural beliefs parents are supposed to control the freedom of individuals...

(teacher B, Jan. 1994)
This teacher examines the issue, renders her cultural response, then concludes there is no answer. Whatever she may find dysfunctional, may or may not seem to be dysfunctional to the parents and their children. In truth, her revelation of behaviours which underpin "choosing to be a Canadian" is based on the desire for inclusion in the white, middle class culture. This values-based desire is what most recent Punjabi immigrants appear to lack, at this point in their life. Why would they miss or want something which is unfamiliar and valueless to them? A counsellor attempts to rationalize this viewpoint:

... an outsider is not in a position to rectify this attitude. I think it would be difficult to get them to participate whether it is a mainstream or ethnic service provider... to achieve the Canadian way of life, you must want to do so. If you are out of your own group and are associating with different Canadians, you would realize the many ways of thinking and the many freedoms which encourage this...
(counsellor, Dec. 1993)

Perhaps these Punjabis are not at the stage where they are emotionally and culturally comfortable with mainstream inclusivity, and so require another generation to appreciate its significance.

The ESL/ESD student experience
(English as a Second Language / English Skills Development)

Schooling, for some students means having to leave the security of their homes and venture out into a building where they live an English life: where they read, write, think, dream, paint, colour, question, laugh and joke in English.

...most school staff are acutely aware of the Punjabi Jat Sikh parents’ cultural expectations regarding achievement and behaviour in a school setting, by their children’s attitudes. Functional literacy is essential because it is a survival tool and provides choices in life, including greater participation in the Canadian lifestyle... most, recent immigrant Punjabi
homes, naturally, lack experiences which include the English language, Canadian culture and Canadian society interaction. These children, who may have a textbook knowledge of English grammar and speak in broken English phrases, will find it difficult to fulfil the parents' expectation of academic excellence... for excellence requires honed skills at a competitive level ...
(researcher, Dec. 1993)

For some students, English remains a secondary language, a useful tool to be unpacked in English class which defies the ESL/ESD teacher's logic that students require English immersion and practise to increase the pace of language acquisition.

For the students who come to Canada with learning gaps, the ESL/ESD programs allow precious time, space and a credit system based on individual success. But, when parent's expectations exceed the student's ability, parents apply pressure forcing both student and teacher to reevaluate for whom and for what reason this education is being delivered and experienced. These unresolved issues are revealed in the following testimonials:

...I have repeated courses two and three times and have not been successful but I am sent by my parents back to school to do it over... but I know I will fail again...
(student, Dec. 1993)

Students feel a sense of despair in not fulfilling their role.

...if I need a program change, my parents cannot help me because they do not understand English, the school system or what the courses are about...
(student, Dec. 1993)

Students know that their parents only want university preparation courses and that they have little knowledge of other streams, so students trust the counsellor's judgment:

...I am not raised to open up to an outsider...also a teacher is supposed to be respected...but I have to...
(student, Dec. 1993)
Eventually, the student’s confidant becomes the teacher or counsellor because the parent cannot understand or assist in school choices or career planning. Often, the teacher becomes the first and only friend the student has in mainstream society.

Some teachers only view cultural adaptation from the school’s viewpoint:

a) How quickly can we process these immigrant children through the required and necessary ESL classes?
b) How can we program their courses to allow for greater scheduling flexibility within their limitations?
c) How can we give them the quickest entry into the assimilative socializing process?
d) How quickly can we prepare them for general and advanced level courses? Once in these courses, how can we make them successful yet retain the integrity of the course and its assessment levels? Which students could be possible candidates for special services and or vocational school? How accurate are the measuring tools to decide whether this is a determination of present achievement or potential aptitude?
e) How can we groom these students for the workplace realizing their lack of mainstream cultural experience, their less than proficient communication skills and their dependence upon Punjabi cultural values? How will they compete with English-speaking high school graduates in the present economy? How will they compete, select choices and experience success?

Hence, the shape, pace and purpose of ESL/ESD student education and its inherent cultural baggage become statistical issues for the school and the teachers.

Issues of the Punjabi culture’s will to adapt and nurture some mainstream attributes appear to trouble some teachers. Some teachers voiced their feelings of inadequacy. They felt the parents were not well-informed enough to provide direction and clear goals for their children. Thus, parental input for career planning, especially with respect to a non-academic youngster, was lacking. A teacher queries the changes in future generations:
...so what's going to happen? We can't change it. People from outside the community can't change it. It happens from within the community. It's going to be a gradual thing. The more people from within the community who become guidance counsellors, social workers, lawyers and teachers and get into those professions and work within the community and cast aside their fears about being Canadians, the less fear there will be. When they learn that you can be both Canadian and Indian and assure the community that you do not have to lose one to become the other, the better it will be...

(teacher A, Jan. 1994)

How teachers view student adaptation into mainstream society has a lot to do with the teacher's own stereotypes of Indians or Punjabi Sikhs. An administrator shares his perceptions:

...well, I look at the Indian community differently. As a student who was brought up through the North American education system, my idea of the Indian community was one in which I was taught the terms of Gandhi and pacifists. Now I'm seeing a different type of community in which there is a lot of alcoholism and physical abuse. And, I am dealing with that image. But again...I caution myself...my role is to deal with delinquents so the forty students who take up all my time do not reflect the hundreds and hundreds who do not and who are very successful in their homes, school and community life...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)

It is apparent that if some teachers do not make an effort to interest the parents in the schooling of their child, even though it is difficult, teaching may occur in a vacuum. The process of connecting, however, is difficult as an administrator explains:

...dealing with the home is a very, very difficult task here. In many cases, representatives in the home do not speak English ...the board instructs us that if we want to deal with the community we have to use the board translators. So, if I get a problem in the morning that needs to be dealt with immediately, we phone the board. They, in turn, will see if they can hire a translator to see me in four or five days when it is convenient to them, at a cost as well. Now that system just doesn't work when you want to deal with an important issue so we feel very hamstrung. Before, we used our in-school student translators, however, this infringed upon confidentiality and the temple (gurdwara) did not like it...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)
School communication with parents and guardians is at best substandard. Mothers, especially, need to be aware of events which affect their children. However, as most household males monitor the telephone calls in the home, the school must make a greater effort to relate to Punjabi mothers. When this has been attempted through telephone conversations with translators, parents have been most appreciative and their input has allowed teachers to better serve the student’s needs. Some teachers do realize the strength of this culture as witnessed by their impressions.

...I think for the students their faith is a guiding factor. They appear to receive inner satisfaction from going to temple. I’ve been told what’s preached in the temple is this relationship with women, how far a girl should go to school and arranged marriages. We are preaching our North American values and morals which contradict the temple type of preachings. To me, the conflict is deep within the community, as a Punjabi social worker said, ‘Students come to school here in the 20th century. It takes them ten minutes to walk home and they are in the 18th century. In ten minutes they have just crossed over 200 years of development’...and that to me is a tremendous stress on those kids, not us, because they have to deal with it...As of September, 1993, our board of education has begun teaching ESL courses in the temple which is an excellent community project and long overdue...we have to extend ourselves...

(teacher C, Jan. 1994)

The physical proximity of a massive structure such as the gurdwara near their school is a constant reminder of the challenge of the faith and the joy of working with parents and children who sincerely value schooling. The heartfelt views of some teachers underpinned the rewarding work they are doing with Punjabi Jat Sikh students in bridging the students’ cultural adjustment strife.

However, as Gibson (1988) relates, for Punjabi Sikhs it is accommodation rather than assimilation which occurs in education.
This process is demonstrated by adults as this explanation reveals:

...a Sikh father may at one time in his youth keep his hair and attend the gurdwara regularly. Then in adulthood, perhaps faced with finding a job with which to feed his family, he may cut his hair to fit in with other cultures. Then in old age, he may return to orthodoxy and teach his grandchildren about Sikhism. Through it all, he has remained true to his principles and has kept his faith, but he has modified his appearance to endure the realities of survival within the larger context of non-Sikhs. The fact that he survived intact with strength derived from his faith is more significant than his physical adaptations...

(researcher, Feb, 1994)

In essence, he never crossed the boundary of his kara, he simply modified his reality and came full circle back to it.

4.1.2 The community prescribes our daughters’ freedoms

Some administrators, since they have to deal with behavioral issues such as truancy, smoking, drinking, vandalism and student altercations, feel their role is misunderstood by the parents. So, they try to become culturally sensitized in order to alleviate any school produced anxiety for the students who may suffer punishment at home. An administrator discusses this role:

...I discipline a number of students during the week (skipping classes and attendance problems)... when I try to get the parents to work with us in correcting the problem ...I’d get a call back that the girl will no longer be at school...she was sent back to India... the parents said they have a fear of the western culture. They feel we are very, very relaxed with our kids and don’t discipline them. The female upholds the status of the family. If that young girl were to be associated with boys or become pregnant before she was married, the family would be in disgrace with the temple ...(so) they are very, very quick to get that person out. They feel when they send them back home (India), the offender will receive proper discipline...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)

...Oh, God, I hope he doesn’t call home, I’ll tell him nobody speaks English, so what can he do ?...It’s all going to be my fault. My parents are going to kill me.

(student, Nov. 1993)
I wonder how an administrator can listen to youth, sense their anguish and fear; yet draw a fine line between his position and his need to not alienate himself with the adolescents who trust and disclose to him. This dilemma is discussed by an administrator:

...to make a judgment call is not difficult because it is very clearly laid out for me in the Education Act. I know what the law says in cases of beatings and injuries, but what bothers me is when you know there is a minor occurrence, should you contact the home ... because when you contact the home, that particular person (usually a girl) has received a beating. Well, is the punishment fitting the misdemeanour? Do I make that decision or do I always keep the parent informed about what goes on in school and is kept confidential in the home? These are the difficult judgment calls...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)

What is the fear that most Punjabi parents have about their daughters? Is it a real or imagined fear, from the perspective of teachers, parents and the girls themselves? What does it mean to be a good girl or a bad girl? A teacher responds:

...parents are wary of their daughters becoming Canadianized in their lifestyle and being more socially active within the school setting, which is where girls feel secure in relating to boys of any nationality. Girls feel freedom here which causes home conflicts. The girls know that they are making decisions which are inconsistent with the home code of ethics, so they are caught in between...

(teacher C, Jan. 1994)

There are boundaries in life which you can cross, should cross and will be punished if you cross. Students question these artificial lines of behaviour. Who set these boundaries and has ownership of these boundaries? Who will know the difference? Whom will it hurt? Why disobey what you know is forbidden?

The teachers view schooling as a testing ground for future life in which an adolescent can safely practise the adaptation of pre-existing boundaries. However, the students view boundaries as
personal growth and maturity benchmarks as they weave in and out, constantly testing, teasing, ignoring or fearing how close they can come to the edge - beyond which they will be punished. I wonder if teachers understand how and why students dare to define boundaries? An administrator describes a common, boundary-based phenomenon:

...parents come to school just to make sure that their daughter is on location. Also, they will drive them here and pick them up, just to make sure if they are attending classes ...if you come here at 3 o’clock on a regular day, our driveway is filled with cars, up and down the street. It’s the parents picking up their girls. Our school is out by 3 o’clock and by 3:10 or 3:15 the female population is gone. They have been picked up and taken home. Their brothers may stay, but in most cases, they may be given until 3:30 or something. We have virtually no extra-curricular activities at this school because students are not allowed to stay after school to participate in any activities... other schools have baseball teams and football teams... here, sports have been virtually eliminated... also, I do not think any Punjabi kids have jobs after school... the girls for sure do not...
(administrator, Nov. 1993)

...one view is that the school means you go to class and do your homework and nothing else because you have to be home. What else is there for us, why would you want to hang around...for what? If the teachers are finished teaching us, we should be home. This is not our home. Another view is that Canadian kids have fun at school after classes... they meet their friends, hang out, do sports, work on the yearbook and listen to music and just talk...so why can’t I? I want to be like a Canadian kid. Why do I have to run back home where I have no fun, where I have to cook and clean, do my homework and listen to all the adults worry about who I am supposed to marry. I want to be free - not owned... I have to talk to somebody but I don’t want them to tell my parents...I have to trust the people at school. They are different...they try to be fair but they can’t help me understand why I am not allowed to change...
(student, Nov. 1993)

Students sense the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and rationalize their double lives according to Sikhism, while school staff view schooling according to Euro-centric values and ideology.
An administrator explains his professional ethics:

...I respect confidentiality and will ask students if this is something you want to keep within this room, and if they say, 'Yes' then that's fine and I do it...
(administrator, Nov. 1993)

An administrator has to tread a fine line, first to respect the cultural values of the home, and second to uphold the school law and civil law. The following excerpt relates this dilemma:

...her father was very high up in the temple...he had arranged a marriage for this particular year, for his daughter who was 17 years old in Grade 12...he decided that she had gone far enough in her schooling...she asked us what her rights and her parent's rights were under the law...we informed her and advised her to go home and try to resolve it...later we heard she was sent to India to be married...
(administrator, Nov. 1993)

Since the parent is the legal guardian, there is little that school personnel can do, except advise the student as the situation unfolds, when and if the student asks for guidance.

The following text relates snippets of female realities: a trip to India with a surprise, a married teenager’s guardian, the teacher’s dilemma in empowering females, mainstream culture misinformation, how the community keeps watch over females, sacrifices made for the most academic siblings and cultural issues which conflict in the curriculum.
A trip to India with a surprise:

It appears that the individual’s kinship, clan and caste protocol must be maintained to ensure the integrity and survival of the cultural group. However, the resulting majority and minority group culture clash deeply affects the school personnel and the students who are the main participants in this drama.
...I was here one day and gone the next. I went to India and got married. I might or might not go back to school. Yes, I am married. I will go back to Canada but my husband will come later. It says in my dowry arrangement that I will sponsor my husband who may take up to fourteen months to arrive in Canada due to immigration procedures. I have been in Canada for two years and my way of thinking is now very analytical. I understand English and know the difficulties my husband will have so he should go learn English first... the differences in approach to thinking are very difficult for me. There are a lot of pressures for me because I have to provide the finances for the family. I told my parents I will not marry if I visit India... then they told me on the wedding day, who I was to marry. I saw him for the first time on my wedding day. The decision before I went to India was that I would not marry, but I came back married...

A teacher-friend explains her observations:

...now whether there was undue pressure she did not say. She said he seemed quite nice. He started school immediately through the community centre. He came to her school a few times so she was helping him become familiar with Canada...

...I was physically exhausted due to looking after him, working and going to school. I did not want to live with my parents due to their problems. I did not want to risk him seeing their problems. I wanted everything in my favour so I got a separate place... my husband does not participate in or understand the Canadian work ethic. He only goes to work when he feels like it. He has told his family in India that he does not like Canada because you have to work hard... my husband did not get along with his family before coming to Canada. He personally created problems with me by playing my parents against each other, by creating misinformation about me. Finally, the truth became known...

The same teacher continues her analysis of this situation:

...the status of driving was very important to this male. It appears to be an obsession with young East-Indian males as it is a status symbol. In a month since he got his license, he has had two accidents and has been charged with careless driving. If he loses his license there will be no job at the fast food delivery place where he is a driver... His in-laws in Canada want to send him back to India if this occurs...

(teacher A, Jan. 1994)
It is obvious that the student confides in her teacher-friend, a reciprocal relationship which allows the student a trusting, outsider bond and allows the teacher valued insight into the internal issues specific to this Sikh, immigrant family’s angst. Both teacher and student are educating each other, an activity which often precedes the learning of subject material. The student shares with her teacher the acceptance of her fate and fear that now her sixteen-year-old younger sister is being groomed to travel to India to marry her husband’s younger brother. The married sister feels powerless to interfere, yet fears the reality of another burden. She discloses her fears to her teacher and finds that this female relationship is her mental health lifeline.

A married teenager’s guardian:

Some teachers and administrators daily straddle the fine line between what their role requires and what they feel is humane. The administrator’s actions in negotiating a neutral role between the home and school is crucial. The next female story reveals an examination of a dilemma surrounding guardianship:

...we had a situation here with a seventeen-year-old in which we were dealing with an attendance problem and within a month we were informed that she was now married, and now all our requests were to be directed to the husband who is an eighteen-year-old guardian...and now you have a situation where somebody’s attendance problem is somebody’s wife, who will sometime be a mother... and you are dealing with an eighteen-year-old, young man, new to Canada and Canadian culture who is her husband. You have to stop and wonder when is it that you stop dealing with a child and start dealing with an adult... Does a marriage certificate create that bridge between two types of students or does it put up a barrier in between? I haven’t figured it out yet...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)
Sikh sanctioned marriages for some sixteen-year-old girls represent a culture trait which baffles school staff. They can understand, although they do not advocate, mainstream, teenage pregnancies and teenage single-parenting because these situations result from freedom of choice; but the Sikh teenage marriages, they feel, do not result from freedom of choice, but from parental coercion. Some teachers feel this is immoral and irresponsible.

Many Sikh parents, however, want to shift the burden of caretaking and monitoring of their daughter’s morality over to a son-in-law and his family. This fulfils their cultural obligation of parenting a female without loss of reputation, an achievement highly commended by the community. A double standard exists in that a wayward daughter can destroy the family name; whereas a wayward son is forgiven without punishment for he carries the family name.

The teacher’s dilemma in empowering females:

Often, a teacher teaches the student empowerment skills which may present a dilemma: Should a teacher befriend, betray or empower the student? Is the student able to withstand the consequences of empowerment? Will the teacher be held responsible? This dilemma is related in the next female story:

... her husband decided that she was not going to go to school anymore. He just said you are going to work at the mall. So she was really upset because she really valued her education. She wanted me to talk to him, so I got an interpreter to speak with him in Punjabi. We were trying to impress upon her to finish her credits in this semester so she could have a better paying job. He did agree that she could stay... she was suspicious that in the next semester she would not be able to come. We called and she was able to come back to school. He wanted her to go to work because he wanted more money. What is the solution? Well, you have to empower her. She was now starting to take much more initiative for herself... starting
to take a stand on a few things ... starting to use a pattern. She knows there are resources. She has identified that they are there and she is beginning to initiate things. When she needs to, she knows how to pull in others. She found that when she cannot get what she wants directly, she can put pressure on him by using others. This is empowerment. Also, I find you need someone in the male side (South Asian community service provider or social worker) to take over outside of the school. Our jurisdiction is over, outside of school, but we can help students find resources to assist in their home life. (counsellor, Dec. 1993)

Empowerment must be used with caution because if the husband finds his wife liberated, aggressive and demanding; he may find alternate, perhaps negative ways to subdue her, which is not the goal. Instead, if both can learn how to stabilize their situation through equitable negotiations, long term behaviour modification may result. Schooling allows females to experience empowerment skills for self-liberation and/or family negotiations. School enculturation processes quickly permeate the community, through the students who translate the English world for their families. Events which interact with the kara's outside boundary also affect the inside boundary. Could this push-pull interactive, boundary activity represent what Sikh traditionalists resent and guard against - because it is impossible to monitor?

Mainstream culture misinformation:

Some teachers and counsellors become outraged bystanders who witness the frustrations of culture clash which educate them about Sikhism. The following typifies a Sikh, male character study:

...this one man came to me (ESL / ESD teacher and counsellor) to talk about his daughter. Her marks were poor but he wasn't worried about that...what he was picking up on, on the report card, was that she had five absences in one class and not any in any other and he was assuming that she was skipping ... I wanted to talk about the fact that she was
failing in three classes, not why she had five absences. He told me there was a code or value system. He had to make sure that she appeared chaste. She was going through the system as purely as possible because he wanted her to marry a boy from India, because the Canadian-Indian boys drink and sometimes do drugs...and then the woman thinks she can have a beer. He told me the boy she marries from India will keep her in line with Indian values ...the boys from here want a girl from India because they can keep her in line, because she doesn’t know Canadian society...and if he beats her, she won’t even know to call the police. I quickly added that the law is the law and that others can call the police on her behalf...
(counsellor, Dec. 1993)

Some school staff are appalled by the parents’ misinformation about western culture, and so are quick to rectify wrong assumptions, and try to educate and advocate on behalf of students.

The community keeps watch over females:

Some teachers feel that the Sikh attitude towards girls is demeaning and totally irrational, as the next story portrays:

...if I am seen walking down the street with a boy, anybody could tell my parents. In fact, I could be walking down the street with my brother and if someone didn’t know it was my brother, they could tell my parents and I could be beaten for being with a guy...
(student, Dec. 1993)

Another female student relates her painful story.

...I came crying to my teacher and told her that my mother demanded I produce a teacher authorized note stating the days I was present in school...because a neighbour phoned my mother saying that I was seen with a boy on a particular day...(the teacher wrote it and I was so relieved)...
(student, Dec. 1993)

Punjabi female cultural conditioning affects some teachers who then try to predict areas of concern and become cautious as to how school life will impact upon their student’s safety and welfare. When the plight of a student is acknowledged by a teacher - action is immediately initiated to educate and pacify the irate parent.
Sacrifices made for the most academic siblings:

This story reveals how parents intentionally or not, confer status upon children, based on academic prowess and potential to promote the family’s academic reputation and prestige.

...the father had the kids in school two days after they came from India...two boys and two girls. The eldest boy came in and got an English OAC, which he got in the 80's...The next boy’s skills were not as good...then came a girl who was very pretty and of average ability, then the youngest girl...very, bright entering the system at fourteen which is a good age. ...all had a good English education before they came here...then came financial problems...the eldest girl had to work every Friday night...
(counsellor, Dec. 1993)

The counsellor felt it was unfair that one child who was academically less strong should be sacrificed to work while her siblings studied. The forty hour, factory shift from four to twelve daily, followed by homework appeared to be an unreasonable expectation. The teacher felt the factory work should be shared by the siblings. Her concern did not impress the father who was an informed, diligent parent; yet he always found fault with his one, working child. His intentions soon became clear. The least academic child would be sacrificed, as the counsellor explains:

...well, you’re the one most likely not to succeed and are not as bright as the others, therefore, you are going to work in a factory. He was stacking the odds against her. He also told me that if she was too tired to do her homework, could we please give her a spare...however, when the family’s finance stabilized; she did leave the job, finish school and go to a community college while the rest of the kids went to university...
(counsellor, Dec. 1993)

The counsellor felt that gender-based cultural differences determined the freedom, personal worth and academic opportunities allowed Sikh boys and girls, a view which contravenes teachers’
middle class values. Sikh children are kept dependent much longer than other cultures. However, this dependency period allows the child to observe, mimic and appraise adult role-modelling, so it is an active training period for the future. Most Punjabi families foster attributes in their youth which teach them how to be prudent, wise, frugal and have a focus and commitment in life. Also valued are traits of respecting elders, socializing within the kinship, learning how to participate in religious and family functions and learning how to negotiate consensus. Most cultures value these attributes in their youth; however, they are more pronounced and rigid in Punjabi traditional family life.

**Cultural issues conflict in the curriculum:**

Cultural differences affect the school curriculum in many ways. One example is the girl’s physical education course which presents a culture conflict because girls must wear gym clothes which show bare legs and arms. The result of this was non-attendance and the loss of a compulsory credit. The irony in this situation is that the non-attendance was sanctioned by parental consent. Here, the school policy conflicted with the home culture, as an administrator explains:

...we couldn’t exempt them ... based on the Education Act, but we try to educate them ...on what is more acceptable to the community. There aren’t any co-ed phys.ed. classes here anymore. There are either boys or girls classes... it is something that developed in a school like this and we had to deal with it, at that particular time...

(Administrator, Nov. 1993)

The culture-specific tone of this school setting is obviously being shaped by the school’s clients and their traditional beliefs.
This situation is common among Punjabis although some parents are modifying their stance. Gibson (1988:159) also examined the difficulties encountered with girls’ physical education classes.

... ‘Our children cannot change for sports. This is against our culture’, said a Punjabi parent...Almost no Punjabi parents wanted their daughters to expose their legs in the presence of boys or men... some girls wore street clothes to class until they realized they would fail the course if they did not change into gym clothes, then they changed into sweat pants (not shorts) no matter how high the temperature was ... (Gibson 1988; 159).

The teachers’ culture believes in gender familiarity, socialization skills, a sharing of thoughts and ideas as a learning experience, and a less modest view of bare arms and legs.

Another example of culture and curriculum conflict is in collaborative group work, as an administrator explains:

..in science class when the teacher asks kids to work in groups during school, after school and on the weekends, there is a big problem. If you ask kids to call up each other for project work, I will get fathers calling me saying their daughter is being called by a boy. They see it as a very negative part of school. They want me to find out who the boy is and to talk to that boy’s parents. To me, it’s probably not warranted and it’s not something I want to get into...to developing resolutions between families ...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)

The role of the teacher, the curriculum and the precedence of Punjabi cultural taboos, inherent in the culture, often conflict. Why? It is so because the Punjabi parents want to control whom their daughters speak with, want to ensure that their daughters do not socialize with boys, and do not wish others to view their daughters’ bodies. The parents’ goal is to separate both genders until marriage so that they can deliver a "pure and untainted" female who cannot be accused of having any relationship with males.
Eventually, teachers and parents must compromise. Perhaps girls could wear sweatpants, perhaps homework groups could be all-female groups, or, perhaps weekend homework group work could be dispensed with. The Education Act and the parent’s religion should not be feuding, if the educational enhancement of the child is the goal. Instead, more trust, respect and open communication must be nurtured between home and school.

Another example of culture conflict and the curriculum exists in the Punjabi parents’ view that only math and science constitute status subjects necessary for university entrance, while visual arts, drama and music are considered to be frill subjects which lead nowhere. A teacher explains this cultural dilemma:

...I teach drama and English and I notice that after the mandatory drama class, all the Punjabi kids have to take other ‘more important’ subjects and the only kids left in the drama class are the white and black kids. The subjects like drama, music and visual arts become decimated because the Punjabi Jat Sikh parents feel these subjects are not worthwhile to study...

(teacher C, Jan. 1993)

This situation occurs because many Punjabis do not understand the western concept of a "well rounded child"; nor would many parents, themselves, have cultivated an aesthetic appreciation of non-academic, human talents. The western view is that a high school student should be exposed to a number of abilities, skills and social experiences in a wide range of non-academic but rigorous subjects to create a greater appreciation of life.

Consequently, the science and math subjects have priority and accordingly heavy enrolment; whereas, physical education, French, drama, music and fine arts tend to have less importance and
therefore a low enrolment. A low enrolment in subjects also determines which subjects and teachers will be cut, thus narrowing the diversity which other students and other schools enjoy. This situation is summarized in detail by an administrator:

...we have one of the smallest music departments in this board, which is one of the largest in Canada. Out of about 1000 kids about 55 are signed up for music...I would bet that not very many are Indian. I was just in a drama class...and I noticed that out of about 30 kids, only four or five kids were of Indian descent, the rest were Caribbean and others from the white population...the courses are very heavy in the math and sciences and we have a very large ESL/ESD department...in the fine arts and social sciences, the classes are very small and fewer...in this school there are about 65 % advanced level students and about 35 % general level students... (administrator, Nov. 1993)

Also, since Punjabi students cannot stay after school at this particular setting, the extra-curricular athletic activities became non-existent. Now, to what degree the Punjabi culture undermines the choice of extra-curricular school activities for students of other cultures, is debateable?

A negative consequence of the Punjabi parents' emphasis upon math and science for their children, is that not all Punjabi children possess the aptitude or interest to pursue professional degrees, so where does that leave the Punjabi ESL/ESD and non-academic learners? Problems, therefore, emerge when these learners are ridiculed at home and are compared to their academic siblings. This results in a damaged self-concept and a lack of career goals, due to the parents' inability to accept the fact that all children do not have the same gifts. Punjabi parents view high school credits as either job-related or post secondary education-related, but not as having intrinsic value for their child.
4.1.3 First we give boys freedom; then we rein them in

The school administration feels that most behavioral problems are confined to males not females, yet parents refuse to punish males. Teachers accept the double standard that either the boys cannot be controlled by parents or are not expected to behave, while the females are severely punished for minor misdemeanours. Double standards translate into gender inequity which presents conflict between the home and school, as an administrator reveals:

...parents have a completely different idea of the prominence of that male in the household... when you deal with a female, parents almost always expect them to be bad and they are very, very quick to punish a female student...
(Administrator, Nov. 1993)

This perception is difficult for middle class mainstream school staff to understand. However, the following snippets of male realities offer insight into the Punjabi culture mindset: a family burden being the lack of a male child, in school spying on females, and the dilemma whether to stay in school or get a job.

These situations are more typical in recent immigrant Punjabi households; however, the angst surrounding the lack of a male child is a common theme which is pervasive throughout Indian culture.

The family burden: lack of a male child

The family burden of shame for not producing a son is painfully described by a female student.

...my father became an alcoholic due to the depression of being without a son. The family takes responsibility for this situation. My parents do not get on well. Sometimes my father returns to India for a long visit. My sister and I are physically abused... I have held the family together financially and emotionally. My father has no sons, just two daughters. The shame factor is very heavy. I will be going to university in six months yet I cannot
It is natural that my father is depressed because we all have to bear the guilt for this... misfortune. I am smart but I can never be the boy we do not have. I am excited and scared about being on my own but I worry about my mother and sister because of my father's alcoholism. This is the destiny we must bear. We don't like it but we have to put up with it...
(student, Dec. 1993)

The daughters have wrongfully internalized blame for their parent's bad luck in not being able to produce a male child. To atone for this stigma, the females feel they must tolerate his alcohol abuse and violence. The women appear to identify with the abuser - the victim syndrome. So ingrained is the guilt that the genetic rationale of gender selection will not penetrate the horror of this lack in their lives. The commonplace grieving for the lack of a son and forgiving the negative behaviour of a son appear to be intertwined themes, as a school counsellor relates.

...when it came to the sons in this family, the father took a real interest...the father would come and talk about the son's subject options and career choices, the son's life...all the while making the son less and less responsible for his own life...the father would come in regularly, phone for updates and demand homework checklists for a seventeen-year-old boy... As soon as we stopped the absolute, minute by minute, monitoring (this kid would let go)...the father felt if his son wasn't doing his homework, it was the teacher's fault for some reason. He blamed (lack of academic motivation) on tv hockey and the boy's car...so his son was becoming 'Canadianized' ... (counsellor, Dec. 1993)

The son was not responsible for his life, others were. Also, the son was given a car and a television set, yet his father could not understand why he was not studying! It appears that when a Punjabi male child cannot fulfil the expectation of excellence, his parents are shocked and look for a scapegoat. The blame is then conveniently placed on the western culture, not the individual.
In school spying on females:

Next, a culture conflict which eventually involves the school administration. Sikh parents constantly monitor their children’s telephone calls. They especially guard against male and female interaction via telephone conversations. An administrator explains his professional position in this situation:

...an Indian boy and girl are phoning each other at home. The father wants to get me to find out who the boy is. They think it is the school’s role to deal with it... Yeah, the father wants me to act as a spy.... sure, but I understand exactly what my role is. I know how the school board defines my role, how the Education Act defines my role... so if something comes into conflict with that, I simply explain I can’t do what’s being asked because of my role definition... (administrator, Nov. 1993)

Some school staff become unwilling accomplices in boy/girl situations which arise out of the Punjabi cultural taboos. Some staff members are confronted with desperate parents who admonish schools for the academic success which eludes their child. They are reluctant to hear of academic deficits, culture shock or lack of motivation and interest in learning. They also appear unaware of the possibility that their son’s irresponsible behaviour and attitude may undermine his school success. Instead, some parents try to coerce school staff into acting as spies or pseudo-parents within school, in an effort to maintain cultural control. Perhaps this is within their experience elsewhere but it is not possible or ethical within a Canadian school setting.

The dilemma: stay in school or get a job

Why do adolescents forego studies for work? The answer is no different for Punjabis than it is for other Canadians. They want to
enjoy materialistic success and they want to elevate their self-esteem. Or, they want to have a purposeful life which means making money and/or avoiding negative experiences in school, as an administrator explains:

...the automobile is the huge goal that they want and I throw out of here on a daily basis, young adults...the 20 - 25 age group with Trans Ams. One fella I talk to works as a custodian at the airport and he says all the money he has, goes towards his Trans Am. It’s a night job that he has and so during the day he drives around the school, simply showing off his car. And that’s the extent of his objective in life. Now, by the time he gets to 30, he’ll find out there’s more to life... I see this (attitude) infiltrating into a lot of the younger kids here...
(administrator, Nov. 1993)

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the present wave of Punjabis living in this area is mainly from rural Punjab, India. So, their need to economically compete and survive in non-specialized skills positions may supersede their immediate need for an education. As the adolescents see their parents earning money and buying goods, so too they may feel they should earn now as opposed to later. This is especially true of adolescent males who may not be proficient in academics or may lack high, parental academic expectations. One could also say that perhaps having parents who lack professional status may reduce their child’s incentive to pursue higher education. However, many children prove the opposite to be true. Family histories, for some students are irrelevant if they are motivated, encouraged to excel, possess the aptitude to do so and have good role models.

There does not appear to be an absolute perception regarding why certain students are academic and others are not.
4.1.4 The Canadian teachers - who are they?

Some school staff participants remembered their childhood memories of "feeling different, feeling like you did not belong" which formed a strong connection to their Punjabi immigrant students. Childhood labels carry the painful burden of identity into adulthood: rural versus urban; rich white versus poor white; Eastern Europe ancestry versus British ancestry; accents which are demeaned and accents which have status; clothes which are fashionable and clothes which are handmade; an ethnic or immigrant child's lunch versus a "Canadian" child's lunch; one parent's English fluency and accent versus another parent's lack of English fluency, or broken English spoken with a thick accent; varying places of worship in strange languages with strange customs; and community discrimination of specific families as opposed to community admiration of other families.

When some teachers share their immigrant childhood memories in class, the Punjabi students invariably question why having the same colour skin as the dominant society did not earn them immunity from discrimination. Punjabi students are puzzled by this irony, which is explained by teachers who were outsiders:

...I have parents who were not born in Canada so I found many of the student’s situations were ones I had been through. I was not allowed to date a boy who was not Ukrainian. The parents all knew each other. We went to school together...to Ukrainian School after the English school. There are so many similarities...the pain of being different...
(teacher C, Jan. 1994)

...when I was in elementary school, they told my parents not to call me_____ because it was a funny name. Not being a WASP Canadian was not acceptable when I was in a Canadian school so I went throughout life being called Susy _____. I feel a
little bit like I am a hyphenated Canadian... excuse me, I did not hyphenate myself, you hyphenated me. And if I am not Jane or Mary Smith, I should be hyphenated because you cannot understand that I can be a Canadian and not be a WASP...? (teacher A, Jan. 1994)

These testimonials teach us that being white was no defence against not being of a "status white culture". Believing that the status culture was the most desirable so everyone should desire it, this child's name was changed by her elementary teacher to an English name. She became Susy____. Now she carried the identity of an English culture by demeaning her own. Why was she made to feel ashamed of her birthright? After twenty-five years of living in the skin of another woman, she was shaken from her reverie when one day in a music store, she heard an old, Ukrainian lullaby which her grandmother used to sing to her. Suddenly she changed her clothing, food habits, language, music interest and name - in short she returned to a culture which was stolen from her, in her childhood.

Often, a child's birth name, according to some teachers, is changed for the teacher's convenience. Or, sadly, the student complies and continues to answer to a mispronounced name throughout his/her school life. Teachers' pitiful rationales are explained:

...students with non-Anglo names present teachers with a dilemma. Some teachers stumble over the phonetic pronunciation of a long foreign sounding name; others graciously ask students to assist them in the correct pronunciation; still others ridicule the name, then Anglicize and abbreviate it without the student's permission. This insidious demeaning of student's cultures through his/her name and identity is a daily occurrence. Eventually, the student is shamed into accepting an Anglo name for peace of mind. Punjabi names shape identities, carry religious significance, are signature namesakes and define kinship, clan and caste. Tampering with a student's name is a blatant sign of intolerance and dominance over those who are vulnerable and powerless ... (researcher, Jan. 1994)
This "Anglo-Canadian" assimilation package is what the Sikhs oppose. This is why they wear the kara, to remind them of who they are, who they were, and who they are meant to be. They revel in the sacredness of their identity, which does not negate their need and desire to function outside the boundary of the kara.

**How teachers become culture-sensitive:**

Next, a male counsellor-administrator discusses his culture shock experience in a 65% Sikh and 35% white student setting:

...I'm coming from a white Anglo-Saxon background...and now I'm working in a school here where the majority of students come from a completely different cultural background...with different values and they prioritize their values differently from my experience... I learn so much everyday...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)

His insight reveals the experience of a paradigm shift which challenges: his ability to empathize with and counsel students who practise different cultural values; and, his ability to recognize what is an appropriate expectation for a mainstream student, which for a Punjabi student may be totally inappropriate.

Another teacher commented upon the richness of this particular school setting as follows:

...I just love it here...I would never move. Many people have come and gone. I have been to seven schools and this is the best... I learn so much everyday...

(teacher C, Jan, 1994)

Some teachers welcome the excitement of hearing dialects and languages of various cultures and they enjoy the challenge of learning with parents who view education with a non-western ideology. These teachers appear to be acculturated and sensitized. They enjoy diversity, have a liberal mindset and love life.
To this teacher the term "best" means a student who is goal oriented, displays motivation, wants to learn, possesses a sense of curiosity, appreciates the opportunity for an education, respects teachers and parents, desires English language fluency and is not focused on peripherals such as extra-curricular activities, dating and working after school. This teacher knows that the parents of these children have academic expectations for them, even though the parents may not be able to express themselves. Such a teacher rarely focuses upon issues of student learning gaps, slow learners, a lack of English fluency and home cultures which require translators. Instead, such teachers see learning opportunities, both for themselves and their students and do not feel powerless or frustrated by the challenges.

Conversely, some teachers are unable to allow for flexibility and their relationships with students, accordingly, demonstrate a lack of understanding, as the following administrator describes:

...teachers deal with kids in their own way. An issue can be dealt with in a positive way which is sensitive to the community and their needs, or an issue can be dealt with in a punitive way which is more in line with the teacher’s upbringing ... unfinished homework, well, rather than finding out why it wasn’t finished (sometimes the young girl had other duties to perform in the house or was beaten or upset over something) the homework then, to me, becomes an insignificant issue in light of the other issue...but the teacher still demands the homework and is not interested in the reasons behind it...

(administrator, Nov. 1993)

The issue here appears to be the teacher’s culture which is defining homework parameters, irrespective of the student’s personal stress at home. The teacher is disregarding the fact that a classroom is a living, breathing entity in which human beings
interact in safety and negotiate allowances. It should not be a place where a teacher’s inflexible cultural values are tested on those most vulnerable and powerless to complain or explain.

Other teachers commented upon how the school culture should redefine itself to reflect the change in clientele. This, they feel would assist the majority, non-Asian staff in becoming sensitized to the majority South Asian student body. An informal, oral survey of teacher comments suggested various alternatives:

...we could modify the Christian 'Christmas holidays' to a name which accommodates the multifaith, multiracial and multicultures of the community we serve. We should announce the Indian special holidays and events and show that we want to learn more about their culture... the presence of the student culture must be recognized by us... we should be having Indian role models as teachers. Students do not see themselves reflected in this school at all... we should learn about their value system and culture...

(teachers, Jan. 1994)

These teacher’s insights emphasize the following issues.

a) Teachers should educate themselves about the diversity of cultures, equity issues and about how the curriculum can reflect same. Also, teachers should attend places of worship with their students (i.e. attend a gurdwara service as a field trip).

b) Teachers should welcome, not feel threatened by, board policies which promote the hiring of teachers who share the students’ ethnicity.

c) Teachers should show an equal appreciation and understanding of the minority culture and the mainstream culture celebrations.

d) Teachers should investigate with students, the many creative ways in which their parents can become a meaningful, not peripheral or symbolic component in Canadian schooling.

An administrator provides a rationale for a very obvious question, "Why does your school not hire South Asian teachers when you have a majority Punjabi clientele and there are qualified South Asian teachers who supply teach within your board?"
He explains as follows:

...we'd love to hire Indian and Caribbean teachers but in the last five years we have only been allowed to hire one teacher. The rest have to be funnelled through our staffing setup because of our contract. Teachers who are declared excess here, have to be funnelled through to other schools who have shortages. So, what we have to do is not look at it from the school basis but look at it from the board or ministry basis. Also, if these students are going to be assimilated into this society, should they not be exposed to the North American point of view? So, I guess we then get to the situation that if you are going to be taught by your peers all the time, are the students getting the proper exposure? The best would be to get a balance. Of course we need more ethnic teachers...
(Administrator, Nov. 1993)

It appears that the generation in schools today will have to become the teachers of tomorrow, as the economy and school board contracts are not able to absorb those South Asian teachers who are presently available.

Next, an example of how educators, like other professional groups, possess human variances, exhibit differing tolerance levels and find change difficult.

...I had lined up a Punjabi student to assist in driving in a particular situation. The details had all been arranged and it had been confirmed. Then, on the day of the trip, I received a telephone call from her mother explaining that her daughter could not comply because the mother had to be driven to the airport...I tried to reason with the mother, that it had all been planned and could she not find her way to the airport without her daughter... No! My logic, I analyzed, was not culturally sound. According to me, once you make a commitment and others are depending on you, you must come through or provide a substitute. But the Punjabi culture feels that a parent's decision and interest overrides all else in the life of their child. The parent comes first...
(Teacher C, Jan. 1994)

This example reveals the cultural values of the Punjabi parent, the Canadian-Punjabi daughter and the Canadian, mainstream teacher. According to the mother, her daughter owes allegiance to
parents first; according to the daughter, her mother's needs override her teacher's needs; and, according to the teacher, both mother and daughter should have honoured the promise made first to the teacher, an issue which speaks of one's morality and maturity. Therefore, the mother's precedence in this issue appears groundless and illogical to the teacher. Each, however, is acting according to the appropriateness of her cultural values. However, a mature student would have had a back up plan so the teacher would not be stranded. This option, however, would only occur to the student if she had familiarity with the western culture's view regarding a breach of promise. Ultimately, this situation provided all three with a learning opportunity.2

4.2 Summary

The salient theme in this chapter is the teacher / recent immigrant student / curriculum dynamic. The teacher's role is complex. He/she must deal with foreign global cultures; disparate student skills measured on standardized student assessments; inappropriate and often obsolete skills-specific curriculum guidelines; young people's emotional and intellectual growth spurts; the interpretation of an increasingly complex and dangerous world with reference to health, technology, environment, social-cultural, political and economic issues; grooming of students for economically distressed, employment entry levels; and a transglobal educational revolution currently being forced on an aging teaching population at the school / college / university level.

---

2 See Appendix B (CBC: 1993). "Faces of Change: Faces of Hate".
The present teacher / student / curriculum relationship as reflected by the participants’ views and subsequent queries raised in this chapter, requires a profound look at the following.

a) How school socialization and academic thought is being translated, interpreted and implemented by teachers and textbooks.

b) How visible minority cultures, such as Punjabi Sikhs, are being positively or negatively affected or unaffected through marginalization, resulting from the government-prescribed and public-funded exercise named public education.

My belief is that the present teacher / student / curriculum dynamic of schooling is inappropriately entrenched in the Euro-centric based education model as exhibited by the teachers’ ethnicity, professional training and worldview which is displayed by today’s administrators, guidance counsellors and teachers. This entrenched mindset, which may have been appropriate for a previously homogeneous European-based population, is no longer morally acceptable in view of today’s multicultured society. Similarly at odds is the present Euro-centric based curriculum which prescribes, models and assesses dominant culture-appropriate skills, attributes and socialization patterns for students whose future success is dependent upon being groomed and marketed as multilingual and multiculture-sensitive Canadians. To this end, let us examine the philosophical issues on both sides:

The teachers’ concerns:

a) What is the teacher’s role in "befriending" a student in need and by whose cultural standards is this need determined?

b) What is the appropriate depth and definition of student-teacher relationships. That is, how are teachers to deal with a student’s cultural disclosure when it is none of their business?
c) What is the role of the teacher in advising the student to seek mainstream professional services when they know this is against the parents' and community's cultural and religious beliefs?

d) What is the appropriate sensitivity level teachers should exhibit in the inculcation of western philosophies surrounding free will, independence, individuality, self-fulfilment and competition as desirable personality attributes; knowing full well that this view is in direct opposition to the home culture definition of selfhood?

e) What is the role of a teacher in dealing with student diversity when the curriculum focus is to replicate the status quo mindset, values and beliefs which are presumed to be interpreted through teacher-biased attitudes? How can a teacher counteract this situation, this "educational experience" between oneself and the client?

f) How can a teacher's childhood, lived experience of "immigrantness" or "ethnic personhood" become a catalyst for future dialectical, educational reform?

The parents' concerns:

a) When did we lose control over our children? Why is being different and looking different not respected in the schools and workplaces of this country?

b) What is so wonderful about being western? They eat a great deal of dead meat, frozen vegetables and stale food; they smoke, drink and take drugs; they have no respect for elders; they experience intimacy when very young so their children are having children; and they are rude, inconsiderate and self-indulgent and prefer to live and die alone. (These are generalized, stereotypical perceptions commonly held by some traditional individuals.)

c) We fear that we will lose our culture and traditions in exchange for the "good" education our children must have. We feel violated, confused and angry - was the tradeoff worth it?

d) We know nothing about this school system. They (teachers) must know what they are doing but my son/daughter comes home and says nothing. This Canadian schooling is something we do not have in common with our children, so we do not discuss it. It is also difficult for us to help in the children's homework because they are learning differently from how we learned.

e) We just want a good education for our children, not the western way of thinking, because we have to pass on our own Indian identity and traditions through them, to our grandchildren.
The intersection of white privilege and the ideology that concentrates reality of people's lives (Dean 1995: 2).

The necessity of a discourse which must incorporate gender.

Mandatory and Criminal 1993.

Social groups, masculinity and racism.

The recognition of the social effects of "race", that is the recognition of the social effects of race through the recognition of social processes that reduce experiences of minority groups in white dominated societies. A need to explain the ideological and material racism and patriarchy that structural aspects of dominance within the human experience which intersects with the philosophical and class and sexuality as fundamental and rational aspects of the discourse of a discourse which must incorporate gender.

The recognition of a discourse which must incorporate gender.

Social processes which serve to differentiate and discriminate among social groups that would allow all teachers and students the ability.


Jointly practice and participate in cultural humility, an activity of people who are the recipients of same, can learn how to power, who shape the dominant culture and the educational pedagogy.

education. What follows is a discussion of how the people in race.

The term "racism".

The disturbing dialogue - unpleasant yet not tolerable boundaries.

(a) How can the home and school pedagogy have equal status?

(b) Why cannot the home culture and school culture be the same?

Table: Cultural dominance in education.

What part of each child is the school's domain and what part of home?

These concerns illustrate the following questions:

school or school environment (school or...
A need to question, 'Why are some students led to believe that whites are in the majority in the world?' The necessity of a discourse surrounding the belief that the recognition of privilege should be matched by a recognition of social disadvantage and a willingness to do something about it (Dei 1996).

The moral obligation of schools to constantly reflect on their teaching methodologies (pedagogy and curriculum strategies) to ensure that they capture the wide body of community and off-school knowledge and expertise that students bring to the school and classroom environments (see Erickson 1987; Banks 1993; Ernst, Statzner and Trueba 1994).

The ethical obligation of education to provide and nurture a holistic understanding and appreciation of the global, human experience comprising social, cultural, political, ecological and spiritual aspects (see Leah 1995). The need to center the ideas of human spirituality and humane values within the learning process (Dei 1996).

The need for educators to appreciate and internalize how students' racial, class, gender, disabilities and sexual identities affect and are affected by the schooling process and learning outcomes. The need to understand that identity refers to the individual 'self' and personhood (Dei 1996).

The recognition of an urgency in the education system which demands inclusivity. The need for a greater and more efficient response to minority concerns about public schooling. The need for participatory 'working communities' where social responsibility is brought from the margins to the center. A need to promote the school's moral obligation to seek a peaceful co-existence among students, staff, parents, teachers, administrators and local community members. A need to realize that diversity and difference mean that a wealth of knowledge is available for the benefit of all. The desperate need to actively recruit, retain and promote minority staff and teachers. A need to recognize that inclusive schools cultivate sustained institutional support for the development of minority students' cultures, events and interests (see Dei and Razack 1995).

An understanding that schools are part of the institutional structure sanctioned by society and state, and as such have historically served the material, political and ideological interests of the state and those of industrial capital. A need to appreciate that when public schooling segments the labour force by systematically consigning students certain categories or classes, the resultant inequalities become the successful or not successful students. Therefore, marginal students must be targeted at an early date, as education has historically not worked for all students (Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller 1992).
The recognition that school problems faced by the youth cannot be understood in isolation from the material and ideological circumstances in which youth find themselves (national and global restructuring especially for racial minority women and economically disadvantaged youth). Recognizing the belief that the search for explanations for some students' non-conformity to the dominant values and norms of society demands a holistic analysis of the whole structuralization of society (Dei 1996).

The recognition that the denying or shifting of responsibility for school failures onto the family or home environments, purposely avoids a critical interrogation of what happens in schools and why; how students experience schools and why; and how this experience affects their learning outcomes and/or conventional definitions of school ‘success and failure’. These issues require investigation (see McLaren 1993).

According to Dei’s (1996) goals for school reform, which incorporate anti-racism education principles, the teachers and administrators discussed in this chapter should:

a) diversify the curriculum by nurturing a global-cultural perspective in novels, poetry, media, print, movies, videos, music and newspapers instead of promoting the Judao-Christian worldview;

b) experiment with the cafeteria menu by introducing a more cosmopolitan menu for both students and staff;

c) invite guest speakers, prominent community workers and especially women in male-oriented positions who represent the Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Jain and other non-Christian faiths in order to educate and inspire specific students; the focus being to role model and elevate the status of other cultures in the eyes of teachers, administrators, students and parents;

d) establish "World Religions" as a compulsory high school course credit and consequently arrange for students to visit various places of worship (mosque, mandir, gurdwara, temple, synagogue, shrines, healing circles and pow-wows) to become enculturated in global religious worldviews and worship rituals;

e) encourage the study of languages such as Japanese, Tamil, Bengali, Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Mandarin, Portuguese and others offered by the school board outside of the day-school curriculum, for students who share and do not share the same language ethnicity and culture, in order to create a linguistic and cultural experience base;
f) include as compulsory high school course credits: Aboriginal, Afro-Canadian, Asian and Oriental History; the study of early childhood development, parenting, geriatrics and citizenry; summer school courses in the study of music encompassing the steel bands, sitar and instruments of other cultures; school drama performances, not of the Shakespearian period but of the above cultures’ historical epics; teach science and math within the contextual framework of how peoples’ history interfaces with the study of logical thought and phenomenon;

g) mandate that teachers and administrators are to update their professional qualifications by studying accredited culture-sensitivity and anti-racism courses;

h) allow the parent a greater comfort level and ownership in the school environment by discussing the student’s portfolio / report with the parents, teacher and student, collectively; in a partnership, not adversarial approach, focused to inspire, mentor and gauge the learner’s academic and social progress; and

i) allow the student’s voice to be represented in the school’s plan for school success which includes student representation on various committees dealing with:

   a) discipline policies, vandalism, violence, peer-mentor and mediation issues;
   b) fundraising, health and safety issues;
   c) anti-racism education, equity relations, curriculum reform and portfolio assessment issues and Parent Councils;
   d) increased co-operative education choices and credits;
   e) student council representation and culture / language specific counselling for parents and students using multilingual counsellors and staff members;
   f) commercial venues within the school; and,
   g) the promotion of physical education and after school activities attended by the community membership.

Schooling which is focused on student and parent inclusivity would introduce the student to citizenry through a culturally-defined model, which may be practised throughout his/her lifetime as wage earners, parents and tax payers.

The anti-racism education praxis involves the nurturing of inclusivity and equity which promote freedom in thinking and learning, thus allowing both teachers and students to access other cultures’ visions and worldviews. These views would be entrenched
throughout the outcomes-based curriculum and so would find expression in curriculum interpretation, implementation and assessment. By establishing an inclusive, anti-racism education, teacher-training program and by mandating educational reform across all boards, the present paternalistic attitude towards "foreign culture students" would be, hopefully, erased. This attitude is reflected by many sincere but confused teachers who believe that the cultural assimilation of all students within a traditional, Euro-centric model, methodology and assessment style, constitutes their job description. Instead, they must realize that anti-racism education is good education for all students and all teachers, because its inherent creative problem-solving and power sharing quality reevaluates the teacher-student equation, and the content plus mode-of-learning equation. At present, schools are locked into a culture shock mentality, shown by both the recent immigrant students and the school personnel. Anti-racism education erases the "otherness" complex, thus allowing cultural and human diversity to become the threads by which the educational fabric is constructed and lived. This eliminates the need for apologies, permission and subterfuge with which to camouflage differences.

Until the Punjabi Jat Sikh kara’s boundaries plus other cultures and their boundaries are valued and acknowledged in the curriculum and exhibited in the hiring of a multicultured teaching staff, the exotic mysticism and curiosity of "otherness" will exist. And so will exist mainstream assimilation forces, however subliminal and innocuous the instrument of choice to drive them.
Where have we come from and where are we going?

The context of Part One of the Broken Covenant both defined the covenant and the kara boundary tension in the conspiracy of disclosures. The context of Part Two of the Broken Covenant, including Chapter Four and Chapter Five reveals the broken shards of the covenant, or cultural tension reflected by the subliminal and overt assimilation tactics experienced in schooling and social work. Conversely, if education were not an assimilative force then all cultures would not be asked to submit to a standard level of mainstream culture citizenry - or would they?

Chapter Four has explored how Sikhs are defined and confirmed as different and consequently assessed as to their ability to acculturate. Also revealed were spirals of introspection such as how the teachers related to their own immigrant childhoods and therefore how they related to their students' childhoods.

Next, we experience Chapter Five "Broken Covenant: social services, an intrusion or a necessity?" wherein we examine how South Asians are framed, analyzed and perceived as "different" according to the Euro-centric ideology research models.
Chapter 5. BROKEN COVENANT: SOCIAL SERVICES, AN INTRUSION OR A NECESSITY?

5.1 Our cultural boundaries govern our conduct

This chapter discusses the perceptions of four Punjabi Sikh social service providers regarding their place in the lives of their clients who view their role either as an intrusion or as a necessity. Social A. is a female social worker who is an advocate and support worker for abused women in a primarily South Asian community; Social B. is a female, children’s protection officer in a mainstream agency; Social C. is a female program coordinator for the South Asian community; and, Social D. is a male health and community worker in a mainstream service who assists in South Asian cases and educates mainstream social workers.¹

The Punjabi Sikh community is reluctant to seek advice from mainstream social workers due to a lack of English fluency and a cultural taboo against disclosing personal matters to strangers. This taboo of shame also prohibits them from sharing their intimate problems with a Canadian neighbour or friend. Therefore, the venting of personal issues is restricted to the family and to the extended relative kinship, who model and monitor behaviour. In a crisis, kinship members mediate, console, negotiate and offer both victim and aggressor the means of face-saving while monitoring

¹ See the following:
"...Asian immigrants are a heterogeneous group of people who have come to North America from many different countries of origin including Japan, China, Korea, India, the Indochina peninsula (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand), the Philippines and Samoa (Kitano. 1980). As a group they are divided by differences in language, religion, educational level and general socioeconomic background (Schaeffer. 1979)...Often people migrating from only one country seem to be so diverse culturally that there is little in common among them, other than their country of origin...In India, the northerners feel little kinship with their southern countrymen, and vice-versa" (Varghese. 1982) (Yelaja (1982: 121-132).
their behaviour. Thus, if a mother-in-law instructs her new
daughter-in-law about her family customs, food preparations,
celebrations and gestures of respect (such as touching the feet of
elders to show respect and humility); the mother-in-law is then
held responsible for the learner’s successful implementation of
these behaviours.

Punjabi speaking social workers serve as a conduit between the
client and the mainstream professionals. From the South
Asian category, most of the Indian clients are Punjabi Jat Sikhs,
which, according to one social worker, represent 3% of their
total clientele. Sikhs compose the majority of this percentage as
they represent the majority in the South Asian category and because
they have an emotionally volatile disposition. This small
percentage, however, does not reflect the actual cases of Punjabi
cross-cultural conflicts and domestic disputes, as Punjabis tend to
deny the problem exists until it reaches a crisis stage. The option
of accessing a service provider of one’s own ethnicity is more
readily available today, than ever before. However, some people
prefer mainstream professionals because they feel an outsider will
show objectivity and will respect their confidentiality more than
a professional from their own ethnicity.

Thus, with a view to educating myself and my readers, the
following insights have been collected. I will either paraphrase or
directly quote the above participants’ responses in this chapter.
Some participants, after much soul-searching, contributed to this
study by allowing their insights to uncover the veil of rigidity
and control which the Punjabi culture wields within its kara. It appears that the collective culture’s shame and loss of face constitute a threat to the family sanctity - the repository of our secret and sacred stories. This chapter is a cultural narrative of Punjabi social workers and counsellors who deal with Punjabi clients; however, the specifics of issues discussed here should not be generalized to all Punjabi families who experience conflict.

Interestingly, few Punjabi Sikhs encourage their children to become social workers. Punjabi parents feel social work is volunteer work performed by do-gooders, and so do not view it as a status career choice for their children. This attitude, however, is slowly changing as their children realize the professional edge one has with specific language and cultural skills.

5.1.1 How quickly the immigrant dream dies

The Punjabi Sikh culture is dominated by those males who possess English language fluency, psychological control over family members (especially women) and financial acumen. Why, then, does this male dominated culture constitute most of the South Asian social work clientele? A professional responds:

...I believe this is so because (Punjabis) tend to be more aggressive, emotional, uninhibited, independent thinkers and exhibit less internal self-control... this is apparent in their interactions both here and in India. This appears to be a common trait. In India many ethnicities and kinship groups are demonstrative but Punjabi Jat Sikhs stand out as being more than others. These traits are not all negative or all positive as Sikhs have settled in every country of the world... one thing about Sikhs is that they are a very adaptable race. Their community is able to adapt their lifestyle to different cultures and yet retain what is culturally important to them and make a success out of it...
(Social B. Feb. 1994)
When families leave India or other countries to come here, they have no idea what their future holds. They have a dream of economic and employment freedom, equal opportunity and western education for their children. They want to accumulate materialistic goods, find fulfilment and experience happiness. However, the price exacted for the realization of their dream is unimaginable. Some, otherwise healthy families, become dysfunctional because they are shattered by the disintegration of their dreams in the face of stark reality. The immigrant dream demands the sacrifice of one generation for another. Conversely, many families accept Canada as their home because their children are born into a Canadian mainstream lifestyle; yet carry their ancestral country's culture, to a greater or lesser degree. This ideal balance then allows the parents to maintain their personal "Indianness" with peace of mind.

...the immigrant families who come here (from their homeland) are not fully aware of what mainstream culture is about. They want to keep their culture traditional (how they have been brought up for generations) ...they want to hold onto and not eradicate the values of their culture. They want to pass it on to their children...
(Social C. Nov. 1993)

Parents feel their sense of "Indianness", transported from India and other host countries, binds them to their traditional roots, knowing this emotional attachment is more pronounced abroad than it is in India. If a parent explains to an eighteen-year-old daughter why she cannot date, mainstream parents will not understand; however, Punjabi Sikh parents will understand. This is the comfort zone of the kara, living within the understood boundary where we look inside our family and are consoled by the bond of
consensus building. So, what do Punjabi Sikh parents fear most about mainstream society? A social worker gives a candid opinion:

...there is much fear that our children, especially our girls, will become like white children (whom it is perceived, all date, sleep around and do drugs)… parents fail to see all the functionally good qualities in the white mainstream society. Instead, the parents generalize about the white society from the media reflections of white lifestyles. The media always portrays the bad side of society so Indian parents tend to generalize this to everyone in the mainstream.²

(Social C. Nov. 1993)

Television provides, for most homebound, less literate Indian parents and elders, daytime programming which includes a steady diet of sex, violence, drinking, drugs and homicide, which they feel is culturally typical of the white society, beer commercial mentality. These viewers may be composed of a group of recent immigrants or elders who have the least daily contact with mainstream society, and therefore the least appreciation and understanding of their life, values, workplace, community and religious affiliations.

5.1.2 Don’t tell us how to raise our children

Physical and verbal abuse are commonly used, to varying degrees, by most Punjabi families because that is how they were disciplined. Sometimes, parents overreact and abuse their parenting rights because they have childhood memories of mother or

² It appears that when Punjabi Sikh parents discover that their children may also be dating, drinking and taking drugs, they fail to look within their parenting strengths and weaknesses, for all the blame is conveniently placed upon the mainstream culture and its influence on their innocent son or daughter. Perhaps this naïve explanation is derived from a culture which lacks a constructive pattern of dealing with youth deviance. The parents rely upon physical and verbal abuse, ostracism, shunning and shaming the perpetrator because this is what they have experienced back home. When it does not work here, they are overwhelmed and rely upon immediate relatives and elders to become negotiators or peacekeepers. Sometimes this works but sometimes mainstream professional strategies could be more functional. If only the Punjabi Sikh clientele would trust the service providers and not feel that they have lost face in the community (researcher).
father giving them an occasional slap to correct their behaviour and shape their personality. They do not believe that this method of "good parenting" is harmful. Rather, they are shocked to discover that in Canada, extreme types of discipline could translate into illegal child abuse. However, when discipline becomes a parent-anger management problem, then it is a legal issue as a counsellor relates:

...when youth argue with their parents, they often telephone us and we provide services telling them where to go for counselling, both supportive and crisis counselling, which we offer - but for professional counselling they must go elsewhere...
(Social A. Dec. 1993)

Social workers feel that Punjabi Sikh parents need education regarding normal, teenage rebellion because the parent's overly demonstrative actions create a tense family environment, which may escalate the parent-child conflict beyond normal limits. Parents feel their children should automatically obey them without any negotiation or compromise. This is not the case in Canada, where Punjabi children are daily subjected to the western culture insights regarding human rights in the school, media and literature. A counsellor relates:

...parents forget that when they are in a new country, their children have to mix up with another culture... so if the adults have come here and mix with these people for survival, their children must also do the same because their future is here...parents should be willing to be educated but they can't solve their problems, because they are not willing to solve their problems...
(Social A. Dec. 1993)

We teach children that if a parent abuses you, you should disclose and not hide the issue. But, what happens when an
immigrant parent comes to this country with cultural baggage which disregards the child’s freedoms, rights and powers? How do the children, who due to Canadian schooling are becoming more socially aware than their parents, deal with this dilemma? One of the risks is that children may take advantage of this fast track knowledge and ignore their parent’s threats, or they may live a double life in order to satisfy both cultures. Parents feel their children are taught to "dial 911" if someone abuses them, a security measure they agree with, but they are not taught the responsibilities tied to this power. Thus, resentment exists between the laws of this land and the values of parents from different cultures, because they see empowerment of children as a one-sided issue. They feel it wrongfully favours the child’s independence and individuality and not the parent’s rights and obligations in shaping their child’s morality and behaviour. Thus, the moral and legal question arises, "Do you own your children or are they simply entrusted in your care?" Culture conflicts between children and parents constantly challenge this question.

5.1.3 The shame factor hurts our Sikh pride

Children, through education, are aware of physical and sexual abuse and their rights which they discuss without recrimination. However, how a mainstream family and how a Punjabi family handle the same situation is dependent upon their collective and individual cultural code of ethics, morality, worldview and problem solving skills. In the Punjabi Sikh community, many adults deny that sexual abuse exists, when in fact it does, although to a
small degree. They assume that if one ignores the problem, it will simply disappear and eventually become erased from his/her memory. The resulting angst felt by a Punjabi mother who fears the experience of shame in her community is described by a counsellor:

...in the mainstream culture a child may tell a friend that someone touched them inappropriately and in the mainstream culture the non-offending parent (mother) may remove the offender from the house... however, in an Indian family there exists a greater consensus of denial that it ever happened... Later, the child comes back and denies it also. That is where the mother is not functionally defending the child... the mother knew and they still lived as a family... the mother was protecting the male offender because the community shame was so horrible. She did not want the community to know about it; she didn't want anyone to think it has happened. For some mothers, the first thought is to remove either the offender or the child, but in this case, there is total disbelief and denial... the shame is that nobody should know that this happened and who will marry my daughter if they find out she was a victim of... by still allowing the offender to live within the family, the denial is perpetuated...

(Social B. Feb. 1994)

Due to younger children living in the same home, the Children's Society had to become intrusive. They apprehended the abuse victim and placed her in a white foster home because Indian foster homes are rarely available, as a social worker relates:

...this fifteen-year-old Punjabi female did not like the food, so refused to eat... she missed Indian food, friends, family and especially her mother... she was allowed to have her freedom in this foster home so she began to openly date her boyfriend, which sent her mother into shock... then knowing her daughter was headed for trouble, the mother designed a plan... mother felt that her daughter should be sent to India to live with the grandparents, where she is today. Then we closed the case when she became sixteen-years-old...

(Social B. Feb. 1994)

---

3 It must be noted here that the Punjabi Sikh or Punjabi culture is not the only one which denies sexual abuse within the home. Nor is a parent from this culture any more or any less capable of professing denial and choosing to address the issue by ignoring the issue. All cultures, to some degree, have parents who are dysfunctional and incompetent (researcher).
The scarcity of Indian foster homes raises an issue. The rationale is twofold: a) since Punjabis feel that child abuse does not exist, Indian foster homes are not necessary; and, b) due to the Punjabi kinship denial of abuse, there exists no coordinated planning to accommodate the consequences of abuse intervention, if and when it arises. This perception of reality has caused much unnecessary heartache. The first choice of a foster home for an apprehended child of any culture is a family relative, barring that the next choice is a white foster home. Here, invariably, the child’s culture and the foster home culture clash. The white culture includes personal rights, negotiable curfews, age-appropriate dating privileges, mainstream values and an unintentional ignorance of the foster child’s ethnic background, as a social worker reveals:

...we had left a four-year-old Punjabi female in foster care and the next week we were in shock! The foster mother had cut her hair and styled it to suit her own little girl’s haircut, which she felt made the child look cute... she also felt the child’s bracelet was too tight, so she cut it off - not realizing it was the sacred Sikh kara ... then the child was vomiting out the English food because it was foreign to her, also she did not eat meat ... It was a mess!... (Social B. Feb. 1994)

The foster mother’s actions caused the child’s parents much more turmoil than the reason for which the child was initially removed. However, this issue presented a catalyst for change because the ensuing dialogue created a culture-sensitive education program for foster parents who received training in intervention care. However, the fact that Indian teenagers in foster care experience total freedom, late curfews and the opportunity for
intimate relationships through dating privileges, still presents an unresolved issue which pains the community. Ironically, the white foster home values concerning personal freedom, act as a subconscious deterrent for Indian parents, who are faced with a choice: either learn how to communicate and negotiate with your teenager or suffer the consequences of foster care where your teenager will have access to exactly what you have forbidden. Given a choice, parents fear the alternative placement more than their child’s present problem, as a counsellor relates.

...since the Indian mother and father did not, could not or chose not to access counselling (mainstream or Punjabi) for the abuse problem; we did not succeed in reprogramming them and so there was nothing resolved for any participant, be it the mother, the offender, the victim or the siblings...
(Social B. Feb.’94)

Since Punjabis prefer not to disclose family issues to professional outsiders, the family unit must portray cohesiveness and compliancy, although the family may be privately suffering. The sexual assault of a child rocks the sensibilities of a Punjabi community because it is such a violation of innocence. It sharply contradicts the Sikh scriptural teachings regarding human respect and protection for the weak and vulnerable, as a social worker relates.

...there was a lot of damage done because no one had the courage to resolve the issues. Why did this man do this thing? What impact will this have on the girl’s psyche? The parents rejected therapy because the incident was over and done with and why are we bringing it up again and again? ... why can’t we forget about it? It didn’t happen. They blotted it out. It was just a momentary lapse...
(Social B. Feb. 1994)
Distance, time and education allowed the victim to become defensibly prepared against this crime, if it ever reoccurred.

However, parents feel they require little therapy as revealed by the following situation.

... our culture wants our girls to be home right after school...if students finish at 3:15, they must be in the door at 3:20 as parents know the exact time it takes to walk the same route everyday... this father knew to the second, how long it should take his daughters to walk home...and if they were late... God forbid what happened...
(Social B. Feb. 1994)

Due to the father's paranoia and resulting physical abuse of his daughters, he was asked to undergo long term therapy from which all members of his family benefited. He gradually realized that he could not use physical abuse as a parenting strategy. The mother now also feels empowered as she is aware of the culture-sensitive counselling services available to her, in Punjabi, in her neighbourhood. The daughters benefited from counselling and matured with educational insights into the positive parenting of future generations. One daughter married an Indian and the other daughter came home to live, after two years in care and independent living therapy. This Punjabi home environment thus adapted to the educational reprogramming of each member by allowing the skills of negotiation and communication to replace parental distrust and control.

5.1.4 I deserve equal adult status as a mother

Punjabi mothers are sandwiched in the middle of other generations. Often, they and their children learn English together; however, when the older children move on academically and
socially, sometimes it is a seven-year-old who must translate the English world for the mother. A child in this role possesses enough power, influence and maturity to selectively inform the mother, who is then held accountable by her husband for any family crisis which arises out of this misinformation. It is usual for the father to blame the mother for not raising the children properly, meaning she has been negligent in her role as a mother and wife.

However, her role is complex. She must rear Punjabi ethnicity children, possibly born in Canada, according to traditional Punjabi ways, a situation which constantly places her in direct conflict between her children and her husband. She may protect the children by not informing her husband until she loses control and a crisis results. Now she is held responsible for letting her private family situation deteriorate into community gossip. The result is twofold: a negative impact on family relationships and on the husband-wife relationship, in which the father is absolved of all responsibility. A social worker explains this phenomenon:

"... language makes our children very parentified. When a youngster can communicate in English...is responsible for the caretaking of younger siblings (which allows the parents to work different shifts), keeps peace in the family, assists the younger siblings with homework...you are usually a teenaged or younger girl who is a pseudo-parent ... so, our children generally become parentified much earlier in life as is true in other immigrant cultures, and much earlier than the white culture..."

(Social B. Feb. 1994)

Punjabi mothers endure the burden of ensuring the comfort level of all the family members. The woman may be a working mom who comes home, does the cooking, cleaning and washing; a working mom who fulfills the needs of elders and older sisters-in-law within a
joint family home; and/or a working mom who does all this plus look after her elderly parents, who live with her married brothers.

Recent immigrant or traditional family Punjabi women are constantly being challenged.

...with great difficulty our ladies come to a threshold where they cannot endure the present situation. In our culture it takes a long time for this to happen...our leader, our husband is always to be respected and we are taught to respect and endure whatever a man deals out to us. There is, however, a limit to what a woman can and will endure and once this limit is reached, women cross it and seek assistance by speaking to a friend ... many know they can get help but choose not to because they feel that raising kids alone is difficult ... they believe their family respect and family name will be dishonoured. Also, the fear of the foreign outside world compared to the fear of what they presently endure, is an important issue. The woman's parents may say... 'No, adjust. You got what your fate (karma) had in store for you, so put up with it...!'

(Social A. Dec. 1993)

Only when a Punjabi woman can no longer survive in a situation possibly because she fears for her life, will she request social work assistance. The social worker describes the conversation:

...we tell them that going to a shelter is not a stigma because there are people and services to assist them...they are not used to living alone...it is not our custom...it takes a lot of courage for us to leave our marriage home...shame...

(Social A. Dec. 1993)

Women who leave home suffer the consequence: guilt, gossip, loss of their family's reputation and good name in the community, an assumed lack of religious fortitude, a public display of non-compliant behaviour which reflects upon one's training from one's own parents, and a stigma placed upon one's children. The human need to seek help beyond one's kara, to ask a foreign culture for lodging and protection, represents the utmost betrayal of one's culture. The consequences of returning home, for some, are worse
than the initial dysfunction which caused the exit from home. For others, the threat of leaving home forces the oppressor to recognize the resulting loss of family reputation and so curbs their behaviour. Some women cannot return home, for they fear the escalated violence, the recrimination for their cultural betrayal, which awaits them and becomes fortified as time goes on.

The issue is whether a woman should defy her husband’s absolute authority or seek safety in exercising her legal, human rights? Thus, separation, divorce and infidelity are human relations issues which exist within the kara, although they are rarely displayed. Divorce, however, is becoming increasingly more acceptable.

...when an individual cannot cope, a lot has to do with a person’s strength and personality...the way they have been brought up, their background and education...an Indian mother and her family who have just arrived don’t know what to expect ... don’t have the cultural know how ... living in a culture which is opposite to what they know and believe...how can they survive...then regressive mood changes in behaviour and depression set in... (Social C. Nov. 1993)

Women appear to be the convenient victims in a patriarchal society deterred from accessing outside, professional assistance for their personal problems. Instead, elder intervention within an extended family replaces outside therapy because elders offer advice, make judgments, analyze blame and initiate forgiveness. The aggressor may be forced to feel ashamed and so may search for positive strategies, but when the shame factor wears off, the situation again reaches a crisis point. Therefore, Punjabi social services are vital, but only if the community endorsement and
the victim’s personal courage to break with tradition are present. Recently, select gurdwaras have recognized the need to allow entry to social service workers in order to educate the public and air what is usually kept hidden and quietly discussed by male elders.

The joint family household is beneficial to all members because of the shared roles: household, babysitting, counselling, religious training, parenting duties and sharing of expenses. The elder role-modelling in spiritual guidance, childrearing and counselling appears to strengthen the kara’s boundary for the children. Often, it is the elder’s courage and foresight which cushions the cultural shock of interfaith and interracial marriages within the kinship. However, if a power play exists among the elders, the household suffers from internal dissent. For example, an elder may be a marriage broker or may select a reputable marriage broker who is entrusted to form kinship alliances between families of same status and same caste clans. However, not all Punjabi families subscribe to this model.

5.1.5 If a man cannot control his household, he is not a man

Punjabi Sikh men are groomed from childhood for a patriarchal role, inherited from and modelled by kinship males. A man’s status is measured by the degree of his family’s compliance. Punjabi parents accept a lifelong responsibility for the success, happiness and wellbeing of their children, who are addressed and regarded as "children" forever. Parents sacrifice to satisfy family needs and so are profoundly shaken when a child goes astray, breaks with the faith, chooses to marry a non-Sikh or rejects the opportunity
of a status profession. Conversely, the child’s penance for betraying this relationship is equally traumatic. A social worker explains this ownership of children:

...we gladly go into debt and work double shifts in this country to provide our children with a university education, our daughters with a substantial dowry and set up our sons for life. We sacrifice ourselves to give our children the best that this country has to offer ... we do not deny them their needs... we do not collect rent from them or kick them out of our home when they reach a certain age... they are not a burden - they are our pleasure in old age and the reward for our labours in this country ... we want very little from our children: they should be the best students they can be; they should not drink and smoke (and some families have meat restrictions); they should obey, love and respect us, our culture, language and traditions; and most of all, they should marry their choice within the educated Punjabi Jat Sikh men and women available... good morality, clean habits and good education are our priorities. This is the reason why we left our home ... Is this too much to ask ...?
(Social B, Feb. 1994)

If a person does not marry within the appropriate Sikh caste, there is an intangible sense of loss which is eventually absorbed by time and distance. Cultural adaptation appears to initiate blame and betrayal, as explained by a social worker:

...sometimes our kinship system of elders ( aunts, uncles grandparents ) is asked to intervene and settle family disputes and it works... today, some of our children will not listen to the elders who are removed from their generation and Canadian lifestyle. Then the system breaks down. In order to listen to an elder... you must respect who they are and respect what they have to say ... if not, their advice and their relationship with you is superficial and ineffective...
(Social B. Feb. 1994)

Some Canadian Sikhs prefer mainstream social service professionals because their advice is perceived to be more realistic and objective. This opposition to elder status and kinship interaction is labelled by some as cultural erosion.
Canadian identity is worn differently by both the Punjabi children who embrace cultural adaptation and their recent immigrant parents who may reject adaptation, because it threatens the parent’s link with the past. Parents know why they must be vigilant, yet both experience stress due to the conflicting tension between Indian, traditional parenting roles and Canadian, contemporary parenting roles. The following scenario exemplifies how rigid role expectations create havoc in some family dynamics:

...there might be one girl who has rebelled against her parents, society and all norms. She makes non-conformist friends...boys who create family friction within her home. They start by threatening her, ‘So, you won’t go out with me. Well, I’ll just phone your father.’ They phone her home and her father answers...

Boy: Can I speak with _____?
Father: Who are you and what do you want?
Boy: Well, I go to the same school as ____.
Father: ...well, you are not supposed to phone here...

...now an argument is created and most likely the father will beat his daughter...again, the school scenario will come to mind because the counsellor will not understand and the girl will not be believed in our society...the father may rationalize, ‘Well, you must have done something because otherwise why didn’t the phone calls come two years ago. You must be trying to cover up something...’ So, it is better for her to keep quiet because she has been betrayed by all...

(Social D. Jan. 1994)4

A father is expected to govern his home, which is why parents become involuntary participants in capricious, female abuse. Many fathers and daughters experience pain as each blames the other for

4 Punjabi girls are not to be telephoned at home by any boy of any culture, for any reason, although girls may telephone her, especially female relatives. Punjabi boys may be telephoned at home by either boys or girls except girls who phone boys may cause the parents grave concern. In Indian households usually parents answer the telephone and usually the father or brother because they know English. Girls are not encouraged to answer the telephone and if they do, everyone has the right to question her; whereas the boys may receive and make unquestioned telephone calls as they may have access to the vehicles in the home. This, however, is a broad generalization which would not apply to a great degree in those families who are not recent immigrants, and even in recent immigrant families, exceptions do exist (researcher).
misunderstanding presumably innocent situations. Some males feel that the role of a "father figure" in India is far more personally rewarding and socially satisfying because it is clearly defined and carries more status. Here, the Punjabi cultural boundary and the Canadian lifestyle which is economically driven, constantly present dilemmas which must be resolved by a respected male or an influential male elder. Some males, as a social worker relates, have trouble coping and therefore look for a temporary escape.

...alcohol abuse has increased in the Punjabi Sikh male community... social drinking has escalated to abuse of alcohol which results in the majority of domestic violence cases... a female alcoholic is very rare in this community but a male alcoholic is common. For women, female alcoholism is a shameful degradation. For a man, male alcoholism is laughed off as an acceptable macho behaviour...  

(Social B. Feb. 1994)

Alcohol abuse is common in many cultures and Punjabis are no more and no less affected than others. However, the significance of the degree of alcohol abuse, for some men, may represent the weight of their perceived burdens. These burdens include culture shock, the responsibility of a patriarchal role, the quest for material success, the constant tension within the kara regarding self-identity, and the force of western culture assimilation in the next generation. This male-oriented pressure could simply be the price of immigrant cultural adaptation. This adaptation may include uprootedness, alienation, lack of coping skills, dysfunctional behaviour patterns, domestic violence and family disintegration.

---

5 See the following:
However, certain personalities are more susceptible to addiction than others which makes this issue a non-culture specific issue.

5.1.6 Why suffocate the girls and worship the boys?

Punjabi Sikh gender grooming often produces family conflicts which, when they reach a crisis stage, require the skills of a Punjabi social worker. The physical abuse of females, in an effort to control them, is an accepted parental right in some Punjabi homes. Family stress occurs if a daughter is difficult to control. If she constantly tests the boundaries, she will be sent back to India and once there will be married off or will be forced to comply. The list of an outcast female’s potential misdemeanours include being seen as dating various Indian males or white males, being sexually active, having an abortion, drinking and smoking in private or public, running with a wild crowd and unnecessarily living out of the family home due to an incompatible lifestyle. If a male were to behave in the same manner, he would be considered willful, not an outcast. Most females, however, simply want the freedom their Canadian cohorts enjoy: the freedom to dress, accompany each other, behave in a western, liberated manner; have hair treatments (cut, perm, colour, style); wear make up and have a part-time job. Due to the increased communication between parents and teenage girls today, this cultural rigidity is being modified. Eventually, the child grows to educate the parent through life’s stages as both mature and mellow.

Most Punjabi males experience less parental pressure although some males are closely monitored and groomed, depending upon the
parent's expectations. The parent's goal is to steer a course midway between the "absolute influence and survival influence" of mainstream culture; however, steering this course creates confusion, as a social worker relates:

...the school philosophy is to nurture the individual 'self' thought of as 'me, myself and I', meaning this is whom I should think of first.... the Punjabi Sikh focus upon the culture and religion, putting the collective interest before individual interest...the needs of elders, parents, siblings and relatives before your own...this creates conflicts for a child, who is taught in school to think of his/her needs first...
(Social B. Feb. 1994)

This perceived egocentric attitude is thought to underpin the female desire to demand choices in life which include the choice to date, remain single, postpone marriage, enter graduate school, follow a full-time career or move away to study or work. Living outside the Punjabi norm, for a female, imposes the necessary burden of guilt; whereas for a male, it is a necessary step for career grooming. Double standards abound as a counsellor relates:

...parents protect their daughters from the immoral mainstream society not wanting 'our girls' to become like 'their girls'...boys are reined back into line when it is time to arrange their marriages. If they do not marry a Jat Sikh girl then family conflict results...after reflection, the boys realize that a white mate may not endure what the traditional Indian wife is taught to endure - abuse, oppression, control, relentless nagging...(Although most girls are not so docile today.) Since most males model their parenting roles after their fathers, they agree to an Indian wife...some males do not betray their white soul mates and so have an interracial marriage which may result in ostracism from their family, temporarily or permanently... these cases are becoming increasingly apparent but the emotional cost is very high...
(Social B. Feb. 1994)\(^6\)

\(^6\) The increasing incidence of interfaith marriages between Punjabi (Sikhs, Jat Sikhs, or simply Punjabis) is due to many factors: the parents underestimating the degree of influence a dominant culture can have on their children; the availability of mainstream women whereas Indian women are not encouraged to date
Career choices for Punjabi Sikh adolescents cause social stress in families as parents ignore a child’s aptitude and interest, and replace it with images of status and future gain. ...there are certain professions in which the child may excel but the parents will not allow because they are considered lower status professions...acceptable career choices involve university education (doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, engineers). These are the status, prized professions for upward mobility and marriage marketability. If their children cannot cope with the requirements for these professions, the second best choices include nursing, teaching and policing, although policing is not as prevalent...girls and boys are not encouraged to be models, barbers, hairdressers or butchers, especially Punjabi Jat Sikh youth, due to the caste system mentality which designates which castes cut hair, sew clothes, make jewellery and touch animals and leather goods...also, if a youth wants to be a journalist, visual or graphic artist, designer, or a computer software designer, their choice again is highly suspect depending upon the parent’s education and enlightenment... (Social D. Jan. 1994)

Punjabi parents value specific careers because they have status both in Canada and India, they offer a higher salary, and they enhance their son or daughter’s profile in the arranged marriage market. Thus, parents find a university degree has a higher commodity of return, socially and financially than does a college certificate which exceeds the status of a high school diploma. For most families, these papers rank and label the intrinsic worth of an individual. A degree is essential even if the person never works in the field because the person and his/her

---

career choices for Punjabi Sikh adolescents cause social stress in families as parents ignore a child’s aptitude and interest, and replace it with images of status and future gain. 

...there are certain professions in which the child may excel but the parents will not allow because they are considered lower status professions. Acceptable career choices involve university education (doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, engineers). These are the status, prized professions for upward mobility and marriage marketability. If their children cannot cope with the requirements for these professions, the second best choices include nursing, teaching and policing, although policing is not as prevalent. Girls and boys are not encouraged to be models, barbers, hairdressers or butchers, especially Punjabi Jat Sikh youth, due to the caste system mentality which designates which castes cut hair, sew clothes, make jewellery and touch animals and leather goods. Also, if a youth wants to be a journalist, visual or graphic artist, designer, or a computer software designer, their choice again is highly suspect depending upon the parent's education and enlightenment. 

(Social D. Jan. 1994)

Punjabi parents value specific careers because they have status both in Canada and India, they offer a higher salary, and they enhance their son or daughter's profile in the arranged marriage market. Thus, parents find a university degree has a higher commodity of return, socially and financially than does a college certificate which exceeds the status of a high school diploma. For most families, these papers rank and label the intrinsic worth of an individual. A degree is essential even if the person never works in the field because the person and his/her
family’s status remains intact. This is the rationale for spending money on the education of females - to increase their value in the marriage market. In truth, a minority of people in any culture attain professional academic status, which makes one wonder how the rest must feel and where they must fit into the marriage market? A social worker explains this process:

...if a female has a masters degree, parents feel her chances of marrying a male with a masters or doctorate degree are much higher... this attitude is a source of great conflict and depression for our girls...some have tried to run away and the rare, extreme cases resort to suicide... it appears that a girl’s very own existence is not valued by the parents and the culture itself...
(Social D. Jan. 1994)

The pressure of appearances, education, marriage, cultural identity and the role of tradition carrier shape the destiny of a Punjabi female from birth to death. Her role has a script yet she is held accountable for the whole family’s performance. Gender-based inequality is an inexplicable phenomenon, especially when it contravenes the Sikh scriptural philosophy of discrimination intolerance. Yet, it thrives and is perpetuated!

5.1.7 Who is counselling whom?

Family social stress is also caused by the attitudes of same culture youth against each other. Racist remarks become the focus of irritation aimed at both the South Asian youth who demean each other and the white youth who demean South Asian youth. How the mainstream counsellor is prepared, or not prepared to deal with each issue is explained by a Punjabi counsellor:

...I think the white guidance counsellor can handle the incident of white youth verbally abusing an Asian youth because there are policies and documentation which deal with
this issue. However, they cannot deal with the situation involving an Asian youth verbally abusing an Asian youth. Counsellors are not trained to deal with same ethnicity peer racism... For instance, a young, Muslim girl wearing a headdress is taunted by her peers, 'You look stupid with this. Take it off. What's the matter with you. You look like a refugee.'... When she appeared before the guidance counsellor, she was told, 'Well, this is among your own kind. You must deal with it as best as you can... this is an internal cultural problem which you must resolve by yourself.'... The sad result is that same-ethnicity racism is escalating and the professionals are not equipped to deal with it...
(Social D. Jan. 1994)

Within the Punjabi Jat Sikh community, there appear to be two groups: the recently arrived Punjabi Jat Sikh youth from India who speak mainly Punjabi and hangout together; and the Canadian-born or earlier arrival, Punjabi Jat Sikh youth who speak mainly English, barely understand or understand but do not speak Punjabi, and hangout together or with mixed ethnicity Canadian classmates. Each group either tolerate or irritate each other. One group is called the "refugees" and the other is called the "whiteys" or snobs. Each portrays a racist elitism possibly taught and experienced in the home environment and reinforced by the many trips to India.

According to Punjabi counsellors, mainstream counsellors appear to lack culture-specific professional training and the will to combat intercultural adolescent feuding. Lack of appreciation and understanding of the South Asian, multi-cultured history, worldview, language and religion may be the issue. It is always easier to understand and advise a client whose culture and values a professional shares, as opposed to a non-mainstream culture client, whose values and culture a professional does not
share. Punjabi Sikh counsellors feel they can best appreciate the Punjabi parents’ expectations and their child’s dilemma in fulfilling same. Punjabi professionals feel they are more successful in defusing their client’s polarized anger and rage, and can better educate the dysfunctional family because of their language fluency in both Punjabi and English. Also, since they appreciate and understand the broken covenants which signify the Punjabi, intergenerational family angst; they believe they can deliver a more culture-appropriate service, than can the mainstream professionals.

5.2 Summary

The salient themes in this chapter reflect the Punjabi Sikh "sense of self" expressed through their emotional, spiritual and physical wellness. These include the following:

a) The ethics which constitute traditional Punjabi boundaries.

b) The life circumstances which transform a healthy, self-sufficient family into a temporarily dysfunctional family.

c) The familial and cultural in-group dynamics which cause families to suffer culture shock and loss of control in their lives.

d) The question, "Can Euro-centric based psychological models, research, social worker philosophy and health care training, adequately diagnose and treat a culture which is outside of their realm of experience?"

There exists an extensive body of literature to support that South Asian cultures (Punjabi Sikhs included) have been studied by social psychologists, educationalists and anthropologists. Included are researchers such as Naidoo (1992) who specializes in gender, race, class barriers, role perceptions, values, adolescent socialization and achievement aspirations; Ghosh (1983) and Ralston
(1992) who examine comparative racism and sexism evident in the lived experiences of South Asians within mainstream society; and Joy (1989), Buchignani (1985) and Jain (1984) who respectively discuss issues of women’s employment regarding gender exploitation, discrimination barriers and comparative incomes and roles; a social history of South Asians which reflects cultural accommodation, racial adaptation and policy making; economic "glass ceilings" and equity issues.

Many studies from the last fifteen years have addressed, "Who are these people? How are they different? How can they best be served?" In doing so, South Asian perceptions have been collated through questionnaires which dutifully document the realm of English semantics, translated into key words for classification models which include: ethnic/gender identity (Agnew 1990); premigratory experiences (Kutz-Harder 1989); racial stereotypes (Henry 1983); dualistic worldview (Naidoo and Davis 1988); cross-generational self-concept (Khosla 1981); intergenerational value conflict (Wakil and Siddique 1981); father dominance (Qureshi 1992) and authoritarian families (Kurian 1992), to name a few listed in the Research Bibliography compiled by Naidoo (1994) Appendix A.

Scholars tend to label the Punjabi culture according to its position within the Canadian mainstream culture mosaic (Naidoo and Davis 1984). The scholar’s problem is how to measure the degree to which a visible minority culture, does or does not fit into mainstream society? I agree with the legitimacy and necessity of this quest but not with the moral logic of the research model and
its methodology. It assumes that the Canadian mainstream culture, since it is held as a measuring stick for other cultures, exemplifies domestic bliss, workplace harmony, positive mental health and a more valued cultural morality, ethics and worldview.

Supporters of this view include Ng (1981) who believes that people do not feel "ethnic" in the lived reality of their daily lives which transforms the term "ethnicity" into a social construction device, contrived to categorize non-whites into the pre-existing politics and economy of mainstream society. Srivastava and Ames (1989) found that specific women's experiences of gender, race and class, if not observed from their lived reality, produced data which is constrained by the theoretical and methodical limitations of conventional social science. Naidoo (1980) also took issue with the research methodological problems regarding cultural privacy and cultural ethical concerns and questioned the theoretical assumptions about human nature based on comparative studies of western cultures. Ghosh (1979) had earlier realized that validity existed not only in comparative studies between South Asians and other cultures but within the myriad of South Asian cultures themselves. Researchers now began to look "within the culture" rather than "at the culture". Thus, Joy (1984) found that the South Asian "Cultural-Values Differential" surfaced when wage earning Sikh women contributed to the family income. They did so not to increase self-fulfilment or to equalize their power base at home, but to increase the family's collective economy. Thus, research which allows an eastern mindset to contextualize the
theoretical parameters, is best able to gauge the lived reality data necessary to frame intercultural similarities, which teach us more than cultural differences. We need to appreciate how varied cultural boundaries resist, regroup and reaffirm their positions within the matrix of complex human lives.

Why is being different considered unacceptable? When will visible minorities become the status quo by which other cultures are measured? Perhaps this situation will occur when the dominant culture views minority cultures as non-threatening and worthy of introspective study. Punjabis are proud, insular and private and so resist seeking solutions to life's hardships within the offices of Canadian professionals or between the pages of self-improvement paperbacks. This culture is primarily introspective, self-healing and accepting of its fate. Perhaps, as Dei (1996) an anti-racist scholar states,

...the issues of social justice, equity and powersharing are more than moral imperatives ... social reality is not independent of human experiences...we must be rooted in a firm identification of self and the group...
(Dei 1996; 133-134)

My point is that to dissect a minority culture and validate its differences as exotic deficiencies outside of the norm, is morally unacceptable research. Rather, we must reassess our worldview to accommodate that of others and nurture culture-specific professionals to better serve their community in their holistic manner. Thus, the "self" within the kara can choose to accommodate change or can choose to appreciate why change is, or is not necessary.
296.

The signature of narrative inquiry:

What composes the threads of narrative inquiry which weave their way throughout Chapter Five? First, what is the perception that Punjabis harbour about the social workers and their professional role? A possible answer may be as follows:

...most Punjabis view the helping professions with suspicion but for some they are a godsend...the human universals touched upon in this chapter include the immigrant dream, the cultural threat felt in schooling, the cultural shame felt when child abuse becomes public, a female’s cry for equality with an end to patriarchal oppression, a man’s discomfort in the traditional role of Indian household leader in the midst of powerful mainstream forces, the inequities faced by females caught in a double standard mentality, and finally a brief glimpse of the tension between mainstream and Punjabi social services and their limitations...
(researcher, Mar. 1994)

Second, it is apparent that acts of female oppression can be found in abundance inside the kara as well as outside the kara and can be found in all cultures. If so, what is the issue which breaks the covenant? Could it be that the stress level experienced by the turmoil of a patriarchal kinship is higher than the stress level experienced through the mainstream assimilation forces? If so, questions abound:

a) Could the threat of mainstream culture be a hoax?
b) Do boundaries imprison those inside as much as reject those outside?
c) Are we fighting ourselves or invisible enemies we have created?
d) Can the kara turn in, on itself, and self-destroy?

Cultural boundaries invite criticism because they discriminate between insiders and outsiders. This, then, becomes the standard by which in-group affiliation is measured. However, how the forces of
change, both inside and outside the kara’s boundary, function and acquire definition may be more significant to question, than the fact that these forces exist. It is ironic that Punjabi awareness of western culture assimilation overshadows Punjabi dismissal of its intergenerational family tension, evident within the kara. This tension often translates into domestic violence which, if severe, requires professional assistance.

Third, the professional’s purpose is to work with the client, his/her family and the people in mainstream society with whom they interact, in order to initiate behavioral changes and to nurture an awareness of cultural differences, both intercultural and intracultural. Since adults tend to role model the parenting ways they experienced, if a professional does not understand this culture, how then can he/she service the client? Conversely, with such an abundance of cultures, how is it possible for a professional to be aware of each culture’s worldview? However, realizing that the goal is to effect positive cultural change, social workers should understand the cultural ethics which have meaning in similar culture clusters. They should have insight into the individual’s needs, within the collective culture and then engage in a host of alternative culture-specific strategies.

Where have we come from and where are we going?

Chapter Five revealed a spiral introspection of Punjabi clients who do not understand why some of their cultural customs appear strange; nor do they understand the price of infracting the law. The second part of the equation are the mainstream social
workers who do not understand the culture and/or the Punjabi social workers who are underutilized due to their own culture’s embarrassment regarding disclosure and perceived employment discrimination. Chapter Five revealed "culture" as a living, breathing viable entity which interacts, disperses, then interacts and disperses again, developing the pattern of self-fulfilment and self-preservation. This activity, unfortunately, appears to be viewed through the inappropriate Euro-centric research models by which we, Punjabi Sikhs, are studied and labelled.

To encapsulate our theme, Part One allowed us to define the tension of disclosure and conspiracy within the kara; Part Two allowed us to examine the broken lives, the broken shards of our Sikh lives; and, Part Three allows us to examine whether the kara was ever broken or can ever be broken? It also speaks to the definition of the term "broken".
PART THREE

THE BROKEN COVENANT

A union of two Canadians: blended boundaries, reconstructed lives and realigned covenants, forever!
PART THREE

Part Three allows all the participants, including myself, license to heal and bring closure to an enigma,

...was the covenant broken to begin with, or was it just my imagination - my need to place blame, seek sanctuary and receive absolution?...
(researcher Jan. 1995)

That, perhaps, is another question for another researcher, far more eloquent than myself, to either investigate or ignore, for the choice and challenge of questioning cultural taboos thinly disguised as scholarship, float everpresent in the flotsam and jetsam of the human psyche which is saturated with absurdities.

Part Three, Chapter Six concludes the study by bringing to closure the questions of Chapter One:

a) How can one locate and identify the "self"?
b) How can this "self" be recognized by others, both Punjabi and non-Punjabi?
c) What defines the personal inquiry of the writer and the readers as both discover the Punjabi Jat Sikh "self"?

In short, how does one locate one's voice, one's audience and one's words for resonance of "self"? Chapter Six allows me to explore shades of resonance: letterwriting, wherein my voice asks for and receives an audience; the development of my writing style and the writing process in narrative; and my biography which reflects an alliance with grandpa's (babaji's) life and ledgers. In Part Three, we witness a resurrection or a restructuring of the boundaries of the broken shards within the kara, so that what was once broken or transgressed may become whole again. However, becoming whole again assumes mutation, paradox and change, so one may ask, "Was the covenant of Sikh culture ever broken?"
This circular argument reflects images of the circular kara worn as a signature of one's faith, duties, obligations and boundaries defining Sikh morality and ethics. Could this argument underpin rhetorical questions framing rhetorical lives sliced within vigilant layers of an ethereal veil of tears - before a vengeful God?

I can restructure my covenant by replacing the broken shards of my life, my cultural boundaries, with invisible boundaries which will define and translate my selfhood to others, by giving myself permission to cross cultures without the burden of guilt. Thus, healing can occur. Yet, I question the healing of intimacy:

a) Would I have written about the Sikhs, had I not been one? Could I have written about the Sikhs, if I were not one of them? How would a non-Sikh writer have framed our collective reality?

b) How does one measure and attest that truth, in fact, exists? Or, is truth simply an individual's version of his/her reality and therefore exempt from the version of reality of others - the pious and insignificant others?

The letters from my audience of fellow graduate students in the course, "Works-in-Progress", demand cultural universals, communions and comparisons. The letters ask, "How then are Sikhs different from Ukrainians or Jews or Hutterites or others...?" and, "Why me? Why was I destined to write, what perhaps should not have been written?" The intimacy of words is a raw "self" which pulsates with the infuriated rhythm of immortality, coaxed by a maelstrom of emotions and alliances involving our Sikh betrayal and redemption, our proud sacredness, our insolent scorn, our paralysed pride and passion...and so much more...and more...
Chapter 6. BROKEN COVENANT: MY VOICE, MY AUDIENCE, MY WORDS

6.1 My voice requires an audience: the letter writing

This chapter highlights three areas of my writing which are inextricably intertwined: my voice as researcher requiring an audience reflected in the writing of letters; the writer's craft expressing a need for me to believe in myself; and, my fascination with words which constitutes my biography.

The researcher's role defines my need to voice and have an audience relate to my work, actualized in the graduate student letter writing experience, which brings closure to my writing and thinking styles.

The writer's craft is a graphic discussion of how my writing evolved, first in the belief that I could write, second in the belief that I could write in the narrative mode a piece of work to educate others, a work of value.

My childhood fascination with words traces my rural life experiences of the English and Punjabi languages, the household and community life of my formative years and my relationship with my grandpa (my babaji) and his ledgers. I cannot speak for grandpa, but I sense his covenant and mine - our
collective Sikh covenant could incorporate change. Change is simply the inclusion of man-made boundaries, shaped by human resiliency, lodged in our psyche, not to be spurned but to be accommodated. I walk hand in hand with grandpa knowing that what I am, is what he was and ever more will be. Our faith sustains us, shapes us and allows us to look at destiny and infuse it with optimism, hope and courage. I cannot be denied for grandpa was never denied - nor were our people. We took what we needed and wasted not the preciousness of our sacred and secret "selves". We enshrined the pristine scriptures of Sikhism and internalized the message, the rituals and the taboos. Restructuring boundaries is a human act, a creative act and must be mastered, for incompetence is disastrous.

Letters create an audience relationship - once strangers, these men and women touched my mind and graced my quest with their respectful presence, in hearing my words of painful resonance and pride. They explored the caverns of my undulating and vigilant bearing. They returned my trust, used but intact. They cautiously sliced into the delicate folds of my thoughts, wisps of vague realities and translated therein the voices which struggled for release. Mercifully, the proud and courageous Sikhism of my ancestors - that which could break me and destroy me, chose instead to fortify and sustain me so that I may speak, what is not spoken. The learned audience asked:

a) How and why did you choose this topic, or did it choose you?
b) Why place yourself in a controversial situation as a writer with a cultural and ethnic membership in your area of research?
c) How did you execute the act and art of writing? and
d) What impact will this topic have on teachers and the greater, public readership?
Dear April:

I learned a great deal from your presentation last week on Punjabi Jat Sikh youth in Canada. I did not have the faintest notion of the cultural challenges presented to both Sikh parents and their adolescents in seeking to live in Canada. I was shocked to realize that something as seemingly harmless as group work could be a big issue to Sikh parents who wish to keep their daughters and sons pure, both culturally and sexually.

I was also taken with your comment about the challenge of trying to bring the participant, the reader and the researcher all "to the edge"... you made it very understandable to me as to why Sikh parents would want the distinct values of their culture retained in this new land - why they would want to bring India to Canada. They, thus, place great importance on the proper moral upbringing of their children, planned marriages at the appropriate level of the caste system and entry into certain highly regarded professional careers. As you so aptly put it, it really is an issue of continuity for them.

Then there are the Sikh youth. For them, continuity means being able to do what their peers in this country, not India, can do such as going to the mall, dances and dating whomever they choose without chaperons. These issues become obstacles for them. Such concerns are powerful symbols of the freedom that these youth feel they lack. The Sikh youth's permanent move to a new culture while, at the same time, having parents who strongly wish to retain the previous values, must make the confusion and anguish felt all the more acute. I would be interested to know whether Sikh children in Canada who are not pressured by their parents such as your children, feel any pressure or confusion regarding their culture?

It is my strong impression that this particular undertaking inextricably and very personally links you, as a researcher who happens to be both an educator and a Punjabi Jat Sikh in Canada, with both your subjects and your audience. I think that these links might be even stronger than is normally the case in a narrative study, for it is your ethnicity that you are looking at and you apparently do not view it in the same way as other Sikh Canadians. I would imagine that this is where your feelings of taking a risk, of being out on a limb, come from. Like both your subjects and your audience, you seem to find yourself in a dilemma: your obvious passion and feelings of spiritual and ethical obligation with regard to your topic; and the legitimate desire to not stand alone on these important and potentially very controversial matters.

I find some interesting parallels in our situations. Over the previous two years I have spearheaded a vigorous defence of outdoor environmental education field centers in my board. These centers face closure due to finances. I remember asking the same questions as you, "Am I the right person to be doing this? Why me?" Taylor
Dear Taylor:

I like your title, "Are we fading away?", which heralds your passion - saving outdoor education for Canadian youngsters, from budget cuts and asinine, insipid mentalities. I draw a parallel. The Punjabi Sikh community, like the sole survivor of bureaucrat consensus, also questions, "Are we fading away?", which elicits the same emotional defence.

We will not allow the dominant culture to assimilate that which is the heart and sole of our being - our Sikhism! They can teach my children but can never have ownership of our legacy. I will not allow foreign contamination of my values and freedoms, especially intermarriage, westernization, free will, independence, alienation and I will not allow the English language to disintegrate my kinship, my values, my being. This being, this precious "self" represents an insignificant conquest for the consensus population - but it is my very world, my center, my core - without which my existence lacks foundation and legitimacy.

I can't buy it back. Once overtaken it becomes a mutation more surreal than I can imagine. If you assimilate my children in the world of the English, I will have surrendered to you that which I live for. I cannot risk this, so I cannot trust you with this preciousness. Yes, you may educate, skill, shape and groom - but beware, do not tamper with my sacredness. Do not betray what I am in the guise of your education and do not underestimate my vigilance and retribution, for small mercies do not constitute convenient cowardice. What is this strange intoxication - this Englishness - what powers do you feel are God-given? Who gave you this earthly paradise, this mystic meaning, this vestment of power over our progeny!

Our children come to your schools, not as empty vessels - but as nuggets of cultural knowledge that you do not value, refuse to learn from and instead shape to your crude template of exacting, artificial and irrelevant curricula - your curricula, perpetuated for your sense of self, not that of our children. You taste culture in teacher's courses instead of recognizing that which could teach you - the child I send to you, daily, in trust. Beware, you are both redundant and reducible!

Taylor, you are an exception. I have sensed your painful journey as the journey of Sikh parents, both struggling to understand the forces of intimidation, change and compliance. Your spirit speaks of a purist morality and ethics nurtured by your soul, representing a belief that children are one with their natural surroundings. You are our medicine man - our talisman, our truth speaker. You stand alone, as do I the researcher, buffeted by prevailing winds, perilously close to the edge, yet sensing the pleasure within the danger of possible sacrilege or stupidity?
I have memories of you teaching outdoors the hordes of school children who came to the unbelieving earth, sky, water and forests, to relive the grandeur - to witness the sap collection, the sugar shack, the tractor ride, the freedom, the friendship and mostly - to experience you, the embodiment of teaching within the embodiment of creation - Nature! There you stood, sharing your narrative, spinning your tale, touching the hearts, minds, imagination and senses of a child who trusted you in your wisdom. You didn't look like a teacher. Rather you were a learner, at peace with them. Your soul transcended your professional position. Other teachers felt awkward because they did not fit in - they required walls, authority, a guide, a pencil.... Under the sky was your classroom, a world of discovery where all were equal and whole and untouched. I miss that and that is what you must never stop fighting for, because something must drive us and the painful struggles in life are the important ones - the ones we must win, not just for us but for others - the researchers, outdoor education teachers and minority group parents.

We, collectively, battle the same demons. Each has a need to believe and have others witness that belief in our "selves". Don't stop, keep your voice alive - prick the conscience and sanity of others, make this your agenda! Dare not to look around for you may be the only one standing. You are what you have become because you saw injustice. That is all the defence you require. Others will follow but it takes courage. Courage shapes our reality and "sense of self"; it drives our calling and subsidizes our pain, the reflection of anguish, madness and truth-seeking. Perform your miracle!

I support your courage, your cause and your salvation. So should all sane educators. How can students learn in a fluorescent setting when their spirits have not bonded with what lies outside the classroom window - the earth! Thank you for your kindness, reflection and insight into my struggle as a researcher, in my painful journey. I also appear to have a mission not entirely of my own choosing! God Bless.

April

Dear April:

I enjoyed every minute of your presentation and I think that, not only will your thesis contribute to academics but also to the general public as well. At last, we have a study about new Canadians which is expressed at a much more human level than other studies are.

Brigitte
Dear Brigitte:

Yes indeed, there is a desperate need for educators, school boards, trustees, ministries of education, curriculum planners, researchers and bureaucrats to realize that there is a face behind each child, each client. That there is a history, a language, a culture, a sense of how one is valued or not valued by the dominant culture and prescribed curriculum. We have inherited the Canadian tradition of an hierarchical, bureaucratic and lock-step education design which replicates its archaic and atrophied methodology, teacher-training and curriculum implementation mindset. Few non-English speaking, non-Anglo Saxon culture students, adults and parents who are conveniently and perpetually labelled "immigrants", either fit into or share the dominant culture's educational vision, cultural values or worldview; yet an expensive, redundant and inflexible system remains ingrained. Why?

I believe we are afraid to ask this question because we do not have the machinery or logistics to adequately implement flexibility and others' worldviews. Our clients' needs should determine and drive our teacher training; however, in reality, the dominant culture's values determine the clients' needs and how best to accommodate these needs. Therein lies the racially motivated moral and ethical dilemma.

Ethnographical narratives, such as this study, have historically been conveniently ignored and shelved due to the attitude, "We can't bend anymore. What do these cultural groups want from us?" The demographic reality now is that the "us" factor includes the immigrants - the new consensus group as evidenced by the next generation of Canadians. Change, therefore, is both unavoidable and essential and will be overwhelming as the grassroot's voice sounds the clarion call for a courageous reform of education resulting in multi-cultured worldview inclusivity, shaped for and by the new status quo.

Yes, Brigitte, my study is, I feel, timely and warranted and will deliver not only the Punjabi Jat Sikhs, but myself. Have I become the narrator of my peoples' stories, and if so, do I require a consensus? I think not! My house is not deserted, for the winds of change and chaos reside within - is this a premonition of exultation or an apology for what must be? God bless.

April
Dear April:

I was not aware of all the various facets of your topic. You have so much information that is so important for teachers to know, especially since there are so many transfers from the study of the ethnic situations to the classroom in general. You also have the voice to say it with!

A lot of your conversation with us came back to whether or not you felt that you were the one to do this research. It seems from an outsider’s point of view that you are indeed the ideal one to do this. You have a good viewpoint. You are both inside and outside of the situation. I mean that you are inside yet you are unconventional enough to have assimilated some of the Canadian culture and its values. You also have such a great way of speaking and of telling what you know, that you will be writing a very powerful and therefore important account of your view of the Punjabi Sikh youth in our schools.

I enjoyed hearing you talk about your own writing process...I think that the way people choose to work, shapes the way their writing evolves and affects the final form...it is important to do things which are right for you...the pieces that you read to us were very powerfully written and showed a great sense of the voice of the participants. I liked the explanation of the caste system and your explanation of how the caste mentality infuses the whole life of the Punjabi society and how understanding caste is central to understanding Sikhs. Your symbols also added a metaphoric dimension to the writing and give it another meaning.

Mary

Dear Mary:

Firstly, I am a Canadian. Secondly, I am a Canadian-Sikh, for that is how our grandfather shaped and envisioned our mentality. One has to forge an identity, accepting without remorse the sense of loss and gain inherent in human quests for comfort levels in a bicultural society. That is, the "English world versus us" and then the "us versus my 'self'". My language is me. It transposes and seeps into the recesses of the layered shafts of my psychological "self", resplendent, poised and opportunistic. It reflects the mocking and blasphemed threads of reality I envision in my visual and spiritual world, for it is a reflection of the legacy of my inherited English education and socialization. Rustic, rural and godly, it sufficed as faith in others and one’s "self", warped and weather beaten but forged inside my steely alliance, my sallow vigilance regarding life and its drama and the courageous and whimsical actions of those around me. I watch, wait and then textualize that which stirs my senses. The images silently merge, not tubercular and paralysed, but resplendent in subterfuge.
You are absolutely right. If my language and insight did not groom my senses it would be folly to engage in such powerful research. I obviously possess unabashed confidence which should not be mistaken for common sense.

All of us are both insiders and outsiders, afraid and courageous, resolute and uncertain, truthful and deceptive, melancholy and joyful, pained and givers of pain. It takes one to know one. I have always been able to sense what attracts me and which venue highlights my strengths and what fortifies my mind. Little is left unmasked; much is left revealed. Yet, I sense, I cannot carry the burden for complete revelation. I can only attend to that which provides salience for my personal survival which allows me to carry the burden of the participants' and readers' anguish - a daunting task at best.

My writing process is aligned with how I live and work - with chaos and courage. I know I can write but can I deliver? Would you, the reader recognize it if I couldn't? I know you would. Therein lies the rationale for the tough, slogging work. Therein lies the challenge... am I a complex arrangement of irrational embellishments or a fact finder who clings to quotations, peeping over their edges, lusting after the heart which bleeds within, in measured strokes and meaningful pauses? That is for you to decide. I thank you Mary, for your selfless and perceptive acuity regarding my language, my passion and my personhood. I shall not disappoint you, for I dare not disappoint myself! God bless.

April

Dear April:

Thank you very much for presenting "Broken Covenant" to our group. I have no Sikh students but it was a fascinating study of another culture - a brilliant piece of scholarship and a great practical guide. Your modesty about the lonely journey and, "Am I the right one to tell the story?", is understandable, given that few Sikh researchers are dealing with contemporary cultural issues. Yet, the quality and sensitivity of your scholarship towards the people involved, from all sides and cultures, makes you an expert.

Your empathy for women living in traditional, cultural constraints while living in a new world with very different cultural norms, is profound. The tendency of many in the mainstream culture is to dismiss such people as repressed rather than understand the rewards and challenges in their lives. Change, for young Sikh women will, I suspect, have to come from within the community rather than from outsiders intervening with simple solutions.
As a scholar and as a Jat Sikh woman who lives at the cultural boundary between the Sikh world and Western society, your work should be valuable to Jat Sikhs trying to understand themselves; those wanting their community understood by others; and to those of us who need to understand how to teach students from such a different cultural background. I wish you all the best in your work for it will make an impression - it will be appreciated by those who believe in dialogue and intercultural exchange.

Julian

Dear Julian:

Your letter resonates issues of boundaries in asking what is scholarship? What is the public domain for user friendly Punjabi Jat Sikh and non-Punjabi cultures? What is my credibility as a researcher, as a member of the Punjabi and Canadian culture and as a product of three generations in Canada? In short, who am I?

I am a student, a mother, a teacher, a curriculum maker and a visitor in many careers with many people, lightly transgressing and transposing human cultural differences while being amazed at the hypocrisy, the melancholy, the sham and the miraculous revelations inherent in each sallow face. These faces reflect what I envision, a merciless perseverance, a tangible cowardice, a distanced hysteria.

I wonder had I been of Ukrainian, Jewish, Irish or German descent, would I want to explore that which has not been overly inked in, in the libraried sanctuaries of our hollow, educational graveyards? Would I share with you, so readily and cautiously, that which is my preciousness - tainted, alien, indignant, courageous and mystified? Would I share with you my passionate dirge, my refuge, my pitiful "self"? Would you have the courage to participate in my story? What would you steal from my words to make into your embellished biases and ridiculed truths of my people? Are we both victims of religious rigidity, shameless deception, unarmed sentry duty and intoxicated beliefs held like fragments of emotional explosions - resolute yet redeemable? I often become generic, as I am certain you do, because anonymity belies deception. A chameleon exists only if we believe and trust our ability to render its image against its vulnerable background. Where is our Sikh context, our Sikh vulnerability? Where can we hide in safety, away from prying eyes. Eyes trained to research us, search us, dissect us, label us and then "present" us to others who repeat the motion, who repeat the motion, who repeat...?

I am a woman of Canadian status, an educated, loyal follower of the process; yet that same process executes others who cannot claim this ancestry. Are we to fault the ancestry or the right to claim? Therein lies the rationale for what drives me. I have a
Marty

I was disturbed.

Supporting or opposing must be frequently disturbing. Do you concur that real education must be frequently disturbing, that there is highy conservative, attempting to preserve and hold the kind of education that usually goes on in a classroom -- perhaps because it fits in the face of the status quo.

I call our society teachers yet often avoid the important work of us who participate in the world and its contradictions.

I think your work is important and exemplary for all of us who work with students like this. I admire your courage in the face of this contradiction.

Dear April:

God bless.

With love,

Marty
Dear Marty:

Amazing how we interpret our reality as being replicated in that of our students - the clients sitting upright with Sikh, Serbo-Croatian, Nigerian, Chinese and Salvadorean worldviews, confused minds and surrealistic names. They sit with polished faces; polished, parental expectations; and polished smiles with which to grace our benign expectations of a "smart student", worthy of power - the power of the English language. The English images, clues, symbolic references, sanctioned piety and tolerance levels. Are these students a translated image of powerlessness, engaged in an educational dance, stripped of its humanity and devalued of its cultural languages, traditions and songs?

Is this how we are trained to see the client or is this how we choose to see the client? Distance secures painless introspection: theirs, or ours? Is there a difference? At what point is the "institutionally marginalized student" aware of his/her culture's devaluation and contrived erosion, conveniently labelled as grateful assimilation? Students ask, "Is it better to value a consensual agreement: learn to think in their 'English', pass their exams, balm their conscience and dismiss their fastidious courtesies?" Another student asks, "Am I quaint, exotic, ethereal, or simply 'in vogue'?"

Teachers respond," You are simply a 'different culture' student...now that I know you better, I can understand you better. Now I know how to assist you in becoming 'English'."

Marty, if your student had been allowed to voice her play in the ten years she had been "schooled", would it have made your job of assisting her become acculturated in the English language and mode of curriculum delivery, any easier? Would you have changed anything? You, after all, had the power. Would her culture have appeared more positively defined and valued? Or is it safer, for both you and her to live the double lives each has scripted for congenial survival. The teacher dispenses knowledge and the student saturates her "emptiness" with the richness of the English language and politely replies, "Thank you, kind sir!"

Yes, I take risks, what choice have I? I fully realize that my personal story contextualizes every drop of sanctimonious salvation and ancient idolatry textualized by the scholarly animosities, premonitions and vigilance of others who have proceeded me. I await their insolent and muted judgment.

Have I earned my grandfather's blood? At what point can I recede into the background from whence I came and perhaps should have stayed!
God Bless.

April
Dear April:

Thank you very much for your illuminating presentation. It was both thought provoking and informative. You appeared very calm and in control of yourself and your subject matter. I remember going to the Golden Temple in Amritsar and seeing the very powerful looking Sikh women at prayer. You had the same look of confidence and power. I appreciated your comments on how you were actually doing your study, that is, how you have all the chapters in your computer and work on them at different times, not sequentially. I was amazed at the seemingly unwieldy number of participants you have but I can see how you are weaving a story from all the different strands. I, too, plan to have quite a few participants in my study and so I hope I will be able to articulate their places in the story as clearly as you have.

I was struck also by your use of the Sikh symbol, the kara, both as an object and as a representation of a continuing theme in your work. I was also struck by the difficulties that both the Punjabi parents and children are having. I taught kids from Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong and other places and the transition overall does not seem to be as hard for them. The parents seem willing to recognize that as Canadians, their children will be leading lives which are different from those in their native countries. I felt that you made their situation alive for me.

However, I was also left wondering about the Punjabi children and parents who are making the transition more easily. I can’t remember if this is included in your work. I know a young woman whose parents were born in India. Step by step she has brought her parents to the realization that her life in Canada will be very different, than if they had remained in their native country. She attends university but lives with friends. She doesn’t want to marry but wants to pursue a career in social work. It has not been easy for her to have this life, although her parents are reconciled to it now. Thank you for your presentation.

Jo Ann

Dear Jo Ann:

I feel most people, when they are at prayer, look powerful because introspection involves self-reflection without context or artifice. One becomes insignificant yet mute and insolent, lacking the knowledge of one’s destiny - the futuristic yearning for wild, erotic songs yet unsung. Some people feel that beliefs and the act of believing, means relinquishing human motivation or creativity, because if in fact you cannot control your destiny, then why bother shaping your behaviour and attitude? This attitude is witnessed in teacher-student curriculum experiences.
The teacher, then, is the steward of the ship which is filled with conscripted and unrepentant converts, fervent in the belief that goodness, driven by Euro-centric framed knowledge, will prevail.

Narrative inquiry, for me, nurtures the threading of various themes, characterizations and beliefs, snatched from cursed mental images, held hostage within frames of acceptable linguistic imagery and splashed upon a page for the experience of others. The hoax being that the researcher is at once the image maker, image reflector and image translator. What results is an interactive and autobiographic collage of all the actors and their "otherness" validation as seen in how they choose to interact with each other. Their words provide the facts, but the colors of their contextual circumstances and personal biases provide the form. The researcher's patience is rewarded in capturing this form, this moment in time, this freeze-frame, by examining how people forge thoughts. That is, how they link what they say with what they believe and what they really mean. In essence, they are creating the impression required of them. This kaleidoscope of revolving reflections of introspections is glazed by the researcher's rationale of "truth-seeking". The problem is, how does one detect, follow and frame these threads of perceived truths, perceived lies and perceived beliefs? How can you frame what you cannot feel or see? Yet, this act is not random. Rather, it is a singular and quiet dance, secretly and silently contemplated; then refined, revisioned and re-edited. This is the circuituous vanity which fashions my surrealistic journey as a narrative researcher.

I don't question what is real and not real. If spoken, I assume it is what the speakers truly believe or what they feel safe in sharing with me. Often, what is not spoken and is kept private becomes the real story; and what is disclosed, resonates of a distanced truth. The researcher dare not chastise or question the search, for he/she is also a dancer in this human contrivance of truths, supposed truths, and untruths which over time become truths. The reproduction of someone's reality is directly related to the perspective and status of the lens at which the object is viewed, or chosen not to be viewed.

The kara, the Sikh steel bracelet, carries the burden of metaphor in this study because it signifies belonging and wanting others, both Indian and non-Indian to appreciate and recognize one's identity, one's inclusivity. The kara as an identifier allows others to practise acting accordingly. Since, the kara can be worn whether you are, or are not a baptised Sikh, it encompasses a larger population, a larger identifiable in-group. When I wear my kara, I can psychologically feel the enclosure, the weight, the reminder of my distinctiveness - my faith. It is a concrete signifier. Although I have noticed some Sikh males find it vogue to wear, not the original slim-styled kara, but the very
heavy styled kara which I believe is a statement in itself. However, I have also known many Sikhs who do not wear a kara and it has no effect upon their self-concept or their faith. I wonder to what degree are tokens, idols and symbols required to gauge and protect the mystical and erotic "self" which palpitates within?

It is a cautious reminder to me that in any study, the participants chosen do not reflect 100% of the views of the general population in that particular culture. Also, what is reported in a study is a captured moment in the reflective flow of ongoing change, however minor, in the participant’s life. Change also occurs as the researcher writes. Nothing stands still. Since, human behaviour is constantly undergoing change, Sikh youth quietly affect change within their parent’s beliefs and actions through negotiation. Over time, in many families, modified accommodation or cultural blending, to varying degrees, replaces religious fervour as parents become reconciled to what their children desire. Or, parents choose to suffer in emotional silence for the loss which inevitably results. Eventually, because they love their child, they painfully and dutifully swallow their pride. The faith, however, extracts its penance for betrayal, if not from the youth then from their parents. This is the fine line of defence which separates spiritual desecration from spiritual harmony! I wonder, is this the millstone which grinds me? Is this the shameless certainty which houses my insolence and curious insubordination? Perhaps. God Bless.

April

Dear April:

To be an expert in an area that is so emotionally close to you is probably very difficult and perhaps this is why you keep claiming that you are not an expert. Nevertheless, you are in the unique position of having a comfort level in two very different cultures. It is however, a very fine line to walk.

I thought of you this weekend in Ottawa when a taxi driver told me about a previous passenger, a Sikh born and raised in Newfoundland who used all the "Newfie" phrases with great glee, enjoying the effect he created. So, whether we want it or not, we are affected, in some manner, by where we are raised. But as you stated that when our children are involved in changes which we perceive to be alien and threatening, we want to isolate and protect them.

You presented your research in a very powerful manner. It is a topic that is far reaching and so will have many repercussions. It was interesting to me that even though you were obviously personally involved and concerned; the area in which you evoked the greatest personal response was the area of women who had wonderful
stories to tell but were forbidden to speak their own words. I think we all need to hear and respond to these stories, for only then we will understand ourselves and each other. Perhaps, someday we will feel safe enough to share our stories.

You began your talk by declaring the great need for information to be shared and your study being a manner in which this may occur. My roommate is from India and I asked her if it was difficult to come all this way by herself as a single, Indian woman. She said that women in India are making advances in all areas but she felt Canadian Indian families were not doing so. This is another picture that some of us miss: that change may occur in the birth country faster than it does in the adopted country. There are so many aspects to your topic. It must be difficult to decide on a specific direction or emphasis... Thank you.

Gwen

Dear Gwen:

If I appear to have a comfort level in two cultures it was so fashioned and willed by my grandfather. He was a man who held his faith up to the sun and forged a singular framework of workable dichotomies, of storied dilemmas of morality and ethics unwavering in their spirituality yet complementary within the world of a Sikh and a Christian, the world in which he had voluntarily arrived. He dared the ominous, sacrilege mystics to unearth that which he put asunder. He internalized what he could spiritually abide and what he required to survive in the English context of his Canadian prairie life. I, his granddaughter, am blessed or cursed with his resolute wisdom, singular sense of purpose and intolerance of human neglect - the neglect of not witnessing that which historically structures and defines one's interaction and acceptance of others. He wrote in his journals and I write in my study. However, we both wrote in vastly different, historical timelines about the transplantation of Sikhism as scripted and lived in a perceived hostile, host country named Canada.

Protection of our children from assimilation within alien forces is a familiar immigrant phenomenon. Historically, the education system of any host country has been looked upon simultaneously as a valuable commodity, an unfortunate accident, a precious gift and an infringement upon cultural, religious and linguistic values. Parents are not aware of the trade offs upon arrival. They essentially lose their child as a cultural transmission commodity when the child steps foot in the school. Why? Because junior kindergarten public school classes are filled with little bodies of "potential" Canadians and will be groomed as such. Collectivity and homogeneity, by definition, reduces distinctiveness and fragmentation - otherwise, how does one groom supporters of the status quo?
The consensual middle class must be defined and rewarded as such, or chaos results! You must be given a script so you may learn it, believe it and live it.

Being forbidden to speak your own words, as is the case of certain housebound, recent immigrant women I spoke of, reflects the dilemma of any immigrant woman who is not able to communicate in the dominant language. Then, compliance and co-dependency define the female role within the frames of this select category. Their children, who are the mothers’ link with a known and secure past, become the first target group of English language converts, due to the purposeful, excellence of the schooling machinery. Thus, children gradually distance themselves from their mothers’ insecurities and instead embrace the school culture, returning home to family intimacy only through the cooking, laughter and language of another culture, which will become secondary yet remain deeply rooted in their daily lives. No wonder their mothers’ stories are filled with the pain of betrayal and alienation in this cold, barren and vast country where communication becomes redundant; where human voices are stilled in place of television sets; and where the English language replaces a mother and child’s intimacy.

Mothers rationalize through action: they cook, clean, iron, sweep, fold and worry about the loss of control in their lives. Mothering, in an apparently hostile and foreign environment carries the burden of solicitous over-protection, merciless hysteria and perpetual guard against imminent betrayal and deceit.

Immigrants stand frozen in time while their birth country cohorts move along with the times. This is a common, cultural phenomena. A Sikh immigrant believes that he/she is only temporarily displaced from the birth country, knowing full well that there is no turning back. The host country is perceived as an emotionally, in-transit situation in which roots are cautiously planted and survival becomes suspicious optimism. It takes several generations for relaxed breathing to occur and then one falls in love with the vastness and coldness of the land and the gaiety and humanity of these people - the Canadians!

This study reflects the tense anxiety experienced in this period by first and second generation immigrants, which dissipates into cultural accommodation rooted in Sikhism. When this happens, the resulting culture shock becomes intellectualized at a controllable pace instead of being irrationally feared. As I journey with the participants, I wonder how I became involved in this mad fantasy, this alienated script as I trace my grandfather’s reality and search for my private demons! What strange perseverance and premonitions we discover in the name of earthly paradise. What merciless hypocrisies become conveniently closeted in our insatiable curiosity!

God Bless.

April
Dear April:

I think you have a lot of courage to undertake such a controversial study. There seem to be two strands weaving through your presentation: you and them and you versus them. In the first part there is you the observer, sometimes curious, sometimes a little puzzled but generally part of a textural fabric within which "you and they" interweave in an almost indistinguishable fashion. In the second part, I get a sense that you are now an observer of "them", from whom you wish to separate yourself. Sometimes you are filled with awe, sometimes piety and sometimes disdain.

On several occasions, I believe I heard you say that you do not fully understand the process and that your study is merely your interpretative understanding. How refreshing it is to hear when juxtaposed against the surety of so called experts. What you have done for me is invaluable. You have given me a glimpse into a culture that I know so little about. You have reinforced my belief that orthodoxy and xenophobia in any form is antithetical to the development of a peaceful understanding of the different cultures with which we live here in Canada. I am not saying that we should all become friends. But I do believe that we can become more understanding and accepting of each other. But, here I must as you do, accept responsibility for my own biases and prejudices. When one adheres strictly to a culture or religion as the only true one, then how can one balance that against the prevailing cultural truths. How does it feel to be in a different whom you seem to have so little and so much in common? Are we half as multicultural as we purport to be?

Susan

Dear Susan:

I purposely portray myself as you say, "you and them" and "you versus them". I do so because Sikhism is my inherited faith and culture to which I am indebted because writing about the Sikh membership requires a courageous and insightful conscience. I am aware of my inclusion, yet, I am also aware of my grandfather's legacy. It was to view inclusion, not as a force which blinds and mutes one, but as a force which releases one from fear and grants freedom of voice without retribution. I wonder if there is such a thing?

I choose this explanation, not naively, but with reservation. I am not writing to sensationalize Sikhism but rather to see it reflected as having a powerful presence in the psychological development of its youth, and to educate those who teach its youth. An appreciative understanding of the forces in which Sikh youth are inextricably bound both inside and outside of the kara is necessary; if outsiders are to realize their boundaries and the youths' boundaries. However, this does not imply that transference
The role of researcher in narrative, especially in a personal narrative which translates into an autobiography, is overwhelming and endless. Where there is no closure or conclusion, life simply flows on. So, I have had to design amorphous and artificial closures which are invisible to the reader and participants. Yet, that same invisibility allows me space to manoeuvre within the spliced and mystic chambers of the participants' minds. I search for entangled filaments of ethereal thoughts, images, mazes, photographs, memories and impressions which I textualize into an interwoven pattern. What I choose to see, forms my design. Selectivity, obviously belies validity and reliability, which I believe are situated in the reality of the participants' individual not consensual viewpoint. This is an assumption I must believe, in order for my work to proceed. I paint for you that which I choose to see, catalogue and frame as my personal understanding and interpretation. Another researcher, of course, may have chosen different frames. Yes, I feel the sanctimonious burden of proof. I feel the pulse of calm hysteria, passionate salvation and coiled, spiritual paralysis. Melting pots, it appears, are only convenient metaphors shrouded in religious rigidity and benign, irrational neglect. Why mock the wild, erotic songs of shameless and melancholic complacency? Why not? God Bless.

April

Dear April:

How lucky to be doing research in an area so close to your heart. But then, shouldn't we all be doing just that. Your metaphors, your style, your chapter titles, your personal stories - everything was very moving for me. You are an incredible bridge for this culture and should be proud to be considered an expert. I think that your awkwardness in accepting the title of expert merely demonstrates your continuing thirst for knowledge and your strong belief that we can never know it all. Your research will have phenomenal impact on your culture. I think you know that you want to have an impact, otherwise, as you say, "...without the challenge, you wouldn't do the research..." You truly do epitomize the problem of audience for narrative and I think that your study will have significant value for researchers.

Anna

Dear Anna:

I cannot underestimate what other Sikh members will reflect about my work but I know I will have explored a small act of courage in establishing a curious credibility, situated firmly in the narrative literature tradition. There can be no greater satisfaction to a writer of narrative!
Yes, there is the story, but there is also the vehicle that carries the story. The sincerity of the story awaits public dissection but the sincerity of the activity - that of being saturated within the participants' stories - is a spiritual revelation. I feel privileged to have been granted entry into the miraculous descent of their privation and self-deception, their struggle for angry salvation, their plaintive madness and their gratuitous yearning for spiritual redemption. They exhibit a desperate need to understand who they are and how best this can be reflected to others. I have a desperate need to reflect their image, for in it I see myself - my bloody bitterness, knowing that others will mercilessly slash and edit our collective pain to suit their purposes. People look for a sacred sanctuary, an indignant last rite, a hunger of confession, a cursed amulet or a mystic and alien meaning - I have none to offer. The writer becomes the sanctuary, the rite, the confession, the amulet and the meaning, for I am but a mirror of that which you crave. I have no solace, no piety, no awe or disdain. I have only my insignificant and miserable "self" to give you, in return for your belief in me.

Yes, I am fortunate to be researching a topic so close to my heart but the price of this vantage point is immense - my intellectual and spiritual salvation! God Bless.

April

Dear April:

Wow! Your presentation was so powerful, I hardly know where to begin... the beauty, the fluidity of your voice and undoubtedly, your writing as well. I feel that your ability to articulate and present your work with such eloquence is crucial for your audience. So, I disagree that your study will be stacked on the shelf, for your work has much more purpose according to what you have shared. What empowered you to tell this story? Whom do you want to listen to this story and for what purpose? By listening to your story, teachers will be more sensitive in their own classes when they encounter Indian students, realizing what these students endure in their homes and so adjust their curriculum. We need to hear your story and to keep hearing it.

Darlene

Dear Darlene:

If one's readership is offended by what one writes, it matters little that it was written in an eloquent fashion. However, I am pleased that you feel my writing is easily understood and so is appreciated. My childhood was very rich in dialects, intonation, gestures and expressive language. We had many books because my
grandpa bought auctioned cartons of books which were discarded by the English. We also learned from the world travellers whom grandpa brought home and from his nightly readings from our scriptures. The Sikh scriptures and children’s morality tales are very graphic. They use expressive language which readily captures the imagination of a sensitive child’s visual experience. Hence, the art of communication was explored and experienced at length in our childhood, allowing conversation and cultural deference in several languages to be the norm.

I have always been fascinated by the English language and love to browse through dictionaries. I also constantly rehearse speech patterns, pictures and phrases in my mind and possess a good memory for words and phrases which make meanings explicit and expressive. What empowers a person to tell a story? Well, firstly someone has to have faith in your ability to write and must repeatedly tell you so. Secondly, you must choose a topic in which you have a personal investment, a wealth of understanding and enough distance to allow for detailed observation. Thirdly, you must be disciplined, in that the commitment and challenge to write the story must be everpresent in your conscious mind, for only then will it be intrinsically rewarding.

I believe this topic chose me. I was ready to write it and it appeared ready to be written. Now, I am immersed in it and with breaks in my daily life, I write constantly. The stories never cease revolving and replaying themselves in my mind, whether I am peeling potatoes, reading the newspaper or feeding my dogs. I am always looking for links, angles, threads and viewpoints.

I like to characterize, rearrange, juxtapose and interact with the participants in my mind. I like them to speak with each other. I listen to how they respond or do not respond. I see the images of my experience interlaced with theirs and the story grows legs...it leaves me in its dust, valiantly trying to type the words which will release the context of meaning and breathe life into the image. I feel a tension when my mind is arranging the storyline, then as it unfolds, I feel a release, a calmness, as my mind clears the repository of thought fragments accumulated, discarded, shelved... remnants of a beautiful design, masterfully created.

I also sit back and reflect on the negative shapes and spaces left behind as the pattern of thoughts lifts from the confusion of myriad sequences... when the participant’s words are heard, many vignettes from my childhood, adolescence and adult life compose the appropriate salience required to justify, complement and underpin the storyline. If there are none, that is fine also. This is how I create the sequences of narrative thought. I assume others have their unique relationship with words also - but this is mine.
I am writing for anyone who would like to appreciate Sikh culture, its people and its manner of shaping one's personality. It is a story common to most religion-defined cultures in which parents are obsessed with the lives of their children. It is a story of compelling yet unforgiving love, sacrifice and kinship bonding. The drama lies in the betrayal of kinship and caste expectations, and in how the characters resolve their lives after having made heartrending life decisions. Insular, tightly knit cultures also suffer the same fate, to some degree. It is also a story of compassion, emotional suffocation and vigilance, family bonding and personal dilemmas. I feel the story is so powerful, regardless of who had been the writer (within the Punjabi Sikh realm) it would have carried itself! I hope you will see yourself in it, in some small way, as we all share universal truths about ourselves, whether we admit it or not. God Bless.

April

Dear April:

You have a powerful presence as a presenter and I could tell how much your topic meant to you. I would like to know how you conceived this story. I felt I did not get a sense of the whole as you spoke, although I got a good sense of the parts - the chapters, the situation, the predicament that these people face in living in a Canadian society. I still want to know what lies behind your compunction to write this narrative, what you are achieving as you write and what you hope to achieve with your final product...

I think you have a topic that will be of value to a broad range of educators because some of your themes are applicable to many groups within the school system; yet, at the same time you are offering a unique insight into a particular group having culturally-based difficulties. After listening to presentations about different cultural groups, I am often left asking, "What is the point and how does it relate to education?" But you have managed to transcend that question for me. I can clearly see the devastating effects of not being allowed to participate in a (host) country's culture, of the resulting pain for adults who simply want their children to be left uncontaminated by a new way of life.

You are a powerful writer, April, and you come to your writing differently than I do. Your emotions and feelings are very apparent. You almost have to tone down for academic purposes, whereas I have to beef up that side of my writing and not present too objective an account. I think that your, "Why me?" question that you asked regarding if you are the right one to tell the story, can be answered by the fact that you will tell it well, with sincerity and passion. That's something that we need in education and I think that you will do a great job.

Carmen
Dear Carmen:

This story conceived me, for I am born into a Sikh home and all my lineage is Sikh. We can be traced back to the Punjabi villages from where my great-great grandparents originated. They composed the local villagers of farming and soldiering backgrounds who became the historical characters in the evolving history of India, the Punjab, the British rule and the partition of India. My grandfather’s decision to leave the British infantry to explore the new world in the 1900’s, a world from which he would not return for fifty years, is woven into the historical fabric of the Sikh pioneers in western Canada and the mass migrations of Sikh men who left the Punjab, via Calcutta and Singapore, to seek their fortunes. So, in a sense, I am the story and I have been living it all my life. Therefore, I seek neither consensus nor permission. I like to think of this work as an ethnographical yet autobiographical narrative! It is a story of attempted assimilation, both on behalf of the immigrants and the dominant culture. Neither wins nor loses, for it is a story of human beings the world over and encompasses the gamut of human drama.

I think "difficulties" are defined by the dominant culture when minority cultures do not appear to fit into a set of prescribed values and convenient lifestyles. The minority cultures, however, do not feel they are experiencing these "difficulties" because they do not desire inclusion and so do not value the in-group, dominant culture attributes. Their children, however, to varying degrees desire inclusion and therein lies the cultural dilemma. It begs the question, "Why must everyone fit into the template designed by the culture which has secured power and prestige? Why cannot the sacredness of other cultures be respected and valued?"

I don’t think that simply reading this study will assist any educator unless we have the mandate and courage to sensitize teacher trainers, textbook writers and professionals regarding the distinctive value of minority cultures in Canada. Although this study will bring about an awareness of others; in itself, it is not a consummate revelation, for each reader is responsible for his/her own lifelong self-education.

Writing reflects the risk-taking factor, the imagination and the confidence necessary in the writer’s personality. Perhaps you need to ask yourself what evokes passion in your soul and then have the courage to follow your intuition. If the topic does not speak to you and capture your heart and soul, it will not sustain you or replenish you throughout the long and lonely hours and years ahead of you!

God Bless.

April
Next, I will discuss my reflections of letterwriting; the act of making public a very, private and personal adventure.

6.1.1 The wintergreen of my life

My wintergreen encompasses the Sikh cultural experience as reflected by the emotions, images and rhythms which resonate in my mind, awaiting the English words which will give them wings. Wings which will shape the images of betrayal, disclosure and retribution. Wings which will carry the rumours of torn and desecrated self-narrative voices. Voices which will journey into encapsulated vignettes encompassing time, space, occurrence, temporality and phenomenon, constrained within the rush of emotionally neglected freedom. They will speak of a culture and kinship in which life is lived, defined and muted by the image shapers and the image breakers in this frozen, barren wasteland - a society of white faces and rapidly-spoken English.

These are the images which await the English vernacular which will contextualize and transport that which I dare to share and hide; and that which I have not the courage to witness - not yet, not maybe ever!

...witness what I would like to see...what I actually see...what I understand from what I actually see...how I express that which I understand and how I choose what it is I will disclose ...witness who I am, the degree of trust established, the degree of safety in disclosure...my recollection of their recollections, collectively disclosed...articulation construed or misconstrued...validity in disclosures defined by culture and gender propriety...interpretations of interpretations...

(researcher, Dec. 1994)

---

1 Everyone has a "wintergreen" in his or her life. The term itself is a paradox in that winter and green rarely coexist. For me, this evergreen low-lying, green-leafed plant with small white flowers represents timelessness, steadfastness and resiliency in place of beauty, which is temporary.
What is the relationship between the participant and the reader? The audience of readers reveals the face of a child’s expectation, eager to absorb, unlock, translate, appreciate, empathize and significantly bond with - to capture the secrets, the heart, the essence of our Sikh being. This audience of readers, unknowingly, roleplays within the phenomenon of narrative inquiry.

...you (the critic), the pathetic creature, vulnerable, vain, stoic, all knowing yet fraudulent, all seeing yet blind, all believing yet faithless. Where are the flaming spears, where are the agonizing questions, where is the earthly paradise? How dare you dissect my Sikhism for your intellectual pleasure!
(researcher, Dec. 1994)

The delivery of the Sikh "self" is a courageous drama in repose, an unarmed expectation awaiting the arrival of the infidel, the inner voice which the readership has come to hear and behold. Once spoken, the words can never again belong to the participant. The private, warm and lovingly enfolded words which reflected,

...what could be, should be, was, is, ought to be, and finally is framed by you (the reader) to be. Be what? That moment suspended in time when your voice (participant) framed a thought, an assumption, a vision, a context ...you have delivered yourself...intimacy lost and gained at what cost?
(researcher, Dec. 1994)

The participant’s emotional collage races along to conclusion forcing the reader’s mind to quicken the pace, snap the picture, hear the tension, fuse the image, gather the discarded thoughts and imagine "what you live" and be "who you are". The reader’s imagination traces the whimsical wisps of painful memories, glossed over, distanced and safely blotted. These memories compose the intimacy of vicarious experience, to be recovered later and tasted alone, in private.
Intimacy believes the vagaries of voice which gloss over a glistening array of human thought, exposing and transposing the mystical human relationships of a vacuous tedium - a life deservedly lived. Where does that leave me, the researcher, the truth seeker?

...what makes me different? How is this recognizable difference an issue? Why is the construction or recognition of this issue, a legitimate and necessary issue? How best to portray the role of those inside and those outside the kara in this issue? How dare I to qualify myself as a definer of that which evades definition, or, is better left undefined. Perhaps that is the issue? ...

(researcher, Dec. 1994)

Disclosure initiates action and reaction. Lack of disclosure breeds conservative contempt, confusion and polite dissociation. Lacking the desire to taste cultural differences exists only with the permission of individual apathy and collective consensus.

...is this the issue? What drives my need to voice my brutal anger and my angst in the awkward snippets of Sikhism's stark reality in the face of angry, belaboured English words? Is this my burden or theirs? Could it belong to both? ...

(researcher, Dec. 1994)

The chapters roll off my tongue without challenge as if disclosure signifies intimacy. I am the person I have contrived; or am I the person I have contrived to contrive me? Where is the premonition of my salvation - the frame wherein I may exist? I need eyes to house my soul. Where are my eyes, so I may feel the pulse of lives, diffused and incomplete; lives innocently maimed and purposely desecrated; lives lived within a melancholy, indecent and mute "self"? Is this the wintergreen of my life, the focus of my kaddish?
What is my relationship with my writing? Is my writing simply bits and pieces of me, shards of my "self"? Some I own, others I disown because they are the mocking hollow "selves" I have inherited. Why do the millstones of the kara perpetually grind the incurably alienated souls, spent in search of "self" and recognition of jurisprudence? Is writing gender-sensitive? Why do the male voices within their karas appear tense, warlike and forceful? Is it because the role of patriarchal oppression is to create disequilibrium? Why do these irrational, male forces reflect a strange intoxication of indescribable, human scorn? Who initiated this pathetic human self-denial and for what purpose? This is the boundary I have crossed as a writer and as a Sikh!

6.1.2 My fascination with words: my biography

My fascination with words begins with my childhood: grandpa’s dictionaries, the old cowboy songs, the town hall meetings and most importantly, my grandpa’s ledgers -- a chronicle of our pioneer joys and sorrows scribed in Punjabi and English for posterity.

Our strained eyes, hardly reaching the window-sill would search the dusty, winding road to see our weary grandpa arriving home, loaded to the hilt with his treasures from the local auction market in East Calgary. We all scrambled around him because he had an eye for good junk - high class junk. Usually there were old, mismatched sets of the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) Palliser Hotel cutlery: paisley or gold embroidered bone china cups and saucers, varying sizes of dinner plates, bread and butter plates and quarter plates, gravy ladles and exquisitely shaped serving
dishes. How ironic that we seemed to warehouse the C.P.R. cutlery when our Indian food was eaten scooped up with bits of torn chapattis. However, we knew his priorities: table manners and the precious knowledge of how to live like the English and so we quietly internalized the dual cultures. Thus, my life became littered with networks of ironic boundaries, both British and Punjabi Sikh, each struggling for predominance over a child's mind.

The most honoured of grandpa's treasures were the boxes of discarded books which he bought by the boxful - how amazing that our education was based on the discarded English of the English. I was particularly grateful to find the lovely dictionaries, dog-eared or hardly touched, lovingly placed in the leatherette folders bound with filigreed threads, lovingly entwined. I wonder which reckless estate heirs had chucked these valuable pieces of culture, found in well-bred parlours and studies of the English elite, as soon as their beloved and well-heeled relatives drifted towards the clarion call to a Christian heaven.

I would quietly hoard my treasure of books and then read with amazement the words therein. They painted a magical picture of a conservative family life which was gentile and unassuming - not the firebrand existence of the raw, country-bred folks in my life. The boys and girls in these pages stared at me in disbelief, finding it incredible that I, a country kid, dared to enter their quaint life.

-Around 1925, grandpa hired a British nurse to live in our home to assist my mother and my grandmother in learning the English language and the English lifestyle and to assist in the childrearing of a large family. Therefore, our home was a microcosm of both the English culture and language and the Sikh culture and Punjabi language.
The dictionaries presented a wondrous world of small, medium and large English words complete with tidy pictures and tidy meanings. With childlike curiosity, I couldn’t believe that a person could possibly use all these lovely words in one lifetime. I invented situations in my mind wherein these words shaped the dialogue of the characters I created. Thus, the words were becoming part of my present "sense of self", internalized, stored, and filed in my mind. The world of English words released in me a passion for storytelling which included the characters in my life: the hired men, especially the one with a wooden leg who regularly drank and woke up vomiting; the suave cattle buyers who squinted knowingly across the arena, each communicating by the touch of his stetson; the harvest crew made up of young boys or seasoned and tanned grinders and arthritic, pot-bellied old men; the spinster lady with a hairy, old mole growing on her flaky skinned-chin; and the bible thumpers - the old German couple living down the road with their forty-five-year old, unmarried son. Their country slang, curt speech, abrupt gestures, yelps and howls of laughter collectively interspersed with chewing tobacco spit. This activity created hysterical images framed by English words which danced frantically inside my head. I was forever inspecting my reality and digesting its beautiful visual bounty. My perceived invisibility allowed me entry into the secret passages of their minds.

... pages of the dictionaries were yellowed and stained, or water warped and yet retained the classic grandeur of preciousness, a necessary commodity which enhanced their value in my eyes. Here was the language in which I could express my innermost fears, emotions, secrets and fantasies. Some smelled of mothballs, acrid and dry which would sting my nose; others
smelled of fireplace wood and lilacs or English lavender; still others smelled of proximity to decanters of very old whisky and cow hide leather, which reminded me of grandpa. I longed to smell these scents for they filled my imagination with contexts the words pursued...

(researcher, Dec. 1994)

Another language source for me was the lyrics in the cowboy songs that grandpa was partial to, not only because he considered it high art but because he understood the universal, implicit empathy revealed in the hurtin’ songs. For two and a half minutes a soulful vignette of a woman done wrong by a man who was a two-timing drunk, wailing out his love for his horse, woman and God and cursin’ the streaks of poverty and moral weakness in his life, consumed my mind. Through these lyrics, I gained respect for the economical usage of words. I especially liked the visual fantasy surrounding the song Kaw-liga, a carved, wooden Indian statue which stood in front of a store; however, when someone bought his counterpart, a carved, wooden Indian maiden, he wailed his mournful song of lost love for her.

Kaw-liga was a wooden Indian standin’ by the door,
He fell in love with the Indian maid over in the antique store
He stood there and never let it show,
So she could never answer yes or no.

Poor ole Kaw-liga, he never got a kiss,
Poor ole Kaw-liga, he don’t know what he missed,
Is it any wonder that his face is red,
Kaw-liga that poor ole wooden head.

He always wore his Sunday feathers and held his tommyhawk,
The maiden wore beads and braids and hoped someday he’d talk.
He stood there as lonely as could be,
And wishin’ he was still an ole pine tree.

Then one day a wealthy customer bought the Indian maid,
He took her oh so far away that ole Kaw-liga stayed.
Kaw-ligaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa , yo !
(" Kaw-liga." Ronnie Milsap Live. RCA Inc.).
This was my first encounter with an inanimate object portrayed as a person - juxtaposed in the parallel of human thought and emotion. Henceforth, I analyzed every song lyric looking for the human vocal extension of sound and rhyme. The record player in grandpa’s study allowed me to see the words spinning on a glistening, black sphere grooved in uneven, base undulations. The record would spin before my eyes its mournful dirge of love betrayed, lost, revealed, won and forsaken. The country slang circled around the vowels with a warm and grateful swirl of melody, enveloping the meaning in its passion and sound. For instance, *Your Cheatin’ Heart* by Patsy Cline was my all time favourite. Both grandpa and I loved the brilliance of its simplicity. I guess I loved what he loved, because I loved him. My world was reflected through his joyful love and respect for my feelings.

The singers of that era were not the lithe, beautiful people of today. They were seasoned, suntanned and leathery and included: Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams Sr., Johnny Cash, Tennessee Ernie Ford and others who sang of coal mines, praying, family togetherness and dissolution, drinking and womanizing. Their songs revealed bloodied lives worn thin by human vices and frailties and love stretched and sustained beyond human tolerance. This was the imagery I fantasized and incorporated into my thinking, believing, dreaming, speaking and writing. This was my life: branding cattle, harvesting, barn raising, fiddle playing and polka dancing, and community picnics where folks bonded, ate, drank, slept and dreamed of better crops, stronger male children and higher hog prices. This was not the
English gentry storybook of sedate characters sparring with grammatical correctness on white pages. My community was rugged, raw and peppered with imperfection and that is what attracted me to their sweat, pain, tears and hope. I translated their reality in my psyche, through words, with which to observe and record our lives.

Politics in those days was simplistic propaganda, laced with hell, fire and brimstone, for most politicians were preachers, products of Bible belt country - not yet sophisticated enough to be called Rednecks! The message was delivered by wily, whiskered men, wary of their flock yet persuasive in the powers of heaven, hell and damnation, which country folk viewed as evil or a lesser evil without complicated compromises. Their pitch rarely changed as pies were praised and babies were kissed through trimmed whiskers reeking of shaving cream and whisky. The community lived by rituals in speech and social intercourse directed by a special language of symbolic gestures: a tip of the hat, a wink of an eye, a spit of the tobacco chew, a snarl or shake of the head. You started smiling at a man from a far because you knew his life story better than he did. Symbols and gestures connected the prairie towns, bars, general stores, post offices, grain elevators, arenas and townhalls, through a ritualized manner of communication.

I remember the ledgers - grandpa's ledgers, red-lined, legal size, frayed and yellowed. They contained the sum total evidence of his existence. They served as a legacy to us, of his thoughts, dreams and yearnings in this new country - Canada. One was written in the geometric, scripted handwriting of Gurmuki characters and
the other was written in stilted English phrases, blocked in strangely scripted back slashes which lacked the experience of meaningful emotion. They were just dried up words falling at the feet of sounds lacking a contextual rhythm and cadence. This was the other language, devoid of depth, negotiating only practical data with a date. This adopted language of business was English. Included in his English entries were accounts of legal contracts, a bill of sale, a cow brand, a tax notice and an "I owe you" which he had no intention of collecting.

The Punjabi ledger, conversely, was ornately decorated, had a few religious phrases scattered throughout and was written with an embellished, Gurmuki handwriting which contextualized not only the transaction but the friendship, warmth and generosity of a deal which went well. He would insert in several places, "God bless this good soul." or, "This man's needs are greater than mine, I will send him the Jersey cow's milk every week." Also included were a feather, red ribbon, twine and Mrs. Cole's recipe for making cow salve and the bran and molasses antidote for a cow so bloated by water and grain, it could die. These ledgers documented not only an historical period but reflected the intellect and vision of a man destined to overcome bureaucracy, which translated into dealings with the English. The term "English" meant the white people and their language, dress, food, culture and customs.

His favourite pen had a sharp handle and a nib you could stick in the handle. It sat in an ink well on his desk, directly kitty corner from where he kept the ledgers wrapped in a red cloth,
wrapped like a parcel with a leather, belt-strap. He also had a heavy, steel blotter which you gently rocked back and forth onto the paper until it had absorbed all the knots of black ink left by his pen stabbings.

No one was allowed to touch grandpa’s ledgers because he always treated them with respect and had an intimate relationship with the words written within. They represented his sacredness, his Canadian life. They also measured his wealth, honesty and ownership and recorded the depth of his tenacious roots in the Canadian soil. These were the early days, the days he loved most. When he was conducting business, we knew to quietly leave the room after having acknowledged the guest and having closed the door behind us. No one dared to enter until grandpa asked either our mother or grandmother to bring the guest a cup of coffee or a shot of brandy.

The pages of the earlier ledgers, kept since 1913 and preceded by personal diaries in Punjabi, reflected not only the restructured reality in which he lived, but that of others around him. Others, who composed the collective interaction of human beings woven together in a tapestry of cash sales and loyalties bartered or rendered, and gifted goods and services. Each page resonated with his joy of sharing in the drama of pioneer life.

I can smell the kerosene lamp wick and the dented tin cup which held the raw egg, hot milk, sugar and ground tea mixture substituting as a meal when he was weary from thinking, writing or praying. He made time for God after all the chores were done and when all the neighbours’ needs were met. He believed solace could
only be attained at the end of a day filled with the glory of expectations and the smiles and embraces of neighbours.

Memories are deceiving. Were the ledgers in reality as magnificent as I had imagined them to be, or was their size, their smell of yellowed paper and dried up, old leather straps and red thread page inserts, just an illusion? Did their stature increase before my eyes because of their significance to such an esteemed man as my grandpa, or were they just ordinary bound ledgers, bereft of context and importance? I don’t really know and I don’t think it matters but I need to believe that they were an extension of grandpa. They represented his daily tallies of life experiences, methodically documented, as if time could be reclaimed and relived, as if an audit of one’s life experiences brought definition and closure to the act of living itself.

Grandpa continued writing in his ledgers beyond the time when it was fashionable to do so. I wonder why people retain habits long after their needs are fulfilled? Did he need to consolidate his daily life and view it on paper in order to contextualize its validity? Or, did he continue because he felt a need to sustain the logic of his actions for later, private reflection?

The ledgers were his Canada!

6.2 Summary

In hindsight, Chapter Six provided me with an opportunity to defend my "study-in-progress" before my non-Sikh peers. My pedantic responses clarified for me: who I am, why I think the way I do and why I feel others should know about Sikhs. My cursory childhood
biography underpinned my worldview: my fascination with print, song lyrics, townhouse meetings and most importantly, the effect that grandpa’s ledgers had in shaping the curiosity of my childhood. Later, I revealed how and why I write. I have always felt a need to experience a quest, create an audience and initiate a discussion. However, if the audience chooses to scorn the mirror of my insubordination - so be it.

In the Introduction, I discussed the need to study how a cultural covenant is perceived to be broken. That need translates into making an unfamiliar culture, such as the Sikhs, into a familiar experience which is easily understood by the mainstream readership. I feel this goal has been achieved through the experience and insight gained by identifying with the persons and situations presented in the narratives. Yet, how does one measure and transcribe growth and change within a kara? Grandpa allowed me to transfer my contextualized life experiences from the storied imagination of my childhood memories onto paper by imitating his ability to recreate a storyteller text which secured and nurtured disclosure. The act of transposing abstract memories into print allowed me to define who we are, how others choose to see us and need to see us, and how we would like to be seen. This says it all and it says nothing. It all depends on who is translating the cultural experience and for whom it is intended.

This study is purposely open-ended because life is so. By the conclusion of the study, I am clear about the human motivation behind the journey of the metaphorical kara and the broken covenant
but I am not clear about the boundaries shared and defined by human accommodation and human adaptation. Perhaps it is not possible to separate these concepts, or perhaps it is not possible for me to be both an outsider and an insider who is researching her own culture. This study reveals that cultures rarely exhibit a homogeneous identity because labels tend to alter the truth rather than isolate it. This view initiates the following discussion: What are the salient principles of cultural ethics for most cultures? How are they different for Punjabi Sikhs? How do these Sikh principles become traditional, cultural truths; if, according to the membership, truths are manufactured at best and constantly undergo change? Also, when is an in-group membership no longer able to differentiate between various cultures' principles? Is this inability to differentiate dependent upon the member’s level of adaptation inside the cultural boundary; or is it dependent upon the positive or negative tension existing between boundaries of various cultures? It is difficult to measure boundary tensions because the simultaneous experience of living in two cultural boundaries (Canadian and Sikh), is an enormously profound experience. One tends to negotiate what is necessary in order to survive the moment - a decision which often lacks logic or an adherence to traditional principles of cultural ethics.

Revisiting the statement of inquiry:

Next, I would like to discuss an overview of the study based on the introductory statement of inquiry which raised the following questions:
What were the forces which generated the evolution of Sikh identity?

How can human intellect and emotion reconcile cultural invasions which proscribe historical, socio-political and religious mutations dictated by caste designations?

Is the caste system not an elitist, man made boundary within boundaries of collective cultural identities?

b) Which factors shape a unique identity: language, script, genetic inheritance, displays of symbolism, codified behaviour and worldviews or others’ reflections of same?

c) How is the absorption of multicultural symbolism which includes beliefs and rituals, positioned in the migratory culture? How in this positioning posture, is discussed what will be protected and perpetuated or what will be abandoned, aborted and eventually atrophied?

d) Why is the need to portray the Punjabi Sikh culture as being more solidified and overt in the host countries, a crucial issue? Why is this need felt to a lesser degree in Punjab, India? How did this become a sacred and consuming priority for the boundary gatekeepers who emigrated to other lands?

e) Is the cultural adaptation which results from repeated, historical conquests and invasions, the same or different from the cultural adaptation which results from the dominant, cultural forces experienced in a migratory host country?

I believe the Punjabi male and female narratives in this study reveal that a cultural identity is ever evolving; yet remains grounded by traditional manifestations which are internalized by its members and members of other cultures. However, the members of other cultures have the option to select what they wish to internalize about Punjabi Sikhs, while the Punjabi Sikhs have no choice. For instance, if a non-Sikh person has not experienced a caste designation, what lived experience can that person compare it to? Thus, they may feel it is an antiquated and negative label when in fact, it may be purposeful. Caste, I feel, is an artificial device which defines and controls racial purity through inclusion,
while keeping racial impurities at bay through exclusion. However, I question how I as a researcher and participant in this study can with any degree of objectivity, state my feelings about the caste system? The dilemma here is that I am an integral part of the cultural phenomena that I am studying, so who is studying whom? That is, to what degree is my situation as a researcher-participant parallel to that of a non-Sikh attempting to internalize a Sikh concept?

Next, how did the participants define boundary exclusivity? The narrative characters' identities appeared to strive for a solitary solace yet mandated a prescribed and necessary spiritual attachment which anchored and nurtured their traditional, kinship stability. Hence, their frames of self-concept through self-definition shaped their sense of belonging. This created a sense of group inclusivity which both irritated and bound the inter-relationship boundaries. This social activity defined the boundary of exclusivity. I feel the youth in this study appreciated the reality of their daily lives lived outside the ghosts of traditional Sikh culture; yet, the youth also lived amidst the dominant milieu, as each individual in the minority culture jockeyed for a negotiable position. For example, as generations of Punjabi Sikhs negotiate for a cultural position within the dual cultures, Sikh and mainstream, much is lost and much is gained. For instance, they may name the first child an Indian name and the second child an English name; they may understand or voice only snippets of their ancestral language, long unused; they may modify
their behaviour and still participate in customs which have lost their meaning; and, on special occasions, they may identify with emotions which vaguely reflect their inherited culture. They, instead, become the land in which they live, breed, cry and eventually die. Their children will view them as traditionalists, a label which will be used by each generation to describe the one which preceded it. This may explain how the mindset of migration-caused cultural mutations in a host country, differ from conquest-caused cultural mutations in a birth country. The former are reflected through the eyes of the dominant culture; whereas the latter are reflected through the eyes of a similar but dominant culture. Living in the present absolves one of past heresies, which can be attributed to those who naively follow.

This exercise defined blended, cultural change, but what is the attribute of change which is perceived to be threatening? Let us examine how scholars view change. Is it that somewhere, in time, the "self" appears to have lost, misplaced, integrated or overlapped its integral essence - an identity, a personhood, a selfhood? Could this be the reason why the youth narratives weigh the "net gain" in a new country against the "net loss" inherent in cultural transformation?

A) Are Canadian-Punjabi Sikhs, or Canadian-Punjabis defined within the "vertical mosaic" or the "melting pot" theories of stratification of cultures?

The quest to understand who we are is often defined by the mosaic versus melting pot theories regarding Canada’s multiculture, multifaith and multiracial society. Porter (1965) coined
the term "vertical mosaic" as a powerful metaphor used to explain contemporary Canadian, social science research. His image of the Canadian mosaic is a composite of social groups defined by class, ethnicity, language and religion, vertically ranked in a series of unequal dimensions. These distinctive mosaic communities represent ethnic identity while the vertical alignment represents a hierarchy of ethnic inequality, resulting in distinct social cleavages. The Canadian mosaic then is contrasted with the American "melting pot" tradition where people give up their ethnic identities to become homogenized Americans. The melting pot theory, if applied in Canada, would have meant a breakdown of national ties and stratification which would have threatened the conservative Canadian lifestyle and values as enshrined in the British Charter (Hagdorn, 1990: 262). In comparing these two concepts, the following rationale results:

a) According to the "vertical mosaic theory" Canadian-Punjabi Sikhs are a distinct society, reluctant to dissolve into the greater mainstream society; and

b) According to the "melting pot theory" Punjabis would have to become one with the dominant culture: adopt their nationalistic sentiment and support and aspire towards assimilation with the dominant culture. According to this study, to achieve this would be difficult. The "self" within the kara would not allow Sikhs to dissolve into other cultures, although they often marry non-Sikhs.

Individuals rarely dissolve their birth ethnicity and casually adopt another culture's values without angst. They will, however, publicly role play where necessary and acquire appropriate persona(s) for specific situations requiring ritualized blending, which cannot be labelled as a "melting pot or mosaic " issue.
(C) How can a visible minority's boundary remain secure and well established, seasoned tradition as others whose boundaries were formed elsewhere, movements, exceptions, of course, are apparent in the membership of boundary construction, deconstruction and reconstruction are shared power, competition and cultural difference. In short, Punjabi boundary could be restructured when forced to do so by the forces of we are able to restructure our identity because they and visible. Despite this, they maintain an identity because they and solid. Boundary to be rigid yet flexible, fragile and breakable, or solid membership within each may find their activities within each.

In the boundaries of the Sikh kara and mainstream culture, the study revealed that breaching's views of transformations are present between the community and society (e.g., in Burnet, 1995:3-21). This suggests that power, competition and the cultural impacts internal changes resulting from transformation, delibrate social and cognitive by the group’s relationship with the larger social order. Cultural survival, yet located within time, this transformation is sociocultural constructions underlying by transformations which predict symbolic enclaves of integration and exclusion, which mirror symbolic.

Breton (1984) defines collective cultures as cultural. (B) Is the Canadian Punjabi community in a relationship with the dominant culture, yet a distinctive entity?
safety zones. This constant realignment functions to stabilize the necessary chaos of integration. Thus, the "self" locates its voice after learning which traditions and attitudes it would be most beneficial to dissolve, adapt and perpetuate. This boundary reorganization stage may foster myth creations of life back home in order to substantiate boundary-related safety zones, codes of behaviour and avoidance of stark assimilation. I find this view to be accurate as revealed in this study where Sikhs constantly reassess their values according to the mainstream culture values. The range of values is unlimited: marriage, childraising, education, adolescent gender-grooming, semi-arranged or arranged marriages, elder worship and domestic differences which involve issues of intergenerational feuds within a united family unit. It is essential to be aware that the boundary inside the kara may exhibit as much cultural chaos and dissention as might the external mainstream boundary foresh. This is revealed in the narratives of Reva and her father, Pia and her husband, and Sobi and his uncle and aunt. This is a natural event, universally experienced by all cultures.

Sikh participation in mainstream culture is shaped through interactive adaptation, a necessary survival activity. The immigrant Sikh reality, if lived inside the kara’s boundary with minimum, mainstream culture interaction, may not desire or need to adapt to this degree. Thus the quality and degree of intersocietal interaction ranges from adopting mainstream values, to confirming absolute Sikh orthodoxy. Most Punjabis live between each extreme.
D) How does a baptised Sikh who wears the five k’s reconcile both his / her need to look different and the need to blend in with the status quo?

Again, Breton (1984, cited in Burnet 1989: 13) describes two interpretations of interactive reality. The first interpretation is that symbolic constructions are ideas, images and symbols which define society, can be purposely shaped by powerful people and institutions, and can be imposed upon members. Imposing these concepts on people, allows the elite power structure to rank their culture’s hierarchical participation, which is defined by the rewards of interaction. The second interpretation of interactive reality explains how symbolic constructions define the relationship between individuals and the reality they confront in daily life: the actions, needs and wants of the culture’s membership. This level demands participation, ownership and specially designed rewards. The question is, "What do the majority and minority cultures want from each other?" or rather, "What does each value in the other culture?"

I believe the five Sikh "k’s" would constitute the symbolic construction and the interaction and rewards would result from the acquired education, status positions, materialistic comfort, idealism and security. For Punjabis, a good education which will lead to a status profession is desired for a prestigious salary and family status. Professional education elevates one’s marriage prospects and marriage marketability. This is confirmed by the Punjabi newspaper matrimonial columns which consistently advertise for male doctors as opposed to other professionals. Conversely, the
prized mainstream culture is assimilated through schooling, employment opportunities, consumer education and the subliminal, media / technology invasion through television, print and music.

Also, the issue of "jumping boundaries" appears relevant here, in that Eli felt free to marry an outsider because Anna was out of caste, so she could not disturb the taboo regarding marriage in another caste. This alludes to cultural accommodation, a Punjabi Sikh option documented upon by Gibson (1988) in the schooling of Sikhs in the United States.

Studies of cultural integration and acculturation processes in communities are identified by Berry (1989, cited in Burnet, 1989: 23) as active participant studies which reveal people negotiating roles, identities and behaviours which affect their cultural transformation, acculturation attitudes and resulting stress within the ethnic group. For Punjabis, the stress caused by the chaos and tension within the kara’s boundary (as forces inside and outside demand change) exemplifies how people respond to change. Life lived inside and outside of the kara boundaries is in a constant state of flux. Human interaction is not timetabled or rehearsed and neither does it occur in isolation. While an individual may be experiencing racism inside the competitive mainstream employment forces; the individual is also competing in his/her clan and kinship for status, supremacy and rewards.

Alfred Schutz (1962, cited in Sherman and Webb, 1988: 62) explains human interaction as the affective journey of experiences shared by the human culture, "...another’s existence transcends
mine and mine does his. We have in common only a small section of our biographies...we are human beings not science experiments..."

This he called typification, the human state which validated the past experience of replication, constancy, common responses and assumed knowledge. This concept, when applied to Punjabis, reveals what most cultures hold sacred and secret. That being their histories and behaviours, which each culture signifies through varied symbols resulting in universal objectives. Cultures must practise self-protectionism in order to survive. Often, the enemy they fear is potent but overlooked, for it is safely lodged deep inside their boundary.

Appreciating the metaphorical boundaries of the "self" secured within the kara is reminiscent of the world of Prakash Tandon (1971) who describes in his autobiography, Beyond Punjab, a period in his life from 1937 to 1960, twenty-three years of colonial culture imposition. He describes a world within India by tracing the local inhabitants' relationships with the outgoing white raj generation, culminating in the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan and subsequent independence of India. In 1938, he describes how he, an Oxford educated Indian from the Punjab, rises to the level of management; and how uncomfortably his British supervisors and Indian brotherhood look upon this cultural transformation of a "foreigner" - one of the Indian males in a generation educated abroad. His self-concept, expectations, behaviours and outward appearance undergo an unwelcome transition as he positions himself between the local Indians and the exiting British. To be local is
a boundary solidified by birthright: to exist is a boundary shaped by others out of territorial assumption, pigment and power. Both can become illusionary states of mind, dissipating in a communion of masses of brown bodies overwhelmed by white supremacy.

Examples of Tandon’s historically lived experiences, during and shortly after the British raj in India, test the boundaries of a subcultural ethnic identity and a self-identity defined by the British stranglehold on the colony, India. Tandon (1971) examines this ironic twist of fate as everyday life is filled with the bizarre mechanisms of a loyal colonial Punjabi mentality trying in vain to make sense of their world - their quest for typification in reclaiming what was theirs.

Tandon graphically illustrates insidious class differences: Punjabi Jat Sikh caste and clan structures; the Indian society’s status and stigma structures; and gender boundaries which defined the racial, religious and cultural lines which channelled females into acceptable lifestyles. It appears that inside the boundary of being Indian, there reside variations of mosaics rather than melting pots. Tandon challenges this mindset by explaining further.

...an (Indian) like myself was a nationalist at heart but in front of them (the British) he found himself saying nothing, ‘seeing their point’, since he lacked the courage to disagree. *It was a kind of schizophrenia.* (my emphasis)...

(Tandon 1971:30)

This study was just such a conceptual journey, a quest based upon a desire to see that change is necessary and real. I thank you for your engaging presence in our collective journey and your need to appreciate the heart of a culture which deserves an audience.
APPENDIX A.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Adi Granth - the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture of Sikhs compiled by Guru Arjun, 1603-1604, containing the compositions of the first five and the ninth Guru and a number of sants and sufis

Akalis ----- a staunch follower of Guru Gobind Singh; in the early 19th C. equated with the Nihang; in the 20th C., initially a volunteer to take over the Sikh temples and afterwards a member of the Shiromani Akali Dal

antahpur --- an inner chamber of a home within a courtyard having the kitchen and bedrooms, where males rarely enter; the realm of women

ayah ------- a child's maidservant; a female servant

babaji ----- grandfather

bani ------- speech, the utterances of the Gurus and bhaktas recorded in the Adi Granth; the amplified form gurbani (the utterance of the guru); or bhagat-bani

bhangra ---- a male harvest dance; a celebration

bhai ------- " brother "; a Sikh formally connected with Sikh affairs; an epithet of respect

biradari --- a maximal lineage, a brotherhood

caste ------ a difference in Punjabi (Hindu) society based on hereditary social class, inherited rank, privilege, profession or occupation; originally defined the profession and disallowed inter caste marriages (taboo)

a) Jat Sikhs ---- landowning class
b) Bhatra Sikhs - traditional occupation of handreading and granthis (readers of the Adi Granth)
c) Jhir Sikhs --- water carriers
d) Julaha Sikhs - traditional occupation of weavers, known as Ramdasia or Khalsa-biradar
e) Khatri Sikhs - urban mercantile group, business and civil service
f) Chamar Sikhs - leather worker and landless labourers also named Ad-Dharmis and Ravidasis
g) Nai Sikhs ---- barbers, matchmakers, messengers

h) Tarkhan Sikhs or Ramgharias - traditional occupation being village artisans such as carpenters, blacksmiths and bricklayers (Khalsi 1992: 86).
chadaras --- a Muslim female covering for the whole body
chapatti --- an unleavened, circular bread
chaudhuri -- the hereditary headman of a group of villages for collecting revenues on behalf of the government
dapatta ---- an uncut length of material used to cover a female’s head, may be lightweight or a warm cloth, part of a woman’s punjabi suit ensemble
dhesi mattai - Indian sweets
Doaba ----- plain tract in central Punjab between Beas and Sutlej rivers, including Jullunder and Hoshiarpur
doab ------- an area lying between two rivers
dowry ------ the money, goods or estate that a woman brings to her husband’s home in a marriage; or a gift of money or property by a man to or for his bride
Granth laawaan ---- the circular walk, made four times by a male and female in the marriage ceremony, around the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh scriptures and Granthi) located under a canopy in the gurdwara
gurdwara --- ‘the door of the Guru’; a Sikh temple, generally also the center of social activity
Gurmukhi --- a script adopted by the first successor of Guru Nanak for recording his compositions and subsequently used by the Sikhs for writing Punjabi
guru ------ teacher, leader, prophet, revered and wise person
Guru Granth Sahib ------ Adi Granth (see above)
gutka ------ a small prayer book
got ------- exogamous caste grouping within the zat
granthi ---- a professional reader of the Granth; the functionary in charge of a gurdwara
izzat ------ honor, prestige, status
kachhaira -- a loose pair of shorts to allow for freedom of movement when fighting, worn by baptised Sikhs, a symbol of Sikhism
karma ------ fate
kanga ------ a comb to be worn in the unshorn hair for tidiness; a symbol of Sikhism
kara ------- a steel bracelet, a symbol of Sikhism
Kaur ------ the Sikh name given to women, meaning princess
keema ------ a Punjabi meat dish
kesh ------- unshorn hair and beard, a symbol of Sikhism
keshdari -- Sikhs who maintain the five k’s, outward symbols associated with Guru Gobind Singh (kesh: unshorn hair and beard; kanga: a comb kept in the hair; kachhaira -- a loose pair of shorts;
kara ------- a steel bracelet;
kirpan ------ a ceremonial dagger or sword
khadi ------ woven rough cotton
Khalsa ------ Sikh brotherhood, instituted by Guru Gobind Singh
Kirpan ------ a ceremonial dagger or sword, symbol of Sikhism
Jat ------- cultivating class prominent in Punjab agriculture and within the Sikh Panth
langar ------ the kitchen attached to a gurdwara from which food is served to all irrespective of caste or creed; a community meal
lavan ------ stanzas composed by Guru Ram Das for the solemnization of marriage
maharajah -- the ruler of a principality in the Punjab
maharani --- the spouse of a ruler of a principality
Majha ------ region in central Punjab between Beas and Ravi rivers, including Lahore and Amritsar
Malwa ------ tract in Punjab east of the Sutlej river, including districts of Ferozepore, Ludhiana and formerly princely states of Nabha and Patiala
morcha ------ an entrenchment for besieging a fort; used as a metaphor by the Akalis for non-violent agitations
nalla ------ a cord used to hold in place the salwar
nitnem ------ religious prayer (book)
Nizam ------ the governor of a province; an administrator; an administrative charge; governorship of a province or a primary division in an empire
panj kakke - the five k’s, outward symbols of Sikkism
phulkari --- a decorative, female headdress usually worn at weddings by a bride over her wedding ensemble
pilau ------ a rice dish
pukka ------ strong or firm
Punjab ----- the north-western province of India
Punjabi ---- the language spoken by people from the Punjab; may also refer to the people from Punjab
Punjabi Sikh ------- a person who is of the Sikh faith and is originally from the geographic region of Punjab, India
Punjabi Jat Sikh ------- a person who is from the Jat class, from the Sikh faith, from Punjab, India
purdah ------ a seclusion of women from the public, especially males
pulla ------ an end of a sari worn over the head to cover it
putka ------ unshorn hair of a male child, tied with a cloth on top of his head
Ramgharia -- Sikh artisan caste (carpenters) prominent among East African Sikhs
rikree ------ a ceremonial red thread sent by sisters to their brothers, assuming the brothers will give them money or a gift in return
salwar kameez - a female attire (a punjabi suit is composed of three pieces: a loose top, gathered pants and a dapatta of a specific length of fabric)
sangats ---- assembly, a religious congregation; a congregation of Sikhs or a collective body of Sikhs at one place
sari ------- a garment of yards of lightweight cloth draped so that one end forms a skirt and the other end is draped over the shoulder or and or worn over the head to cover it

sati ------- voluntary burning of a widow on her husband’s pyre

sat-sari-akal - Sikh greeting ‘in the name of truth ’

Sikh Panth - Sikh community

Singh ------ lion, the name given to most Sikh men

subzee ----- a vegetable dish

Untouchable (Harijan) -- leather worker and landless labourer

zamindar --- literally the holder of land; applied alike to the intermediary who collected revenue on behalf of the state and to a vassal chief as well as to a peasant proprietor; the holder of a right over a certain share in the produce from land

zat ------- endogamous caste grouping
APPENDIX A.: STUDY DATA

Table 1. Selected characteristics of female study participants (primary).

Table 2. Selected characteristics of male study participants (primary).

Table 3. Selected characteristics of non-South-Asian study participants (secondary).

Table 4. Selected characteristics of South-Asian social service participants (secondary).

Table 5. Selected characteristics of South-Asian parent, elder and student participants (secondary).

Table 6. Selected characteristics of high school student participants in ESL, advanced and general level classes (tertiary).

Letter of Agreement.
STUDY DATA OVERVIEW:

This is a narrative inquiry study which investigates the narratives of Punjabi Sikhs, especially youth narratives. The study participants included three levels:

A) primary participants: fifteen in-depth interviews
   * 7 female youth (ages 18-29); 5 male youth; and 3 parents

B) secondary participants: twenty in-depth interviews
   * 5 school personnel; 4 social work personnel; 11 graduate students

C1) tertiary participants: forty-two participants in group and individual discussions
   * 22 parents; 8 elders; 12 youth

C2) tertiary participants: one hundred and forty-eight students in group/classroom discussions
   * 5 classes (3 advanced, 2 general) and 3 ESL level classes
      a total of 148 students. See Tables 1-6.

The initial interview data was taped, transcribed and validated with participants within the course of eight months, beginning in November, 1993 and ending in June, 1994. The school visits were made from April to June 1994.

The Research and Ethics Committee of the local public school board approved of this study, in a committee meeting at which I presented my initial proposal, before the research was conducted. The "Letter of Agreement and Consent" in Punjabi and English was made available to South Asian participants, with an oral translation of same into either Punjabi or Hindi, as required. The transcribed tapes, once validated by the participants, were paraphrased by a professional translator and also by myself. A comparison of the two translations resulted in the closest approximations of the actual dialogue which afterwards were
discussed with and approved by the participants. Signed consent forms were collected from all participants including minors who had the consent form signed by their parents after full disclosure of the nature of the study. According to copyright rules, print permission was also requested from all authors / publishers, archives, CBC producers and others whose material was utilized within this study. (At the time of writing this study, print permission was either given or pending.) My recollections of my late grandfather represent a collage of my family’s early life in Canada, frequently displayed through the personal photographs which are the property of my mother, Sujan Kaur Hari.

A. Bariana.
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (PRIMARY)

TABLE 1.
Total = 9 (2 parents; 7 female youth)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acka</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reva</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Can.</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobi’s wife</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>college(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobi’s sister in law</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>college(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaya</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Brit.</td>
<td>P.R.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>university (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna (Eli’s wife)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Can.</td>
<td>Eng./ Ger.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Ger.</td>
<td>university (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>university (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kame’s mother</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>P.H.</td>
<td>Hindi/ Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>college (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reva’s mother</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>college (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (avg.)</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>Eng. 57.1%</td>
<td>Punj. 42.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ESL = English as a Second Language / English Skills Development
Eng. = English
Ger. = German
Punj. = Punjabi (language)
PJS. = Punjabi Jat Sikh
PR. = Punjabi Ramgharia
PH. = Punjabi Hindu
HP. = Hindi / Punjabi (language)
Brit. = Britain
### TABLE 2.

Total = 6 (1 parent; 5 male youth).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tikki</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Can.</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>university (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobi</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>college (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobi’s bro.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>university (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kame</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Brit.</td>
<td>P.H.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>university (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava’s father</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>university (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth (avg.)</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Punj. 60%</td>
<td>Eng. 40%</td>
<td>Eng. 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ESL = English as a Second Language / English Skills Development  
Eng. = English  
Ger. = German  
Punj. = Punjabi (language)  
PJS. = Punjabi Jat Sikh  
PJR. = Punjabi Ramgharia  
PH. = Punjabi Hindu  
HP. = Hindi / Punjabi (language)  
Brit. = Britain
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (SECONDARY)

Non-South Asian participants.

TABLE 3.

Total = 16 (5 school personnel; 11 graduate students).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teach A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Can.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Est.</td>
<td>univ.(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach B.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Can.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>univ.(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age range = A = (30-40); B = (41-50); C = (51-60)
Gen. = Gender / Ethn. = Ethnicity
Eng. = English
Ger. = German
Est. = Estonia / Estonian
Ukr. = Ukrainian
Fr. = French
Jew. = Jewish
Ital. = Italian
Scot. = Scottish
Can. = Canadian / Canada
Jap. = Japanese
Heb. = Hebrew
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (SECONDARY)

South-Asian social service personnel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>univ.(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care worker</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>univ.(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prog. coord.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Brit.</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>univ.(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comm. worker</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Eng.</td>
<td>univ.(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age range = A = (30-40); B = (41-50); C = (51-60)
Eng. = English
Punj. = Punjabi (language)
PS = Punjabi Sikh
PJS. = Punjabi Jat Sikh
PH. = Punjabi Hindu
PR. = Punjabi Ramgharia
HP. = Hindi / Punjabi (language)
Brit. = Britain

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (TERTIARY))

South-Asian parents, students, elders. Informal group and individual discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yrs. in Can.</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>1st Lang.</th>
<th>2nd Lang.</th>
<th>Educ. level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sikh parent (11 sets)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5 mo. to 3 yrs.</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Hindi or ESL or Eng.</td>
<td>grade school or college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh elders (8)</td>
<td>E,P</td>
<td>5 mo. to 12 yrs.</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>Hindi; ESL or Eng.</td>
<td>minimum or army trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngsters at home (12)</td>
<td>Al</td>
<td>3 mo. to 4 yr.</td>
<td>India or Brit.</td>
<td>PJS</td>
<td>PS PR</td>
<td>Punj.</td>
<td>PH.; ESL; Eng.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age range = Al = (17-20); A = (30-40); B = (41-50); C = (51-60)
D = (61-70); E = (71-80); F = (81-90+)
Eng. = English
Punj. = Punjabi (language)
PS = Punjabi Sikh
PJS. = Punjabi Jat Sikh
PH. = Punjabi Hindu
PR. = Punjabi Ramgharia
HP. = Hindi / Punjabi (language)
Brit. = Britain
ESL = English as a Second Language / English Skills Development
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS (TERTIARY))

HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

Individual or group conversations.

TABLE 6.

Total = 148 students (3 ESL classes; 5 regular classes; 3 advanced level and 2 general level classes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yrs. in Can.</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>1st Lang.</th>
<th>2nd Lang.</th>
<th>Educ. level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>16-20 yrs.</td>
<td>5 mo. to 3 yrs.</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>PJS PS</td>
<td>Punj. or PH.</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>grades 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REG. Adv.</td>
<td>15-19 yrs.</td>
<td>5-15+ yrs.</td>
<td>Can.* India Brit. Afrl.</td>
<td>PJS PS</td>
<td>Punj. or Eng. or PH.</td>
<td>Eng. or Punj.</td>
<td>grades 10-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(69)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REG. Gen.</td>
<td>15-20 yrs.</td>
<td>India and Can. and other</td>
<td>PJS PS</td>
<td>Eng. or Punj. or PH.</td>
<td>Eng. or Punj.</td>
<td>grades 9-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eng. = English
Punj. = Punjabi (language)
PS = Punjabi Sikh
PJS. = Punjabi Jat Sikh
PH. = Punjabi Hindu
HP. = Hindi / Punjabi (language)
Brit. = Britain
Afrl. = Africa
ESL = English as a Second Language / English Skills Development

Adv. = students who were born in Canada or came between 10-14 years of age (average)
Gen. = students who were born in Canada or came between 15-19 years of age (average)
ESL. = students who are recent immigrants and came to Canada between 16-20 years of age and have been in Canadian schools from 3-4 months up to 4 years or more (average)
Also, there were four married (female) students in the ESL classes. They lived with their in-laws or their parents.
Between April Bariana, researcher and ____________________________ participant, or participant's parent and/or legal guardian.

This is to signify that ____________________________ has agreed to be a participant in my research for the qualifying thesis for the doctoral program at OISE.

If the participant requires the use of Punjabi and/or Hindi instead of English during this research, the researcher will provide the translation and interpretation in the required language.

All materials gathered during this study will be kept in a secure place, locked in my office at home.

Confidentiality and anonymity is ensured for all participants. ______________ may withdraw from the research at any time. In no way will this interview reflect upon the evaluation of the participant, in the case of a student.

The participant’s consent in his/her participation in this qualifying thesis extends to any resulting published works including articles and/or books which may result from the original data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signed</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April Bariana researcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participant’s parent/guardian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Letter of Agreement And Consent**

I, ____________________________, agree to be a participant in this research. The researcher will provide translation and interpretation in the required language. All materials will be kept in a secure place.

Confidentiality and anonymity are ensured for all participants. I may withdraw from the research at any time. The participant’s consent extends to any resulting published works.

Signed ____________________________
Date ____________________________

---

**Punjabi Version**

Between April Bariana, researcher and ____________________________ participant, or participant’s parent and/or legal guardian.

This is to signify that ____________________________ has agreed to be a participant in my research for the qualifying thesis for the doctoral program at OISE.

If the participant requires the use of Punjabi and/or Hindi instead of English during this research, the researcher will provide the translation and interpretation in the required language.

All materials gathered during this study will be kept in a secure place, locked in my office at home.

Confidentiality and anonymity is ensured for all participants. ______________ may withdraw from the research at any time. In no way will this interview reflect upon the evaluation of the participant, in the case of a student.

The participant’s consent in his/her participation in this qualifying thesis extends to any resulting published works including articles and/or books which may result from the original data collection.

 Signed ____________________________
 Date ____________________________

---

**Punjabi Translation**

I, ____________________________, agree to be a participant in this research. The researcher will provide translation and interpretation in the required language. All materials will be kept in a secure place.

Confidentiality and anonymity are ensured for all participants. I may withdraw from the research at any time. The participant’s consent extends to any resulting published works.

Signed ____________________________
Date ____________________________
APPENDIX A. INSERTS:

"The Minority Report: Toronto’s Face Reflects the World"

Abstract: India Abroad, August 2, 1996.  
"Multiculturalism: Canada Indians Richer than Rest"

Table 1. -------- "Origins of South-Asians" p. xi.
Table 2. -------- "South-Asians in Canada by Province" p. xiii.


Table 8. -------- "Religious Compositions of the Main South-Asian States" p. 45.

Appendix A. "Classifications used by the Research on South Asian Women in Canada Bibliography (1972-1992)


Appendix A. "Chronology of Sikh History in Canada " (compiled by researcher from following)


Toronto's face reflects the world

The face of Toronto is changing. The sights and smells and colors of faraway places now beckon from the street corners.

Less than 30 years ago, only 3 per cent of Metro's population was composed of visible minorities.

Today, it's one person in four. And more than 100 different languages and dialects are spoken in greater Metro.

By the year 2001, visible minorities will make up 45 per cent of the population.

One woman, delighted with Toronto's metamorphosis, says: "I don't have to go to the continent to mix with the world. It's all here in Toronto."

People from Britain no longer form a clear majority of the population. "No one ethnic group has a majority in Canada," says John Samuel, a demographer at Carleton University. "We are now a nation of minorities."

But the rapidity of this change brings its own unique stresses and challenges. Toronto's recent Yonge St. riot, coming after the controversial Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles and the Metro police shooting of a black drug suspect, revealed race relations are on a delicate footing.

### Population Breakdown for Greater Toronto Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British/French</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE MINORITY REPORT**

% in favor of employment equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% Favorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Statistics Canada 91 census
### The Minority Report

|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|

**Overall, how satisfied are you with Canada as a place to live?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Number polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Have you ever experienced discrimination being directed against you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Would you approve or not approve of your children?**

|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|

**...mixing and socializing with friends who are not a member of your group?**

|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

**...going out on a date with someone who is not a member of your group?**

|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

**...marrying someone who is not a member of your group?**

|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

**...marrying someone who is not of the same religion?**

|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

### Notes

Multiculturalism

Canada Indians Richer Than Rest

By AJIT JAIN

TORONTO — Immigrants from India living in Canada are considerably more likely than people in other groups to have a university degree and their average annual incomes are $1,500 greater than the incomes of those born in Canada ($25,200 to $23,700), according to "Profiles India," part of an immigration research series recently released by the government.

The survey was done jointly by Federal Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Statistics Canada. Together they have completed a series of 15 statistical profiles examining immigrants.

The total number of immigrants was 4.3 million, representing 16 percent of the total population.

During 1993 and 1994, almost 40,000 people born in India immigrated here, making up 8 percent of all immigrants in that period.

Twenty-six percent of immigrants from India aged 15 and over in 1991 had a university degree, compared with 14 of all immigrants and 11 of the Canadian-born adult population.

"Young immigrant adults from India are less likely than other young adults to be attending school," the survey found. "In 1991, 53 percent of immigrants from India aged 15 to 24 were in school full-time or part-time, compared with 64 percent of all immigrants and 61 percent of the Canadian-born in that age group."

Also in that year, 79 percent of Indian immigrants (15 to 64 years) were employed, compared with 78 percent of all immigrant men and 76 of the Canadian-born in the same age group. Twelve percent of Indian immigrants were self-employed, the same as the Canadian-born.

As many as 30 percent of Indian immigrant men were employed in professional or management positions, against 27 percent of Canadian-born men. In manufacturing occupations, the number of immigrants from India was 8 percent higher - 23 to 15.

There was a similar pattern among women.

A disconcerting feature was the high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Characteristics of Immigrants from India</th>
<th>Immigrants from India</th>
<th>Total Immigrant Population</th>
<th>Canadian-Born Population</th>
<th>Total Canadian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>173,675</td>
<td>4,342,890</td>
<td>22,427,740</td>
<td>26,894,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of total</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of total</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% aged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of Immigration (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-1991</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-1980</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1970</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 1961</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of official languages (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French only</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% living with families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15-64</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% aged 65 and over not living in family with other relatives</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women aged 15-44 who are lone parents</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children ever born to ever-married men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>women aged 15-44</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with university degree</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with less than grade 9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population aged 15-24 attending school</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### % aged 15-64 employed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Standardized*</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % self-employed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>12.0</th>
<th></th>
<th>15.6</th>
<th>12.4</th>
<th>12.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % employed full-time, full year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>60.2</th>
<th></th>
<th>62.9</th>
<th>58.7</th>
<th>59.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % unemployed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>15.5</th>
<th>10.2</th>
<th>10.1</th>
<th>10.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Average income (S)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Both sexes</th>
<th>25,174</th>
<th>25,318</th>
<th>23,749</th>
<th>24,001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>31,923</td>
<td>32,089</td>
<td>29,837</td>
<td>30,205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>17,195</td>
<td>18,266</td>
<td>17,457</td>
<td>17,577</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### People aged 15-64 and over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>26,278</th>
<th>27,010</th>
<th>24,435</th>
<th>24,841</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % income from government transfer payments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8.5</th>
<th>11.6</th>
<th>11.4</th>
<th>11.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with low income</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized*</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Source: Statistic Canada, 1991 census of Canada.

1 includes people born in India who are, or have been, landed immigrants to Canada.
2 All data are shown for the non-institutional population
3 Figures for the immigrant population are age-standardized to the Canadian-born population.

From India and 14 other communities, including Chinese, Germans and Italians. Using information from the 1991 census and immigration Canada's administrative files, the profiles describe settlement patterns, family status, education, labor force characteristics and income levels by countries of birth.

Comparison are drawn with the total Canadian population to give a sense of proportion.

At the time of the 1991 census, 173,675 India-born people were living in Canada, representing 4 percent of all immigrants. Those born in India made up 0.6 percent of the total Canadian population.

1991, compared with 1.8 for their counterparts among all immigrant women and 1.6 among those born in Canada.

According to the 1991 census, 49 percent of all immigrants from India were Sikhs. 24 Hindus and 10 belonged to other religions; 8 were Catholics, 5 Protestants and 3 had no religious affiliation.

The current level of immigration to Canada is higher than in previous decades, official statistics say.

In 1990-94, an average of 220,000 immigrants arrived each year, peaking at 256,000 in 1993. This compared with annual averages of 125,000 in the 1980s and 145,000 in the 1970s.
Table 1. Origins of South Asians, 1987
Table 2.

Table 3.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian, African and Pacific Islands Origins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Asian origins</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Afghan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Armenian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Iranian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Israeli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Kurdish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Turk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- West Asian, n.i.e.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arab origins</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Egyptian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Iraqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lebanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maghrebi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Palestinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Syrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arab, n.i.e.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African origins</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ethiopian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Somali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other African, n.i.e.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **South Asian origins**                   |
| - Bengali                                 |
| - Punjabi                                 |
| - Singhalese                              |
| - Tamil                                   |
| - Bangladeshi, n.i.e.                     |
| - East Indian, n.i.e.                     |
| - Pakistani, n.i.e.                       |
| - Sri Lankan, n.i.e.                      |

| **East/South East Asian origins**         |
| - Chinese                                 |
| - Filipino                                |
| - Indo-Chinese                            |
| - Burmese                                 |
| - Cambodian                               |
| - Cambodian                               |
| - Laotian                                 |
| - Thai                                    |
| - Vietnamese                              |

| **Pacific Islands origins**               |
| - Fijian                                  |
| - Polynesian                              |

* = not included elsewhere

---

*Statistics Canada Definitions

Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which the respondent's ancestors belong(ude). Ethnic or cultural origin refers to the ethnic "roots" or ancestral background of the population, and should not be confused with citizenship or nationality. The 1991 question asked "To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did the person's (your) ancestors belong?"

Table 4. CENSUS SOUTH ASIAN SUBGROUPINGS by Gender and Selected Metropolitan Areas,*
1991 Census - 20% Sample Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Asian Origins</th>
<th>Calgary</th>
<th>Edmonton</th>
<th>Hamilton</th>
<th>Kitchener</th>
<th>Montreal</th>
<th>Ottawa-Hull</th>
<th>Toronto</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>Winnipeg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>18350</td>
<td>18930</td>
<td>7080</td>
<td>5395</td>
<td>28225</td>
<td>11280</td>
<td>190665</td>
<td>75430</td>
<td>7975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 10</td>
<td>9325</td>
<td>9760</td>
<td>3630</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>15630</td>
<td>5935</td>
<td>98990</td>
<td>37955</td>
<td>4165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>90025</td>
<td>9170</td>
<td>3450</td>
<td>2760</td>
<td>12595</td>
<td>5345</td>
<td>91670</td>
<td>37475</td>
<td>3805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 20</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>2990</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhalese</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 20</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>6970</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4240</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 10</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 20</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1090</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 14945</td>
<td>15120</td>
<td>5385</td>
<td>4755</td>
<td>16765</td>
<td>8145</td>
<td>141420</td>
<td>65960</td>
<td>6130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 7660</td>
<td>7810</td>
<td>2815</td>
<td>2365</td>
<td>8795</td>
<td>4295</td>
<td>71605</td>
<td>33060</td>
<td>3225</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 2045</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>3920</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>17765</td>
<td>2570</td>
<td>720</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 990</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>8570</td>
<td>365</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 395</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3435</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>16295</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. 200</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>6815</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* cities with South Asian populations > 5000

Table 5. CENSUS SOUTH ASIAN SUBGROUPINGS by Gender, Province and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Man Origns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>420295</td>
<td>445 85</td>
<td>2315 405</td>
<td>2940 405</td>
<td>2940 405</td>
<td>885 405</td>
<td>1200 405</td>
<td>670 405</td>
<td>2095 405</td>
<td>6200 405</td>
<td>550 405</td>
<td>13495 405</td>
<td>2000 405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>203080</td>
<td>530 45</td>
<td>670 45</td>
<td>1200 45</td>
<td>670 45</td>
<td>159530</td>
<td>445 45</td>
<td>2095 45</td>
<td>6200 45</td>
<td>550 45</td>
<td>13495 45</td>
<td>2000 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>670 45</td>
<td>159530</td>
<td>445 45</td>
<td>2095 45</td>
<td>6200 45</td>
<td>550 45</td>
<td>13495 45</td>
<td>2000 45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>670 45</td>
<td>159530</td>
<td>445 45</td>
<td>2095 45</td>
<td>6200 45</td>
<td>550 45</td>
<td>13495 45</td>
<td>2000 45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. The numbers (in millions of speakers) based where possible on official figures for 1981 are to be regarded as approximations only. All state languages in India are officially recognized by Schedule VIII of the Constitution.
Table 8.

Religious composition of the main South Asian states, 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Hindus (including scheduled castes)</th>
<th>Buddhists/Christians/others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>90 million</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>85 million</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>15 million</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>15 million</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hindus 82.64% subdivided

INDIA 684 million
APPENDIX A:

South Asian Women Research (1972-1992) Bibliography Keywords.

Naidoo's (1994) selected, annotated bibliography of research on South Asian women reveals not only a practical guide to the twenty year period of Canadian research in this field but also a list of observable categories as key words, within which the "self" of these women and their families is captured. The following list of the categories used in which the research is annotated follows (in alphabetical order).

acculturation; cultural persistence
acculturative/marital stress; coping resources
acculturative stress; minority mental health
adaptation; Caribbean / Guyanese Indians
adaptation; educational role
adaptation problems; inter-ethnic marriages
adaptation; racial stereotypes
adaptation style; acculturation pros / cons
adolescent socialization; achievement aspirations
ancestral history; feminism
arranged marriages; intergenerational conflict
arranged marriages; intergenerational attitudes
Asian Indian immigration; racist immigration policy
Asian seniors; powerlessness
assimilation dilemmas; somatic distress
attributions styles; depression symptoms

barriers to health system; work and health
B.C. racism; Punjabi farm workers
bilingualism; ethnic discrimination

Canadian immigration trends; South Asian adaptation
clothing practices; demographic variables in clothes choice
collectivism/individualism; integration strategies
conjugal power; religiosity
cross-cultural aging; South-Asian aging in Canada
cross-generational self-concept; acculturation conflict
cultural alienation; non-Christian experience
cultural differences; adaptation factors
cultural health attitudes; somatic illness
cultural value conflict; intercultural impressions
cultural value retention; personal growth
demographic profile; immigration history
dependency status; employment barriers
discriminatory immigration; "continuous journey" rule
distress attributions; high distress attitudes
dualistic worldview; selective adaptation
early South Asian studies; host country experiences
economic achievement; comparative incomes
economic "glass ceiling"; equal opportunity
education; self-perceptions
elderly immigrants; ethnic aging
employed disadvantaged individuals; visible minorities
employed educated women; lived experiences
employment barriers; gender exploitation
employment conditions; union activities
employment discrimination; combatting racism
employment; participation in labour force
ethnicity; social organization
ethnic identity; ethnic stereotyping
ethnic pros / cons; multiple repression
ethno-religious identity; religious activities
exclusive immigration; racial fears

factory discrimination; labour dispute
familial power; male/female relationships
family change; culture persistence
family life cycles; women's/children's roles
family patterns; kin networks
family patterns; women's role changes
family size; fertility rates
family structure; rural / urban communities
family structure; social change theory
family system theories; family research trends
family value conflicts; acculturation
family violence; gender oppression
father dominance; personal growth
femininity in Hindu beliefs/myths; traditional family systems

gender oppression; racial oppression
gender oppression; religious ideology
gender role determination; selective immigration

health care practices; immigrant women
health problems; discriminatory health care system
health status; methods issues
heritage culture; social interactions
Hinduism; religious adaptation
Hindu acculturation; love concepts
home/host barriers; mental health
homemaker hardships; spouse isolation

illness beliefs; health behaviour
immigrant adaptation; racial experiences
immigrant status; family re-unification
immigrant women's hardships; employment barriers
immigrant women's statistics; education levels
immigration patterns; adaptation problems
immigration via marriage; matrimonial advertisements
individualist/collective ethos; spiritual and material self
Indo-Pakistani socialization; intergenerational value conflict
Indo-Pakistani spousal relationships; test of Resource Theory
institutionalized sexism/racism; labour market classism
integration; social/economic factors
integration strategies; built environment attitudes
intercultural counselling; counsellor-Asian guidelines
intergenerational problems; authoritarian families
intermarriage; parental conflict
Ismaili elderly; family interdependence
Ismaili Ugandan Asians; economic adjustment
Ismaili women; domestic space
Ismaili worldview; tradition changes

kin networks; resettlement fragmentation

labour force experiences; employment barriers
labour force experiences; regional employment impact
labour market participation; employment barriers
language learning; employment training
legal career experiences; societal attitudes

mainstream feminist racism; women’s solidarity
male/female roles; non-Western acculturation
marriage; immigrant children
media stereotypes; white male bias
Meech lake Accord; women’s equality rights
mental health; South Asian immigrants
migratory experiences; economic contributions
migratory stress; premigratory acculturation
minority mental health; high risk women
menopause; Sikh traditional beliefs
mortality patterns; test of Lee hypothesis
multicultural experiences; adaptation stress
multicultural meanings; value conflicts
multicultural policy assessment; multicultural attitudes

needs assessment; community services
newcomer self-perceptions; likes/dislikes of Canada
new reproductive technologies; reproductive exploitation

parent-child acculturation attitudes; home/host social change
perceived immigrant difference; feminist racism
personal experiences; adaptation struggles
personal racism; racist attitudes
pioneer South Asian women’s studies; methods / multicultural issues

pre-migratory experiences; personal stories
professional women; individual/institutional racism
profiles of working class East Indian women
race/class/sex experiences; community structure alliances
racial prejudice; correlates of prejudice
racial violence; public policy
racial violence; racial issues
racism; immigrant women exploitation
religious identification; comparative religious beliefs
reproductive rights; feminist racism
reproductive rights; sex selection
research literature review; problems/issues
roles and relationships; Pakistani Canadian youth
role discrimination; race/sex/societal bias
self/spouse perceptions; social/economic adaptation
Sikh family organization; intergenerational differences
Sikh fruit pickers; work acculturation
Sikh religious beliefs; adaptation stress
social identification; visible minority women
social identity; inter-ethnic attitudes
social perceptions; trait attribution
social racism; gender oppression
socialization; gender structure
socialization; Pakistani teenagers
socialization; parent-teenager conflict
social science research critique; gender/race/class barriers
societal classism; household work changes
South Asian AIDS education; South Asian lesbians
South Asian Canadian history; adaptation problems
South Asians in Atlantic Canada; lived experiences
South Asian women’s organizations; ethnic/gender identity
Sri Lankan Tamils; self/family perceptions
stress measurement; helpful adjustment factors
support groups; outsider resources

Ugandan Asian refugees; parent/children adaptation problems
Ugandan refugees; settlement experiences

value conflict; role expectations
value conflicts; traditional medicine
Vancouver farm workers; work experiences

women’s roles; professional women
worldview duality; personal growth
working women; spousal relationships

youth-parent acculturation attitudes; youth heterosexual relationships
An Overview

India is about one-third the size of the United States with 3.3 million square kilometers, 26 states and 6 union territories. India's population is 940 million, the second largest in the world after China. The major religions include: Hindu (82 %); Muslim (12 %); Christian (2 %); and Sikh (2 %). India's per capita GDP is $ 310.00, exports are worth $ 26.3 billion (1995), imports are worth $ 28.7 billion (1995) and the major trading partners are the United States, Japan, Germany and Britain. The life expectancy at birth is 61 years and the literacy rate is 52 %


APPENDIX A : "CHRONOLOGY OF SIKH HISTORY IN CANADA"

1846 -- Treaties of Lahore 1846 - British occupation of India to 1947

1897 -- Sikhs were attracted to Canada after a Sikh regiment had crossed Canada by train, following Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897.

1903 -- the beginning of South Asian immigration to Canada

1906 -- a) sudden increase of East-Indian population to B.C. due to sudden decrease of Chinese immigrants caused by the $ 500.00 head tax
b) 5,000 East-Indians enter Canada to explore labour market
c) 10,000 Japanese also enter B.C.
d) labour shortage becomes job shortage
e) white labour was too expensive, immigrant labour was cost effective

1907 -- a) race riots in B.C. due to worker and trade union anti-Asian immigrant bias
b) exclusion of East-Indians by Mackenzie King the Deputy Minister of Labour
c) South Asian immigration banned
1914 -- 400 Sikhs left in a chartered boat, the Komogata Maru, from Singapore bound for Vancouver, B.C, to test the rights of a British subject to be allowed entry into any part of the British Dominion.

This expedition was headed by Gurdit Singh and opposed by Hopkinson.

** spent 2 months on the water, starvation, delay tactics and consequences (exclusion, encouragement, departure, arrival, delay, the Court of Appeal, force, intimidation, return, arrest and detention, surrender, assassination) - Muslim League, politics, newspapers, underground movements.

1917 -- East-Indian population in B.C. shrinks to 1100

1930's - Immigration barriers further tightened and were extended to war and post war recovery period

1946 --
   a) 90 % of employed Sikhs worked in the lumber industry
   b) discrimination against East-Indians:
      1. denied access to municipal / public affairs jobs
      2. lumber camps, seasonal farm work, sawmills, casual labourers (men 55-60 age / no women)
      3. wages were 1/2 or 1/4 of a white man's wage

1947 -- Independence of India

1950 to 1960 -- mostly Sikh immigrants population rose from 2,000 to 67,000

1960's - Canada announced the "colour blind immigration policy" election tactic to appease the East-Indian community

1970 to 1980 -- South Asian population increased fourfold

1980 -- Canadian Farm Worker's Union to protect the South Asian farm workers

1994 -- nearing the 100th year of South Asian settlement in Canada now over 300,000 South Asians in Canada
The First Sikh Immigrants

Sikhs started arriving on a regular basis in 1903. After arrival in Canada, most of them worked in farming, logging, railways, or sawmills. Many eventually started their own fuel delivery, farms, and lumber businesses. Their efforts have helped develop British Columbia’s lumber industry.

The Journey of Malkit Singh Parhar

Malkit Singh Parhar was three when he came to Canada in 1927 with his mother and his brother. They were going to join his father, who had been in Canada since 1906. It took them two months to reach Canada. First they traveled by train for three days from Panjab to Calcutta, a distance of 1500 kilometres. They stayed in a Gurdwara in Calcutta for a week and then boarded a boat to Hong Kong. This boat stopped at several ports en route to Hong Kong, including Colombo (Sri Lanka), Penang (Malaysia), Singapore, and Saigon (Vietnam). They arrived in Hong Kong after sixteen days and stayed in the local Gurdwara for twelve days before boarding another ship bound for Canada. This ship stopped at Shanghai (China), Nagasaki (Japan), Kobe (Japan), and Yokohama (Japan). After eighteen days at sea, they arrived in Victoria where they were greeted by Malkit’s father.

See the following reference:

Sikhs landing in Vancouver, 1904.
It was common for Sikh immigrants to be wrongly identified as “Hindus.”

During the sea voyage, the Parhars traveled in “steerage class.” This means they did not have a cabin. Instead, they lived on the open deck and they had to cook their own food. It was a long and tiring journey. With little to do, some of the passengers used the time to make friends with one another. They even managed to learn the fundamentals of new languages such as Chinese or English from other passengers. This became very helpful since most of the Sikhs on board did not speak English. By the time they reached Canada, a few were able to understand a bit of English.

Malkit Singh Parhar, his father, and mother in Vancouver after their journey.
(Photo credits for this section).

Photo 1. The Hong Kong Regimental Contingent in Victoria, on their way to and from Britain, 1902. (From Victoria Daily Times, June 4, Sept. 8, 1902).

Photo 2. New South Asian arrivals camped on the sidewalk on West Hastings Street in Vancouver, November, 1905. The temperature was below freezing. (Courtesy Vancouver City Archives).

Photo 3. Pioneer South Asians often lived under very rough conditions: these are living quarters at a Todd Inlet lumber mill. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives).

Photo 4. South Asian and fellow loggers at a Sikh funeral service at Todd Inlet around 1909. (Courtesy Victoria City Archives).

Photo 5. Gurdit Singh Sarhali (far left) his son and others aboard the Komagata Maru in the Vancouver harbour, 1914. (From Literary Digest, July 18, 1914, p. 95).

Photo 6. This newspaper cartoon appeared during the Komagata Maru incident in 1914. (From Literary Digest, July 18, 1914, p. 96).

Photo 7. The Komagata Maru anchored in Vancouver harbour. (From Literary Digest, July 18, 1914, p. 95).

Photo 8. Guarding food destined for the Komagata Maru, 1914. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives).

Photo 9. Mewa Singh on his funeral pyre soon after being hanged by Canadian authorities for the assassination of William Hopkinson. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives).

Photo 10. A meeting held in the Vancouver Sikh temple during the drive to secure the vote, 1946. (Courtesy Vancouver City Archives).

Photo 11. The Vancouver Sikh temple on Christmas night, 1943. (Courtesy Vancouver City Archives).

Photo 12. Lumber workers in the Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C., 1910 - 1914. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives).

Photo 13. Mayo Singh, a major Sikh industrialist during the period 1920-1950. (Courtesy Victoria City Archives).

Gurdit Singh Sarhali (far left, front) his son, and others aboard the Komagata Maru in Vancouver harbour, 1914. (From Literary Digest, July 18, 1914, p. 95)

The Hong Kong Regimental Contingent in Victoria, on their way to and from (below, left) Britain, 1902. (From Victoria Daily Times, June 4, Sept. 8, 1902)

Photos: 1.
New South Asian arrivals camped on the sidewalk on West Hastings Street in Vancouver, November, 1905. The temperature was below freezing. (Courtesy Vancouver City Archives)

Lumber workers in the Queen Charlotte Islands, B.C., 1910-1914. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives)

South Asian and fellow loggers at a Sikh funeral service at Todd Inlet around 1909. (Courtesy Victoria City Archives)

Pioneer South Asians often lived under very rough conditions; these are living quarters at a Todd Inlet lumber mill. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives)
WILL THE DIKE HOLD?

This newspaper cartoon appeared during the Komagata Maru incident in 1914.
(From Literary Digest, July 18, 1914, p. 96)

The Komagata Maru anchored in Vancouver harbour.
(From Literary Digest, July 18, 1914, p. 95)

Guarding food destined for the Komagata Maru, 1914. (Courtesy B.C. Provincial Archives)

Mewa Singh on his funeral pyre soon after being hanged by Canadian authorities for the assassination of William Hopkinson.
A meeting held in the Vancouver SRA temple during the drive to secure the vote, 1964.

(Courtesy, Vancouver City Archives)
APPENDIX B.
Faces of Change: Faces of Hate  ( CBC 1993 )

This program dramatically highlights various issues:

a) The parent’s agenda for their daughter’s arranged marriage excludes the western levels of courtship: dating, communication, relating to each other’s family, possible / probable intimacy, and visualizing a separate married lifestyle in separate living quarters. In reality the term " arranged marriage " has a wide range of definitions depending upon the family’s views.

b) The girls’ concern is that they should have the same right as boys, to go out, dance and experience freedom (not sexual freedom), choose the partner they find physically attractive, get to know him (dating) and then get the parents involved, much like the western culture model. Their parents cannot allow them to date because their culture forbids a boyfriend-girlfriend socialization experience.

c) The parents, due to tradition, cannot allow their daughter to be seen in public with other males because when they seek an arranged match for her, people will gossip that she has experienced freedom. This implies that dating and drinking may jeopardize her marriage prospects and her family’s reputation. At marriage, the female must be seen to be chaste and virginal, without a past or any previous obligation to another male. For males, reputation screening is less rigid and is of less consequence.

d) The parents feel that western courtship, dating and freedom (such as attending a dance) ultimately lead to one thing - sexual intercourse, possibly preceded by smoking and drinking.

e) The adolescents feel that freedom to dance and dine out either singly or in same sex groups does not mean intimacy will occur. However, the double standard prevails, as this study indicates, wherein a brother is filled with rage when he sees his sister at the dance. He escalates the father’s anger which leads to her physical abuse and ostracism; while he has permission to enjoy uncensored and unrestricted freedom.

f) Parents feel marriage is a kinship-bonded relationship between two Punjabi Jat Sikh families, through their son and daughter. Adolescents feel ashamed that their tradition demands an arranged marriage (which itself has a multitude of variances), while their peers experience dating and courtship. They wish to emulate the western lifestyle and are ashamed and frustrated because they must comply with the wishes of their elders.
Commentator: Culture clashes can split families, for example, teenagers of the South Asian communities - Hindu, Muslim and Sikh can find themselves torn between the values their parents insist upon and the freedoms other Canadian kids take for granted. It’s a cultural crossfire that catches a lot of young people. For some boys and many girls, it can be very painful.

Reporter: Three o’clock and school is out at _____ where 65% of the students are South Asian. The parents escort their daughters home from school. That’s part of a daily ritual in a culture they fear. Parents want to control their daughters to make sure that they remain chaste and virginal for an arranged marriage. But South Asian kids are reaching for their freedom. This is how some of them dare to spend their days, often school days. This is a day dance, a ticket out from a highly controlled atmosphere at home. Many of these teenagers had to lie to their parents to be here today. They are doing things their parents would not approve of (clip of a girl smoking). With these girls, this is their big chance to have fun. Most South Asian girls are not allowed to go out without a chaperon.

Father: Let us not forget. One thing leads to another. When a girl and boy go dancing, it doesn’t stop there.

Female: You have no ulterior motive when you go dancing to pick up guys. You just go and you’re with three, four friends.

Father: There is somehow, almost inevitable pressure to lead to sex, could be pregnancy, sometimes AIDS.

Female: They’ll (parents) only realize there is nothing wrong with the dances when they attend one themselves.

Father: I think, um, I’m not overstrict but at the same time I’m not complacent either. We are on the lookout all the time.

*******************************************************************************

Student skit

Boy: Listen, what are you doing this Saturday?

Girl: Nothing.

Boy: I thought maybe you and me could go out for a while.

Girl: Oh, I’d love that.

Boy: So?

Girl: Well, I have to find an excuse for my parents.
Boy: Tell them you’re going to the library, Man!

Girl: Yeah, okay.

Reporter: This role play reflects some of the tension found in many South Asian homes.

Father: She has a boyfriend.

Mother: Yeah, he called her...

Father: Get her down here right now...

Reporter: The idea in presenting this skit is for a basis of discussion.

Girl: What’s wrong?

Father: Sit down. You have no shame. We feed you, we educate you, we put a roof over your head.

Girl: Listen to me...

Father: You lie to us. Why should we listen to you?

Girl: That’s just it. You guys make me lie to you. You never listen to me.

Mother: This should not even be an issue.

Girl: There is no privacy in this house. You guys just...

Father: You have no privacy. This is my house, not your house.

Do you love this boy? Seriously, tell me. Do you want to marry him? If you want him - go to him.

Mother: You are seventeen-years-old.

Girl: I just like him and he likes me and we’re just good friends.

Mother: Shut up! You’re not permitted to speak from this point. You’re going to listen to what we have to say.

How are we going to get you married off now? How are we going to get you married off?

Girl: I haven’t done anything wrong, Mom.

Mother: You have done everything!

*******************************************************************************
Female: You do things and you get caught. That’s really hard on an Indian girl. I would like to just go out to the mall, just do what I want and find that ....

Female: When I’m home, I can’t stay on the phone that much. I’ve gotta worry what I say and do, how I act towards my sisters and brother. You’ve gotta worry what you do and say without getting the third degree every time...

Father: Parents are required to bring up their children properly, with proper, moral upbringing, and therefore the way that the child behaves, shows how he or she has been brought up. A successful marriage in many ways reflects upon the upbringing that was inculcated into the child. And that’s what in a sense is a process. The way the parents bring up good children and the children then go on to become good parents themselves.

Reporter: Such ideas about love and marriage, western ideas are what pit children against parents in many South Asian families. The parents wish the dream - a traditional wedding, a young couple brought together by their families. This couple are both still in high school but their families have been close since they were children. This is a match which will join social class, religion and caste. On that foundation love is expected to grow (clip of a traditional Sikh wedding of two teenagers in the Sikh gurdwara with all relatives in attendance).

Mother: We believe not in a boy and girl getting married: we believe in families getting married. Of course the couple have to be compatible.

Female: I could never marry someone that I did not love. I’ve grown up in this society and this society says that you must love someone first.

Mother: We have done the initial homework for the children. They are not just going to bars and picking up guys and then finding out that they are murderers or rapists.

Reporter: The theme of marriage and what happens is not just a preoccupation of the parents, it’s a major theme in the kids’ pop culture.

Deejay: Over here it is going to be Apache Indian, so come by and say ‘Hi!’ ...whatever you do, okay?

Reporter: Today they are here to meet one of their idols. He is British. He is Sikh and he is their idol and he is hot! To these teens he’s a star who belongs to them.
Deejay: Welcome to Bhangra Fusion with something that is brand new.

Reporter: _____ is a disc jockey with her own radio station program. Three times a week they tune in and phone in to her late night radio program. Today we’re going to ask you about day time dances and so on. Today we are going to ask you, ‘How do you feel about your culture, are you really Indian, or not?’

Female caller: I feel that I am Indian, you know, especially when you play Bhangra and stuff, you know. When everyone gets together and shares their culture.

Deejay: I think the dances are portrayed very negatively. In England, the attitude towards dances is quite different over there than here. In fact kids over there are allowed to go. In fact, they are encouraged to go together and just you know, have a lot of fun and be with their own culture.

Deejay: What would happen, let’s say if your Mom and Dad found out tomorrow, that you go to all these dances?

Male caller: They would kill me.

Deejay: Okay, they would kill you, but why? What is their thinking?

Male caller: Okay, they came over here from Indian in about ’78 or so and like they are not really into Canadian stuff. They only want me to, like clean the house and go to the store or whatever.

*******************************************************

Mother: I went to a dance with them to see what it was all about. And then when I did go it was like nothing. They just stand around and dance. There’s nothing wrong.

Reporter: Back at school, tensions from home hang around the classroom. Even at a school like this one where South Asian students overwhelmingly outnumber the rest, parents still worry. They worry about girls pairing up with boys in class projects. They worry about the pressure to participate in team sports at school.

Principal: It is very difficult for me as a principal to say to a girl that I’d like you to try out for the volleyball team when her culture says that she should be home at 3:10. So we’ve battled that on an ongoing basis. We have a social worker who goes to the two temples and tries to give the message to allow students to become a little more involved.
Reporter: ______ a teacher, understands that battle, she’s one of the few South Asian teachers in the system.

Teacher: A lot of the parents are from rural settings. Quite frequently we put demands on students. As educators we say okay, here is a group project, you two or three people work on it and quite often educators don’t realize it infringes on the families beliefs and values.

Reporter: For many South Asian girls, school means freedom and a chance to be like other teenagers.

Female: ...put myself in that situation. I’d get up in the morning, wash my face, put on covering clothes from head to toe, put my hair back in a ponytail and just go to school, run into the washroom, open my hair, change my clothes - you know, put lipstick on and go to class.

Reporter: But tip-toeing over the line can sometimes prove catastrophic at home.

Female: She was seeing this guy for about two years and they were intending to marry each other when they were finished high school, you know. Her parents found out that she was going out with this guy. When she came back that same day they had her passport ready and her airplane ticket and shipped her off to India. And she is still there. And to tell you the truth, I don’t even know if she is dead or alive. Sometimes, you know they will threaten - you know, if you don’t do this or that I’ll send you off to India. I know they won’t but there’s always this common threat to an Indian girl.

Teacher: Their immediate reaction is okay, let’s send her back to India. She can stay with her uncles or grandparents until she hits sixteen. As soon as she hits sixteen we can marry her off.

Reporter: Even for girls who try to toe the line, the pressure can be overwhelming.

Female: A friend of mine comes from an extremely, extremely traditional family. They have been here for about three years now and she is nineteen. She has never been to a movie cinema by herself...she’s compared to a jail-like survival. She doesn’t know who she is living for, anymore. She doesn’t know if she is living her own life or if her parents are living her life for her and it’s leading her to confusion. She is suicidal. She has to be monitored by us at all times.
Teacher: In the long run, the family is the strongest support system, in our culture, that can ever exist and it’s there for the rest of their lives. I guess, I wish that somehow we can start working with the parents. It’s important for them to sit down and communicate with the children and to begin to, not change the values, but maybe evaluate their views.

Female: My view is openness between just everything. I mean I want us to let society know that there are problems going on and I think it will be good to talk more openly with our parents because everything kids do now is behind their parents’ back.

CBC News Toronto.

******************************************************************************

An overview of the dilemma in this segment allows us to place the Punjabi cultural behaviour code(s) in a broader frame of reference:

a) The conflicts experienced by the "self" within the karas of the mother, father, daughter or same ethnicity teacher and social worker reflect the push and pull tension between what is prescribed in the Punjabi culture and what is modelled in the mainstream culture. This leads some parents to believe that they should take their children back to India and raise them there, where they perceive the culture to be more homogeneous and less threatening.

b) The adolescents are frustrated and cannot understand how their Punjabi Sikh culture, which migrated from the Punjab, could have such a psychological stranglehold upon its membership. They are also amazed at the moral paralysis their elders nurture because they cannot incorporate cultural change in a host country.

c) The demands of the Punjabi culture either devastate one’s soul or produce a very tough human being with a focused and positive moral strength. Therefore, the Punjabi membership develops coping skills and strategies with which to endure the unquestionable compliance expected in issues of marriage, lifelong parental responsibility, interactional kinship roles and bonds and expectations.

There is no easy solution when a traditional culture opposes the pressure to change: a necessity which their youth demand in order to experience accommodation in their birth / adopted country.
Hayes (1992: 39-130) in his article, "The Dances, the Firebomb and the Clash of Cultures ", discusses the emotional and cultural impasse between South Asian parents and their youth regarding daytime dances and related issues of freedom.

...daytime dances originated about ten years ago in the large South Asian community in London, England. In the peculiarly fluid way that these things happen, an entire youth scene emerged, at the heart of which were young musicians and dance club DJs - also called 'mixers' who produced recordings that combined Bhangra, a traditional folk music and hit songs from Hindi movie sound tracks with high tech synthesizers, electronic recording effects and the rest of the trappings of western pop. By the 1990's, Bhangra had been cross-pollinated with everything from reggae and rap to the jerky, mechanized dance known as techno. The lyrics were usually sung in Punjabi although often alternated with English and liberally sprinkled with Caribbean patois or Euro-Asian slang... (Hayes 1992:40).

Hayes further relates the history of adolescent angst.

...the first Toronto dances were staged about two years ago. They were popular because South Asians wanted to mix with other South Asians and hear Bhangra, which wasn't possible at their high school dances, even if they were allowed to go. Since then there have been dozens of dances held in banquet halls and clubs which kids learn about by listening to 'Bhangra Fusion' a radio show on CHIN AM, the pulse of the South Asian youth in Toronto... (Hayes 1992:40).

As in all human interaction issues which present chaos, there have been definite shifts of boundaries and reconstructing of boundaries, inside and outside the kara, regarding compliance, blind acceptance of tradition and the need for change. Daytime dances exploded the myth that contemporary adolescents would comply with traditional values and practices for generations without rebellion - however public! This clarion call was heard at the doorsteps of the gurdwaras and rocked the traditional parents' beliefs as they looked for solutions to this very public laundering
of their customs and beliefs. They found that they had to learn how to communicate with their children regarding previously held taboo subjects: sexual intimacy, dating, courtship, love marriages, double standards for boys and girls, and selective western culture interaction and emulation without guilt, loss of face and reputation. Parents asked the gurdwara system for permission to experience the change forced upon them by their children. In essence, the boundaries of the rigid kara had burst and new boundaries had to be reconciled. This translated into adaptation, cultural accommodation and a reinterpretation of, "What is the benefit of living within a fixed tradition when it causes such personal pain, publicity and community turmoil?"

In reality, Sikh elders and parents began a dialogue with their children regarding their disapproval with students dancing when they should be studying in school. Some degree of privilege was then negotiated. Daytime dances have since diminished in importance having served their role as a cultural catalyst. They have now evolved into mainstream bands which showcase Punjabi talent and provide a social outlet for adolescents, both as participants and as an audience.

In effect, youth rebellion was necessary to generate publicity regarding cultural and religious rigidity, forcing parents and gurdwaras to resolve issues previously conveniently ignored. At last, children were listened to and parent’s views were discussed. This had not happened before!
Assimilation in disguise:

It is impossible to summarize the very complex and private interaction which occurs between teacher and student within the world of schooling for the children of the status quo, never mind the children of a visible minority. However, it is essential to underline that not all children of the approximately 250,000 Punjabi Jat Sikh population in Canada are undergoing similar, parent/child/student culture clash anxieties.

Each parent and child, of any generation and of any culture comes to some agreement within which harmony is fashioned, so that life can be moulded to suit the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Since this culture arrived in Canada near the late 1800’s, there are those like myself, whose children are fourth generation Canadian-Sikhs and there are those who are recent immigrants, with the disparity in their respective generational philosophies being quite noticeable. The Sikhs, however, whether they wear a kara or not, are guided by their Sikh faith which becomes modified as time goes on. The intense relationship between a parent and his/her child is remarkable, for parents sacrifice everything for their children even into the child/adult’s middle years. The respect for education, high morals and deeply embedded kinship structures become the cultural inheritance.

Educators who enjoy working with students of different cultures have acquired a more profound level of human understanding. They have reexamined both their personal and
professional and cultural philosophy and that of their clients. Schools represent the bastion of mainstream society which daily contradict the culture of the recent immigrant, minority student. Thus, unique problems and challenges result. However, I find the degree of flexibility and compassion exhibited by some teachers in this particular setting, to be exceptional in thought and action and quite proactive in looking for culturally sensitive solutions.
REFERENCES


Newspapers and Archives.

B.C. Provincial Archives.

India Abroad: August 2, 1996.

Literary Digest: July 18, 1914. pp. 95-96.


Toronto Star: June 7, 1994.

Vancouver City Archives.

Victoria Daily Times: June 4 and Sept. 8, 1902.

Victoria City Archives.
RELATED TOPIC READING


In the Further Soil: A Social History of Indo-Canadians in Ontario. Ontario: Organization for the Promotion of Indian Culture.


McDonough, B. (1978 mimeo.). "A Study of South Asian Immigrants in the Montreal Metropolitan Region."


_________ (no date) "The South Asian Experience of Aging." In J.V. Ujimoto and G. Hirabayashi (eds.), Asian Canadians, pp. 84-95.


