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Shared Immigrant Journeys and Inspirational Life Lessons: Critical Reflections on Immigrant
Punjabi Sikh Mothers' Participation in Their Children's Schooling

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Ravneet Kaur Tiwana

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Shared Immigrant Journeys and Inspirational Life Lessons: Critical Reflections on Immigrant
Punjabi Sikh Mothers' Participation in Their Children's Schooling

by

Ravneet Kaur Tiwana

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Frederick Erickson, Chair

By 2040, one out of three children in the United States will come from immigrant households (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2008). It is imperative to understand how immigrant parents participate in their children's schooling. This study examined the dynamic ways immigrant parents participated in schools, which did not conform to conventional notions of parental involvement. Previous research studies showed that immigrant parents used their knowledge and skills to participate in effective ways in order to maintain high educational expectations. However, more research was needed to illuminate how immigrant parents transmitted social values regarding the importance of education.

This qualitative study utilized the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in California as a case study for immigrant parental participation. Ethnographic interviews were conducted with immigrant mothers and their children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in order to describe how Punjabi Sikh mothers from three migration periods in California participated in

their children's schooling by transmuting obstacles and triumphs into educational messages. These messages were saturated with human and social capital acquired through a shared immigrant journey with their children. Knowledge and skills gained through difficult experiences of integrating into American society, such as English language issues, domestic violence, and navigating the job market, were used as fulcrums for developing positive messages containing the value of education. Theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry such as, "funds of knowledge," "community cultural wealth," "standpoint theory," and "grounded theory" were used.

The significance of this project lies in conceptualizing immigrant women's experiences in more dynamic terms that do not re-victimize women, but, instead, highlight their agency. Immigrant parental participation can be better understood as a social process through which human and social capital within Communities of Color is cultivated and leveraged in order to achieve educational goals through a collective familial effort. This does *not* mean that immigrant parents do not participate in traditional activities within schools, but that these activities are not their primary ways of participating in their children's schooling. Therefore, focusing only on traditional notions of parental involvement do a disservice by overlooking the inherent strengths within these families, which can be maximized to build a more equitable American educational system.

The dissertation of Ravneet Kaur Tiwana is approved.

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2012

To my mother, Lakhwinder Kaur Tiwana.

ਮਾਵਾਂ ਠੰਡੀਆਂ ਛਾਵਾਂ

Mavan Thandiyan Chavan (mothers are like cool shade). -Punjabi Proverb

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It is imperative to understand how immigrant parents participate in their children's schooling as the immigrant population in the United States grows rapidly, with one in three children projected to come from an immigrant household by 2040 (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2008). Furthermore, research studies have shown that immigrant parents do not participate in traditional ways (Lopez, 2001). However, research has also shown that children of immigrants have higher rates of educational success than their native parentage peers (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). This outcome may be attributed to immigrant parents' high aspirations and value of education, neither of which requires direct involvement in school activities and academic tasks (Aldous, 2006). Despite this, we are left with a few questions: How do immigrant parents participate in their children's schooling in non-traditional ways? What do the social processes that compose this practice look like? What kinds of resources and capital might be used by immigrant families to participate in their children's schooling?

Previous research studies have shown that immigrant parents use their knowledge and skills to participate in effective ways in order to maintain high educational expectations (Gibson, 1988; Barton et. al., 2004; Lopez, 2001). However, more research needs to be done to illuminate what this social phenomenon actually looks like in everyday life, particularly the process of transmitting social values, all of which support the importance of education. Understanding how immigrant parents participate in their children's schooling is key to supporting immigrant success. If the "American Dream" is ever to become a reality, it must begin with a more equitable education system that values diverse forms of parental participation in schooling.

This research study attempts to better understand immigrant parental participation by using the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community as a case study. The Punjabi Sikh population in

California is the oldest and largest South Asian group in the United States (La Brack, 1988). Unsurprisingly, however, the immigration narrative constructed about this community overlooks the contributions of Punjabi Sikh women. If mentioned at all, they are generally in the background or in a “supportive” role. This project can help illuminate the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in California because South Asian mothering has been shown to lend itself especially to intimate participation in children’s schooling (Sharma, 1995). This study describes how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers harnessed their human and social capital, acquired through their immigrant journey, to participate in their children’s schooling. This capital was transformed into educational messages that transmuted life lessons garnered through a shared immigrant journey between immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study. Essentially, knowledge and skills gained through difficult or negative experiences of integrating into American society, such as English language issues, domestic violence, and navigating the job market, were used as fulcrums for developing positive messages about education. This study highlights a kind of immigrant parental participation that capitalized on the strengths within a minority community. Such an investigation required using “anthropological stances and methods of inquiry that counterbalanced deficit discourses” (González, Wyman, & O’Connor, 2011). These theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry consisted of Funds of Knowledge, Community Cultural Wealth, Standpoint Theory, and a Grounded Theory approach.

This project focuses on schooling because it is an important platform through which one generation socializes another. This socialization process takes on a new dimension for immigrant families. School is a space and place full of both contention and liberation for immigrant parents and their children. It is a space where social, cultural, religious, and economic

values undergo negotiation, acceptance, rejection, and transformation by both parents and children. Education is a concept through which immigrant parents express their dreams and desires for themselves and their children in a multitude of ways.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to how social science researchers and education practitioners conceptualize immigrant women's experiences and immigrant parental participation. Granted, the limitations of this project and contextual constraints should not be overlooked when making generalizations or developing social interventions. Ultimately, the ability to generalize this study lies in each unique reader identifying with the findings, while considering his/her own local, individual circumstances. The goal of this project is to illuminate the processes and practices, both of which give meaning to how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers participate in their children's schooling. This study will help in the conceptualization of immigrant women's experiences in more dynamic terms that do not re-victimize women, but, instead, highlight their agency. The focus, therefore, should be on the resiliency, courage, and faith immigrant women have displayed to overcome obstacles in their lives. Life lessons these women gain through their immigrant journey are ultimately transmuted into educational messages for their children. These messages are saturated with educational aspirations and expectations.

Furthermore, immigrant parental participation across various immigrant groups can be better understood as a social process through which human and social capital within Communities of Color is cultivated and leveraged in order to achieve educational goals through a collective familial effort. Thus, immigrant parental participation does not always fit into normative understandings about parental involvement. This does *not* mean that immigrant parents do not participate in traditional activities within schools, but that these activities are not

their primary ways of participating in their children's schooling. Moreover, participation lies in transmitting social values about the importance of education that are developed through a shared immigrant journey between parents, particularly mothers in this study, and their children. Despite the variation in how this journey was interpreted between the mothers and children I studied, education remained a collective familial goal among them. This study shows that traditional notions of parental involvement are not only irrelevant in understanding the full range of ways in which immigrant parents can contribute to their children's education in American schools, but also that such notions also do a disservice by overlooking the inherent strengths within these families, which can be maximized to build a more equitable American educational system that supports the attainment of what is purported to be the "American Dream."

Research Questions

The main research questions that guided this project were: 1) What are the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in California, across three different migration periods and varied education and class backgrounds, at home, at work, and in general American society? 2) How was human and social capital acquired by immigrant mothers and their children through a shared immigrant journey? 3) How did immigrant mothers use their human and social capital to develop educational messages, which were a means of transmitting the value of education? 4) How were these educational messages interpreted by their children?

I conducted ethnographic interviews of twenty-four research participants¹, which consisted of twelve mother-child pairs. By focusing on the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women, the project developed insight into how the value of education and schooling was

¹ Refer to Appendix C: Chart of Research Participants. This chart contains background information on each participant.

constructed in the minds of mothers and the different ways these values were transmitted to their children. These processes composed, ultimately, a kind of immigrant parental participation.

Organization of Study

This research study was an attempt to fill the gap in the literature regarding immigrant parental participation and immigrant Punjabi Sikh women's experiences in the United States, while simultaneously serving as a tool for social science researchers, educators, and community activists to enact social change. Thus, this project was situated in Chapter 2, within the current body of research and theoretical pieces on South Asian immigrant women, children of immigrants, parental participation, "funds of knowledge," and "community cultural wealth." There is a discussion of qualitative research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting in Chapter 3. This discussion led to an examination in Chapter 4 of how "insider/outsider" positionalities are not part of a dichromatic process, but situated along a continuum. A researcher's positionality varies from interaction to interaction or interview question to interview question. This kind of critical reflection is needed in order for "insider" researchers to develop a "native" anthropology that decolonizes the social science disciplines. In this chapter, I reflected also on my experiences of doing "insider" research. The historical and contemporary contexts of the Punjabi Sikh community in the United States, specifically in California, were illuminated in Chapter 5. This chapter provided background information on the Punjabi community in South Asia, as well as within the Sikh faith. I highlighted the migration history of the Punjabi Sikh community to situate the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women who have been most often overlooked in previous studies. In addition, this chapter revealed my own "insider"

identity within a diverse Punjabi Sikh community with varying perspectives on the history of the Sikh faith and Punjabi community.

The heart of this study, the findings, were presented in three chapters: a) Chapter 6: Immigrant Punjabi Sikh Women's Experiences in California-Voices From Within; b) Chapter 7: "Learning Together"-Opportunities for Co-Constructing Immigrant Human and Social Capital; and c) Chapter 8: Value of Education- Educational Messaging for Mobility and Stability. The concluding chapter presented a summary of the findings, while highlighting the limitations of the project. It was important to discuss the limitations in order to contextualize the findings into implications and examine future possibilities for research.

Because the "findings" chapters highlighted the depth of this study and contribution to educational research and practice, I provided a brief summary of each one. In Chapter 6, the immigrant experiences of Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study showed how immigrant parental participation was grounded in using lessons from the immigrant experience as a method for transmission of social values concerning the importance of attaining an education. These experiences centered around reasons for migration, initial impressions of the United States, women's role in decision-making, experiences with familial substance abuse and domestic violence, challenges with the English language, and navigating the American workforce. The findings in this chapter presented foundational knowledge necessary for comprehending how children of immigrants acquired different kinds of capital through "Funds of Knowledge" and "Community Cultural Wealth" approaches.

The chapter on "Learning Together" illuminated how immigrant parental participation was rooted in social relationships, which supported mothers and their children as they overcame various obstacles. Through these social dynamics, cultural wealth (such as aspirational,

linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capitals) was co-constructed. Thus, a shared immigrant journey lent itself to immigrant mothers and their children “learning together” how to adapt to American society and develop English language skills.

The last “findings” chapter addressed how the value of education rested in its ability to determine: 1) immigrant “success”; 2) increase life choices; and 3) serve one’s family and community. This “value” was rooted in education being a tool for social and economic mobility and stability. However, transmitting this value from one generation to another led to a social process of cultural continuity and change for both the definition of a good education and child socialization practices around schooling. Ultimately, this chapter highlighted that the development, transmission, and enactment of educational messages reflected how social values regarding the importance of education were transmitted from one generation to another.

My hope is that my methodological training and “insider” knowledge reflected in this study of the Punjabi Sikh community in California will help lay the groundwork for future studies on immigrant women and children as well as immigrant parental participation. Both topics need to be explored in dynamic ways where we move beyond a “victimhood” or “deficit” perspective. Strengths-based and resilient-focused research projects should not dismiss or otherwise invalidate the obstacles and inequities faced by minority communities, but instead should leverage strength acquired through resiliency by Communities of Color to create effective, community-based, comprehensive solutions. My hope is that this project serves as a productive contribution to this necessary work.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical analysis of immigrant parental participation in this study occurs at the juncture of theories and studies related to children of immigrants, immigrant South Asian women's experiences in the diaspora, and the Punjabi Sikh community in North America and Europe. This literature review will unpack studies as they relate to this juncture in order to situate this research project within the larger discourse on immigrant parental participation. Literature on "funds of knowledge" and "community cultural wealth" will be used as tools for analysis in order to place this project within theoretical and methodological contexts in the field of education.

First, there will be a discussion on women's experiences with immigration. I review studies on South Asian, specifically Punjabi Sikh, women, thereby providing a contextualized understanding of the complex issues and multiplicity of Punjabi Sikh women's experiences in the diaspora. The goal of this project is to add women's voices to the larger narrative on South Asian migration to the United States, specifically within the Punjabi Sikh community. For far too long, women have been brushed over or ignored entirely. In addition, the purpose of highlighting immigrant women's voices is not to display them simply as victims of patriarchy and the oppressive societal structures in their receiving country, but to present them as women of color who exercise their agency by displaying resilience and courage as they tread their paths on an immigrant journey composed of obstacles and triumphs. Thus, this study aims to provide a space where immigrant Punjabi Sikh women show the complex ways they make sense of their gender roles in their adopted country. Their meaning-making processes validate, challenge, and re-conceptualize common understandings of immigrant South Asian women's experiences in the Diaspora.

The following section will be a review of the literature on children of immigrants and their experiences with education as related to this project's topic. There will be a special focus on the experiences of Asians and South Asian youth. The discussion will lead into an examination of research studies on immigrant parental participation, with a particular focus on the role of mothers. It is at this juncture that "funds of knowledge" and "community cultural wealth" literature will be used to situate the project within the larger conversations about social justice education. Ultimately, I prove why showing immigrant parental participation from a deficit perspective in order to assist schooling systems to assimilate them is a less empowering option than enabling parents to be co-partners in educating the youth of America.

Immigration & Women

According to a report published by the United States (U.S.) Immigration and Naturalization Service in April, 2012, 1.1 million new legal immigrants were given permanent residence status in 2011. California is a "new home" for the vast majority of this population. Furthermore, India ranks as the third largest arrival country, preceded only by Mexico and China. Hence, new families are being built where one in three children are expected to come from immigrant households by 2040 (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2008). Interestingly, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that most immigrants are arriving through the family reunification process. Thus, socioeconomic background varies for these migrants; they are not all coming to America because of their professional skills. They are coming as blood relatives and spouses of those who came before them. Susan F. Martin (2011) shares in, "A Nation of Immigrants" that this method of migration to the U.S. is not new for the Indian community. She asserts that, during the 1970s, the majority

of Indian immigrants entered through family reunification categories (Martin 2011, 193). For approximately ten years following 1965, Indians arrived mostly as skilled professionals. Prior to 1965 and subsequent to the 1970s, their socioeconomic and educational backgrounds were more varied. Many Punjabi Sikhs, as highlighted in Chapter 5, came from agricultural backgrounds. They often immigrated to the United States through family reunification because they had limited or no professional skills. The case for women arriving as spouses was different because some did have skilled backgrounds, sometimes even more so than the men, thereby increasing their “marketability” or “desirability” factor to Indian men abroad seeking spouses.

Martin’s research helped demystify the notion that Indian immigrants are solely doctors, engineers, and technology professionals. Thus, the economic opportunity structure was not as easy to access for many Indian immigrants as was commonly understood. Indeed, the

opportunities

here often outnumbered that which were available in Punjab, India, but they were not always as lucrative as they were frequently portrayed, particularly for unskilled immigrants arriving through family reunification. Min Zhou (1997) asserts that the economic opportunities are now not as robust as they were for early European immigrants in the 1900s because contemporary immigrants are entering into an “hourglass” economy. Zhou (1997) writes,

“During the 1980s, 80% of American workers saw their real hourly wages go down by an average of about 5%. Blue collar jobs, the kinds of jobs generally available to newly arrived immigrants, not only pay less than in previous years, but they are also disappearing at a particularly rapid rate, resulting in expanding classes of poor and rich and shrinking middle class. In such an economic structure, even U.S.-born Americans

find their chances for economic mobility lessening. The situation for many immigrants is bleaker, except for the unusually fortunate, the highly educated, and highly skilled.” (67). Thus, the path to mobility and stability for immigrants to the United States following the “first wave” of migration by Europeans is more difficult. Therefore, the navigational experiences are more varied and complex.

This “hourglass” economic structure poses a special problem for immigrant women, particularly South Asian women, because they expect and desire to work in order to garner social and economic resources. They have left the familiarity and safety of their Indian homes to seek the greater opportunities available to them here. Often times, they have sought Indian husbands settled abroad for this very reason. This economic complexity, coupled with a new social environment, creates a new set of issues to negotiate that immigrant South Asian women are not typically “socialized” to address. This unique context is particularly important to investigate in the United States as India is the 3rd highest sending country and, as of 2005, according to the Urban Institute, 66.3% of immigrants to the United States are women. Furthermore, 64.6% have entered as dependents of male principal visa holders (<http://www.urban.org>). Many of these women are arriving as sisters, aunts, mothers, and wives.

A hallmark of the post-1960s immigration wave was the predominance of women arriving alone or in families (Louie 2002). Thus, women have composed a large part of the immigrant narrative. However, their voices have been primarily overlooked or, in rare cases, glossed over altogether when theorizing and constructing the larger South Asian immigration narrative (Dion & Dion, 2001; Bhachu, 1999; Pedraza, 1991; Spitzer et. al, 2003). When Asian women’s experiences, particularly South Asian women’s experiences, were highlighted, they were represented frequently as ‘working class victims’ forced to struggle with what are

understood as their “oppressive cultural systems” (Bhachu, 1999). Their negotiations and redefinitions with patriarchal norms as forms of agency were not showcased. In a sense, these immigrant women were re-victimized, once by traditional patriarchal norms, and then again by scholars, journalists, and community activists attempting to “give” voice to silenced women. Thus, post-modern feminism and standpoint feminist theory are tools that can be used to show the agency migrant women display from *their* perspectives about *their* immigrant experiences by being both an analytical and methodological tool (Rayaprol, 1997). Aparna Rayaprol (1997) writes, “with postmodern feminism I believe in contextualizing, the women’s experiences rather than speaking of universal sisterhood and with the standpoint feminists I believe that it is necessary to understand women’s problems from their own perspective” (135). Feminist standpoint theory asserts that positionality of a researcher and research participants is not solely a perspective, but an experienced struggle. Sandra Harding (2004) writes, “Feminist standpoint is not something anyone can claim but an achievement. This makes it different from a perspective. Your knowledge is gained through a struggle. Through struggle you yield up a truer or less false image of social reality. Fight against oppression and power.” Hence, researchers should think of women’s history and experiences in less categorical, and more dynamic, terms (Olson and Shopes, 1991). This approach requires highlighting how immigrant women, particularly Punjabi Sikh women, make sense of their experiences in the United States. This project can show how “... like other immigrant traditions and practices, patriarchal norms neither continue unchanged in the United States nor die out. Rather, they are redefined and renegotiated. In fact, migration brings both benefits and burdens to immigrant women, and gender relations reflect a mix of old and the new” (Louie 2002, 65). By showing the agency employed by these immigrant women during this complex and contradictory cultural and social process, this project can lend insight

into how their practice of resiliency and courage is a form of parental participation in their children's schooling; they use their life stories to construct educational messages about parental aspirations and expectations.

Various researchers have examined how migration to North American and European countries has influenced South Asian women's decision-making roles, ability to earn wages, cultural production, and child socialization practices (Bhachu, 1988, 1991, 1996, 1999; Kouritzin, 2000; Dosnaji & Ghuman, 1997; Sharma 1995; Rayaprol 1997; Spitzer et. al, 2003; Rayaprol 1997). A common theme across all of these studies is the negotiation and redefinition of South Asian women's roles in families through a process of cultural continuity and change. Bhachu's work examines Asian women's experiences in Great Britain with a particular focus on Punjabi Sikh women. She believed it was important to highlight how wage-earning influenced Asian women's daily lives because 62% of women of Indian origin and 67% of East African Asian women were in the workforce (Bhachu, 1988). Furthermore, Bhachu provided a useful delineation for analyzing Asian women's experiences, specifically Sikh women, based on how many times they or their family members had migrated since first leaving their home country of India (Bhachu, 1999). She made a distinction between direct, twice, and thrice migrant women and alluded to the development of a fourth movement. Bhachu (1999) writes, "unlike direct migrants, for whom migration especially in the initial stages is frequently a temporary economically goal-orientated move. For twice and thrice migrants, migration is not a sojourn but a more permanent move to settle" (345). This distinction is important in highlighting the differences in social and economic capital between different kinds of migrants. One may assume that twice and thrice migrants have more knowledge about how to navigate around and integrate into new cultural systems because they and their families have done that before. For many of

them, they have already gone through an acculturation process of being “immigrants” once, unlike direct migrants. However, during the course of this research project, Bhachu’s distinction between direct and twice, etc. migrants as temporary versus permanent settlers was not as prevalent. All immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study were direct migrants and viewed themselves as permanent settlers. To be sure, many of them intimated that, in their hearts, Punjab was their home. However, they concurrently asserted that America was now their new home because they had built a social and economic life here and their children were in the U.S. This was particularly true for those who migrated between 1965-1990, the population which comprised the vast majority of research participants for this study. However, many of Bhachu’s findings on decision-making, educational aspirations, gender role negotiation, and cultural production resonated with the perspectives shared by research participants in this study. She writes, “While I am not arguing the simple thesis that wage labor equals liberation, because it is clear that the patriarchal relations of the household and the wider socioeconomic structures remain powerful, I am arguing in the discussion that follows that women’s increased ability to develop more self-defined roles has been aided by their increased access to cash, which has allowed them to invest and consume in their own interests and for their own benefit. This is contrary to the emphasis in the existing literature on the lack of women’s control over productive resources, even when they themselves have generated from.” (Bhachu, 1988, 76). This study highlights the nuances of this process from the perspective of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in California. Furthermore, it shows how this process is used to develop educational messages for these women’s children, thus highlighting a parental strategy used by immigrant mothers to participate in their children’s schooling in non-traditional ways.

Kavita A. Sharma (1995) shows in her study of Indo-Canadian immigrant women how their struggles are different than those of immigrant Indo-Canadian men. She attributes this difference to women's "dependence" visa status. Because these women have arrived as dependent relatives of men, their experiences navigating home, work, and public life are different than those of their male counterparts. She writes, "... domestic pressures felt by these women are not due to harder labor in Canada but since they are away from their larger family and community of their home country, they are solely responsible for domestic work and childcare" (Sharma, 1995, 79). Hence, it is not entering the workforce that increases domestic pressures in immigrant women's lives, while increasing women's abilities to negotiate and define their roles, but the lack of social support. Often immigrant South Asian women are leaving a strong, large community and multi-generational familial support system. For many generations, this support system existed to buffer domestic demands. In this research study, many of the women talked about the loss of this kind of support system. It was cited most often as one of the most difficult aspects of migrating to a new country. Thus, Sharma highlights the nuanced ways migration influences immigrant women's lives, which ultimately influences approaches to mothering and caretaking. It is through these approaches that immigrant mothers participate in their children's schooling. These approaches contribute to the development of educational messages that contain parental expectations and aspirations regarding education.

One of Sharma's (1995) research findings is that, for Indo-Canadian mothers, children's activities in schools become women's responsibilities because children belong to the "domestic" sphere, which is considered "housework." Thus, their approaches to mothering lend themselves to intimate participation in their children's schooling. Kouritzin (2000) writes, "Within immigrant cultural frameworks, many of these domestic tasks are first-language orientated;

providing emotional sustenance and well-being requires mothers to be maintainers of the mother culture, keepers of the mother tongue, and guardians of familial heritage. Complicating this, caring for the family's emotional and physical well-being while attending to children's academic development requires mothers to function in the majority language, interacting with teachers, doctors, social systems officials, and merchants and, ideally, remediating any difficulties." Interestingly, it is during this nuanced interplay between mothers being "guardians" of cultural heritage and language and functioning in the majority language to complete "domestic" responsibilities that a lot of "learning together" happens between immigrant mothers and their children. Children often function as linguistic and cultural brokers who also try to guard their mother's dignity during complex conversations in the English-dominated social landscape.

Sarah Matier (2003) found in her qualitative study of immigrant South Asian mothers' parenting approaches in Canada that character formation and identity formation were the mothers' key goals of parenting. Character formation consisted of teaching their children personal qualities such as "... respect for elders, modesty, humility, hard work, persistence, perseverance, and having a disciplined life, which, from their perspective, was most likely to be attained through adherence to religion" (Matier, 2003, 420). When mothers spoke about identity formation they highlighted the "... importance of helping children to develop a sense of identity. They expressed concern that if children do not have knowledge of their culture, they will not have a sense of belonging, without which life would be difficult, particularly later on when they are away from home. Thus, imparting cultural values was considered essential for the healthy development of identity" (Matier 2003, 420). Interestingly, Matier (2003) found that mothers' understanding of cultural values was not static during migration, which caused them to raise children in an environment different from the one in which they grew up. The environment

where these mothers were raising children included the loss of support from extended family, kinship, and neighborhood networks. Thus, their approaches to mothering were often constant negotiations that transpired within tense social situations that required them to teach their children their cultural values while simultaneously incorporating the new cultural framework in which they lived. She found that they often shared personal anecdotes to achieve their parenting goals. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of what happens, exactly, during this negotiation process and how it contributes to the personal examples used by immigrant mothers to convey the value of education.

Parminder Bhachu's work with Sikh women in Great Britain has presented more nuanced ways of examining decision-making power, sexual division of labor, educational aspirations, and negotiation of gender roles in immigrant families. Most importantly her work begins with the premise that, "Asian women appear as passive victims unable to make any significant dents in these features of their societies, which are presented as static, oppressive, non-negotiable entities free of women's input" (Bhachu, 1988, 76). Thus, her work is an attempt to reexamine how immigrant women's entry into the job market affects their abilities to practice their agency in effective ways, rather than beating their heads against the brick walls of tradition. Bhachu (1988) found that Sikh women's religious background provided an egalitarian ethos which "... has a considerable impact on perceptions of gender roles and helps modify the male dominance" (78). She states that Sikhi's emphasis on egalitarianism and equal status for all does not mean it is practiced by the Sikh community; men still remain dominant. However, Sikh women come from a history where women have been honored for their resilience, courage, and independence. She writes, "There are cases of Sikh women who have shown great independence and courage in the face of adversity, and are used as role models to illustrate the elevated position accorded to

women by the founding Gurus, who attempted to upgrade the lowly status of women." For example, Sardarni Sada Kaur (1762-1832) in the eighteenth century "planned a surprise attack on Lahore and conquered it for Ranjit Singh (The Maharaja) in 1799 and Mai Bhago in the seventeenth century went into battle by organizing a band of women including wives of deserters who had left Guru Gobind Singh's troops to fight the armies of Wazir Khan, the local Mughal chief ... They even fought in wars by organizing themselves into *jathas* (armed bands). They have always been active participants alongside Sikh men in protest marches (*morchas*) in the past and present both in India and UK." (Bhachu, 1988, 78). Thus, Sikh women come from a heritage that honors their assertiveness; however, the disjuncture between theological equality and contemporary oppressive cultural practices leads to social inequity in homes and religious organizations. This disjuncture does not mean that Sikh women have stopped being courageous, resilient, and independent in the midst of oppressive environments. No, rather, the immigrant Punjabi Sikh women interviewed in this research study spoke consistently of how their Sikh faith was an empowering force in their lives, particularly when they had little to no familial support to overcome various social and economic obstacles. Their faith provided a fundamental foundation for their ability to be resilient, courageous, and assertive as they navigated through their immigrant journey. Furthermore, these were the very personal characteristics that they tried to teach their children through example. They often felt that these values would encourage and propel their children along the educational pipeline.

Bhachu (1988) found that Sikh women's earning power in immigrant households in Great Britain did "...not necessarily lead to the reversal of roles but to recognition by women that they have a right to assert their opinions about household management and to negotiate more favorable positions for themselves vis-à-vis their menfolk" (92). This negotiation was not

always an easy process and sometimes had violent elements to it, which will be discussed in later chapters. Furthermore, Bhachu made the distinction between older and younger Sikh women. She found that, even though older Sikh women had greater access to cash, which increased their personal autonomy and expenditure power, they were not as able to establish more egalitarian roles in the household. Therefore, while their decision-making power increased, the sexual division of labor was not necessarily reallocated in the lives of older Sikh women. In short, their responsibility level increased by working outside of the home, and managing household responsibilities, yet they did not always have the support of extended family. A finding in this research study highlights how children often supported their mothers in managing these increased household responsibilities. In the process, they gained critical, intimate knowledge of how the American system functioned while simultaneously improving their English language skills, which then ultimately helped them navigate the often complex socio-economic structure. Additionally, children developed a profound appreciation and respect for, along with a close bond with, their mothers in the process. They learned that often their collective goals could be achieved through individual educational trajectories.

Children of Immigrants

As post-1965 immigration increased, the number of children with immigrant parents also increased. Carola Suárez-Orozco's, Marcelo Suárez-Orozco's, and Irina Todorova's (2008) seminal study on immigrant youth found that "20% of young people growing up in the U.S. have immigrant parents and projected by 2040, 1 in 3 children will be growing up in an immigrant household." Distinguishing between immigrant youth and youth who have immigrant parents is important because while the "children of immigrants" group contains both demographics, there

are differences in lived experiences. Children of immigrants are 2nd generation youth born to immigrant parents in the United States. However, they can also include immigrant children who were born in a foreign-country and migrated with their parents to the United States. Min Zhou (1997) states, "... the second generation is sometimes broadened to include foreign-born children arriving at pre-school age (0-4 years) because they share many linguistic, cultural, and developmental experiences similar to those of immigrant offspring" (65). In this study, children of immigrants were born in the United States and immigrated with their parents. Some immigrant children fell within the range of being 0-4 years of age when they migrated to America, whereas others did not. For the most part, the children were 2nd generation.

Interestingly, Min Zhou (1997) discussed Gans's (1992) notion of the "second-generation decline." Gans found that there are three possibilities for today's second generation: 1) education-driven mobility; 2) succession-driven mobility; and 3) niche improvement. He found that immigrant children from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds have a much harder time than middle-class children do in succeeding in school, particularly those who are poor and dark-skinned because of stagnant economic growth and the process of Americanization. These two social, cultural, and economic processes will either not ask immigrant children or they will be reluctant "... to work at immigrant wages and hours as their parents did, but will lack job opportunities, skills and connection to do better" (Zhou 1997, 72). In addition, a distinctive ethnic and religious identity will help and hinder social mobility. Many Punjabi Sikhs have dark skin and a distinctive religious identity consisting of an article of faith displayed on the body, such as unshorn hair. Furthermore, many Punjabi Sikh youth in this study were from immigrant family backgrounds that arrived through the family reunification process, which means they were not necessarily bringing professional skill-sets that would lead to immediate job

opportunities. Thus, a large part of their lives were spent in a working-class environment, where some were part of the working-poor classification.

Min Zhou (1997) also highlighted the drop in poverty rates between the immigrant and 2nd generations. Immigrant parents leave their home countries in order to help provide opportunities and social and economic mobility to their children (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1991). They want their children to have better lives than they did even though they bare most of the burden of paving the path for more opportunities when they work for low wages and endure tremendous social and economic demands. The goal is to have the 2nd generation perform better socially and economically than the first. Zhou found that there was a substantial drop in poverty rates among the 2nd generation in all racial groups, but the magnitude of that decline varied by race. The rates dropped by nearly half for non-Latino European and Asian-American children, but by less than a third for Latino, African American and Latino-American children (Zhou, 1997, 76). The conditions for the latter two groups were even more disturbing for the third generation (U.S.-born children with U.S.-born parents). In this study, research participants, particularly the immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers, saw these injustices take place in Latino families with whom they worked or otherwise engaged regularly. Many worked in low-paying jobs, such as factory jobs. Thus, their parental participation strategies focused on how to encourage Gans' notion of education-driven mobility by tapping into their personal experiences, which included their social relationships and general perceptions of American society. These strategies were rooted in understanding that "growing up in an immigrant family has always been difficult, as individuals are torn by conflicting social and cultural demands while they face the challenges of entry into an unfamiliar and frequently hostile world" (Portes and Zhou, 1993, 75). The mothers intuitively understood that entry-level menial jobs were performed by newly arrived immigrants without

hesitation because they were reestablishing their families and needed access to immediate financial resources. However, these jobs were shunned by their U.S.-reared offspring because they saw the toll on their parents' bodies and souls from performing hard manual labor for little economic returns. Therefore, children wanted access to the "land of opportunity" that their parents worked hard to give them, but found that it was often unavailable. Therefore, "this disjuncture gives rise to a race between the social and economic progress of the first-generation immigrants and the material conditions and career prospects that their American children grow to expect" (Portes and Zhou, 1993, 76).

Children of immigrants often support their parents' goals of paving the pathways for greater social and economic mobility for their children by being linguistic and cultural brokers (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba 1991 & Dorner, Orellano, and Li-Grining, 2007). They also help with managing household responsibilities, such as cleaning, managing finances, and child rearing. Through these activities, they gain a more intimate understanding of how and why their parents' construction of "immigrant success" is a collective-based notion rather than an individual one. Furthermore, as a result of this added work, their general knowledge of the American system is more robust than that of children from non-immigrant families in similar age groups. Lastly, children of immigrants have a deeper understanding of the obstacles their parents encounter and the toll those obstacles take on their bodies despite the resilience and courage they model for their children.

There have been various research studies on South Asian or Desi youth in Great Britain and in the United States (Gibson 1988; Hall 2002; Maira 2002; Shankar 2008). These studies have shed light on South Asian youth's complex ways of constructing a myriad of identities and cultural practices across various spaces. Gibson's study of Punjabi Sikh youth in a Northern

California school highlighted an adaptation process known as “accommodation without assimilation.” Her goal was to better understand how Punjabi Sikh students from immigrant households that were primarily working class and of rural backgrounds were able to succeed in their schooling despite the various social and economic obstacles they confronted. She writes, “The Punjabis’ success in school appears to stem less from cultural attributes per se or from conformity to the majority culture than from diligence and persistence in their schoolwork, combined with a strategy of accommodation and acculturation without assimilation” (Gibson 1988, 170). I would argue that similar studies in other immigrant groups would result in similar findings. Gibson (1988) found the youth tended to lean more towards acculturation whereas the parents stressed accommodation. Gibson’s use of acculturation without assimilation means “... a process of culture change and adaptation which results when groups with different cultures come into contact. The end results need not be the rejection of old traits or their replacement. Acculturation may be an additive process ...” or blending of old and new traits (Gibson 1988, 24-25). She found that although Punjabi Sikh immigrants were proud to be Americans, they rejected openly and actively the concept that Americanization means giving up a separate ethnic identity. Accommodation means choosing “... in certain situations to subordinate their [Punjabis] ways to those of the dominant group when they believe this to be in their interests or those of their children. They [Punjabis] may adopt such an approach even though they consider their own ways to be superior to those of the majority” (Gibson 1988, 25). Therefore, the youth preferred a process of blending whereas immigrant parents chose subordinating or highlighting certain traits depending on a given situation. For example, if the youth wanted to take part in extracurricular activities (such as sports, clubs, and other social activities) to blend in more, the parents often dismissed such an idea, citing them as perilous pathways to hyper-Americanization.

The parents did, however, support their children if their attempts to blend in improved their English skills (thinking this would improve their likelihood of academic and professional success).

Immigrant Parental Participation

Immigrant parent's non-traditional ways of participating in their children's schooling has often been framed in a deficit type manner. Their limited English proficiency and lack of understanding of American culture and systems are constructed as deficits preventing them from adequately participating in their children's schooling, particularly when school programs are structured in such a way "that parental intervention becomes a prerequisite for student success, we may actually penalize children with non-interventionist parents" (Gibson, 1988).

Interestingly, immigrant parents must be doing something "right" when their children have higher academic achievement rates than those of their native-parentage peers" (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). Research has found that parents' high aspirations and value of education, regardless of direct involvement with school activities or academic tasks, were related to higher achievement (Aldous, 2006). The gap in the literature is related to better understanding why this phenomenon is happening despite mainstream notions that students' educational success is related to traditional forms of parental involvement, (i.e. homework help and participating in parental-teacher organizations). The goal of this study is to contribute to the reduction of this gap. For educators to better understand immigrant parental participation and how to better facilitate it, schools need to move away from framing their role in terms of "help." "Support" is better. In this study, "help" is defined as the need to help someone reduce their deficit and become more like the status quo (i.e. translate documents from English into another language,

teach parents about how they can be part of predominately white middle-class parent teacher associations, instruct parents on how to speak with their child's teachers, etc.). "Support," however, leverages parents' non-traditional ways of participating in their children's schooling by building strategies that are more aligned with immigrant children's home cultures, such as understanding how parents teach their children the values of education, "hard work" and "resilience" and honoring the tremendous respect immigrant parents have for teachers and the educational system, particularly the American version, which often makes them feel that intervening in a teacher's pedagogical practices is disrespectful. In this study, a daughter highlighted that her mother often missed "open night" at her school or chose not to engage extensively with her daughter's teachers because she believed that teachers were professionals, like she was in medicine, and therefore knew how to do their jobs better than those not trained in the field. As a result, "non-intervention" was a way of showing a teacher due respect for his/her professional skills. Granted, this mother's work schedule often conflicted with parent-teacher nights, but she also refrained from engaging the teachers because of her belief in the "exceptional" American educational system and the actors who gave it life. By moving away from deficit thinking about immigrant parental participation to a strength-based perspective, we may better understand what is happening during immigrant parental participation and how to best leverage it in American schools as the immigrant populations rises, particularly in California. Parental participation needs to be understood "as a dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with schools and among school actors" (Barton et al. 2004). Gerardo R. Lopez (2001), in his study of Mexican (im)migrant parent's participation in their children's schooling, found that these parents were intimately involved in their children's schooling by teaching them the "value of hard

work,” which consisted of both drawing on their own work experiences, life lessons as immigrants in a new country, and bringing their children to work with them. He writes, “... traditional involvement roles may be outside the cultural repertoire of some parents – especially marginalized parents who may have limited exposure to schools, lack of socioeconomic resources, and/or prior negative experiences with school organization ... the vast majority of marginalized families fall in the “uninvolved” category. As a result, many have been judged to be unconcerned and perhaps uncaring, when in fact all that these parents have “failed” to do was to become involved in normative ways” (Lopez 2001).

One aspect of understanding immigrant parental participation is by viewing ethnicity as an asset rather than a liability. Min Zhou (1997) found that “ethnicity may be utilized as a distinct form of social capital (including such cultural endowment as obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms) that contributes to adaptation” (73). Thus, one’s ethnic background serves as a strength rather than a deficit because specific obligations and expectations and social norms assist in adaptation. Therefore, parental notions of familial obligations and social norms within a community influence the kinds of messages immigrant parents send to their children. The messages are also reflections of contentions and negotiations of cultural values within a new social context of immigration. Education is fundamentally a way that one generation socializes another. The types of educational messages created and the way they are developed and transmitted are key aspects of this process. Thus, ethnicity is not a bounded and stagnant notion, but what Conzen and her associates conceptualize as “a process of construction or invention which incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories” in a real-life context and social experience (Zhou, 1997, 73). Culture is a community of practices that reflects this process.

Thus, ethnicity and culture become capital upon which immigrant children may draw upon when confronted with unfavorable contextual factors. For immigrant families this may consist of linguistic discrimination, racial bias, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural incongruence, coupled with generational tensions that any family confronts in its home. The material and moral resources embedded within their ethnic and cultural capital, according to Zhou (1997), increase the probability of upward assimilation.

Education is often viewed as a tool for upward mobility within immigrant families. Interestingly, Suárez-Orozco's (1987) study of the psychosocial aspects of achievement among Central American youth whose families left their home countries for America to avoid war and deprivation in their countries "... found that students' perceptions of the opportunities available to them in the United States versus in their home countries, in combination with their sense of duty to their parents for their sacrifices, helped to propel them to "become somebody" and to succeed in school "in spite of the odds" (Gibson and Koyama, 2011, 395). This dual-frame of reference in comparing the "here" and "there" became a strategy for additive or selective acculturation, similar to the notion of "accommodation without assimilation" acculturation process. It is important to note that this acculturation process may not be enough when immigrant youth attend schools that embrace and foster "subtractive acculturation" or "subtractive schooling" (Gibson and Koyama 2011; Gibson 1988; Valenzuela 1999). Thus, the students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds within a new social context of immigration influenced their educational achievement because of their sense of duty to their parents for their sacrifices in trying to provide them with more opportunity than what was available in their home countries. This pattern was seen consistently throughout this study and will be highlighted in following chapters. The contribution of this research will be to show what the contribution of immigrant

parents, particularly mothers, is in developing this “dual-frame” of reference through educational messaging and how it functions in youth’s educational decision-making.

The purpose of educational messaging by immigrant parents is to assist their children in the acculturation process. Gibson and Koyama (2011) state that there are three forms of assimilation; they are linear, selective, constant acculturation (happening to parents, too), in addition to dissonant acculturation, which can increase the risk of downward assimilation (395). Thus, the dual-frame of reference of the “here” and “there” highlighted in Suárez-Orozco (1987) study contributes to selective acculturation. Gibson (1988) found that Punjabi Sikh immigrant families in Northern California practiced a similar acculturation process. This process, according to the study, is influenced profoundly by life lessons garnered from immigrant parents’ life journeys and their expectation for their children to do better than they did in a new country. Gibson (1988) stated that this selective acculturation process, and its influence on academic achievement, are not limited to Punjabi Sikhs. She writes, “ high expectations and assumptions about the value of schooling appear to have far more impact on immigrant child’s decision to persist in school than either family background or actual school performance” (174). Gibson believes this acculturation process is not tied to specific family background when using a bounded and stagnant notion of ethnicity and culture. However, when we see ethnicity and culture as more fluid, those high expectations are deeply embedded within family background (i.e. immigrant journey) that is tied to familial life lessons garnered through triumphs and obstacles of the migration process. The research participants in this study share their perspectives on what this process looks like for them through the lenses of developing, conveying, and interpreting educational messaging.

Cynthia Feliciano (2006) writes that the literature on status attainment or mobility has shown that educational attainment predicts future economic success; therefore, educational expectations are an important predictor of educational attainment. Furthermore, expectations mediate the relationship between socioeconomic background and attainment (Feliciano, 2006). Thus, she makes a distinction between educational aspirations and expectations. Educational aspiration “may capture general goals and ambitions for the future” (Feliciano, 2006, 285). Educational expectations, on the other hand, “more explicitly capture realistic plans for the future” (Feliciano, 2006, 285). In addition, she highlighted that whites and ethnic minorities encounter different mobility systems. The desire for whites and ethnic minorities for upward social and economic mobility is similar, but the systems they encounter in order to achieve success are different. Firstly, whites have been embedded in the American socioeconomic system for a much longer time. Feliciano (2006) writes, “... studies have shown that family socioeconomic background variables have stronger effects on whites’ than on minorities’ educational aspirations and attainment have suggested that the formation of educational expectations may differ for minorities, including most children of immigrants, compared to whites” (285). This supports the idea that traditional notions of white, middle-class parental involvement do not serve the needs of immigrant minority families, or even working-class white families. Hence, it illuminates the need to better understand immigrant parental participation and the nuances of this social phenomenon.

This kind of research is important because perceived and actual parental expectations shape children’s expectations (Feliciano, 2006). As a result, “children with parents who have higher hopes for their children’s educational attainment develop higher educational expectations of themselves” (Feliciano, 2006, 295). This research will show how immigrant parents,

specifically immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in California, express their expectations for their children's educational attainment by leveraging their immigrant experience into their educational messages. Furthermore, these messages influence their children's higher educational expectations. Min Zhou and Susan Kim (2008) illustrate the content of human and cultural capital that is leveraged by immigrant parents in Chinese and Korean immigrant communities. Zhou and Kim (2008) write, "cultural inventory that facilitates success includes high achievement value and orientation, industriousness, perseverance, future orientation, and ability to postpone immediate gratification for later rewards" (3). This research will show that immigrant families contain this capital because it is an intrinsic part of rebuilding a life as an immigrant in a new country. That is why immigrant families capitalize on these characteristics when socializing their children with the value of education and its larger purpose. However, as Lopez (2001) stated, "transmission of sociocultural values has rarely been documented in the literature as a type of parental involvement" (428). The goal of this study is to highlight the social process by which immigrant parental participation is defined as transmission of sociocultural values deeply embedded within the immigrant experience. The immigrant Punjabi Sikh community, particular mothers and their children, will be used as a case study.

Margaret Gibson's (1988) seminal study on the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in Northern California and education highlighted the role of family and community forces in shaping school engagement strategies. It focused also on a key adaptation strategy known as "accommodation and acculturation without assimilation" or additive acculturation, also known as selective acculturation, within the context of schooling. Parents played a key role in this process. Their strategy for engagement with schools was non-interventionist (Gibson, 1988). Thus, they did not take part in traditional ways with respect to their children's schooling, such as

helping with English homework or visiting their schools. Although Gibson provided some insight into what these immigrant Punjabi Sikh parents actually did do, there is room for a deeper investigation of how their education socialization process was tied to their immigrant journey in complicated and nuanced ways. For example, Gibson (1998) states that the parents approach was “take what’s good from the new culture, but leave the rest” because “in the Punjabi view successful and respected individuals are those who can move skillfully among the different cultural groups that surround them while maintaining strong roots within their own community” (Gibson and Koyama, 2011, 394). The findings in this study are aligned with Gibson’s later conclusion, but the former was shown to be much more complicated and nuanced. In this study, immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers spoke about understanding the complications their children faced in navigating multiple cultures, while still maintaining their heritage. Thus, their educational messaging fit within fluid notions of ethnicity and culture as being preexisting cultural norms and communal solidarities that are renegotiated in a new social context. That is why the focus of this study is immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers; their voices have often been overlooked in constructing the immigration narrative, of which schooling is an integral aspect. Ultimately, the goal is to bring more insight into the notion of immigrant parental participation in order to create an immigrant educational strategy that helps minority students to transcend some of the barriers to their success in school, but it does little to alter the basic inequalities within the American system of education” (Gibson, 1988).

Funds of Knowledge

The “Funds of Knowledge” body of scholarship is based in the anthropology of education and, for two decades, has engaged with how deeper knowledge of social relationships and human dynamics within families and communities is a source of cultural capital that may be leveraged in order to provide more equitable access to the educational system for minority students. Thus, the goal is to use “anthropological theoretical stances and methods of inquiry [to] counterbalance deficit discourses” (González, Wyman, & O’Connor, 2011, 491). The purpose is to move from simply applying theory to practice to creating theory that organically emerges from the lives and practices of families and communities. That is the reason I used a grounded theoretical approach for this study. Ultimately, the term “funds of knowledge” refers “to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being,” which are accessed by exploring “the homes, and therefore the hearts and minds, of families, however they might be constituted. It [is] a way to make transparent [this] historically constructed knowledge that resides in households and within and between their members” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992; Greenberg, 1989; Tapia, 1991; Velez-Ibfaez, 1988; González, Wyman, and O’Connor, 2011).

By identifying the development of social networks and how social relationships facilitated and co-constructed the exchange of resources, ranging from knowledge to labor, the “funds of knowledge” literature directly combated overly simplistic “cultural” explanations about student behavior and familial investment in education, which perpetuated deeply entrenched racial biases in the schooling process (González, Wyman, and O’Connor, 2011). Much of the “funds of knowledge” research has been used in developing culturally-relevant

pedagogy that goes beyond folkloric displays such as crafts, food, and dance performances (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992). Teachers are trained to use ethnographic methods to help develop this approach to teaching (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992). A lot of work in the United States has been done with the Latino community on how knowledge and skills in Latino families and communities may be used by teachers to develop a pedagogy that leverages this cultural capital from a strengths-based perspective (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González, 1992; González, Moll, Amanti, 2005). Similarly, the vast majority of studies at the intersection of Punjabi Sikh community, “Funds of Knowledge,” and the educational process, have all centered on the need for culturally-relevant pedagogy in classrooms (Smythe & Toohey, 2009; Andrews & Yee, 2006). Therefore, the goal of this study is to use a “funds of knowledge” approach to understand more meaningfully how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers participate in their children’s schooling by developing educational messages rooted in their life lessons as immigrants in the United States. Thus, the intent is to move schools beyond a “help” perspective that assumes a deficit in immigrant families towards a “support” strategy that capitalizes on the wealth of knowledge, skills, and mechanisms already existing within students’ families and communities. Schools need to envision “parental involvement” as more than a laundry list of activities that are “usually one-way forms of communication in which the schools transmits information or makes specific requests of the parents to volunteer their time and/or money” (Larrotta and Yamamura, 2011, 75).

Community Cultural Wealth

The status quo definition of “parental involvement” is based on white upper and middle class understandings of the educational system; it involves the ability to volunteer time and/or

money and English fluency. Thus, the “capital” valued by schools is based on a white upper and middle class culture, which contrasts the cultural or communal capital possessed by immigrant families and other minority groups. Funds of Knowledge literature illuminates how and why particular forms of wealth and knowledge exist in minority families. In contrast, the Community Cultural Wealth model addresses directly how this cultural capital challenges the institutionalized norms of knowledge which can only be gathered, according to Pierre Bourdieu, by being born into white upper and middle class families or through formal schooling, which functions as a proxy for these kinds of families.

The Community Cultural Wealth approach uses a critical race theory lens to critique Bourdieu’s interpretation of cultural capital based on this white upper and middle class standard; it does so in order to provide an alternative concept of capital, which attributes wealth to the cultural skills, knowledge, and contacts within Communities of Color that have been framed within a deficit framework (Yosso, 2005). A critical race theory lens “means critiquing deficit theorizing and data that may be limited by its omission of the voices of People of Color. Such deficit-informed research often “sees” deprivation in Communities of Color” (Yosso, 2005, 75). This transforms the theorizing space, which ultimately changes practices and policies.

The “Community Cultural Wealth” approach provides various forms of capital nurtured through cultural wealth in Communities of Color; they are aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant types of capital (Yosso, 2005). Tara J. Yosso (2005) writes, “These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth. For example, aspirational capital is the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality. Yet, aspirations are developed within social

and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling and advice (*consejos*) that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions. Therefore, aspirational capital overlaps with each of the other forms of capital, social, familial, navigational, linguistic and resistant” (77). The six forms of capital individually are defined as:

- Aspirational Capital: “The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005).
- Linguistic Capital: “... The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005).
- Familial Capital: “Cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005).
- Social Capital: “Networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2005).
- Navigational Capital: “Skills of maneuvering through social institutions” (Yosso, 2005).
- Resistant Capital: “Knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005).

The “Community Cultural Wealth” approach is used in this study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study construct, enhance, and leverage these various forms of cultural capital in order to use schooling as a tool for social and economic mobility. Thus, the Punjabi Sikh community will serve as a case study thereby contributing to the literature on the strengths of immigrant parental participation that need to be supported by schooling-systems. Contrary to Bourdieu’s belief that white upper and middle class capital was the only valuable capital needed for upward mobility, which could be garnered only through formal schooling if one was not born into such a family, children of immigrants are succeeding in schooling at higher rates than their native parentage

peers who have been in the United States longer. Thus, immigrant parents are using their knowledge and skills to participate in effective ways in order to maintain high educational expectations and support their children's educational aspirations. The gap in the literature revolves around how this phenomenon takes place. This study is an effort to help illuminate this dynamic and nuanced social process.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

My research study has three major foci in documenting the production and interpretation of educational messages between immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in California and their children. The description and analysis: 1) of the perceptions of these immigrant women's experiences in the United States; 2) of how these experiences influenced the educational messages developed by these mothers for their children; and 3) of how these messages were interpreted by the children. I am attempting to understand better the "sense-making" process of both immigrant mothers and their children concerning the purpose of education.

I chose a qualitative approach because the intention of this study was to capture the nuanced and complex social processes that illuminate the meaning attributed to education by the research participants. Ethnographic interviewing was the primary technique utilized in this research project. Robert S. Weiss (1994) writes that through interviews one can learn "about people's interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work and their selves" (1). Therefore, ethnographic interviewing was the most appropriate qualitative data collection technique for this study because I was interested in understanding immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers' and their children's perceptions of events and relationships that assisted in the construction and interpretation of educational messages. The ultimate goal of this study was to describe the meaning-making connections between the subjectivities of mothers and their children. This approach allowed me to construct an understanding of the importance of education and how its significance was communicated within the mother-child relationship.

In this chapter, I will describe how this research study was conducted through a qualitative methods framework. Joseph Maxwell writes that qualitative methods have four major aims:

“... 1) “understanding the *meaning*, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences. In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behavior that is taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of this and how their understandings influence their behavior; 2) understanding the particular *context* within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions; 3) identifying *unanticipated* phenomena and influences, and generating new grounded theories about the latter; 4) understanding the *process* by which events and actions take place” (Maxwell 1996, 17-19).

Thus, the main goal of qualitative research is to highlight *how* people make sense of their lives by untangling the complexities and nuances nested within their various experiences.

Clifford Geertz agrees with Max Weber “that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,” therefore, he takes “culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning” (Geertz 1973, 5). This search is conducted by exploring the “qualities” of social meaning research participants attribute to life events. Thus, this study provides insight into how research participants’ perceptions of immigrant experiences, family expectations, and parent-child relationships all intersect to encourage the development of educational aspirations in children of immigrants.

In qualitative research studies, findings cannot be generalized to an overall population because the power of context often limits the validity of the study to a reader’s identification with the research results. Frederick Erickson (1992) argues that it is important to remember that “the judgment of generalization must rest with the consumer rather than the producer of the research report [because] specific contextual circumstances do vary significantly from one

setting to the next, albeit in little ways. Yet these can be small differences that have big consequences for the qualitative character of the overall pattern that develops in a local setting” (10). Thus, “the generalizability of qualitative studies is usually based not on explicit sampling of some defined population to which the results can be extended, but on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases” (Maxwell 1996, 97). Hence, a grounded theory approach was used in this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In order to implement the grounded theory approach and increase the generalizability of this study, the messy and complex contextual reality, which was initially a “limitation,” was incorporated into the research design rather than controlled for it as in quantitative studies (Yin 2003, 13).

The generalizability of this qualitative study was linked closely to the validity of this research project. This interrelationship was established through: 1) purposeful or criterion-based sampling in order to account for variation within a particular population; 2) highlighting typical and atypical cases within the study; 3) developing codes that fit the data rather than making the data fit the codes; and 4) having the researcher implement a “disciplined subjectivity” (Charmez, 1983; Erickson 1984; Maxwell 1996; Merriam, 2009).

In this chapter I will discuss also how a qualitative methodological framework shaped this project. Topics concerning the interviewing technique, development of research questions, insider/outsider issues, data collection and analysis matters will be addressed to showcase the limitations and affordances of this project. Ultimately, highlighting the importance of what Brené Brown, a qualitative researcher who examines the meaning of vulnerability and whole-hearted living in human social development, poignantly said, “I am a qualitative researcher. I collect stories. Stories are just data with a soul” (Brown, 2010).

Research Participants & Setting

The research participants in this study were immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers who had directly migrated from Punjab, India² to the United States in addition to one of their children over the age of eighteen who had attended an American public school for at least four years. These families all lived in California for ten years or more. I chose to focus more on immigrant mothers and their children because: 1) immigrant Punjabi Sikh women's voices are largely ignored in the larger narrative about Punjabi Sikh migration to the United States and 2) the caretaking relationship between Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children lends itself to the intimate development, communication, and interpretation of educational messages.

Research participants were specifically recruited from California because it is home to the largest and oldest Punjabi Sikh population in the United States (Sikh Coalition, 2010). Also, I had the most nuanced and complex knowledge about the California Punjabi Sikh community because I am a member of it and community social activist. As a 2nd generation child of an immigrant Punjabi Sikh mother, I grew up on the outskirts of the heart of the Punjabi Sikh community in Central California, but my family and I often participated in community functions and had personal relationships with others similarly situated, which encouraged regular, in-depth engagement. Also, my mother played an integral role in the development of my educational aspirations through educational messages rooted in her immigrant experiences. I found this to be true of my peers during both formal and non-formal exchanges I had as a community social activist, researcher, and friend. As a community organizer and researcher for the Sikh Coalition, a national non-profit organization focusing on Sikh civil rights issues, I spoke to a wide variety of Sikhs in California who shared their beliefs and emotions regarding schooling in the United

² Refer to Chapter 5 for more in-depth information on the Punjabi community in India. Also, refer to Appendix B for current map of Punjab, India.

States. We spoke often about school bullying issues and how they reflected the inequity in school systems, particularly for immigrant families. I had conducted, too, a two-year study on Punjabi heritage language schools in Central California that were primarily run by immigrant parents, specifically mothers. During staff meetings and casual conversations, the immigrant mothers spoke consistently about the importance of education and their triumphs and struggles in encouraging their children to achieve a higher education. These are the experiences that shaped my dissertation study.

I chose to recruit immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in California and one of their children although, “picking a focus, be it a place in a school, a particular group, or some other aspect, is always an artificial act, for you break off a piece of the world that is normally integrated” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, 55). This act became even more disjointed from the world at large because I interviewed mothers and their children, not husbands/fathers or other family members. However, I took solace in knowing that I had a deep “insider” or “native” understanding about immigrant Punjabi Sikh families in California because of my background and experiences. I was not entering the community for the first time by listening to a specific segment of it. I was actually trying to build upon my general knowledge by gaining more nuanced insights into specific aspects of the community, specifically women and children. However, I knew this was still an artificial act because Karen Olson (1991) found it to be important to recruit men in her study of working-class women in a steel-making community in Maryland because women’s experiences are based on gender relations. She found that women’s experiences were largely influenced by their husbands’ notions of masculinity. Despite this understanding, I still chose to recruit only immigrant women and not their husbands because: 1) I wanted to privilege Punjabi Sikh women’s voices as they had been largely ignored in South Asian migration studies; and 2)

the majority of these women came as “dependents” of their husbands and I did not want that dynamic to dominate this research study. Bogdan & Biklen (2003) write, “feminists have moved the field of qualitative research toward a greater concern with the relationships between researchers and their subjects, as well as toward increased recognition of the political implications of research” (19). I gained indirect knowledge about husbands’/fathers’ perspectives through their wives and children. Husbands/fathers were mentioned often and their roles were included under broader terms such as “parents” and “family.” In a future study, I would definitely recruit husbands/fathers to gain a more robust understanding of immigrant parental participation, which would have its own kind of benefits and limitations. The findings of this study would help direct those conversations.

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers were purposefully recruited based on migration period, education and class levels, as well as access to interviewing one of their children. Women were recruited across three migration periods: 1) 1965-1981; 2) 1982-1990; and 3) 1991-2000 in order to capture the contextual similarities and differences across migration experiences³. The first migration period was composed of professionally skilled or educated migrants. The second period of migration consisted of large numbers of migrants arriving through the family reunification process. Their highly skilled relatives from period one applied for family members with predominately less professional skills to migrate to the United States. This period also consisted of many people arriving from India as refugees, particularly Sikhs, who were escaping the violence in Punjab, India as they asserted their sovereignty against the Indian state. The third period of migration also consisted of mostly migrants arriving through family reunification, refugee status, and skilled-visas. Because of the contextual reality of each migration period, I

³ Refer to Chapter 5 for detailed description of each migration period.

tried to recruit women from diverse educational and class backgrounds for each group.⁴ However, I found that class-level fluctuated greatly for the research participants in this study. Occupation of research participants and their husbands was used as a proxy for class, as well as piecing together general knowledge about where their family currently lived and details about their immigrant journey. Class-level was not directly inquired because of the discomfort and judgment that it would create when trying to develop a relationship with research participants, in which they would feel comfortable sharing intimate details about their lives. Thus, I found that, most often, immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study entered at a lower-class level than their current positions, especially for those who migrated during the 1st and 2nd periods of migration. Through hard work, business ventures, and financial investments, many families had moved upward in class positioning, although the experiences about which they spoke were from multiple class-levels rather than only their current one. Thus, my during analysis, I found that the migration period, educational background, and movement from different class levels, all influenced how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children developed and interpreted educational messages, rather than their current class-level or one stagnant notion of socioeconomic status (i.e. working class, professional).

All of the “child” participants were in college or were college graduates, with a few having graduate degrees.⁵ Children who did not go to college were not included in this study because the goal was to better understand the way educational messaging was developed for those who did achieve a higher education. This understanding could assist schools in supporting immigrant parental participation so more children of immigrants could attain a higher education.

⁴ Refer to: Appendix C: Chart of Research Participants for more detailed information.

⁵ Refer to Appendix C: Chart of Research Participants for more detailed information.

Moreover, the research participant recruitment process was based on pairs of mothers-children in order to make connections between their subjectivities concerning the importance of education. It was important to understand not only how educational messages were developed and delivered, but also how they were interpreted. This was a fluid process and not unidirectional. By conducting a paired-analysis in combination with a migration analysis, I highlighted the specific contextual influences on educational messaging and aspiration development.

Overall, 24 individuals⁶, composed of 12 pairs of mothers and children, were formally interviewed for this research study. The age range of the mothers was from the late 30s to the 60s. The lowest level of formal education for immigrant mothers was the 10th grade (equivalent to metric or high school in India). The highest level of formal education was a Master's Degree. One participant also had a double Bachelor's Degree, one from India and the other from America. The immigrant mothers also had varied occupations ranging from a warehouse packer to a medical professional to a small business owner. The children ranged in age from 18 to their mid30s. The lowest level of formal education for them was one-year of community college and the highest level of formal education attained was a law degree.

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval, I began participant recruitment. I focused on my social network in California to engage immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers from varied educational, migration, and occupational backgrounds. These women had to have at least one child over the age of eighteen who had attended an American public school for at least four years.

⁶ Refer to Appendix C: Chart of Research Participants for more detailed information.

Furthermore, I conducted a paired analysis across migration periods, which required joint recruitment of mothers and their children. As each mother and child was recruited, I set up a meeting time at a location most comfortable and convenient for the research participants. Most often this location was the research participant's home, video conferencing, and/or coffee shops. Sometimes mothers were interviewed before children and vice versa. As per IRB protocol, I gained permission from each research participant. All interviews were machine recorded to ensure validity and also to create a comfortable, casual, and conversational tone (Erickson, 1986). By using a voice-recorder, the researcher could listen actively and participate in a conversation with the research participant, rather than focus on note taking. Note taking could also create an atmosphere of formality and be distracting for the research participants.

It is important to note that the vast majority of interviews with immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers were conducted in Punjabi--their native language. The children spoke English with interspersed Punjabi. The research participants made the decision about which language would be used for the interview. Some mothers chose to speak purely in Punjabi, whereas others interspersed a lot of English. As the researcher, I am a fluent Punjabi and English speaker. Also, Punjabi was my first language. As a scholar, I had improved formally my comprehension and speaking skills through university and U.S. government-based language programs in Chandigarh, India. I found that most mothers felt comfortable expressing complex thoughts in Punjabi and my responses in Punjabi helped create trust and confidence between researcher and interviewee. It is commonly known that language use is embedded with more than the technical element of sentence structure and word choice. It is heavily laden with emotions and cultural understanding. It would be unfair to state that simply using the Punjabi language developed trust and confidence; the style and content of my responses were equally important.

The ethnographic interviews began with a background survey of each research participant. This information helped me contextualize the research participants' responses during the interview. The interview protocol was used to guide the conversation. That the tone of the interview be conversational rather than interrogative was critically important because "conversations were of greater value than straight question and answer sessions as they provided more rich detailed data" (Burgess, 1995, 102).

However, each conversation had a purpose so research participants were given an overview of the topics we would discuss. Therefore, interviewees garnered a "big picture" idea of the conversation and anticipated future topics that would be discussed. This approach helped interviewees develop responses that were coherent and interrelated across topics. The follow-up questions for each interview were guided by the nature of the conversation. I allowed research participants to guide the conversation, while I steered it in particular directions to garner information related to my research questions at those points I felt such direction was necessary. It is important to note that, while I steered interviews in particular directions because they were conversations with a purpose, I was mindful that my proposed research questions were preconceptions. They were guiding questions that had no finality to them. An integral aspect of qualitative research is that research questions change to fit the nature of data collection because "... the researcher does not presume at the outset to know where, specifically, the initial questions might lead next" (Erickson 1986, 143). Therefore, during data collection, I had to be mindful and reflective of my own subjectivity in order to not "implant" social constructs or meanings into participants' minds because "ethnographic research is an intensely personal experience for the fieldworker" (Sanjek, 1990, 398). Thus, as Joseph Maxwell (1996) writes, "attempting to purge yourself of personal goals and concerns is neither possible nor necessary.

What is necessary is to be aware of these concerns and how they may be shaping your research, and to think about how best to deal with their consequences” (16). Interestingly, the follow-up questions were reflective of the continual “analysis” process from data collection to formal data analysis, which is a hallmark of qualitative methods because “the observer’s emotional reactions are a source of research hunches” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, 93).

In an effort to search for disconfirming evidence for tentative assertions, I asked follow-up questions which would garner confirming or disconfirming evidence regarding these hunches. It was common to ask additional questions that were not on the interview protocol. These additional questions were necessary to explore patterns I had noticed from previous interviews with participants.

Because ethnographic interviewing is inherently an interpretative endeavor and the researcher is the primary tool for data collection and analysis, I had to be critically aware of my own biases in order to productively use them to maintain the validity of future conclusions. Bogdan & Biklen (2003) write, “because you are so central to the collection of the data and its analysis, and because neither instruments nor machines nor carefully codified procedures exist, you must be extremely aware of your own relationship to the setting and of the evolution of the design and analysis” (114). Often in quantitative methods there are statistical “controls” for these biases, but in qualitative work instead of removing them from the analysis process, they are incorporated in a disciplined fashion (Bogdan & Biklen 2003; Erickson 1984). During and after interviews, I made notes and wrote memos about my ongoing thoughts and feelings in order to employ a “disciplined subjectivity” and develop tentative assertions that helped guide the formal data analysis process. Lastly, informal interviews and member checking were conducted informally at community events in order to reduce the “formality” and “anxiety” around research

for participants. This approach also helped maintain the conversational tone of the data collection process. It was necessary to maintain a casual tone throughout the interview process in order to make research participants feel comfortable.

Burgess (1995) writes, “it is impossible to control the relationship between the researcher and the researched but that it is vital to develop the trust and confidence of those with whom interviews were used” (103). The vast majority of the research participants had not taken part in a research study before. Thus, the stereotypical notions of inquiry being formal and interrogative initially intimidated the research participants and negatively influenced the researcher-interviewee relationship. I found this to be the case because I noted the difference in body language and tone of conversation from the beginning to the end. Also, the kinds and depth of detail that were shared by research participants often changed from the start to end of the interview. After listening to the recorded interviews and reflecting on the “interview scene,” I found myself providing a lot of reassurance and creating comfort in the beginning of interviews through words, tone, and body language, particularly for research participants who were short with answers, formal in interaction, or seemed intimidated. Interestingly, I was often dismantling stereotypes about the formality of scientific research and as participants became more relaxed and comfortable, their answers became more robust. Also, my “outsider within” status as a doctoral student affected the power dynamic within the researcher-interviewee relationship, although I was younger than the mothers interviewed-sometimes around the same age of their children. I tried to combat this power imbalance based on education by addressing each of the immigrant mothers as “Auntie,” a common practice within the South Asian community. They often responded to me as “betaa” and “putth” which are terms of endearment for a child. By attempting to dismantle this power hierarchy, the research participants and I were

able to create a more comfortable and casual environment that built trust and confidence in each other. Often I sensed initial anxiety from research participants at the beginning of an interview. We were able to reduce the formality and initial anxiety around the research process in order to encourage a more open environment for sharing life experiences. At the end of the interview, many of the research participants appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their life journeys. Most often they had been very busy with the “doing” of life and did not have an opportunity to reflect on what had been accomplished through their various struggles and triumphs. They said that the interview process had been therapeutic.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process in qualitative research is inherently a recursive and iterative one because the goal is to find “... an analytic framework that fits data and find data that are consistent with the framework” (Erickson, 2004, 493). This approach is necessary because “... the ultimate validity test [of qualitative research] ... is whether the categories and frameworks constructed ... can be shown to have some relation to the meaning perspectives of those whose actions are being analyzed” (Erickson, 2004, 492). This analytic process begins before the formal coding process does, which lends itself particularly well to the grounded theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Initial hunches and cursory data analysis of information sources are required to reshape research questions and develop more appropriate guiding questions, thus, assisting the researcher in developing a more focused data collection and analysis process that accounts for the full range of variation within the sample. This process helps the researcher avoid leaping “... to conclusions inductively early in the research process [which] can be called the problem of premature typification. This problem makes it necessary to conduct deliberate searches for

disconfirming evidence in the form of discrepant cases—instances of the phenomena of interest whose organization does not fit the terms of one’s emerging theory” (Erickson 1984, 144). In this section, I will explore how this approach to data analysis manifested itself in this study in two ways: 1) during interview transcription and 2) while conducting formal coding.

Interview Transcription As Analysis

The ethnographic interviews in this research study were transcribed through an “Embodied Transcription” process which acknowledges that transcription is inherently analytical because it consists of data interpretation and is theory-laden (Brooks, 2010). During “Embodied Transcription,” the researcher listens to the audio recording of an interview and repeats the research participants’ words into voice-recognition software. Through the process of vocalization and resignation, a “knowing in the body” of the researcher is developed, which deepens the researchers understanding of the data (Brooks, 2010, 1227). This “knowing in the body” is developed by the researcher being taken back to the original interview scene to recount non-verbal interaction, changes in tone and pitch of voice, and remembering more deeply initially hunches. Furthermore, this process requires the researcher to be acutely aware of his/her subjectivity during the transcription in order to control bias because the body, intuition, and intellect are “simultaneously activated through the act of speaking” the research participants words (Brooks, 2010, 1230).

The “Embodied Transcription” process has three main cycles: 1) revisit and repeat; 2) revise; and 3) refinement and reflection (Brooks, 2010, 1230). Reflective note taking on researcher positionality and the writing of analytic memos on initial hunches are done through all three cycles, but particular attention is given to them during the third cycle. The first cycle

consists of revisiting the interviewing by listening to audio recordings and repeating the research participants' words into the voice-recognition software. Christine Brooks (2010) asserts that by using voice-recognition software, not only is time saved, but also a measure of quality control is implemented, similar to Erickson's argument for audio recording being a technique to ensure validity. During the second cycle, the interview is played again and revisions are made to the text in the event of listening and/or typing errors. This provides an additional opportunity to understand the interviewees content in close detail. It is at this step that notes about feelings and unspoken factors within the interview such as changed pitch and tone are noted. Cycle three is an opportunity to make additional punctuation and language corrections to follow intonation patterns, word choice, and pauses that may have been missed before. Brooks (2010) writes, "I have been through the material now three times. I find that the "story" of the participant becomes clearer and clearer over the course of the process" (1232).

Importantly, the transcription process in this study had a translation component. I translated the interviews conducted in Punjabi. Thus, the words spoken by the researcher into the voice-recognition software were English translations of the research participants' Punjabi statements. Although there is a lot lost in translation from one language to another, the "Embodied Transcription" process best addressed this issue in this research project because the emotions and other unspoken factors were noted by the researcher on paper and captured by the researcher's intuition or "body." Thus, they were not lost but, instead, harnessed to develop initial hunches.

Brooks (2010) asserts, "my belief that transcription is an essential aspect of data analysis and better research is well served by executing her own transcriptions of interview data" because Lapidat and Lindsey (1999) conclude that "analysis takes place in understandings that are

derived from the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening. Transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data” (1228). Thus, the “Embodied Transcription” process is particularly aligned with the qualitative framework of this study because Clifford Geertz asserts that “one must see society as an object and experience it as a subject,” which requires the fusion of “two fundamental orientations toward reality--the engaged and the analytic” (Rosaldo, 1993, 89). During the transcription process, the researcher is engaged by repeating the research participant’s words and “reliving” the interview. This process is also analytical because the researcher reflects on the interview, his/her positionality, and developing initial research hunches and conceptual categories.

Coding & Reporting

The formal coding process used in this study was from a top-down approach, although the information was collected from a bottom-up perspective. Fred Erickson describes a top-down approach as understanding the forest in order to learn about the individual trees. This process of top-down coding is based on broad categories developed from the emic perspectives of research participants. Therefore, all interview transcriptions, memos, and reflective notes were read as one corpus of information in order to identify salient themes and construct broad categories or codes. Once these themes and categories were developed, I attempted to code in an open and inductive manner (Charmaz, 1983; Emerson et. al 1995), while recognizing that “there are no pure inductions. We always bring to experience frames of interpretation, or schemata” (Erickson, 1984, 152). Thus, the goal was to be mindful of these positionalities in order to harness them to produce a more comprehensive coding scheme or “tree diagram” (Bogdan &

Biklen, 2003, 92). For example, during this phase in the research process, I tried to put my theoretical lenses in my “researcher backpack” in order to show that my analysis was not devoid of them, but also were not being used as major tools for analysis. The development of a coding scheme was a recursive and exhaustive process where initial coding brought new insights; that led to the development of new codes. During this time, I was constantly looking for “kinds” of social interactions and “types” of communication styles. An important aspect of this search was to find points of contrast within codes; Fred Erickson refers to them as the “white” meat and “dark” meat.

After I developed a comprehensive coding scheme based on one corpus of information (i.e. interviews, memos, and reflective notes), I coded the interviews individually through the aid of Atlas.ti. The broad codes consisted of, for example, “beliefs,” “child socialization practices,” and “immigration experiences.” The coded data was then analyzed by paying “careful attention to frequency of occurrence, especially to relative frequency, in comparing different kinds of phenomena across differing comparison groups” (Erickson, 1998, 1166). These comparison groups were composed of various mother-child pairs and immigration periods. After identifying different patterns, such as “service to community,” “immigrant success,” and points of variation across migration as well as mothers and children, I developed a grounded theory on immigrant parental participation in education, which was representative of the social phenomena that emerged from the data. Certain pieces of data were identified to exemplify various social phenomena within this research study. Moreover, pseudonyms were used for all research participants and locations. Ultimately, this final report was an attempt to highlight how a qualitative approach to social science research “enables a social analyst to become a social critic” by dismantling objectivity and realizing a disciplined subjectivity, which allows for a more

nuanced, complex, and humane reporting of people's lives and how they make sense of them
(Rosaldo, 1993, 181).

CHAPTER 4: SITUATING INSIDER/OUTSIDER RESEARCH

Critical reflection is a hallmark of qualitative research because the goal is to achieve a disciplined subjectivity that uses rigorously the researcher's positionality to develop effectively assertions. In this chapter, I will explore the theoretical implications of conducting "insider/outsider" research by touching upon my own research experience. This writing is not an attempt to represent all of my positionalities and biases, but to highlight how I became critically aware of some of them in order to utilize productively each of them in my research. Sandra Harding (2004) believes introducing the "subjective" element into the analysis in fact *increases* the objectivity of the research and *decreases* the "objectivism" which hides "grounded" kinds of evidence from the public. Thus, the role of research is not to objectify the research participant, but to connect to him/her through a relationship. This relationship is rooted in a researcher's awareness of when he/she is "skinfolk" vs. "kinfolk" (Williams, 1996). Hence, highlighting that insider/outsider research has its affordances and constraints. Traditionally, "insider" research gave access to information that only "insiders" would understand because as an "insider" one would have developed an "intuitive knowledge and built-in 'feel' for the subtleties of their cultures and their human relationships" (Hau'ofa 1975, 288). However, the constraint for insider research is making the "familiar" strange in order to capture the variation of social phenomena.

I assert in this chapter that being an "insider" or "outsider" is not a dichromatic process, but involves, rather, a continuum. One is never completely an "insider" or "outsider." Our humanity is too complex and integrated to allow for such a clean, reductive, dualistic delineation. Depending on the situation or interview question, we become more of an "insider" or "outsider" but never completely one or the other. This awareness is developed through reflection, a critical awareness that helps "insider" researchers acknowledge their intuitive knowledge, while making

the “familiar strange.” This awareness is important because qualitative researchers, particularly those doing “native” research, need to help develop a “native” anthropology that decolonizes the academic field. The concern is no longer merely understanding social phenomena, but gaining clarity in order to enact change that “stands witness” to the experience of human existence, rather than “reacting” upon it.

De-Colonizing Anthropology Through a Native Anthropology

Insider/Outsider research has long been viewed as a step towards decolonization of anthropology because “natives” moved from being “objects” and “tools” of research to being the researchers who designed investigations, collected information, analyzed it, and constructed local theories. “Natives” were no longer only sources of “insider” or “authentic” information for “outside” white male analysts, but those who could provide “closer” and more critical insight into the local meaning-making processes of their communities by also theorizing about the information. This theorizing would take place within the context of breaking down the objective distance and hierarchy in Self/Other research through reflection. Traditionally, Self/Other research that lacked critical awareness produced and perpetuated social injustices. Furthermore, the deconstruction of objectivity and hierarchy would show that “insider” and “outsider” status-research is situationally based on the researcher’s own personal and professional backgrounds and experiences showing that, it is not that “insider” research is better, but different (Jones, 1970). However, this shift in research style did not necessarily lead to a change that broke down the embedded hierarchies reflected in the academic frameworks and approaches used to “socialize” native anthropologists to be critical and successful researchers that could provide

more in-depth interpretations of local meaning-making processes of social injustices in order to effectively challenge them.

As an “insider” researcher, Sofia Villenas (1996) stated that during her academic training, when she thought she was gaining skills to help her “decolonize” marginalized people, such as Chicanos/herself, she participated in conversations that developed frameworks, which reinforced this colonization. She writes, “the seminar participants failed to see how, in the process of discussing people of color, we silenced and marginalized the very voices of those who were supposed to have been the subjects and authors of their experiences” because “the power of the dominant discourse of ‘other,’ the objectification of my experiences as the ‘other’ through detached, rational augmentation, and the severing of a collective vision and memory disable me and rendered me voiceless, all [which] constituted marginalization and complicity” (Villenas 1996, 6-7). This compliancy with “othering” prevented her from recognizing the nuisances of her own privilege and appropriation as a Chicana applied researcher, which helped reproduce power hierarchies and social injustices, rather than challenge them. Hence, illuminating Delmos Jones’ (1970) argument, “... there are native anthropologists, but there is no native anthropology. By this I mean there is little theory in anthropology which has been formulated from the point of view of tribal, peasant, or minority peoples” because the data collected about and by them is initially interpreted through frameworks that reproduce colonized anthropological hierarchies rather than deconstruct them through the nuisances of the meaning-making processes of marginalized people (478). Therefore, I argue in this chapter that “native anthropologists” have to become more aware and, also, be more transparent in their own intellectual and social habits, background assumptions, and nuisances of situated “insider” and/or “outsider” status to develop a native anthropology that decolonizes qualitative research. Once this decolonized qualitative

approach is utilized, “native anthropologists” may gain better insight into the meaning-making processes and phenomena in their local communities through quality reporting of grounded theories. These theories will then support action that improves the wellbeing and life chances of their community members. Hence, one moves from social analyst to social critic.

A Situational Insider/Outsider

The nuances of being an “insider” and “outsider” are critical during data collection, analysis, and reporting because qualitative research is a constant analytics process that is recursive and iterative. Hence, reflecting on the personal, professional and academic positionalities through a continual process is critical in order to construct grounded theories that can help develop practical and feasible solutions to social injustices. Brackette F. Williams (1996) writes that researchers “... must continually try to figure out the power implications of who they are ... in relation to what they are doing, asking, and observing” (73). This process is necessary because “identity and self are multiple and continually remade, reconstructed, reconstituted, and renewed in each new context and situation” (Villenas, 1996, 12). I found this to be true during my research. Although I was an “insider” to the community I was researching, a 2nd generation Punjabi Sikh who had an immigrant Punjabi Sikh mother, I was an “outsider” in terms of my academic background, and, in the case of the immigrant mothers, younger than they were. By being critically aware of my positionality, I tried to reduce the anxiety my research participants felt by constantly reiterating that I was here to learn from them, hear their voices, and not present authoritative information or conduct an evaluation. There were no right or wrong answers, in other words. In addition, I tried to show my respect to the immigrant mothers as elders in the Punjabi Sikh community. Thus, being reflective was an on-going process that

happened, for example, when conducting interviews in order to adjust to the particular researcher-interviewee relationship. I practiced this reflection when writing observational notes and creating an entry into an ethnographic journal.

Ingrid Banks (2000) discusses how her insider/outsider statuses provided affordances and constraints during her interviews with African-American women's notions of hair and hairstyles. These affordances and constraints influenced the quality of information she collected and the types of analytical lenses she crafted during the research process to develop assertions. Interestingly, she believes that a white woman, for example, could have been a neutral researcher because her participants' responses would not have been filtered through their reading of a black woman hair (164). Banks (2000) believes that her insider/outsider positionality was, at times, largely determined by an expectation that, as a black woman, she would know particular terminology and practices associated with hair (166). Hence, she argues that her "insider" and "outsider" statuses were not determined by her position as an "academic researcher" as much as they were by her race, gender, and hairstyle, which influenced the types of questions she asked, the responses she received from her particular participants, as well as how she decided to present herself at a bodily level. For example, during one set of interviews, she wore a hat because she was catching a cold, but noticed that when she was asking questions, the girls were looking at her hat before responding. I found myself in a similar position during my research. Often times, my research participants expected me to be more of an "insider" because of our shared ethnic and religious backgrounds. They would respond to questions I asked with surprise because a more "neutral" researcher would mostly likely ask some of those questions. I asked those questions in order to be less presumptuous. Thus, I would let the research participants know

during our conversation that I was an “insider” in terms of our ethnic and religious positionalities, but an “outsider” in regards to their families.

Re-Colonization Through Academic Frameworks

Villenas (1996) discussed her experiences reflecting during her professional training research when she was “... both the colonizer, in her university cloak, and the colonized, as a member of the very community that is made ‘other’ in her research” (2). Her positionality as a “native” researcher was appropriated by community leaders to validate their “problem” and “at-risk” discourse about the Latino community in Hope City through reinforcement of both her marginality and privilege as a Chicana researcher (Villenas, 1996). For example, her language skills and intimate experience with Latino community dynamics were being used to validate her expertise as a credentialed and skilled researcher whose investigative skills could be appropriated by English-speaking community leaders to reinforce their own notions of the Latino community’s “problems” related to violence, sexism, machismo, and low educational aspirations. Therefore, her “insider” status in both her local community and academy where being manipulated by community leaders to reinforce existing hierarchies instead of deconstructing them by offering to share their privileged power as decision-makers. Even though she felt uncomfortable with the use of “deficiency” terminology by community leaders, she remained silent and continued to use their “marginalizing” language to describe the community dynamics because her research position in this setting reflected her inclusion into white privilege.

During my research, I feared the dynamic described by Villenas. I wanted to be critically aware of the “academic” or “professional” notions regarding injustices affecting immigrant

Punjabi Sikh women in order to prevent my research from being another victimizing act. Often, research on Punjabi Sikh women in the diaspora re-victimizes them in an attempt to highlight the inequities they experience (Bhachu, 1999). Of the little research that does exist on Punjabi Sikh women, they are often times represented as victims of patriarchy and their working class situations. I believe that investigating victimizing experiences in women's lives should not reify a "victimhood" in these women. Thus, in my research I wanted to highlight the resiliency, courage, and faith immigrant Punjabi Sikh women had as they navigated their immigrant experiences both during the process of data collection and in the final reporting. I believed these characteristics anchored the educational messages immigrant Punjabi Sikh women conveyed to their children. In order to conduct such research I had to "... confront [my] own feminist biases and to rethink women's history in less categorical, more dynamic terms" (Olson and Shopes 1991, 189). In my quest for this research to be a social justice project, I had to be critically aware of not re-victimizing the mothers and children, but also not overlooking or glossing over their painful experiences in order to paint a "rosy picture." Villenas' (1996) research made me aware of how re-victimizing research participants in order to illuminate their unjust experience can be a "recolonizing" act. I had to be mindful to not mold my research agenda to fit academic notions about immigrant women and the South Asian community in order to avoid reifying stagnant categories about immigrant women's experience, but still honor the struggles encountered by immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in California.

“Outsider within Status”: When You Become Skinfolk or Kinfolk

Some researchers discuss their experiences of having “outsider within status” based on their racial, class, geographical, and gendered identities. These multiple subjectivities influence how they are “translated” by their participants across contexts, which influence the type of data the researcher collects and the quality of analysis produced. Brackette Williams (1996) writes of how her gender, class, educational, and kin-relationships influenced her role of participant-observer and the type of information she had access to. She was skinfolk to blacks in the American South and those who were Afro-Guyanese, but she was not always kinfolk. Williams (1996) writes, “Although historical similarities and an ideologically defined politics of racial kinship provided implicit, albeit hard to reckon socially, connections between my identity as an African American and that of the Guyanese who claimed Afro-Guyanese identity, class stratification and status geography were the more salient factors in how we constructed the limit of participation-observation as a concept” (89). Hence, she had “outsider within status” because within her skinfolk she was granted or denied access to locations and people as an “outsider” based on, for example, her geographic and class status. My research experience echoed that of Williams. Although I was skinfolk because of my membership within the community and my relationships with the research participants, I was not always “kinfolk.” Differences in education, immigration status, and the very fact that I was not always an “immediate family member” prevented me from being “kinfolk.” I would argue that the nature of my personal relationships with the research participants influenced where I fell on the continuum of skinfolk-kinfolk. In addition, my positionality varied according to the interview question I asked or how the interviewee responded. For example, questions pertaining to occupation, geography and decision-making sometimes caused consternation. I would argue that my “outsider within

status,” as William’s was, was an affordance in some situations and a constraint in others because of the variation in our “insider” status, which influenced what kinds of information we had access to and the biases we had to be mindful of during formal analysis.

The “Outsider Within”

Patricia Hills Collins (2003) writes that “some potential benefits of outsider within status include: (1) Simmel’s definition of “objectivity” as “a peculiar composition of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference”; (2) the tendency for people to confide in a “stranger” in ways they never would with each other; and (3) the ability of the “stranger” to see patterns that may be more difficult for those immersed in the situation to see” (104). Hence, reflecting the nuisance approach a researcher cultivates based on the situatedness of his/her many identities. She goes on to assert that qualitative researchers can learn a lot from Black feminist intellectuals because they have developed a special standpoint that pushes the white male-dominated hierarchal academic frameworks that cannot effectively and productively account for the anomalies of their experiences. This lends itself to a better interpretation of how women of color make meaning of their oppression. This special standpoint puts women of color’s voices at the center of the conversation because of their “outsider within” status in both racial and gender oppression. Collins (2003) writes, “As an extreme case of outsiders moving into a community that historically excluded them, Black women’s experiences highlight the tension experienced by any group of less powerful outsiders encouraging the paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community. In this sense, a variety of individuals can learn from Black women’s experiences as outsiders within: Black men, working-class individuals, white women, other people of color, religious and sexual minorities, and all individuals who, while from social strata

that provided them with the benefits of white male insiderism, have never felt comfortable with its taken-for-granted assumptions (122).

Patricia Zavella (1996) discussed how her Chicana feminist orientation became an affordance and constraint during her qualitative research because her concepts for challenging patriarchy and sexism within “la familia” influenced her to develop interview questions that elicited Mexican-American women’s notions of a working-class ethnic identity, which were not entirely captured by Chicana feminism. Furthermore, she realized that during interviews with Mexican-American women in New Mexico about the construction of their ethnic identity that she was privileging the Chicana positionality in her identity by thinking that their identification as “Spanish” reinforced ethnic and class segmentation. Hence, “after returning to our interview data and culling from own experiences of living in Albuquerque and observing working-class Mexican Americans, we came to see that our Hispanic informants were telling us something new about ethnic identification. That is, within the constraints of their lives, “Spanish” meant accommodation, resistance, and struggle” (Zavella 1996, 153). However, Zavella (1996) was not able to come to this understanding until she deconstructed her own Chicana feminist viewpoints. She found that these theoretical positions which challenged power hierarchies of ethnic, racial, and gender oppression could actually become forms of oppression and silencing if they were not continually reflected upon across contexts, power dynamics, and subjectivities.

Similar to Zavella (1996), I had to be mindful of how my desire to highlight the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women, particularly around violence, did not marginalize the perpetrators of the violence (most often they were these women’s husbands). In an effort to show the resiliency and courage these women possessed, I did not want to present them as “more powerful” than what they actually were in various situations or “too overpowered” by

different people in their lives. Thus, by investigating the nuanced and complex ways that women practiced resiliency and courage, I wanted to highlight why and how women made particular choices in their lives, even if those choices reified the imbalance of power. What their thought process was and how their children fit into their calculations were just two of the questions I posed. Therefore, I wanted to ensure that by reproducing the examples of “injustice” I was challenging common notions about women’s empowerment, rather than re-marginalizing women and their families.

Conclusion

Historically, anthropology used a binary oppositional approach to understand the exotic “Other” for missionary and colonial purposes. The all-knowing “Self,” most often an upper-class white male, was trying to understand the “Other” in order to later act upon her. Post-modern anthropology attempted to demystify this unitary authority of the anthropologist through reflection. Through introspection, an anthropologist became more aware of his/her positionality. However, this approach did not necessarily break power dichotomies; it simply focused on how to communicate across Self/Other divides. Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) asserts, “This divide remains unquestioned because post-modern anthropology does not worry about deconstructing the history that created the divides, whereas feminist theory is rooted in understanding the historical roots of oppression in order to form a political stance that alters such unequal power relations.” Thus, reflection with this political awareness allowed the “personal to become theoretical.”

By incorporating researcher values and political ideologies into the design of inquiry, qualitative research critiques social injustices in order to find solutions. Moreover, “insider,” “outsider,” and “outsider within” statuses give access to different types of information to produce

evidence for a richer description of phenomena that can be used to develop feasible solutions for marginalization. Thus, “there will inevitably be certain facets of self that join us up with the people we study, other facets that emphasize our difference” (Narayan, 1997, 34). The goal of qualitative research that “decolonizes” anthropology by developing a “native” anthropology is to gather evidence that is more reflective of the multiplicity of the research participants’ lives by having the researcher become aware of his/her own multiple standpoints. Insider/outsider research is a complex process in which a “native” researcher is constantly moving along an “insider/outsider” continuum based on the situatedness of his/her many identities during particular activities and social interactions. This movement allows the researcher to bring the voices and concerns of the marginalized to the center of the conversation by examining their meaning-making process through a more nuanced approach, which increases the quality of reporting and the development of a native anthropology.

CHAPTER 5: PUJABI SIKHS--CONSTRUCTING A CONTEXT OF GLOBAL MOBILIZATION

Historical Panjab (a.k.a. Punjab⁷)

Panjab's pluralistic history stems from the various rulers who have conquered, lost, changed, and contributed to its makeup of cultures, politics, and religions. Located in Northwestern India as a buffer between Pakistan and India, Panjab was a "gateway" into India for the Turks, Greeks, Afghans, Mughals (Persians), and British. It was also a conglomerate of Sikh princely states that would become annexed by the British in the 19th century.⁸ This influx of rulers constantly challenged territorial, cultural, and religious boundaries. J.S. Grewal (1998) writes:

"the literal meaning of the Persian term *panj-b* is 'five waters.' It was meant to signify the land of five rivers (the Beas, Satluj, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum rivers) but it was not meant to be taken literally. When it became current in the reign of Akbar in the late sixteenth century, it was synonymous with the province of Lahore and, therefore, actually smaller than the area lying between the rivers Indus and Satlej. The British Panjab, however, embraced the entire plain between the Jamuna and the Indus. This region had a geographical entity of its own. A desert marked its southern boundary in historical times. The Himalayas stood in its northern portion even before the Panjab plains emerged as a geological entity."

As a part of the Indus civilization in the third millennium before Christ, Panjab would become representative of the change brought in by the Aryans.

At the time of the Aryan invasion, the Indus civilization was in decline. The nomadic Aryans brought with them agricultural techniques to revive the agrarian economy and Vedic traditions.

Panjab's location in the North, divided into five *doabs* [surrounded by two rivers] brought a diversity of

⁷ The spelling "Panjab" is more aligned with the Panjabi pronunciation and meaning of the word. However, the spelling "Punjab" is most commonly used.

⁸ Refer to Appendix A: Historical Map of Panjab

geopolitical traits. Rivers, mountain ranges, and good weather conditions surrounded it. The Hindu religion arose from how “the Vedic Aryans [conquers] interacted with the people of the Indus Culture [original native population] not only to produce the prototype of the social system based on caste, but also to evolve new systems of religious belief and practice, combining the simple worship of their nature-gods with the well-developed cults of the Indus people” (Grewal, 1998).

Alexander The Great first invaded the Panjab region in the fourth century before Christ. His constant movement helped create Taxila, a city within Panjab, into a cosmopolitan center of art and learning. It was also the center of trade with Iran and the Mediterranean world. The Greeks would rule in Panjab into the second century before Christ followed by an influx of rulers from Kanishka, to Sassanuan emperor Ardashir, the Huns, and Hindu Shahis. The Ghaznavid Turks would rule over Northern India from the eleventh century for 150 years before being overthrown by the Ghurid Afghans. These two invasions and the war that took place between the Turks and Afghans would introduce Islam to India and greatly contribute to the fluctuation of Panjab’s territorial boundaries. Buddhism dominated religious life in Panjab for several centuries prior to the Turkish and Afghan invasions. These invasions would conclude with great socio-political changes within the character of the Panjabi population. The dominant tribes of the region grew and began to push the Indus civilization, the original inhabitants of India, down southward. The evolving makeup of India was marked by cultural, territorial, and political conquering, from the Aryans and Turks to the Afghans.

The ethnic plurality in Panjab was marked by the variety of cultural traditions. New beliefs were mixed with old. J.S. Grewal (1998) writes, “to the scriptural authority of the Vedas and the Puranas was added the authority of the Quaran. To Sanskrit in Devanagri script were added Arabic and Persian in slightly different scripts of their own ... neither Sanskrit nor Arabic or Persian, however, was the language understood or spoken by the mass of the people in Panjab ... they used regional dialects in

their daily [conversations] ... Lhaur as the spoken language of the people of the Lahore region, later to be called Panjabi.” The variation in languages, religions, and rulers nurtured an environment ripe for the beginnings of Sikhi.

Partition

India’s independence from British colonial rule in 1947 was inaugurated with the partition of the Indian State. The British left a legacy of colonial rule in India, a legacy that was infected with continual despair in the on-going conflicts following the creation of a new Islamic state of Pakistan. Northern India, particularly the Punjab region, was most affected by the 1947 partition of India. Just as the British had manipulated Punjab for their own good during colonial rule, they severed it into two parts for what some scholars view as the British strategy of divide and rule. As noted in the historical review above, Punjab had been the site of conquering by Hindus, Moguls, Persians, Afghans, Sikhs, and the British, which created a unique composition of identities, architecture, and communal relationships. Sikhs, a strong majority population in Punjab, reflected this diverse background both in their faith’s (Sikhi) theological composition and community practices. Sikhi’s main premise was the belief in one God, which extended into the acceptance of one humanity. The Sikh community continually struggled to assert recognition of its autonomous identity from both Islam and Hinduism. This conflict became more apparent after the partition of Punjab. First, the British had given Lahore, the cultural capital of pre-partition Punjab, to Pakistan. Therefore, Hindu and Sikh populations that had fled Pakistani Punjab to Indian Punjab felt that they had been ripped of the center that symbolized their historic past and diverse identities. Furthermore, Sikhs were forced to desert their Gurdwaras⁹, “the most important element of Sikh sacred and cultural space.” The term Sikh is derived from “the Sanskrit sisya, and Pali sekha,

⁹ Sikh house of worship & community center, which means the door to the Guru.

meaning a learner or disciple” (Grewal, 1998). Therefore, the center of Sikh identity is based on the concept of being the students of ten gurus. When Sikhs were forced to leave their Gurdwaras, “literally ... the house of the guru,” they felt as though a key portion of their identity was being taken away from them. Thus, Sikhs started reform movements, such as the Gurdwara Sudhar Lahir movement. This particular movement resulted in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), which was given the responsibility to maintain all Gurdwaras in both India and Pakistan.

The majority of Sikhs fled Pakistani Punjab to Indian Punjab because of India’s more “secular” position. However, Hindu nationalism became a strong movement in India after colonial rule. This construction of the Hindu Self, particularly in Northern India, contradicted the notion of a “secular” state. Paul Brass, Professor (Emeritus) of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Washington-Seattle, believes that all separate electorates for Sikhs were removed at that time. In 1966, Indian Punjab was further divided with the formation of two new states, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This division was strongly opposed by Sikh organizations such as the Akali Dal. However, through the use of linguistic surveys to determine the inclinations of Hindi-speaking and Punjabi-speaking populations, these two new states were created. Haryana consisted of Hindi-speaking Punjabis and in Himachal Pradesh, the hilly-areas of northeast Indian Punjabi, most spoke Pahari. Furthermore, the new city of Chandigarh became the capital for both a Sikh dominated Punjab and Hindu majority Haryana. Sikhs were constantly expected to share control and representation with Hindus. Thus, Sikhs demanded to be recognized as having an autonomous and separate identity in a “secular state.” Politically, the Hindu nationalist party in Punjab, the RSS, tried to propagate its Anti-Muslim sentiment by extending the term Hindu to include Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhist. *The Statesman, India* (April 2000) was published “to bring Sikhs under the Hindu umbrella; the RSS

chief KS Sauarshan has been propagating the idea that the community was a warrior race created to protect the Hindu religion.” The RSS had even set up a Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, which believes that the Khalsa order is a sect of Hinduism. The reaction of Sikhs was not favorable; the author writes, “if the RSS hopes to rope them [Sikhs] into their Hindutva agenda using the ‘Sikhs are Hindu first’ argument, they will find the exercise self-defeating.”

The basis of the contemporary movement for Khalistan was a movement to assert a separate identity from a Hindu-centered Indian State. The Sikhs believed that the Indian government had lied to them when it did not follow through with its promises of secularization. Sikh farmers had been promised more water rights and separate representation *as* Sikhs. In the 1970s, the Green Revolution initially brought much agricultural prosperity to India’s bread-basket, Punjab; however, it came with a high cost. The genetically modified seeds and increase in production required more use of water and pesticides. Thus, the Punjabi water-table began to decrease and farmers went into debt to support harvesting costs. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s invasion of the Harmandir Shaib [Golden Temple] in Indian Punjab displayed the Indian government’s lack of respect and compassion for the Punjabi Sikh community. Therefore, the movement for Khalistan became one in which the Sikh nation tried to force Indian recognition of its separate identity and political rights by demanding the construction of an autonomous state. The need for a separate state illustrated India’s failure to address the needs and concerns within its “secular” state.

Today, Indian Punjab is in a more dire situation, although there is an increase in consumerism. Some attribute this spike in consumerism to India’s overall economic growth in the past 25 years. However, this economic growth has not resulted in overall human development. According to the Economic Times (November, 2010), India ranks 119 among 169 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI). China ranks much higher at 89, although it shares membership with India as the top 10

movers in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thus, economic prosperity has resulted in larger gaps between the rich and poor. Punjab, once known as India's "sohni di chiri" [the golden bird] is now ranked as the 11th richest state in India according to The Economist. Low employment rates, higher farmer debt, and increased consumerism have resulted in high rates of drug use, brain drain, and farmer suicides. Many attribute Punjab's decline in status as a result of poor central economic policies and a lack of state leadership.

Origins of Sikhi

Sikh theology began as a revealed faith through Guru Nanak Ji's (1469-1539). It is believed that young Nanak, at the age of twenty-seven, disappeared from his village for three days. During this time Nanak was taking a dip in a neighboring stream. It was during this "trance-in-water" that the Sikh faith was revealed to and through Nanak. The Sikh Coalition, a national Sikh civil rights organization, writes, "The genre of pious Sikh literature called *Janamsakhis*, "The Testaments of the Life of Nanak," almost unanimously describes the experience of Nanak during his 'trance-in-water':

"As God willed, Nanak, His devotee, was escorted to His Presence. Then a cup filled with Liquid of Immortality was given accompanied by the command: 'Nanak, pay attention! This is the cup of Holy Adoration of My Name. Drink it . . . I am with thee and thee do I bless and exalt. Go, rejoice in My Name and preach to others to do the same . . . Let this be thy calling."

Through this revelation, Nanak became the Sikh's first Guru (one who takes you from darkness into light). His various voyages during the late 15th and early 16th centuries in and out of the Indian subcontinent added to his contributions to Sikh theology. Guru Nanak Ji's proclaimed, "there is no

Hindu, and no Mussalman.” He preached from “Assam in the east, Ceylon in the south, Nepal and Tibet in the north, and Mecca and Baghdad to the west” wearing a “saffron jacket of a Sadhu, the woolen shirt of a Faqir, and the hat of a Qalandar Dervish” (Grewal, 1998). Guru Nanak Ji’s style of dress symbolized his distinct identity; it was not Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist. His discussions with Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhist reveal how Sikhi was a religion of exploring different ways of life, despite differences in beliefs. This is evident when, despite the political upheavals in Punjab during the last fifty years of Guru Nanak Ji’s explorations, he was still able to meet with the representatives of the different religions. J.S. Grewal (1998) writes, “... he could meet the representatives of both Hinduism and Islam. Religious discussions between Hindus and Muslims were not uncommon in the 15th century Panjab. Guru Nanak mediated on the mysteries of life and reflected on views expressed by others on some fundamental questions of life.” During his voyages and discussions, Guru Nanak Ji was open to debate with leaders of all religions on all topics from “politics or government, in society or religion, or in nature.”

Guru Nanak Ji, during his guruship, found that the best way to promote a “oneness” among the people who followed Sikhi was to give them a holy recitation, Japji that defined the “oneness” of God- Whae Guru. Guru Nanak Ji believed that there should be an “unambiguously singular concept of God” in which the believer must equate “God to Sat, which means both the truth and that what exists truly, or more specifically what represents the ultimate truth of existence.” He asked his Sikhs to recite regularly the Japji every morning. A preamble to the Guru Granth Sahib and the Japji, and conveyed “equally a definition, a confession and an adoration” and declares unequivocally,

There Is One God,
Eternal Truth is His Name.
The Maker of all,
Without fear, without Hate.
Ever-present, at all times,
Beyond Birth, beyond death.

Through the Grace of the Guru, is the Divine achieved. (Preamble popularly known as Mool-Mantar)

The followers of Guru Nanak Ji, who believed in his notion of One God, Whae Guru, were labeled as the Sikhs. The term “Sikh” was derived from “the Sanskrit *sisya*, and Pali *sekha*, meaning a learner or disciple.” A social revolution began with Guru Nanak Ji against the rigid caste system, female oppression, and various other social injustices that composed the fabric of Indian society. The majority of India’s people were lower castes-- Sudras-peasants, laborers, and servants – and accounted for seventy to eighty percent of the population (Singh, 1999). Based on the rigid caste-system that supported Brahmanism, Sudras were not allowed to participate or even hear any kind of religious ceremony performed by a Brahmin priest. Sudras were abused, oppressed, and had no access to education. This oppression forced them to accept their subservient status. Guru Nanak began a social revolution by founding Sikhi. He empowered those who were oppressed by showing them how to connect with the divine freedom they were born with and questioned the Brahmanic system. Professor Puran Singh writes, “For ages the doors of true spirituality were locked for the people; the great Guru (Nanak) flung them open to all the four castes.” The Sikh Coalition asserts that the central tenets of Guru Nanak’s revolution were: 1) Simran-- meditation on the Divine’s Name; 2) Equality--the divine resides in every human being and his/her entire Creation; 3) Non-Ritualism/blind ritualism does not bring one closer to the divine; 4) Grist - Jeevan: Retreat from familial and social relationships does not help one become closer to the Divine. The triumphs and obstacles of these kinds of interactions support the journey towards that Divine connection; 5) Seva--selfless service is a perquisite for achieving connection with the Divine; 6) Gurprasad -- the belief that everything occurs according to the Divine’s (i.e. Waheguru or God) grace or will; 7) Love -- a set of actions conducted out of will to follow the tenants of the faith that help one connect and display; and 8) Divine-like qualities of kindness, compassion, humility, integrity, devotion, courage, wisdom, and awareness. Guru Nanak Ji also

established the three main pillars of Sikhi:

- *Naam-Japna*: recite and meditate on the name of Waheguru (omnipresent higher power);
- *Kirt Karni*: do honest work;
- *Vand-Chako*: share/consume together with others.

Guru Nanak Ji also instituted the practice of “Guru Ka Langar” or a free kitchen/meal.

Following Guru Nanak Ji, there were nine other living Gurus. The Sikh Coalition, a national Sikh civil rights organization in the United States, states: “The word ‘Guru’ in Sikh parlance means an enlightener and a prophet. Ten Gurus founded Sikhism. The first, Guru Nanak Ji (1469 to 1539) rejected the ritualistic practices of the dominant religions in South Asia and based his message strictly on divine revelation. Nine other living Gurus followed Guru Nanak Ji. The last living Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666 to 1708), crystallized the practices and beliefs of the faith and determined that no future living Guru was needed. In consonance with Guru Gobind Singh's last wishes, today the religion is guided by joint sovereignty of Guru Granth and Guru Panth. Guru Granth is the Sikh scripture, as the spiritual manifestation of the Guru, while the Guru Panth is the collectivity of all initiated Sikhs worldwide, as the physical manifestation of the Guru. The Guru Granth Sahib is known as the Sikh’s eternal Guru.

A tenuous relationship between the Sikhs, Islam, and the Mughal Empire remained into the period of the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. During this time there was tremendous oppression under the rule of Aurangzeb, a Mughal ruler. The Khalsa, or “army of the pure,” was created by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The goal was to create “a community of Saint-Soldiers dedicated to Guru Nanak’s tenets with the specific mission to stand up against tyranny, oppression, inequality and injustice anywhere” (Sikh Coalition). Thus, the Sikh movement was more than a social revolution. It was also a plebeian political revolution. Sikhs demanded political and spiritual sovereignty-statehood.

Jagjit Singh (1981) writes:

“The French Revolution began in 1789. The Khalsa was created ninety years earlier in 1699. The French Revolution was started by the middle class and ‘the blind driving power behind it ... was apparently accidental upheaval of the poor.’ Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa with the deliberate plan that the downtrodden, including the outcastes, should capture political power. During the first thrust of the French Revolution (1789-1792), ‘the middle class became a privileged oligarchy in place of the hitherto privileged, feudal aristocracy.’ When the Khalsa wielded political power for the first time, ‘the lowest of low in Indian estimation’ were equal co-sharers of that authority” (6).

The first membership of the Khalsa order was made of five men from different castes, therefore, carrying on the idea of excluding a caste system in Sikhi. Guruji first initiated the five men and then, in return, was baptized by them. Hence, he and the five men were initiated into Khalsa. This brotherhood of Khalsa required all male members to carry the surnames of “Singh” (lion) and female members to carry the surname “Kaur” (lioness and princess). Once initiated into Khalsa, a member was required to wear the “Five Ks, “*kes*, long uncut hair; *kangha*, a small wooden comb; *kirpan*, a dagger or sword; *kara*, a steel bracelet and *kachha*, boxer shorts.

The contemporary and eternal guru for Sikhs is the holy scripture Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikhs eternal guru in written form, is “the manifest body of the Guru.” A relatively new religion, Sikhi is over three hundred years old. According to the Sikh Rehat Maryada, the official Sikh code of conduct, a Sikh is defined as someone who believes in: (i) One Immortal Being, (ii) Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Ji to Guru Gobind Singh, (iii) The Guru Granth Sahib, (iv) The utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus and (v) the baptism bequeathed by the tenth

Guru, and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion (Sikh Rehat Maryada, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar).

Sikh Immigration

The *push/pull* factors of Punjabi Sikh emigration from South Asia were deeply nested within a history of colonialism and the politics of World War I and World War II. The British Raj provided the reasons and opportunities to leave Punjab to become “passenger immigrants,” while the two World Wars helped frame U.S. immigration policies. Therefore, global politics played a large role in contextualizing the socio-political relationship between the United States and India. Ultimately, this relationship affected the treatment and modes of adaptation of South Asians, specifically Punjabis, in America. Bruce La Brack (1988) writes that the intimate link between push/pull factors for South Asians manifested into push factors that were largely economic, but also political. The pull factors are more vague, “but [were primarily based on] promises of economic gain” (La Brack, 1988). He asserts that most Panjabi migrants were engaged in “passenger migration” where the main circumstances that pushed the migrant out of the home country were those over which the individual had little control, such as “economic necessity, war, political persecution, ethnic discrimination, and legal difficulties” (La Brack, 1988). The pull factors were primarily ones of economic gain because the “individual sees the new culture as a place of only temporary importance, a transitory phase of his life, and; ... the ‘sojourner’ is orientated towards some goal, usually financial, and all other considerations are secondary” (p. 20). The early Punjabi migrants were those who had no intention of staying in the United States; they were *sojourners*. However, as a result of changing immigration policies in the United States, shifting geo-political circumstances, and the development of the sojourners’ patterns of social and cultural adaptation, South Asian immigrants, particularly Punjabi Sikhs, moved from being sojourners to

pioneers - those early settlers who laid the foundation from which further immigration and patterns of settlement developed.

The early history of Punjabi Sikh immigration up to 1975 is generally divided into two groups, "... first was the majority who were illiterate laborers from agricultural and/or military backgrounds; the second very small class was the educated elite of professors and students" (La Brack 1988, 69). Even though the first Sikh in the United States appeared in 18th century Salem and is believed to have been an aide or servant to a Captain Phillips, Sikhs migrated freely by the 1880s as overseas *passengers* exploring the British Empire under the assumption of being its citizens. La Brack (1988) notes that "... it was not until some twenty-years later [in the early 1900s] that North American immigration commenced" in large numbers.

In this section, I provide a brief historical background of the small number of early pioneers who immigrated to North America in the 1800s as passenger immigrants on overseas ships in order to provide a foundation from which we can examine larger amounts of South Asian emigration in the 1900s. It is important to note that these South Asian emigrants were largely (85-90%) composed of Punjabi Sikhs, with Muslim and Hindu migrants making up the rest (McMahon, 2001).

Sikhi finds its origin in Punjab, a northwestern state in India. It is ironic that, in the 15th century, Guru Nanak Ji, the founder of the Sikh faith, practiced and institutionalized the notion of *E Pluribus Unum*, meaning "from many, one," while the United States of America, which utilizes this motto as a definition of itself, had a long history of trying to creating a "one" by discriminating against the "many" immigrants that have arrived at its shores. Karen Brodtkin (2001) writes, "... the United States has constructed itself as a democracy for its white citizens, but dependent upon the labor of a non-white, alien and dangerous working class to be excluded from the national democracy even as it produces the

nation's wealth." This is evident in early Sikh immigrant history when Sikhs were denied U.S. citizenship, even while they contributed to the U.S. economy and defended it in World Wars I and II. Despite their economic and military contribution to the U.S., Sikhs were still viewed as "threats."

The initial construction of the Sikh-American identity is based on the late 19th century American view of South Asian immigrants as being "culturally inassimilable and socially undesirable as citizens." Kamala Visweswaran (1994) argues that in the United States "hyphenated identities have typically marked a politics of assimilation." For Sikh-Americans, the early politics of assimilation were primarily grounded on their "undesirable" American citizenship status. This "undesirability" was connected to the Sikh immigrants' construction of cultural communities to sustain their Eastern beliefs and to maintain a support system for economic growth.

In the 21st century, Sikh-Americans were acknowledged and respected for their "inassimilable characteristics" when, on October 18, 2001 in Washington D.C., the U.S. Senate passed resolution 74, condemning hate crimes against Sikh-Americans in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. However, this resolution was a result of tremendous hatred Sikh-Americans faced following the 9/11 attacks for their "inassimilable characteristics" such as unshorn hair and turbans. Some people took these features of Sikh practice to mean that Sikh-American were "terrorists." It became clear after 9/11 that the issues facing Sikhs were uniquely linked to their "inassimilable" appearances. Currently, Sikhs are fighting for their civil rights to practice freely their faith in the United States at the workplace and in schools. Even after more than a century of contribution to America's political, social, and economic preservation, Sikh-Americans essentially remain "undesirable citizens," until, at least, policy changes indicate otherwise.

The Sojourners: Late 1800s-1914

The first Sikh immigrants to the Pacific Coast in the 1820s were primarily sailors, students, and diplomats who came in small numbers. However, between 1902 and 1906, Punjabi Sikh immigration formed into recognizable numbers. The first immigrants were primarily Punjabi Sikh men associated with the British army or those working for the Imperial Work Force. Most of them had first settled in Shanghai or Hong Kong as part of the British work force going through the “Orient.” Many of these men initially left Punjab with the intent to return with money to pay off moneylenders and buy more land. The British annexation of Punjab in 1849 caused the economic condition of the Punjabi people to deteriorate. Increases in water rates, land revenue, and money lending made it very difficult for Punjabi farmers; farming was the main occupation in Punjab. They learned from American and Canadian travelers in Shanghai and Hong Kong that a worker could earn \$2.00 to \$2.50 daily, compared to the daily wage of \$0.30 in India (Gonzales, 1986). Hence, the first immigrants went from Shanghai and Hong Kong to Western Canada and then into Washington, Oregon, and California (La Brack, 1999; Gonzales, 1986). As stated before, from 1900 to 1906 there was an estimated immigration of 870 Asian Indians, of whom 85% identified themselves as Punjabi Sikh, 13% Muslim, and 2% Hindu (Gonzales, 1986). They were generally low skilled and uneducated agriculturalists from the rural areas of Panjab. The majority of these Panjabi immigrants came to settle in California because there was a high demand for agricultural workers and California was similar to Panjab in climate, space, and farming.

These immigrant men were quick to form labor gangs similar to those of Japanese immigrants. Based on their communal values, these gangs selected one of their members, usually the one who spoke the most English, as their leader and representative (La Brack, 1988 & Gonzales, 1986). These gangs essentially became small Punjabi families that in many ways resembled the joint family system that

these men had left behind in Punjab. As these gangs worked and pulled their money together, they started to organize agricultural and economic cooperatives for long-term investments. Initially they had small farm holdings in the Sacramento Valley, which then grew into larger ones. Generally, ownership was divided among five to ten Sikh men who worked their farms jointly and shared their profits. These Punjabi labor gangs were one of the reasons that Sikhs were viewed as “undesirable” U.S. citizens. They had different collective and communal ideals from those of American individuality.

Soon the Punjabi entrepreneurs were despised for their economic growth and were known as the “Hindu Invasion” or the “The Tide of Turbans” (Tiwana, 2002). White Americans formed their own community groups to lobby politicians to form legislation preventing this economic “takeover.” The spearheading group was the “Asiatic Exclusion League,” which contributed effectively to turning public opinion against Asian immigration (Tiwana, 2002). The California Board of Control submitted a report to Governor Stephens in 1920 entitled, “The Orientals: Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus,” in which it indicted the number of Asians in the United States had increased by 33.5%. This increase in Asian immigration was viewed by the state government as having a direct correlation with the labor immigrants “becoming landowners and threatening the monopoly of the majority group.” Legislation such as The Immigration Act of 1917 was passed as an attempt to mollify American fears and displayed the animosity and jealousy that existed within the Self/Other dichotomy. Furthermore, the California Alien Land Law of 1910 was enforced and later revised in 1920 to prevent the further economic expansion of this “Tide of Turbans.” This law prevented immigrants from owning and leasing their own land, which made it difficult for immigrant men who primarily farmed to survive.

The Ghadar Party

The term “Ghadar” means “revolt” or “mutiny.” The Ghadar movement was essentially a

diasporic movement to do away with British control over India. The Sikhs left Punjab in India in part because of their minority status, which brought with it discrimination. However, once in the United States, the Sikhs realized that there was no escaping discrimination; it was both in India under British rule and in the United States. The newly arrived immigrants saw how the Americans were able to uphold and benefit from the principles of the Declaration of Independence. The Punjabi Sikh immigrants wanted the same in India. This desire was essentially the impetus for the Ghadar movement, which began in 1913 and ended in 1915.

L. Har Dayal, a lecturer of Indian philosophy at Stanford University, and long-time social activist, founded the Ghadar Party. His ability to mobilize the Indian-American Diasporic population caused the British government to press the United States government to deport him. L. Har Dayal was arrested on March 23, 1914, but reached Switzerland via Turkey before deportation. He was an adamant supporter of publicly revealing the subservience of the United States administration to the British rule. Kartar Singh Sarabha, a Sikh from Punjab, joined the Ghadar Party in San Francisco in 1912 while he was a student at University of California, Berkeley. He returned to India in 1914 to fight for the country's independence and was hanged in 1916 at the age of nineteen (Tatla, 1999; Sibia, 2009; <http://www.panthic.org/>). The Ghadar movement was one of the first and strongest Sikh/Indian diasporic movements. It eventually collapsed because too many of its participants were arrested for conspiracy. Sir Michael O' Dawyer referred to the movement as "the most serious attempt to subvert British rule in India." However, the Ghadar movement was not only about achieving Indian freedom but also about the status of those living in the Indian Diaspora. Bruce La Brack (1999) writes, "they [the Ghadar Party] conflated the subservient role of India with their own minority status in America and keenly felt the inequality and inequity of their position in U.S. society." The Ghadar Party essentially formed the basis for South Asian political involvement in both the U.S. and India. However, much of this political

involvement following the Ghadar movement was centered in the American (I assume, and not British) East Coast and marginalized the majority of Sikh farmers in California, who had played a critical role in forming the foundation for South Asian political activism. The only Punjabi Sikh immigrant to move beyond this marginalization was Dilip Singh Saund, who, as a farmer in the El Centro area, became the first South Asian and Asian American to win a seat in the U.S. Congress in 1956; he served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. Despite Saund's success, La Brack (1999) asserts that "given their small numbers and disenfranchised status, it is not surprising that as a group South Asians never achieved much serious political influence in the power structure of that day [early to mid-20th century].

Termination of Asian Indian Immigration: 1915-1944

With the start of World War I all the way to the end of World War II, the flow of immigrants from India decreased substantially. For instance, from 1915 to 1929, only 1,646 Asian Indians were admitted into the United States, an average of 110 immigrants per year. However, from 1930-1944 (The Depression and World II), only 183 immigrants were admitted for an average of 12 immigrants per year. The Immigration Act of 1917 prevented Indian laborers from entering the United States. This legislation also contributed to the de-humanization of Asian Indians because fear of the "Hindu Invasion" or "The Tide of Turbans" stripped many of the immigrant men of their ability to maintain a living in California through agricultural work. However, many Sikh pioneers tried to overcome this barrier by marrying women who were U.S. citizens and putting their farming businesses into their wives' names. In an effort to prevent this "manipulation" of the U.S. system, The Cable Act of 1922 was passed and ultimately stripped white women of their U.S. citizenship if they married these Other "brown" men. Essentially, the United States did not have a place for the representation of the space "in-between" these marriages. Stripping white women of their U.S. citizenship prevented the dilution of

America's white-American Self with a brown Other.

Fearing that more Indian immigrants would add to the “economic threat,” the Immigration Law of 1924 prevented recent immigrants from retrieving family members. I argue that this immigration law exemplifies how the U.S. seems to have always blamed its problems on an “external” threat or Other in an effort to give the Self a sense of security during a time of crisis. This is evident when examining the immigrant legislation of World War I and the Depression. The American people's sense of security was maintained by showing how the U.S. could win the “economic war” waged by these new immigrants within the United States. There was a constant need to maintain an American Self and an Immigrant Other. This need prevented the U.S. from allowing for the representation of the hyphenated identity, i.e., the Sikh-American. In order to maintain a sense of security they tried to structurally prevent the Sikh-American identity from gaining a strong root. This division was also necessary during times of war when a high sense of patriotism was needed to create unity and solidarity. The best way to re-insure the Self remained very patriotic was to compare or define itself against an Other who was the polar opposite of American patriotism, both physically and culturally. The Sikh pioneers were already viewed as being “inassimilable” and therefore “undesirable citizens.” In 1910, a Sikh was denied U.S. citizenship because he would not drop his turban while being sworn in. The requirement for belonging to the U.S. was based on the physical appearance of a clean-shaven, white man. Anyone who looked different was not an American and labeled as the Other. The immigration legislation during World War I clearly defined who the Other was and waged a war against the Other with the law as its primary weapon. This war was waged to convince the Self that if it maintained a high sense of American patriotism, America could win the war abroad as it was waging the “immigrant/economic war” or “Hindu Invasion” at home.

The irony within this “war strategy” is that while only a clearly defined American Self could

protect the U.S. State (both at home and abroad), Sikhs, with their long hair and turbans, were permitted to join the U.S. army and fight in World War I, unlike in the contemporary American military. The blurring of the boundaries, as mentioned above, between the American Self and Other, were the foundation for the United States Supreme Court Case *The United States versus Bhagat Singh Thind* in 1923. Bhagat Singh Thind, a Panjabi immigrant from 1913 and a veteran of World War I, was fighting to maintain the U.S. citizenship he received following an honorable discharge in 1918 from the U.S. Army.

The fundamental issue in this case was race. The revised Naturalization Act granted U.S. Citizenship only to “aliens being free white persons and to aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent.” Interestingly, according to this piece of legislation, the bi-polarity of white and black defined being an American, whereas, usually the black Other was used by the white Self to define what was not the white Self. Essentially, the black Other was being manipulated to help the white Self win this war against a new brown immigrant that threatened the definitions of the white American Self by being the space “in-between” the U.S. color dichotomy of citizenship.

The U.S. argued that Thind was not a white person; therefore, he was not lawfully entitled to naturalization. However, Thind argued that, by tracing his ancestry to the Aryan/Caucasian race, he was a white person; therefore, he was entitled to maintain his citizenship. Panjab, a northwestern state in India, had been a continual site of conquering by the Aryan race. The Supreme Court determined in 1923 that, “Hindus are aliens ineligible to citizenship” because the term “Aryan” has to do with linguistics and not physical characteristics. The resemblance in language indicated a common linguistic root in a remotely ancient soil, but was altogether inadequate to prove common racial origin with whites because “it is a matter of familiar observation and knowledge that the physical group characteristics of the Hindus render them readily distinguishable from the various groups of persons in this country

commonly recognized as white.” In essence, the blurring of boundaries between the American [i.e. white man of the Judeo-Christian ancestry] Self and the brown Other revealed how the U.S. was more concerned with maintaining a sense of security during the World War I era.

Thind’s case exemplifies how the space “in-between” was acknowledged only to maintain security. This is evident when Bhagat Singh Thind was allowed to wear an American military uniform and a turban during war. However, he was denied U.S. citizenship when the U.S. no longer needed his fighting ability. The hyphen was given a voice only if it defended the American identity, not when it asked to be recognized *as* an American.

Second Wave of Immigration: 1945-1965

This period in immigration saw a dramatic increase of Asian Indians in the U.S., primarily of Sikhs, from 12 immigrants per year in the previous period to 303 immigrants per year. This increase was due, in large part, to the passage of The Luce-Cellar Act of 1946, which opened the “barred” zone and granted naturalization rights to Asian Indians. This change in U.S. immigration policies was partially in response to the role that the Indian government played in assisting the United States in its efforts to defeat Japan during World War II. No longer did it seem as though the immigrants were a threat. Now they were allies. This wave of immigration was still characterized by a primarily agriculturally based population, which was able to add to the flourishing of the previous immigrant families. Gonzalez (1986) writes that the social isolation and rejection of Sikhs from 1915-1944 created “cultural islands” that developed into agricultural areas in California which then formed the basis of Sikh society “that began to flourish after World War II” when more Asian Indian’s immigrated. The new immigrants looked for strong communal communities that resembled those they left in Panjab. The “cultural islands” were communities where the family and kinship networks from Panjab were utilized

to enhance family business in agriculture, and which resembled those of joint family farming in India.

The increase in immigration allowed Punjabi Sikh men not only to bring their immediate families of origin to the United States, but also their Punjabi Sikh wives. The “barred” period of the early 1900s had led many Punjabi men to marry Mexican women because of miscegenation laws (Leonard, 1992). These laws only allowed “brown” men to marry “brown” women. Their children were generally ‘lost’ to Sikh culture, as most adopted the traditions and customs of their Mexican-American mothers. When discussing hyphenated identities, Kamala Visweswaran (1994) writes, “Not all identities are equally hybrid, for some have little choice about the political processes determining their hybridization.” American societal and community ties were more apt for the Punjabi Mexican children to adopt a

Mexican-American way of life because Mexican-Americans had been in the United States longer and developed a stronger presence.

With an influx of immigration of Sikh families and wives, the “cultural islands” started to build *Gurdwaras*, house of worship for Sikhs, which were predominately converted Christian churches. Dr. I.J. Singh believes that Sikhs sought to use Gurdwaras to replicate the sights and smells of home. These Gurdwaras allowed the Sikh immigrants to maintain a strong relationship with their Sikh identity in America. Gurdwaras were more than just a focal site of worship but a “home away from home” for Sikhs. Gurdwaras were a place where the community’s concerns and tensions as well as general socializing took place. The Gurdwaras were “cultural islands,” a sort of a new home for those who could never be at “home.”

The Third Wave of Immigration: 1966-1981

In contrast to the previous waves of immigration, a younger and more professional class of Asian Indians characterized the “third” wave. These immigrants were generally from urbanized areas and could read, write, and speak English. Furthermore, there was an increase in transnational Indian immigrants, mostly from artisan backgrounds, fleeing political prosecution from East Africa and Afghanistan during the 1970s. This artisan group of Sikhs had considerable experience in business and settled down in urban cities such as New York, San Jose, Washington D.C., Houston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. However, this influx in immigration to urban areas did not create ethnic clusters or identifiable residential areas like China Towns. It contributed, instead, to the development of small communities such as “Little India” in Artesia, Jackson Heights in Queens, and Devon Avenue in Chicago. This wave of immigration accounted for half to two-thirds of Asian Indians now settled in the United States, with a yearly rate of 14,376 immigrants per year between 1966-1981. However, behind this shadow was a considerable population of agricultural workers that was also immigrating to the United States through family reunification.

Contemporary Immigration: 1982 - Present

The political upheavals in Punjab during the 1980s caused many immigrants (primarily from rural areas) to request political asylum or refugee status in the United States. The movement for Khalistan in Punjab, India was a secessionist one that developed for a number of reasons. There were many unkept promises made to Sikhs and they grew tired of being treated as second-class citizens in a country for which they had given their lives to defend. Patwant Singh (1999) writes, “the following facts should throw light on Sikhs’ heroic role in the independence struggle [from the British]. ‘Out of 2,175 Indian martyrs for freedom, 1, 557, or 75

percent, were Sikhs. Out of 2,646 Indians sent to the Andamans for life imprisonment, 2,147, or 80 percent, were Sikhs. Out of 127 Indians who were hanged, 92, or 80 percent, were Sikhs. Out of 20,000 who joined the Indian National Army under Subhas Bose, 12,000, or 60 percent, were Sikhs. And the Sikhs comprise only 2 percent of India's total population" (235). Thus, in 1986, following Indira Gandhi's attack on the Haramdir Sahib (Golden Temple), the Sikhs' spiritual and political center (a Sarbat Khalsa or communal convening of approximately 500,000 to 1 million Sikhs) came together outside of the Akal Takht and declared the existence of "Khalistan." This was a declaration for Sikh statehood and movement for independence from India (Tatla, 1999).

The Sikh Diaspora supported the movement through financial donations and political activism. For instance, there was considerable Sikh leadership, which met and approached forums like the United Nations. In a sense it was a way of retaining active ties to their "homeland." Early Asian Indian immigrants had kept considerable ties to Punjab by helping to build schools and community centers in their home villages. However, the politics of new rural immigrants fleeing persecution collided with that of most urban immigrants of the 1960s. Gurinder Singh Mann (2000) writes, "Sikhs from urban backgrounds in the Punjab tend to stress the importance of devotional activity, while those from rural backgrounds are interested in the political agenda as well." I would assert that division was not always such a clear delineation, with people from either background supporting the movement or not. The combination of devotional activities and politics caused the rural immigrants to push for orthodox what? an Sikhi regulated from the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.), the premier Sikh organization in Panjab, invested with the power to maintain control of all Gurdwaras in India.

The urban immigrants, however, wanted to contribute to the decision-making taking place in Punjab, rather than merely abiding by it. This distinction led to the court case in Virginia, *The Sikh*

Foundation of Virginia versus Narinder Singh in 1993. Narinder Singh argued that the S.G.P.C. was the authority that regulated all aspects of Sikh communal life and should setup all Gurdwaras in the United States. He viewed the “Sikh community overseas [as] a satellite of the parent community in Panjab.” The administrators of the Fairfax Gurdwara in Virginia recognized the authority of the S.G.P.C., and instead of taking orders, wanted to contribute to the decision-making. Through their strong leadership, the Sikh-Americans mobilized resources and political support from international organizations for the Khalistani movement in Panjab.

Despite the violent outrages and desire to silence Sikh voices in Punjab, India, Sikhs became “extremely sensitive to the need to help the American public understand Sikh beliefs and its community’s history” (Mann, 2000). The Sikh community, particularly in New York, instituted Sikh Day parades and cooperated with other religious organizations to put forth interfaith activities. Furthermore, the teaching of Sikhi and Panjabi languages was inaugurated in American universities. Columbia University emerged as the center of public information on Sikh issues. Furthermore, there arose a scholarship of Sikh theology and Diaspora located in the United States.

Despite these efforts to educate the population about Sikhi, the tragic events of September 11th revealed that dominant U.S. culture still envisioned India as a monolithic culture instead of a mosaic of diversity. There is more to Indian culture than *mehendi*, *curry*, *kurta*, and the *sitar*. There is a diversity of religious and cultural practices. However, this ignorance about India became a basis for violent discrimination against Sikhs following the attacks. The thinking resembled something like, “they must be from Afghanistan and Muslim because of their beards and turbans, therefore, they are *terrorists*.” Gurinder Singh Mann (2000) writes, “Sikhs have been a minority all through their history and have always faced these problems.” Regardless of parades, the right to citizenship or a massive campaign in the late 1980s and early 1990s to educate the American population on Sikhi, symbols of religious belief

were mistaken for terror and destruction. The murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner in Mesa, Arizona, became a manifestation of American stereotypes. (*They own gas stations and are terrorists.*) A massive movement by the Sikh community began to fight against these stereotypes while not discriminating against Arab and Muslim Americans, although initially there were Sikh campaigns about not being Muslims. This movement displayed how Sikhi, in its early history, was a leader in practicing *E Pluribus Unum*, even though the United States prided itself on it. Organizations such as the Sikh-American Association and The Sikh Coalition met with American President George W. Bush and vocalized their concerns to Indian Prime Minister Vajypee. Upon the signing of Resolution 74/255, President Bush said, “Today, we take an essential step in ... protecting the constitutional rights of all Americans.” Other organizations such as SALDEF (Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund), United Sikhs, Sikh Research Institute, and Ensaaf, have also played a role in raising awareness of the Sikh-American experience.

Contemporary Relationship Between the Punjabi Sikh Diaspora and Punjab

The contemporary relationship between the Punjabi Sikh Diaspora and communities in Punjab as well as India has been built on a foundation of much hostility. The “arrogance” of “vilyati” (non-resident Indian/Punjabi) Sikhs about their economic success, and complaints of Punjabi “backwardness,” particularly during their trips back home, created friction. In addition, political movements and social issues of runaway grooms helped fuel hostile relations between the two communities. Since the 1990s, though, there has been steady improvement. Thandi (2000) writes:

“Until recently, the Indian authorities never saw their Diaspora communities in a positive light. If anything, they were often regarded as a thorn in the side as many

of these communities and the organizations that represented them were very critical of India's domestic, foreign, economic, and political policies. Many migrants were also perceived in wholly negative terms, as part of an unfortunate "brain drain" over which India was powerless to act. At other times, these migrants were perceived as exiles that should somehow feel sorry for having jumped ship. These patronizing and arrogant attitudes towards NRIs [Non-Resident Indians] have now begun to change." (217)

The relationship between both communities was influenced heavily by the secessionist movement that promoted the establishment of an independent Khalistan. This movement was an effort to have Punjab secede from India and become a separate Sikh state. Sikhs believed that India had failed to fulfill the promises it made during the Independence movement to protect Punjabi farmers' water rights and civil rights as a minority group in India. Hence, while the Khalistani movement was funded by the Punjabi Sikh Diaspora, the bulk of the turmoil, fighting, and bloodshed was suffered by those in Panjab. Some segments of the Punjabi Sikh population in Punjab and abroad became closer, while others developed antagonistic relationships. During the Khalistani movement and following the violent crushing of the movement by the Indian state in the early 1990s, the numbers of Punjabi Sikhs immigrating to North America increased. Many arrived as refugees fleeing for their and their families' safety. Many young Punjabi Sikh men and women were disappearing and the Indian government was threatening their lives.

Following the decline in violence in the 1990s, Punjabi families felt safer visiting relatives in Punjab. Interestingly, economic investment in the region progressed much slower than social integration did. Among the Diaspora, hesitancy to invest was based on a strong understanding of the politics, corruption, and bureaucracy crippling the Punjabi economic and

governmental systems. Furthermore, NRIs had grown accustomed to “easier” and more “just” North American and European systems compared to the one in which they lived before.

However, seeing advertisements on Indian satellite television stations available in Punjabi Sikh homes across North America and Europe promoting investment deals in terms of residential communities, savings accounts, and bonds became increasingly common.

The remittances sent by Punjabi Sikhs to Punjab had huge impacts on their home villages, with schools and colleges getting built, underground sewer systems getting installed, and Gurdwaras getting constructed. Furthermore, this newfound economic affluence based on the remittances, and “fewer mouths” eating from single-family landholdings in Panjab (i.e. one brother and his family were settled abroad, versus two brothers settled in Punjab and sharing family wealth) allowed Punjabi Sikhs in Punjab to increase their properties, enter new business ventures, and install “luxury” items, such as air conditioning units and satellite dishes. In recent years, economic liberalization policies in India, and the granting of the near equivalency of citizenship through issuing a card for Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) has made it easier for the Diaspora to forge global economic links to match the strength of the “emotional and sentimental” ties.

The contemporary Californian Punjabi Sikh community ranges across a spectrum of professions, from factory laborers and small business owners, to professionals and venture capitalists. In urban areas, there are higher concentrations of professionals, although working-class families are widely represented among taxicab drivers, custodial staff, and office workers. In rural areas, working class families are more predominant and are often employed as truck drivers, factory laborers, nurses, and postal workers. In these areas, it is also common for Punjabi individuals to become small business owners, doctors, and engineers. Since Punjabi immigrants

enter the U.S. on a diverse range of visas - family reunification, marriage, and the H-1B (technical professional) – there is great variation in the educational background and occupational patterns of Punjabi Sikhs, particularly in California (McMahon, 2001).

Many of the Punjabi Sikh immigrants who come to the U.S. based on family reunification and/or marriage status have graduate degrees, but do not have direct access to jobs meeting their skill levels. Many employers believe that their programs of study in India do not meet American standards. Hence, these immigrants generally enter working class occupations, such as truck and taxi cab-driving, entry-level nursing, lab assisting, factory laboring, and convenience store operating. Some also attend local Adult Education programs through Adult Schools, City Colleges, and local universities. Generally, those attending Adult Education programs also have part-time or full-time jobs.

This chapter contextualizes the religious and ethnic histories of Punjabi Sikhs and their migration abroad, specifically to the United States. Moreover, this review illuminates the diversity within the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in California. This discussion is important for comprehending the background of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study and how it has influenced communal social dynamics and the community's relationship with American systems, particularly the development of human and social capital. Moreover, this review provides insight into transnational relationships which affect the educational perceptions of the immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and children I studied. All of these social dynamics and histories, ultimately, influenced the type of educational messages that were developed and interpreted by the research participants. These particular messages will be investigated in following chapters.

CHAPTER 6: IMMIGRANT PUNJABI SIKH WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN CALIFORNIA - VOICES FROM WITHIN

Introduction

It is important to study what the immigrant experiences of the Punjabi Sikh mothers were in this study before a case may be made about how immigrant parental participation was grounded in using lessons from their immigrant experience as a method for transmission of social values to their children concerning the importance of attaining an education. These experiences were embedded within the character development that immigrant mothers modeled to their children throughout the immigrant journey. This modeling was then leveraged into educational messaging that conveyed high family expectations regarding educational attainment as a familial goal attained through individual children's academic achievement. Furthermore, documentation of the mothers' experiences of communicating their wisdom to their children as a set of life lessons provides foundational knowledge that is necessary for comprehending the ways by which the children of those mothers acquired the differing kinds of capital outlined in the "community cultural wealth" model.

The immigrant experiences of Punjabi Sikh women in this study took place during three periods of migration to California (1965-1981; 1982-1990; 1991-2000). These experiences influenced their beliefs about the value of education in America. From the points of view of the mothers I studied, education is not simply the acquisition of a degree, but it is a vehicle for better understanding and managing life circumstances. The development of these beliefs may be traced through the mothers' reasons for migration, their initial impressions of the United States, their roles in family decision-making, their experiences with familial substance abuse and domestic

violence, their challenges with learning to use the English language, and their experiences in navigating the American workforce.

A major finding in this study was that educational and social class levels influenced the resources these women had to manage their new lives in the United States. However, they did not create large differences in the kinds of characteristics these women enhanced, such as resiliency, courage, and strength, all of which they used while reestablishing themselves and their families. The manner in which these women expressed their beliefs in my interviews with them, the examples that they highlighted, and the obstacles they said that they encountered, varied across education and class, but did not inhibit their resiliency.

One of the main goals of this chapter is to redefine the common depiction of immigrant South Asian women, particularly those of Punjabi Sikh background, as passive victims of their traditions and socioeconomic class (Bhachu, 1999). This counter-narrative focuses on how the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women were nested in agency -- in their courage, resilience, and faith. By exploring the experiences that reinforced these characteristics in these women's lives, we can better understand how they nurtured their children to have the same characteristics, all of which were necessary in the pursuit of higher education. This provides insight into the processes by which social values were transmitted between generations through the mothers' leveraging of their own immigrant experiences in advising and supporting their children concerning tactics for persisting and succeeding in American schools.

It is important to study what the immigrant experiences of Punjabi Sikh mothers were in this study before a case could be made on how immigrant parental participation is grounded in using lessons from the immigrant experience as a method for transmission of social values concerning the importance of attaining an education. These experiences are embedded within

the character development that immigrant mothers modeled to their children throughout the immigrant journey. This modeling was then leveraged into educational messaging that conveyed high family expectations regarding educational attainment as a familial goal attained through individual children's academic achievement. Furthermore, the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study creates foundational knowledge necessary for comprehending how children of immigrants acquire different kinds of capital outlined in the "Community Cultural Wealth" model.

The immigrant experiences of Punjabi Sikh women in this study spread across three periods of migration to California (1965-1981; 1982-1990; 1991-2000). These experiences have influenced their beliefs about the value of education in America. Education does not simply involve the earning of a degree; instead, it represents a better understanding and managing of various life circumstances. The development of these beliefs may be traced through their reasons for migration, initial impressions of the United States, roles in decision-making, experiences with familial substance abuse and domestic violence, challenges with the English language, and navigation of American workforce.

A major finding in this study was that educational and social class levels influenced the resources the women had to manage their new lives in the United States. However, they did not create major differences in the characteristics they exemplified while reestablishing themselves and their families. The manner in which these women expressed their beliefs, the examples that they highlighted, and the obstacles they encountered, all varied across education and class, but did not necessarily create a difference in how emotionally resilient they were.

One of the main goals of this chapter is to redefine the common depiction of immigrant South Asian women, particularly those of Punjabi Sikh background, as victims of their traditions

and socioeconomic class (Bhachu, 1999). This counter-narrative focuses on how the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women were nested in courage, resilience, and faith. By exploring the experiences that reinforced these characteristics in their lives, we can better understand how they nurtured their children to have the same characteristics, which were necessary in the pursuit of higher education. Ultimately, they give insight into the process of how social values are transmitted between generations by leveraging immigrant experiences.

Reasons For Migration

Immigrants often uproot themselves from their home countries and embrace an adopted land because of interrelated social, economic, and personal challenges. For example, corrupt governmental systems leave very little room for upward social and economic mobility based on merit, which strain familial relationships and stampede upon individual hopes and dreams for a better future. Thus, in a community where arranged marriage is a common practice, many Punjabi Sikh women shared in this study that they migrated as dependent wives in order to have access to economic opportunities that would help soothe various social and personal issues. For many, marriage was an avenue for (upward) mobility. This does not apply simply to their personal mobility, but also to that of their natal families and future children. Some of these women were aware of the struggles they would encounter on the path to achieving the “American Dream” whereas others only saw a dreamland. Despite the different visions these women had for America, they all, in their own way, adopted America as their “country” in an effort to make it a home for their children. The common threads of courage, resilience, and faith helped each of these women move from the journey of what America would be to what it has become.

Take, for example, the story of Ravinder Kaur, the mother of Sandra Kaur. She immigrated to America in the 1970s. Her story is the most distinctive in terms of its “dependent immigrant status” in this study. Her qualifications as a medical professional were her passport to America. Technically, one could say her husband was “dependent” upon her to migrate to the United States. However, Ravinder’s parents refused to allow her to migrate as a single woman and marriage became the only route for her to leave for the United States. In the narrative vignette below, she discusses the frustration of not being able to migrate to the United States alone.

As Ravinder and I casually sat on white couches in the formal living room, she reminded me how an “educated” woman, particularly during her early years, was at the mercy of her family to reap the benefits of her own hard work. She explained with grounded confidence how she had attained her medical professional credentials despite her economically disadvantaged upbringing in rural Punjab, India. As she moved the conversation to how she migrated to the United States, her voice slowly, but seamlessly, became slightly frustrated with an undercurrent of complete acceptance of her situation. Ravinder remembered, “One time I asked my family that my class fellows are planning to go there [United States]. Being single and being an Indian girl, that was a question. Can I even apply for a passport? They did not want me to.”

Thus, Ravinder’s situation showed how her migration was always rooted in notions of family. She was both constrained and propelled by this social dynamic. Her family refused to let her go to America alone. However, by marrying her husband with the hopes of creating another “family” she was to migrate. Thus, the concept of family constrained her desire to migrate and also became the catalyst for her move.

Ravinder’s individual perseverance and hard work propelled her into a successful career as a medical professional, but it was her husband’s motivation to go abroad that eventually propelled her to walk out of the doors of India into those of the United States. Ravinder’s husband married her primarily because she was a ticket to the United States.

Ravinder said: *“They try to make our marriage arrangement before. They didn't agree. But when he find out that I'm a medical professional, he is the one that approach my family that (he)I want to marry (me)her so we can go out.”*

Ravinder's natal family refused to allow her to migrate as a single female because they feared her “izzat” [honor] would be tarnished. Also, despite the responsibility, independence, and perseverance she displayed while getting her education, Ravinder's family wondered how she would manage to navigate a new country on her own. She recalled a conversation with her uncle as she began to pursue a career in the medical field, which took her outside of the home.

She remembered him saying: “If you want to go to school you can go however much. If I ever hear anything about your character -- you are running away, you are missing the school -- I will kill you. [She added] And he wouldn't kill me. That is the way that he gave me the advice that there are a lot of things that you can do wrong if you don't watch it. A lot of people can misguide you if you don't watch it. That was in my brain. And things can go wrong.

Thus, there was an assumption from the beginning that Ravinder's “izzat” [honor], as a single woman in the medical field, would be at risk if she went out of the home. The fear was not only that she would do something wrong, but also that others would hurt her. Therefore, Ravinder's family was responsible for protecting her. Until someone else took that responsibility, such as a husband, she could not go alone. Marriage became a “safer” route. Thus, it was Ravinder's “izzat” that made her a dependent in her migration journey and not immigration classifications or economic reliance. Interestingly, Ravinder traveled alone to the United States after getting married and initially navigated various institutions and systems without her husband.

Ultimately, Ravinder arrived in her “dreamland” America. It was an opportunity for her to live up to her potential as a medical professional. India's corrupt system, which she hoped to leave behind once in America, was a constant obstacle to her professional success. Ravinder remembered how, in India, she had out-scored all the other fellow medical professional students

on rigorous and prestigious tests, but was given second-place because another student had better social connections. It was these kinds of “connections” that she feared would hinder her professional success. India’s corrupt system was maneuvered with economic and social resources, which Ravinder was still acquiring considering her less advantaged background. Thus, migrating to America would help her build these resources for her family, while utilizing her talent. She had cultivated that talent honestly—through hard work and practice.

Ravinder said: *“I wasn’t born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I always thought this would be a better lifestyle than what I came from. I can improve my family’s life. And that could improve all my family. They are well and hard-working and they are living good. It [America] is my dreamland. I achieved what I want to. My mother lived here for 20 years and she thought that this is heaven because she has everything that she ever wanted.”*

Ravinder would later use this same story about not being born with a silver-spoon in her mouth in educational messages for her children. She reminded them of the potential in achieving their dreams, despite the non-utopian path people, particularly immigrants, had to follow. There are many impediments and struggles, she’d say, but often a “dream” is simply having some progress in your life.

In contrast, Mohinder Kaur wanted to immigrate to America primarily for social concerns, although she grew up in a privileged and highly educated home and attended a well-known private boarding school. Her desired parenting style and sense of family were the main reasons why she wanted to migrate. Economic goals were the route to achieving these social desires.

Mohinder married a man who traveled extensively for his career. She did not wish for her daughter, Manmeet, to attend boarding school. She wanted the family to be together physically, emotionally, and socially. The only way to prevent her family from being divided was to encourage her husband to migrate abroad and set up a business.

Mohinder said: *“Because you know I did not want Manmeet to be in the boarding house. My husband was traveling and I could stay with him and Manmeet could stay, but Manmeet was five. I did not want to put her in the boarding house. I wanted my husband to just settle down with some business or something. And in India there was a lot of fights going on. We could not start a business. For Sikhs it was very rough. There was more discrimination there for the Sikhs than here [America]. At that time it was not an easy situation. So we just wanted to come abroad.”*

The importance of maintaining strong family ties and being intimately involved in the rearing of her children fueled Mohinder’s desire to go abroad. Her family was financially well-off in India, but in order to have the family she wanted, Mohinder needed her husband to develop a new career that required less traveling and more time with family. The political situation in India was not favorable for Sikhs. Following the tragic events of 1984, India became very hostile towards Sikhs. It was not an encouraging environment for Sikhs to develop businesses. Thus, the only option was to settle abroad.

Prabhjot Kaur’s desires to settle in North America were developed through her interactions with relatives who had left Punjab for America and Canada. Their success inspired Prabhjot to want the same for her future. She says, “I actually wanted to come to America or Canada. My entire family is in America and Canada. When they came to visit us we also felt a desire to come from a country like that.” Thus, images of what economic success looked like abroad inspired Prabhjot’s longing to settle in North America, rather than solely helping her family. However, the concept of “family” would be the route to immigrating abroad.

For Prabhjot, a woman who did not have a high formal education, the common option to settle abroad was to marry a man who already lived in North America.

Rashminder, her daughter, said: *“When my mom was going to get married in India, she always wanted to come to America. My grandma would say, that a “pandit” [fortune teller] came to our house and they asked him if she would be able to go abroad. Not even Canada, she wanted to go to America. The pandit said whatever you try you will not be able to go. My mom’s “Chachi’s” [paternal*

uncle's wife] dad was like this is so ridiculous. I can't believe you guys believe in him. Marriage will happen, let me see how she doesn't go. They knew my Daddy and they made the arrangement."

Hence, through marriage, Prabhjot came to America to fulfill her dream. Although life was not easy at first, she admired the way American society was built. She could work hard and create physical things that represented her economic success. Although life in America showed her that there were limitations to how far she, an immigrant woman of color, could go within the American system, she still found that it was possible to achieve more here in America than in Punjab. The barriers of corruption and its necessary social networks [i.e. relationships with people in power] did not play as strong of a role in American society as they did in Punjab, India.

Impressions of United States

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh women's experiences in this study have changed across the different migration experiences. This section will elaborate on those differences in expectations and societal structures. The social and economic changes in India over the past 25 years, along with stronger transnational ties between Punjab (India) and its diaspora, have influenced the types of expectations women have as immigrants in the United States (thereby influencing their initial impressions).

The immigrant women in this study were asked to describe their initial impressions of the United States the moment after they landed in America. The purpose of this section in the interview was to better understand how their experiences and impressions of the United States evolved during their immigrant journey. How did they perceive the United States initially and in what ways did this impression stay the same or change over years of engagement with American society? The immigrant women in this study consistently remembered their first impressions of

the United States with fondness. This fondness was not always the result of positive memories, but of being able to reflect upon their first experiences “so long ago” in the United States. For many of the women, this was the first time they had been asked to reflect on their experiences for an extended amount of time or had been able to allocate such time for reflection out of their busy work and family schedules. Thus, the interview was not a “passing conversation” but an exercise in deep reflection.

The immigrant Punjabi Sikh women studied spoke of the general cleanliness and organization of cities and streets. Smooth roads and the “lack of poverty” stood in contrast to the everyday experiences in Punjab, India. It was commonplace to see impoverished street beggars at every corner of the city streets in India. The women in this study often noted that after the initial euphoria of being in the United States wore off, they missed with great intensity their social lives in Punjab, India. How intensely each woman felt this emotion varied upon the types of social support systems, such as relatives and friends, to which she had access upon arrival. In addition, the nature of the emotional connection these women had with their social support systems also influenced strongly how intensely they yearned for their former social lives in Punjab, India.

Most interestingly, Navdeep Kaur and Ravinder Kaur reflected on their first impressions through comparison with more recent immigrants. As immigrants from the 1965-1981 time period, they both noted drastic differences in not only California’s landscape, but also the expectations women had when first coming to America. Navdeep shared that the general impression many Punjabis had of the United States over 35 years ago was similar to that of the “wild-wild west” construct, a densely populated remote land of opportunity ruled by bandits, in other words. Canada was the more well-known and “civilized” nation. Navdeep, who migrated

in the early 1970s, said, "... my father had two cousins and they came to America back in the 50s or something like that, but they never went back. So it was kind of a scary thing because whoever goes to America they don't come back." In addition, the systems of global communication were not as sophisticated or commonplace as they are today. Thus, the expectations women had were not lined with desires of immediate economic success or social freedom.

Navdeep smiled and took a small but deep breath as I asked her, "Do you see any differences with women who come now?" Navdeep began, in grammatically correct English with a very slight accent, "Ah yes. As I told you, they have bigger dreams. Even back in Punjab now, they have more shops, more stores, more things. So when they have heard a lot more about America that we did not hear. So they have bigger dreams when they come over here. If they don't get to do things themselves they get frustrated and it is very disappointing for them, very disappointing."

Navdeep developed this insight through her experiences with families and friends who had welcomed new brides from India into their families. Navdeep's insight also highlighted how economic growth and increased transnational relationships between the United States and India influenced the expectations of newly arrived immigrant Punjabi Sikh women. "Bigger dreams" of quick money and comfort also lead to more frustration and disappointment.

Ravinder highlighted how increased global communication allowed more recent immigrants to have more knowledge about how to work within American systems. Ravinder said, "Even people coming from India have not passed high school yet, they know more tricks than we do. They will say no this can be done this way." Navdeep and Ravinder shared how the socio-economic context of their migration period altered what they expected of America at first sight.

Furthermore, Navdeep and Ravinder's statements highlighted how global changes influenced expectations and reactions to migration. New immigrants, in many respects, are the

benefactors of knowledge garnered by older immigrants through trial and error. Older immigrants tended to figure out how to navigate American systems as they went through them. Hence, many new immigrants know things on arrival in the United States that took older immigrants over ten years to learn. This discrepancy was apparent in the women interviewed in this study. The older immigrant women tended to speak about struggles as they encountered them and spoke little of their expectations of what they would have in the United States. In contrast, newer immigrants were more aware of the difficulties and had clearer expectations. These differences influenced the type of social networks, consisting of material and moral resources, available for immigrants during each migration period. This then influenced the type of educational messages conveyed to the children, which then impacted the kinds of social capital garnered by the children of immigrants, such as navigational capital (Yosso, 2005).

Decision-Making

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh women's experiences with decision-making at home varied across migration periods in this study. Different educational backgrounds influenced decision-making power, but was not a consistent factor. The most influential factors were: 1) the need for immigrant women to take on large decision-making roles (i.e. substance abuse in family, familial mental health issues, and better knowledge of American systems) and 2) if the decision-making role was accepted or encouraged by husbands. Across the varied social contexts of immigrant women's lives in this study, these factors were most relevant in influencing decision-making power. The variation in these experiences will be highlighted throughout this section. Most importantly, the ways immigrant women participated in decision-making highlighted their

courage, resilience, and faith, thereby serving as examples for their children on how to navigate the positive and negative experiences of schooling.

It is also important to note that particular social dynamics within American society and families also influenced the roles these women had in the decision-making process. In addition, the ways children participated in this process and supported their mothers' decision-making was influenced by these social dynamics. Most often husbands or fathers-in-law had major roles in the decision-making process; however, the nature of these roles varied across families. Also, mothers-in-law were rarely mentioned by research participants because 1) they were not living in the home or 2) their opinions were not dominant in issues related to "big" decisions, such as buying a house, car, furniture, or paying for children's expenses.

Navdeep, an older immigrant with a high-level of formal education, spoke of different "departmental" roles in decision-making. Women were the heads of the "home department" and men were assigned to business-making decisions. Anything related to the kids and taking care of them was regulated by the home department.

Navdeep said: *"... the ladies did not get involved in the men's work and they had their own decisions from the business point of view. As far as raising the kids, and taking care of them, that was the home department for the ladies. So that is why I think there was not much conflict."*

Navdeep also attributed less conflict around decision-making to the limited choices that existed for purchasing home goods during the first period of migration (1965-1981). There were only a couple of stores that existed in her California town. Thus, she believes the expectations were less.

Navdeep said: *"The needs were not that many at that time ... we did not buy this and that. At that time, the choices were not that much and you had the basic things."*

Although Navdeep spoke about different “departmental” roles of decision-making, she also highlighted that she and her husband would go grocery shopping together. Also, Navdeep would occasionally hold off on buying home goods, such as bed sheets, until he could be with her to make the decision. Although these decisions may easily be relegated to the “home department,” Navdeep and her husband participated in them jointly because in the beginning they only had one car. In addition, Navdeep made some “home department” decisions jointly with her husband out of respect for him. If he had a different preference, she wanted to take it into account, particularly since he would be paying for purchases.

In Tajwant Kaur’s household, all decisions were made jointly between her and her husband. However, her husband handled alone all financial issues. Her paychecks as a department store employee were given to her husband. She received a monthly allowance. Tajwant said she was content with this situation “because I think finances are a headache.” I would assert this contentment is also grounded in her husband’s desire to always incorporate Tajwant’s opinion into any financial decisions. Thus, she feels that her perspective is valued and needed. Signing checks and paying bills were technical details taken care of by her husband so she does not have to deal with that purported “headache.”

Tajwant said: “...[he] brought me over here to show me the house. We were wondering where to buy it. He kept my preference in the fore front when deciding on where to buy a house or what furniture to get. He liked a table. He would not buy it before asking me for my opinion. We do everything together.”

Thus, in Tajwant’s case, joint decision-making was not based on conducting financial transactions, but on the depth to which various opinions were taken into consideration when making a decision. It was not Tajwant’s access to money that determined her role in the

decision-making, but the weight that was given to her point of view when making a decision by her husband.

The dynamic of the “home department” and financial priorities intersecting during decision-making were also highlighted in how Tajwant and her husband determined which car to buy their teenage son for college.

Tajwant said: *“For example we have to get Yuvinder a car now. He [her husband] brought home a car one day. He thought let’s get him a small car. I did not like that car. I think if we are getting the child a car, let’s get him something nicer so it does not break down en route. If he is going to school, it should not break down. I said we need to get him a better car. He [her husband] said no problem and returned it.”*

Ravinder’s and her husband’s dynamic of making decisions was different than Tajwant’s and her husband’s. Although Tajwant and Ravinder both participated in the content of a decision, Ravinder’s husband was the main implementer. Also, he did not implement a decision until he wanted to.

Ravinder said: *“... it’s always his decision. It’s always man’s decision. Now we have been married so long I know exactly what he is thinking. I will tell him this the way things are, it will happen that way but not when I say it.”*

Thus, Ravinder was the main source of developing the content for a decision; however, her husband decided when it was the best time to enact a decision as well as how to conduct the financial transaction.

Throughout the aforementioned cases, education did not seem to be a determining factor in deciding how large of a role each woman had in decision-making. All three immigrant Punjabi Sikh women had a higher education than a Bachelor’s degree. Two had achieved Master’s Degrees in Punjab, India. Ravinder, a professional healthcare worker, had acquired a Bachelor’s of Science in the United States through an accredited California-based four-year university. Thus, she had the equivalent of two Bachelor’s degrees. Also, class was not a

defining factor. All three women were currently of upper-middle class background. Rather, it was based on the expectations husbands and wives had around decision-making. This strengthened Bhachu's belief that earning wages did not lead to a reversal of roles for Sikh women, but affirmed their right to assert their opinions (Bhachu, 1988). This study shows that, similar to Bhachu's wages, higher levels of education also did not lead to role reversals. Furthermore, access to monetary resources for older Sikh women increased, in some ways, decision-making power, but did not necessarily change the sexual division of labor (Bhachu, 1988). In this study, level of education functioned similarly.

One factor that did appear to have a strong influence on an immigrant Punjabi Sikh woman's decision-making power, and in some ways also even led to role reversals, was substance abuse in her martial relationship. The person afflicted with the disease was her husband. An immigrant Punjabi Sikh woman's role in decision-making within this context centered largely around her own acceptance of how this disease impacted her martial relationship and her perseverance to move forward in the best interest of her children. Many of the women in this study were no longer concerned about their own happiness, but wanted to do the best they could for their children. The experiences of Prabhjot Kaur and Kulwant Kaur will be highlighted to display this very dynamic.

The general pattern of both women's decision-making roles was implementing the decision and most often conducting the financial transaction. However, they always made sure to get their husband's "haa" [yes]. Their children played a critical role in helping their mothers develop a decision that would receive their fathers' "stamp of approval."

Prabhjot responded in Punjabi on how she got her husband's buy-in. She said: "So then I can say you said yes, too. Rashminder said I needed a car. Then we thought yea she is going to college and we only have one car at home. Then we looked at our balance [income] if we could get it. First day they went and saw it.

The second day I went and saw it. Then they went and bought the car. Decision I take for whatever in the house and I just need to get his “yes.”

Although in this case Prabhjot’s husband went with his daughter to purchase the car, the final decision about purchasing the car was ultimately made by Prabhjot on the second trip. Essentially, Prabhjot’s husband fulfilled the technical detail of being with his daughter when the papers were signed and money was given to the car company. His engagement highlighted his role as her father and depicted his inclusion in a big family purchase. Prabhjot’s desire to gain her husband’s approval was critical for not only making him feel included in the decision-making process but also in ensuring that she had proof he agreed to this decision in case there were family arguments around the car-buying.

Prabhjot and Kulwant included their husbands in decision-making to ensure family cohesiveness, although their husbands were “absent” from day-to-day family matters because of their substance abuse issues. Because both women decided to accept their husbands’ alcoholism and were determined to do the best they could for their children, they took on the responsibility to maintain as much family cohesiveness as possible, particularly during “big” decision-making moments. From their perspective, a strategy for achieving this cohesiveness was to get their husbands’ approval. Some remnants of this dynamic of family decision-making remained even after the husbands/fathers had overcome their substance abuse problems.

Children’s engagement in decision-making was particularly strong as they got older and brought knowledge to the decision-making table. Mothers sought the support of their children in making decisions, particularly when their husbands were not as engaged in the process, because of the unique knowledge their children could contribute.

Kulwant said: *Beta¹⁰ my opinion was more. Somebody has to make decisions in the home. They can be someone's mother. They can be someone's father. One person has to get in the front. Now your uncle wants to make a decision with us. Before I used to make decisions with my children. I made decisions mostly with Gurinder. He is older and he always gave me good decisions. When your uncle didn't give me full feedback then I would turn to Gurinder. Now all of us come together and make decisions.*

Thus, as highlighted in Kulwant's and Gurinder's case, children often became a strong support system for their mothers in decision-making. This role helped them develop various kinds of capital as illuminated by the "Community Cultural Wealth model" (Yosso, 2005). Most often children developed familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005).

In Baljinder Kaur's case, she relied on her husband to make most decisions. She primarily gave her input when it came to issues concerning the children, particularly around schooling. It was during these decisions that she put in extra effort to convince her husband about making a particular decision that she believed would be beneficial for the children. Thus, she had more influence over the "home department" but not necessarily the purchasing of the home or running the business.

Baljinder said: *"... Most often his decision was right. But I just didn't have the confidence. I was just like a kid. What car he liked, we got. Wherever he wanted to move, we moved. He just told me. Sometimes, even if I did not want to go, I molded myself into going. If I did not like something, I would get hurt. It depends on your husband-wife life, how much of an equal standing your husband gives you."*

Although Baljinder had a Master's Degree from Punjab, India, she did not have the confidence to fully participate in decision-making. This highlights the reality that Sikh women's increased access to social capital (i.e. money and education) did not necessarily deconstruct patriarchal dynamics within relationships (Bhachu, 1988). In addition, her husband did not

¹⁰ Term of endearment for a child.

necessarily support equal decision-making in the home. Baljinder says this dynamic was similar to that of her natal home. Men always made the decisions and everyone else followed. However, after the passing of Baljinder's husband, she became the primary adult decision-maker. Her son, Parmveer, played a strong role in building her confidence to make these decisions. Moreover, her situation required her to make critical decisions. She had no other choice. Thus, Baljinder turned more to her son for support in making decisions after her husband passed away. Parmveer helped his mother gain a sense of independence before his father passed away, for example, by helping her learn how to use a debit card to purchase gas for her car. His support and input become even more critical when his father passed away.

Substance Abuse & Domestic Violence

Often women, particularly those who are immigrants, are portrayed as disempowered victims in discussions regarding domestic violence and substance abuse. During this research study, these three immigrant Punjabi Sikh women from different educational backgrounds, one a professional in the medical field with a Bachelor's of Science from an accredited American four-year university and the other two with high school educations or less from Punjab, India, all spoke candidly about their experiences with domestic violence and substance abuse. Other research participants alluded to these issues within their families. In this section, the experiences of the three women, who spoke about violence in their home, will be explored to highlight the resilience and strength they had to continue with their lives. They most often cited their children as their main sources of inspiration. It should be noted that none of these women divorced their husbands. One woman separated from her husband many times, but today they are still married and living together in their home along with their extended family.

The goal of this section is to move beyond defining immigrant Punjabi Sikh women as “victims” of violence, although their experiences have been victimizing and would be deemed so in a court of law, by highlighting their resiliency and agency. It is their resiliency and agency that they model for their children, which serve as part of their educational messaging. If we can see victims as agenetic, then we can move forward on developing solutions and providing social support that will best fit their needs. Also, not judging these women’s decisions to not leave their husbands allows this project to focus on the characteristics these women displayed to harness opportunities that allowed them to create new lives in America. Highlighting the resilience, strength, and courage they had to accept hard conditions and move forward in the best way they could shows that experiences can be victimizing, but need not necessarily lead to victimhood.

Prabhjot spoke about her husband’s alcoholism and domestic violence. During the interview she conveyed dislike for this abuse but also the necessity to never give up.

Prabhjot: *One problem was that your Uncle would drink and then hit. I did not like. Otherwise, working in America was not hard. I liked work. I liked the house, and the job. I liked working in the factory. I thought I would never get a job like it. I quit. Then started working with a federal agency. I thought I would never have a job like it. Now I am self-employed at home and I think I would never get a job like it.*

Ravneet: *There is one thing, Auntie; you never gave up.*

Prabhjot: *Yea.*

Prabhjot’s resilience to move forward by being the primary breadwinner and homemaker exemplified for her daughter the necessary perseverance and courage needed to attain goals, such as a higher education. Prabhjot believed that achieving a higher education was a goal that would prevent her daughter from enduring abuse.

Prabhjot said: *“She will not have to bear any pain. For example, if our husband said something we thought just bear it. You can’t do anything. Don’t know how to go to court or what your rights are. So, for a girl that is the main thing. If her*

husband is right she will go along. If her husband is wrong she will not have to bear it. She will have confidence. And he will know it too. Our husbands just sat at home. We worked at the factory and home. They started drinking and sat down. The girls that are educated here will not bear that. They say one day I will do the dishes and next day you will do the dishes."

One can garner from Prabhjot's response that she endured the abuse from her husband because she did not have a high level of formal education from the United States, which resulted in her not being able to access easily the legal resources needed to hold her husband accountable. It can also be speculated that her circumstances also reduced her confidence. Prabhjot asserts that her daughter will not have to endure this violence if she gains a high-level of formal education. She believes her daughter's education, higher earning power, and upbringing in America will lead to a change in the sexual division of labor in her household and combat patriarchal dynamics.

Prabhjot's parents and siblings became a strong source of support emotionally and financially for her after they migrated to America. Their support encouraged her daughter to attain a high level of formal education. Rashminder is now in law school. Prabhjot's natal family played a critical role in helping her raise her children and provided emotional and financial support for establishing her current home-based business. Thus, through social support and personal determination, Prabhjot was able to establish a flourishing life in the United States. Furthermore, Prabhjot's husband has now stopped consuming alcohol, which she attributes to *Waheguru* [a divine higher power/God] and her faith in Sikhi.

Interestingly, Ravinder, a highly educated medical professional who had a higher level of earning power than her husband, chose to stay married, despite the alcoholism and abuse.

Ravinder said: *It was just that I was weak and I didn't want to have stigma ... we considered that he had a disease. A handicap. But it was just the social stigma.*

The immense social stigma that Ravinder would have suffered prevented her from leaving her husband. However, she had a tremendous amount of resilience. She worked long hours as a medical professional at two different hospitals. She provided her children with the most she could give them. For example, they went on family vacations without their father, but included their friends and cousins. The children were bought high-end clothing and other personal items. As a mother who worked more hours than she was at home, Ravinder believes she gave her children the most she could.

Her daughter, Sandra, affirms that, despite her mother's equal or higher footing in terms of education and earning power with her father, she did not leave because of the social stigma. Anitha Venkataramani-Kothari (2007) writes about the debilitating social stigma that causes South Asian women to stay in abusive marriages.

Sandra said: *She had equal footing with my dad. She didn't need to count on him to explain something to her. She knew what she was doing. But also she chose not to leave him although she could have. Hell I would've left him. You shouldn't live that way. To some degree it is cultural, you don't want to leave him, you don't want to be abandoned by him, but with my mom, I feel like she always had the means to get rid of him. Go off on her own. The only reason she had the means is because she was well-educated enough to be independent. I think that, well you know our culture. What I try to do with my daughter is reinforce that she can be everything that her brother can be. And my parents never once said, or least my mom, I only talked to my dad like five times growing up, my mom never implied once that my brothers could be something that I couldn't. She never once implied that ... there was always the you are just like them, you can do just as much, aside from learning how to make chai and roti too.*

Thus, despite Ravinder's tremendous emotional stress, she was determined in terms of her work ethic and ensured that her daughter never expected less of herself because she was a female. One can assume Thus, Sandra's mother that seeing one's mother suffer from abuse would reiterate the secondary status of women in the Punjabi community. However, Ravinder

made sure that Sandra knew she was equal to her brothers and could do as much or more than they could. However, this equality was not always “equal” across contexts.

Sandra said: *There were just things that I think as boys she would naturally do for them but expect me to do for myself. But when it came to education it was never anything like they will go to college and you will stay home. Or the opposite that you will have to work harder because you need to prove as a woman that you can do this.*

Thus, Sandra’s mother did do things for her sons (yet expected her daughter to do them on their own), such as laundry, that they were capable of doing themselves. However, when it came to expectations about worth and accomplishment, especially through education, she had equal expectations of her children, regardless of sex. It is evident that these equal expectations influenced indirectly Sandra’s self-confidence in how she would approach a similar martial situation as her parents.

Sandra said: *She [Mom] went with automatic assumptions. I have kids they need a father. Whereas I am eternally grateful that my kids have a fantastic father but I think it is more important that they have a good father than they just have a father. You know what I mean. I don’t know if that is education or experience or a combination of both and I have clearly demonstrated that I don’t give a shit what people think about my life choices. Whereas I distinctly remember people coming in talking to her-yeah we noted that he beats you, yea we know that he drinks a lot, but you need to be married to him and he needs to be living here. I resent all those conversations because they worked. She had it ingrained in her that is the way that it was supposed to be.*

Amidst all the familial instability, Ravinder’s children were her inspiration and source of strong support. Though she chose to stay in her marriage, her children inspired her to move forward in her life.

In an emotional state with tears in her eyes, Ravinder said: “You become enclosed. Yea I want people to be happy. And I want to show them that I am happy. In my kids I think they have always been my good friends. They always listen and I never hide anything from them. I always share with them.”

Ravinder's deep friendship with and emotional commitment to her children carried the family through this chaotic time in their lives. Although the abuse was absolutely unjustified, this time in their lives brought them closer together. They created a deep bond that was a source of courage to swim against the tremulous waves of life.

Furthermore, the resilience displayed by the mothers in this study was strongly grounded in their faith, Sikhi. Spirituality gave them strength to accept their situations and move forward in a positive manner. Their acceptance did not justify the abuse they suffered, but indicated a personal decision to remain in the situation. They tried to move forward the best they could under the circumstances. This acceptance was necessary in order to gather the inner strength to tread the path they had chosen. Their faith helped them to access their strength and courage.

Kulwant described her first impression of the United States as "bad." She was referring to the family dynamic she married into. Her husband was an alcoholic.

Kulwant said: *... girls leave their family behind. It depends on if you get a good family or not. When someone drinks, you feel very bad. Uncle drank a lot.*

She then began to highlight how her strong faith in Sikhi helped her move forward while remaining married to her husband.

Kulwant said: *I did not want his kids to drink either. It was a wish in my mind. I became closer to Waheguru. Waheguru made that my aim. Sikhi should be there.*

Kulwant felt that by focusing on her faith and allowing her Sikh principles to guide her life, she would be able to prevent her children from following a similar path as their father. With little support and a great deal of perseverance, she worked hard as a manual laborer and was fully involved in her children's lives. She attended parent-teacher nights, brought them lunch to school, and took them to youth events at the local Gurdwara [Sikh house of worship/community

center]. She later was able to obtain an office job, which she attributes to having strong faith in Sikhi.

Children raised in violent homes are often expected to “grow up faster.” What is especially compelling in the life stories of the women and children highlighted in this section are that the children grew up “faster” not in terms of harmful behavior, but in terms of lending their mothers support in making decisions and moving through day-to-day life. Education was a key to accessing opportunities that would allow them to make better decisions and highlight that their mothers’ resilience and dedication to their children was fruitful. The many moments of single-parenting done by their mothers were meaningful and successful.

Workforce

Entering the workforce as an immigrant woman is an entry point into learning about American culture and beginning the integration process. The immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study shared how this process most often centered on language use, independence, value of prior education, and the intricacies of searching for a job. These experiences were shared with their children as part of the mothers’ socialization practices around education. They highlight the resilience and strength these women displayed as they navigated the workforce—characteristics critical for achieving any goal.

Searching for a job is often the first independent experience immigrant Punjabi Sikh women who arrive as “dependents” have in the United States outside of the home. In this study, eleven out of the twelve immigrant women arrived as legal “dependents.” Their primary route for migration was through marriage. Thus, job seeking highlighted their anxiety concerning English languages issues and creating a work-life balance. Despite these obstacles, job searches

were journeys through which many of these women began to develop a stronger sense of independence within a collective community.

Tajwant's job search experience started as a pursuit for independence. Her income would be an additional benefit for the family. She wanted to venture outside the home and learn about American society.

Tajwant said: *I think I started working after two or three years of being here. He [her husband] did not want me to work. But I wanted to work. My heart desired to go outside. At home it's the same thing- cooking and cleaning. First my son was young. I did not work. When my daughter became a toddler, I felt that she is okay with herself. If I leave her at the babysitter, it will be okay. My sister-in-law was with me and we thought why don't we go fill out an application. When we used to ask them [husband and brother-in-law], they used to always say you will not get a job anywhere. One day, we got the paper and found out that a couple of fast food places needed people. We went and applied. When they called us to give an interview, we went to the wrong location. I went in and said I had an interview. They said we don't have any spots, but we will find out. That was a good experience. They found what location my interview was at and gave us directions.*

Although Tajwant's husband did not initially support her job search, he did not prevent her from going to work once she found a job. Tajwant started working at a fast food restaurant and later became a department store clerk. She was able to obtain a steady timetable that also worked with her children's schedules. Her priority was making sure that she was always available for her children. Thus, she did not harness opportunities for professional growth because the work hours would be longer and there would be a lot of travel. However, she found a sense of independence by working at the department store, which she would not have had if she was unemployed. Tajwant believes it gave her leverage to do things that she wanted the family to do, thus affirming Bhachu's (1988) finding that earning wages does not eliminate patriarchal roles, but encourages women to assert their opinions. By contributing financially, Tajwant could assert where money should be spent.

Tajwant said: *Even if it is not much, it's one kind, for example, it's financially, like if I want something, like make-up, I deserve it. I don't like to do a lot of cooking. If I work, I can tell your Uncle let's go out to eat. I can take the children out. I can take a trip to other parts of North America. I deserve this because I work. If the kids have a game and Uncle says we can't go. I can say we have to go. I can say that because I feel like I am doing something.*

Tajwant's sense of independence and confidence for asserting her opinion during decision-making moments were tied strongly to the financial contributions she made to the family, although money was not the primary reason she wanted to get a job. In a sense, she saw that her decision-making power increased as she contributed to the family income. Interestingly, she believed that taking care of a home and children was a "natural" responsibility and not a financial contribution. It held less weight in constructing decision-making power.

Baljinder similarly wanted the independence that was the catalyst for Tajwant's initial job search. Baljinder said, "I wanted to be self-dependent. Like have a job." She, too, was not fully supported by her husband to seek a job outside of the home business. She received no social support. However, Baljinder was adamant to get a job outside of the home and family business. She was not too concerned about increasing her decision-making power, but wanted to ensure that her family's future was secure in case anything tragic happened to any of them. Because her husband controlled the family finances and most of the decision-making, she feared that if something unfortunate ever happened to him, specifically, it would be difficult for her and the children to survive. She needed the experience of interacting with people outside of the home in order to increase her knowledge and confidence. Thus, she was determined to secure a job although she had no familial support. Baljinder eventually passed the test for a federal job.

Baljinder said: *"Because I liked this career and I wanted to maintain this job. Regardless of what happens, I wanted to keep this job. I also did not have family support to do this job. I wanted to keep my job and keep my children and family happy. I knew my future was dependent on my job."*

Unfortunate events in Baljinder's life would prove that her job was necessary to provide the family stability after her husband passed away. All of the sudden she was thrown into making critical decisions in the interests of the business and family. Unaccustomed to this kind of responsibility, her experience in the workforce provided her with confidence she needed to seek advice and make these decisions. Although she often thought over decisions multiple times, with the support of her son, she was able to make important decisions.

Most often immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study found their first job through their social networks. These networks were primarily based within the Punjabi Sikh community. They consisted of friends, family, and extended family members. Often these women's husbands had created a social network for themselves consisting of family and friends, which expanded as their families grew through marriage.

The social networks provided language accessibility, information about the job environment, and an intimate sociocultural understanding of, for example, how getting a new job could influence a new bride's position in her family.

Gurinder Singh spoke about how his mother's job search experiences were rooted in her Punjabi social network.

Gurinder said: *I feel like a lot of it has to do with finding people within the community that are little bit more established and just kind of going with the flow. I feel like every single job has been now, I don't know this for a fact, I know the community will have to say that this is a trend in our community. People tend to do the same types of jobs of the people of the same immigration level. The fieldwork was something that was common. Then she started working at a factory and I am convinced, I don't know this for a fact but I'm about 99% sure that it was another Punjabi that told her you should work here. You know it's stable.*

Gurinder's comment highlighted how Punjabi social networks were composed of immigrants who had arrived earlier and later. Immigrants from the second and third migration periods benefited enormously from having individuals who arrived during the first migration

period. These individuals were often family members or their friends and their family members and friends. All migration periods had people that arrived through the family reunification visa process, even during the first period of migration outlined in this study. The numbers of people arriving through skilled and family reunification visas varied depending on time period. The second and third migration periods had a strong concentration of people who arrived through family reunification. Thus, their social networks were larger and richer in knowledge.

Prabhjot relied heavily on her in-law's family to help find her first job. First, Prabhjot's in-law's family members were the only people she knew. She did not have a large extended network of friends and natal family members. She was heavily reliant upon the in-laws who were living close to her. Also, they were eager for her to get a job so the family could begin to settle down in the United States. Her financial contribution to the family income was the paramount reason for her to find a job.

Prabhjot said: *"When I went to the vegetable factory. Here in the Central Valley. He [her husband] had a Phauji [an aunt who is one's father's sister] that lived here. She was working in the vegetable factory. I knew I had to work and that I don't know English. Phauji did not know English either but she could say this much to supervisor, "Rosey work tomorrow." Phauji said that she asked Rosey and she said to come tomorrow. She had me fill out the application and I started. When I started, I was young and picking up vegetables was not hard. I thought, they said this work makes you tired, but there is nothing tiring about it. After two hours you get a break. The first check I got for \$45. It looked like such a big check to me. Out of that check I got two pants and a shirt. Five dollars was saved. I was really happy that I could work on my own and get something.*

Prabhjot went through her Phauji to find a job because of convenience, but also trust. She trusted that her Phauji, although not fluent in English, would be able to utilize her limited English language skills and connections within the factory to help get her a job. Also, it was comforting for her to know that she would be working with someone she knew.

The assistance that Prabhjot's Phauji provided highlights that social networks do not only consist of educated or skilled persons, but those who are of a similar background. A social network's resourcefulness is not solely dependent on being more "academically" knowledgeable or "financially" secure than those it is helping.

Often family members encouraged new brides to utilize Punjabi social networks along with using traditional resources, such as newspapers, for job searches. Sukhwant Kaur, a former nurse and current business owner, was not only encouraged, but also pressured, to make contacts with her in-law's Punjabi social network. At every family party she was forced to ask people if they knew of any job opportunities. At times, this pressure became a strong nuisance.

Sukhwant said: *It was very hard when I came from India in the late 1980s. I remember that every day my father-in-law and mother-in-law would say call someone. I gave you this number and call them. Ask them if they have a job there. I did even know the people or how can I talk to these people on the phone. I just came from India ... I don't know anybody. I would go to parties and every day looked at the newspaper and call. I couldn't understand what they were saying on the other side. They would have a job written in the newspaper, but I didn't know what the qualifications were. Where ever there was a phone number I would call. Sometimes there weren't even jobs for my qualifications. They were looking for somebody for a businesslike office job. But at every party we went to my mother-in-law would have me stand in front of people and ask about a job. She would say, she works over there ask her about a job. I would be so embarrassed. What kind of job should I ask for? She would bring people and say this is my daughter-in-law, ask them for a job.*

Sukhwant struggled to navigate the Punjabi social network because she did not have clarity about the types of jobs she was qualified to perform. Regardless, it was a person from her family's Punjabi social network that later found her job. This person understood the pressure she was under from her in-laws to obtain a job. This understanding and connection encouraged the person to help.

Utilizing community networks played an integral role in how the immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study navigated job searches and work environments. Although not always an

emotionally or socially easy process, it most often led to a job. These networks were also a source of support once these newly immigrated women began their first jobs in America.

It is commonly understood that many immigrants who arrived during the first period of migration, outlined in this study, came on skilled visas. Ravinder came on such a visa as a medical professional. However, at this time, skilled immigrants did not have prearranged jobs as many do today. They had to search for a job. This search required understanding and navigating the job market, which was not an easy undertaking, particularly when the Punjabi social networks were not as robust as they became for those coming during the second and third periods of migration. Thus, gaining initial knowledge about the American job market could take a month or more. As a result, newly arrived immigrants with very little to no money in their pockets had to earn a living to sustain themselves while they navigated the job market in their field of expertise. Friends were able to provide financial and social support, but they, too, were struggling to reestablish themselves in a new country with little guidance.

Sandra, Ravinder's daughter, said: *I know she got a visa to come here to be a medical professional. But at one point in time she was a housekeeping lady. She started basically doing laundry and it lasted a little while. She started thinking what the hell am I doing. She was frustrated that she had to start all over, but then she rededicated herself to the medical field and just had to go through the motions of going one level at a time.*

Thus, the job search process, even for those who came on skilled visas, was difficult. Ravinder submitted many applications. She said she was learning which jobs met her qualifications as she was going through her search.

Ravinder said: *I tried about eight or ten hospitals and I did not even know what my job or my qualifications would be here. So finally I got a job and it was about a mile away from the home. The director, I explained to her that I came here and I am looking for a job so my husband can come. I am living with this family. So she understood. She said you know I understand your situation. She gave me the job. It was \$2.37, my pay scale. But we were rich with that money. So then I*

said I need a letter that you gave me the job and I can send to my husband. Your uncle came after six weeks. So that was good.

The resilience to keep searching for a job and the compassion of various employers to give her one helped Ravinder find a job in the medical field. This job was critical not only for meeting her living expenses, but also for applying for her husband to join her in America. The skilled visa alone was not a guarantee for obtaining U.S. residency and reuniting family members. Ravinder had to obtain a job so she could provide financial support for family members and show that her skillset was being utilized in the United States.

The social support system that Punjabi social networks provided also combined resources. They cultivated social and economic support as immigrants reestablished themselves. Prabhjot talks about how she and her fellow immigrant Punjabi Sikh female friends would carpool to and from their vegetable factory job.

Prabhjot said: *At the vegetable factory there was Dilvinder and them. There were four or five of us and we had one car. Then we moved to Laveena and every day one of us brought a car.*

The social support system that was created through carpooling played a vital role in these women's lives. They were able to share their struggles, replenish their strength, and provide emotional comfort to each other as they learned how to function within the American system, both at work and at home. Because of a shared background they had a natural understanding of the struggles each one encountered. It could be family problems or learning how to resolve issues with bosses; whatever the problem was; they could find comfort in one another. Also, they had a lot of good laughs and built an intimate bond that sustains their friendships even today, although many have moved on to different jobs.

Value of Education

Many immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study worked in positions below their skill levels, despite having higher levels of education. Often they needed an additional credential or their Indian degree had to be evaluated and equated into an American degree. Another common issue was that these women chose to accept positions below their skill levels in order to help financially support their families or gain a sense of independence. Now they find it difficult to go back to school to obtain credentials because their family responsibilities have increased.

Sukhwant successfully completed course work for a Master's Degree from a prestigious Punjabi university. It was her academic success that also encouraged her in-laws to arrange her marriage with her husband. However, once she arrived in the United States it became difficult for her to attain her Punjabi transcripts in order for her to gain full acceptance into a graduate program in the sciences. Thus, she began to work as a lab assistant.

Sukhwant said: *"They had accepted my degree but they still needed a transcript from India from the university with a university seal. They couldn't get it. We waited five years. We sent letters to Punjabi University. They did not send it with my brothers who went there to get the transcript. We gave them envelope and said please mail it. They did not do it. After five or six years I went to India. Me and my husband went to Chandigarh university. We collect all the data and everything and put it in a postage paid yellow envelope. But they could not mail it because there was a strike. They said we will mail it after that. It never came and then after five years I think they close my file. It was too late. We couldn't get the transcripts so I started doing nursing. I did a six or seven years job in a hospital lab as a lab assistant. Then after that I did LVN. I worked for three or four years then I started doing RN through correspondence. Then I started to have health problems and I stopped. Then I started helping my husband [with the family business]."*

Sukhwant's experience with trying to obtain her transcripts in order to further develop her skill set in the United States highlights some of obstacles faced by women with high levels of formal education. The skillset Sukhwant gained through her education was not solely accounted for within transcripts and degrees. This education equipped her with skills to pursue a nursing

credential. Thus, she later worked as a nurse in a hospital. Her experiences were later used as part of her educational messaging to her children.

Tajwant has a Master's Degree. However, she chose to remain employed as a department store clerk where only a high school education was needed. Tajwant wanted to be a teacher, but her familial responsibilities and the lack of readily available information prevented her from pursuing this path.

Tajwant said: *The kids often say you have a Master's Degree but you work at a department store. A person without a college degree can work there. The degree I did is not valued. The other side is that I have three children and I can't go to school. I have a limited schedule. I have 4-5 hours to work. I am now in my forties so I feel a little old too. So if I wanted to go into teaching, I should have done it before. Also, I did not have much guidance. If I had guidance it may have been different.*

This need for career guidance is critical for educated immigrant women to learn how to apply their skillsets in the American system. The Punjabi social networks can help provide this guidance, but the information available depends on the job opportunities pursued by individuals within the network. Not many people in Tajwant's social network had pursued teaching in the United States. Thus, she was not able to find the guidance she needed on how to pursue career aspirations in teaching, while simultaneously balancing family responsibilities.

Although immigrant Punjabi Sikh women with high levels of education in this study struggled during their job searches for opportunities that were aligned with their skillset, there was still value placed on their skillset as evidenced by their abilities to navigate the system to find some kind of work. It may not have been directly related to the skills they cultivated through their degree programs in India, but it still helped greatly.

Kulwant highlighted how she struggled to find well-paying jobs with her low level of formal education. As a manual laborer, the work was physically difficult and; in addition, there was the stress of finding a better job to earn two or three dollars more.

Kulwant said: *Beta, here without education you don't have any value because to get a good job to get a good degree you have to have a good education. Over there [in Punjab] a lot of people don't do jobs. Here if you have to do job and there's a value for your degree you can get a job. There are people who have degrees but no one will give them a job. That is the deficiency there [in Punjab]."*

This comparison of the value of education between Punjab and the United States highlighted the reasons why Kulwant believed that education was very important in the United States. It was critical for entering a job market that values academic skillsets. Without an education, one would be forced to do manual labor.

The laborious work some women had to do stood in contrast to their work experience in Punjab. For example, Navdeep, who had a Master's Degree and was a humanities lecturer in Punjab, worked a federal job that required a lot of labor. She found this work to be in complete contrast to the type of work she did in Punjab. The labor-intensive job responsibilities were more difficult than even the housework she did in India.

Navdeep said: *Oh it was very different. It was laborious to begin with. I had to carry those big letter trays. The first three months you are on a probationary period and you have to learn quickly, like cramming to pass a test after three months. I was doing that even though I knew I wasn't going to stay. I was still doing it. Those trays used to be 30-35 pounds heavy and you had to take those trays to the stamping machine and then you had to be careful to make sure not to let any letter or parcel go through that is hand-stamped. It was labor intensive at that time. My hands would hurt when I went home. I did not have to do this kind of work in India. Not in my parents' house and not in my in-laws house. Just brooming the place, cleaning, and cooking. Nothing as compared to this kind of laborious work.*

Thus, Navdeep continued with this job because she had to help resettle her family. She felt that it was not a struggle because it was an expected part of resettling in a new country. She later left the job to take care of her children and pursued teaching.

For Mohinder Kaur, resettling in a new country was a way to keep the family unit intact. She would be able to have the sense of family she always wanted by helping her husband start a business in California. Although she was new to the hard work necessary for establishing a business and wary of the impact it would have on her family, she still believed it was a much better way to maintain her family compared to what would happen in Punjab.

Mohinder said: *“It was a lot of challenge. I worked a lot. Make breakfast, run to work, cook, and clean. There really was nothing else. Work, home, sleep, nothing else. Not even watching TV. Maybe on the weekends, it would be Friday, I might have an hour or two. It was just work, work, work for 10-15 years. It was just like work, work, and more work. I liked to be challenged and feel worthwhile. Over there it was women (India), in our group, they were more into the fancy part of life. Dress up and go to party and this and that. Formal socializing. That did not carry any value for me. Here, when I was doing something, I was being worthwhile, my daughter was with me, my husband was with me. Then my son was born. For me family is very important. To have a family together for me is more important than to be in the party alone and all that. I had to work hard, it was so important to be together that it did not bother me that much. It was tough, very, very difficult. I was lucky because my Mom came to help me a lot. I had lady who used to help, a Nanny. I was really thankful. Without them it was going to be very, very difficult.”*

The struggle to resettle in a new country was reflected in the work experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study. Often previous educational credentials were not fully valued in the United States. However, the lack of technical “acknowledgement” of their education did not hinder them from using their learned skillsets in other professions. Furthermore, Punjabi social networks played a crucial role in helping immigrant women navigate American systems. They served as both information sources and social and emotional support

systems. Lastly, the immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study showed how resilience and courage were important characteristics for navigating a new job market.

Language Issues

English language skills play a critical role in any job search. For many immigrant Punjabi Sikh women, English is their second language. Thus, they have varying degrees of skill levels in this language. Some women have strong academic English skills, but not as strong day-to-day speaking skills. Others know little to no English and began building their language abilities while working.

Sukhwant described how she enhanced her English language skills, particularly her speaking ability, while working. Although she had achieved a high level of formal education, her reading abilities were much stronger than her speaking skills. Her co-worker played a critical role in teaching her English.

Sukhwant said: *It was very difficult if no one was with me. If I needed to get something, I would do it by knowing the spelling and then I would go there and match the spellings. I would be afraid to ask because you're afraid of making mistake. I would match it and bring it home. If my husband was with me I would ask him. When I started working in the lab then the ones who worked with me in the night we would sit down. My job was from 3-11pm. When we would eat dinner at about five or seven there was one boy he worked with us. He would pick up the newspaper. He would keep reading them and I would read with him. I would read and I would ask him how do they pronounce this and then he would say it for me and then I would write it in Punjabi how they say it. Then walking around I would try to remember those words until they were completely firm in my memorization. I got more practice there within a year. My hesitation opened up for talking. Also, I would talk with patients. Go into their room and say "hi" and "bye" to the patients. Ask them how they are? How they are feeling because we used to draw blood.*

Sukhwant sought support from her co-worker. Also, she was very determined to learn English by memorizing how to pronounce words by leveraging her strength in English reading

and writing. It was through this kind of perseverance that she was able to increase her English language abilities.

Kulwant had a limited skillset in English reading, writing, and speaking. She also learned a lot of English while on-the-job. In addition, she relied on her children to help with job applications. Her daughter played a critical role in filling out her application for a federal desk job. Surprised to have gotten the job offer, Kulwant navigated the new work system, which required English language skills, by asking her co-worker for support.

Kulwant said: *Will you believe that I got a \$11 job. I didn't know anything the day I went to work. You know putth¹¹, we don't know about those things such as decline. What does it mean? What is "prior"? What is prior 150 mail. It's very different from home. The girls that were with me. They started them off at \$10 and they were more educated than I was. They said how did you get more pay than we did? I said, I don't know how, only Waheguru knows. The manager was very good. There was one girl like you or my daughter, She was Punjabi. Her Aunt had said my niece works there so talk to her. And the girl said I don't talk to Indians. I said Beta, I talk to Indian girls. I want to talk to you. She used to sit next to me. Slowly, slowly she developed love and I would ask her questions and she would tell me. I told her you are educated from here and I am educated from India. I'm sitting equally next to you putth, try to move forward somewhere else. Try to progress.*

Kulwant's job experience highlighted how she relied on her daughter's English language skills to get the initial opportunity to work at the desk job, which was in stark contrast to her prior factory work. Excited about her higher level of pay and better work environment, Kulwant was weary about her ability to perform her job responsibilities because of her English language skills. However, she sought the support of her Punjabi social network. Although her co-worker was hesitant to help in the beginning, she later became a strong source of support. The communal connection and Kulwant's warm personality and perseverance helped her navigate her

¹¹ Term of endearment

new work environment, while encouraging her co-worker to pursue opportunities where she could exercise her full potential.

Conclusion

Resiliency, courage, and faith played a critical role in how the Punjabi Sikh women in this study navigated their experiences as immigrants in California. The practice of these characteristics was deeply nested within the experiences they had in America at home, work, and general society. As they navigated decision-making, language issues, emotional instability, and the job market, we saw how their resiliency, courage, and faith were tested and enhanced. They refused to allow their victimizing circumstances to create a “victim-hood” in them. The children of the women in this study were often the guiding light for their mothers’ choosing to move forward. Thus, children were a strong source of social and emotional support by mirroring courage and resilience to their mothers during moments of difficulty. Ultimately, the mothers modeled resiliency, courage, and faith to their children who mirrored it back to them. This process supported the children’s attainment of aspirational, familial, and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005).

As children supported their mothers through difficult circumstances, they also learned how to navigate the American system. In many respects, they became their partners in life. In Prabhjot’s, Ravinder’s, and Kulwant’s cases, their children helped provide emotional and social support that their husbands could not give because of their substance abuse problems. These shared experiences, among others, between mothers and children, were often used by mothers when socializing their children on the importance of education. Education meant more life choices and access to information on how to best harness good opportunities.

The importance of education was also rooted in the transnational experience. Immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study often spoke about the roles their education from Punjab played in the United States. They also compared the life experiences of married women in Punjab and America. Through these comparisons they highlighted the importance of their resilience and courage. It was the driving force behind their success in the United States. Also, these women's children were reminded about why their mothers had made sacrifices and overcome obstacles in order to provide their children with more life choices. Thus, as the social and emotional bond between mothers and their children grew through their joint immigrant experiences, the children also began to feel responsible for harnessing an education in order to access these life choices and make the best-educated decisions possible.

CHAPTER 7: “LEARNING TOGETHER” - OPPORTUNITIES FOR CO-CONSTRUCTING IMMIGRANT SOCIAL CAPITAL

Introduction

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study “learned together” how to navigate the American system. They learned from each other’s knowledge and provided emotional and social support to each other. Thus, the intimate bond between mothers and their children grew deeper and stronger, which created a sense of shared responsibility for each other’s futures. It is this collective responsibility, developed through a shared immigrant journey, that made educational achievement a familial goal and not an individual accomplishment, thus illuminating the reality that immigrant parental participation is grounded in social relationships that co-construct knowledge, which in turn form cultural wealth, such as aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capitals (González, Wyman, and O’Connor, 2011; Yosso, 2005). Therefore, educational messages between mothers and their children in this study reflect how these kinds of capital are developed and leveraged in an effort to “achieve the American dream” through schooling.

This chapter will highlight how the phenomenon of “learning together” took on great meaning for immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study through three main social processes: 1) adaptation to American culture; 2) language support; and 3) enhancement of social and emotional connections. The way these processes manifested themselves will be addressed in detail through four sub-sections in this chapter: 1) navigating school; 2) navigating outside of home; 3) navigating English language learning; and 4) navigating the job market. The first category of adaptation to American culture will address how immigrant mothers and their children in this study learned together how to integrate into American culture. Nine out of the

twelve immigrant mother-child pairs spoke to this social process. They often highlighted how they learned from each other's experiences. These experiences centered on school, work, home, and general participation in American society. Seven out of the twelve pairs in this study spoke about the second category of language support. Most often children provided their mothers with English language support through translation, conversational mediation, and access to direct English language learning opportunities inside/outside of the home. These opportunities consisted of watching television together, volunteering in a classroom, or helping one's mother with her business transactions. Six out of the twelve pairs directly addressed the last category of enhanced social and emotional connections between mothers and their children. During this social process, mothers and their children in this study spoke about how "learning together" to navigate the American system further deepened their social and emotional connections to each other. They learned how to value and protect each other's human dignity during an immigrant journey that can often be dehumanizing. Their relationships evolved beyond parental boundaries to deep friendships because they often relied on each other for this kind of support. Essentially, they became co-partners in the immigrant journey. However, this change in relationship did not augment the tremendous respect these children had for their mothers, despite moments of conflict and negotiation of parental authority. Thus, this chapter will illuminate how "learning together" interactions between immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study were opportunities for co-developing various social capitals highlighted by the Community Cultural Wealth model through dynamic interpersonal relationships.

Navigating School

As immigrants, many Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study learned how to navigate a new system through their experiences with their children. Schooling was a space in which mothers and their children learned together. By participating in their children's schooling, mothers received language support, improved their confidence, gained insight into American culture, and enhanced their emotional and social connections with their children. In return, children learned familial responsibility towards education and gained a sense of independence while enhancing their collective identity. They also improved their English language skills, and grew emotionally and socially closer to their mothers. This phenomenon of "learning together" developed through joint decision-making, collective information gathering, and development of a strong sense of connectedness.

Often the children I studied had large roles in the decision-making process concerning their schooling, particularly during the college stage. Through this process, immigrant mothers and their children "learned together" about the schooling system in the United States. In addition, this process encouraged them to grow closer to each other because making these kinds of decisions required emotional, social, intellectual, and financial analyses. Furthermore, children in this study often spoke of high expectations from an early age to attend college; however, there was little guidance on how to achieve this goal from their mothers. This lack of guidance was strongly rooted in their mothers' unfamiliarity with the college experience in the United States. As immigrants, many understood the Indian system but were new to the American format.

Baljinder Kaur, the mother of Parmveer Singh and currently a federal employee, highlighted the importance of her decision-making relationship with her son. He also helped her

make general household decisions. In this conversation she shared how she engaged him in decision-making regarding schooling.

Baljinder said: *Yea, I ask him what is good and bad about this thing. Why do you need it. My son tells me. I ask him what are the benefits. He tells me and we make decision. The children here know more about college than us. They can tell us like this and that. To do it or not, I would be supportive.*

Baljinder's reliance on her son to gather information on the college process in order to make a joint decision was also strongly reflected in his statement about decision-making. Parmveer, Baljinder's son, made the following statement as he reflected on how he would be like as a parent to his own children.

Parmveer said: *Yea, I'll be a lot different because her generation was not born here. It was a lot different for us. Like our parents depend a lot on us. We feel more responsible to them. You can't let them down, but our generation is used to that so we are not going to depend on our kids that much.*

Baljinder's reliance and Parmveer's responsibility for information gathering created a strong sense of trust and connectedness between the two, thus, highlighting how education is a familial goal rooted in deep emotions of connectedness, responsibility, and gratitude.

Parmveer said: *My mom she understands that I know what is best for me. She trusts me a lot on a lot of things. She asks my advice and I'll tell her these are what my options are and that is what I feel is best for me. [My mom gained this trust] through experiences. She would ask a lot of questions and I would tell her, "oh I think we should do this" or more going out of my way. I have a level of responsibility. I would not mess around or anything like that. She helps me think things out. She says, "what are the options that you have" or "I've heard people do this or that."*

Parmveer highlighted how the process of decision-making was based on a strong sense of trust and helped produce strong emotions of connectedness between him and his mother. Also, joint-decision making helped both of them develop knowledge about how different American systems function. Parmveer provided his mother with new insights gained through his social interactions with peers and their families, while Baljinder helped Parmveer "think things out."

As a result, he was better able to polish his decision-making skills, thereby co-developing aspirational, social, and navigational capitals.

Sandra highlighted her mother's high expectations of college and little guidance, but tremendous support during the college application process. She also showed how family friends played an integral role in helping teach both her mother and her about college.

Sandra said: *At the same time they trusted me enough to allow me to figure out where I wanted to apply to school. I think my Mom went with me to a college once I got into it because I said come with me. I decided where I was applying to ... there was no pressure that I had to go anywhere. My Mom understood the system because this was the point where she was learning through us; at that point my brother had gotten into Santa Barbara. But she didn't have any experience with where I was. I remember Navi, a family friend, coming to my house and telling my parents just point blank. My Dad was like she will go to a local university, we will find a good husband for her, and she will be a doctor. It was all mapped out. Navi was like Uncleji, you have to let her go to school out of town. You see Navi went to the local university and she said it had been so much harder for her because the classes were easy. She said, "I aced everything, but no one took me seriously when I wanted to get into law school." And so, they, and this was part of how my Mom grew up with us, she took her advice as much as I took Navi's advice. She was like you went to college here, you know. And so from that point on it was like whatever you need is what we will do for you.*

Sandra later went to college away from her local town, about three hundred miles away. Her parents were both supportive of her decision. Here, the learning about American systems and personal growth happened simultaneously for the mothers and their children, although they were at different phases in their lives. Often times this "learning together" happened by engaging with one's ethnic community's social network, such as Navi in Sandra's case. Through this process, social capital and navigational capital were built by learning from the experience of a fellow immigrant Punjabi Sikh family friend's daughter, who had gone to college in the United States.

In these dynamic "learning together" moments, mothers brought with them more lived experience, which supported both their own and their children's learning process. Children had

experience with being socialized in the American schooling system. However, mothers still maintained their position as a parental figure.

Ravinder, Sandra's Mom, said: *I grow up with them. We think the same way. Education for them it's important too. There are some differences because I have life experience. My practical life that I went through. I have more knowledge. And they're pretty good learners and they listen to me.*

Ravinder's statement showed that enhancing the knowledge and personal growth of mothers and children happened together and should not be used to infantilize mothers. They brought knowledge gained through life experience, which supported the decision-making process. In addition, this life experience brought a level of maturity that the children did not possess. The mothers and children started off at different maturity and knowledge levels, but grew together through shared experiences, specifically those particular to the immigrant journey of replantation and linguistic challenges.

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study showed that navigating their children's schooling enhanced their knowledge of the American educational system. Ravinder learned how the schooling system in the United States was largely financed through districts, which influenced the quality of education. Encouragement from her children's teacher to move to another school district also supported her decision to move the entire family to a nearby city. This move was one major decision she made in the interest of her children despite her husband's lack of support.

Ravinder said: *Mandeep and Sandra were always in honors classes. And to me I thought they were doing pretty good. I went to Mandeep's class one day and his teacher took me aside and said Mandeep is the star of our classroom and we are proud. But I want to tell you something if you want your kids to have a good education this is not the place. I said I thought you said he is pretty smart. She said he is smart but take him where he can be challenged. More kids will be smarter than him and he will want to beat them. He has a brain but he is not being challenged. I said what do you suggest and she said go to Sierra school district. I said I never thought to move from here. So that would solve two*

problems because my husband's family was coming and I was supporting everybody. So my paycheck was going to meet their needs and even though we made the back house, my kids did not have their own bedroom. They had to sleep with their uncles. So they were coming to the point of, "where is my bedroom? Which room can I decorate so it is my bedroom?" So I thought I'm not doing any favor to my kids and they are growing up. I am tolerating that. They were getting to the point where Mandeep said we need to move. We need to move somewhere where we can have our own bedroom. My husband said no way that it is going to happen. No I am not going to move. So I took my kids and started looking at the house. My brother was very supportive to me. He said if you want to buy the house let's start looking. We looked at quite a few houses but this house was the one. Price is reasonable and I could afford it and it was in the school district where teacher suggested. I moved. My husband didn't move for six weeks. I moved to that house with my kids.

Interestingly, Mandeep, Ravinder's older son, also encouraged his mother to move to the city from their rural home. Although his concern was for his own bedroom, Ravinder knew that she had to make a big decision without her husband's full support in the best interest of Mandeep's education. In this case, that was moving to a more resourced school district. By navigating the schooling process, Ravinder and her children enhanced their emotional connection and sense of responsibility. The children saw their mother make a bold decision in their best interests. In informal conversations with Mandeep, he spoke about searching for this new home with his mother and uncle. He often highlighted his "adult role" in examining homes and deciding on a good location, although he was very young (early adolescence). His tone was often frustrated, but very proud.

Sikh children, particularly boys, are often teased and harassed in school because of their religious articles of faith. Keeping unshorn hair tied in topknot makes Sikh children vulnerable to school bullying (Sikh Coalition Bay Area Civil Rights Agenda Report, 2010). Gurinder shared how his mother intervened at his school when he was being bullied. Although she had limited English proficiency, Kulwant made sure to take action at her son's school.

Gurinder said: *I kept my kes¹². I had a haircut until I was in middle school. I'll never forget that my mom came into the classroom and said something because I had just started wearing a patka¹³. In her broken English she said whatever she needed to say. I don't remember what she said. I think she spoke to the class. I know she talked to the teacher because I was so petrified of wearing a patka for the first time. My mom's contribution to that was much greater than my father's.*

Kulwant's determination to address her son's fears and anxiety around keeping unshorn hair displayed perseverance and strength to her son. This prominent memory from his childhood did not allow Gurinder to forget the resilience his mother showed during this time in his schooling. Despite the English language barrier, she made sure to help him as much she could. She helped cultivate in him the navigational and resistant capital he needed to continue wearing Sikh articles of faith despite the challenges of discrimination.

Kulwant highlighted that she was involved in her children's schooling despite her work schedule and English language challenges, because it gave them emotional encouragement.

Kulwant said: *I did go putth¹⁴. I went to every place. The influence of that is if parents don't go children get hurt. They feel like their parents don't have happiness for them. When parents go the kids get very happy that the parents have come with us. They tell their teachers and their fellow students. The child gets proud and gains more encouragement.*

Thus, Kulwant was aware that her direct involvement in Gurinder's schooling displayed to her son her own emotional commitment to his education. It made him feel "normal" like the other kids.

Gurinder: *When there were events she would take the time out to take me and I always would hear her talking about this meeting. Some of it was just me complaining in my memory. She talks about her feeling that I wanted her included. Both of them [mother and father] included. Her included in my education more than my siblings maybe. I don't remember if they went to their events. When I was younger in high school there were definitely certain things*

¹² Long unshorn hair.

¹³ Head covering used too covered the topknot. Also known as a small turban.

¹⁴ Term of endearment for someone you consider to be like you children.

that I would just ask them to come where other parents were going to be there. I wanted them to be involved.

Ravneet: *What did it mean for them to be involved?*

Gurinder: *That we were normal. Seriously that's basically it. Normal meant just like the other kids. My parents cared. I think that's all that any child of immigrant parents wants, is to feel normal. Yeah I think adjustment and normalcy means you're just like your peers.*

Therefore, Kulwant's involvement in Gurinder's schooling, despite the struggles the family faced at home with Kulwant's husband's substance abuse and the various obstacles confronting most working families, helped create a sense of "stability" and "normalcy" for Gurinder in school. She wanted him to feel proud and stabilized despite the obstacles in their lives.

Sandra spoke about how she helped her mother navigate the process of doing homework for her college courses. This time brought them closer together because they shared a similar schooling experience at the same time. Sandra remembered helping her mom type papers and Ravinder taught her daughter the lessons of determination and the importance of education.

Sandra said: *When she [Mom] was at a California university, I remember one time when I was at college, she came up and we both had to study. So that was kind of fun. Come up and we will study together. The Internet was literally starting at that time. So I remember having to help her with some computer stuff, type her papers, and I am thinking, ... I was an English major and she would tell me what she wanted to write and a part of me was like I want to correct this grammar so badly, but that is not the way she would have typed it. You have to let it be that person's voice. So I remember thinking that is kind of cool, I am going to help my mom type her paper and then I am going to type my paper. So we can both get our homework in.*

Sandra supported her mother in doing college homework, which was an inspiring educational moment. She was able to connect with her mother as fellow student. In addition, Ravinder's long hours at work hindered her ability to directly connect with her children around schooling. She rarely went to parent-teacher nights. By doing homework together, instead, they gained insight into other aspects of each other's lives, thus developing aspirational and

navigational capital together.

Sandra also highlighted how her mother's work schedule and unfamiliarity with the American schooling system strongly influenced the way her mother engaged in her schooling. Although the parental expectation of higher education was constant, her mother was not able to provide much guidance. Ravinder strongly socialized her children with the educational trajectory of high school to college, but was not able to provide guidance on how to move through the different phases in this pipeline.

Sandra said: *I don't know if it would have changed my route. You know, because do you think I would be a doctor right now, no. But I think there are decisions I made in high school that a high school kid should not have been allowed to make without their parents. Like I dropped Calculus because it was hard and I wanted a double lunch. Whereas, for most of my friends [white Americans] there would have been a discussion. Yea, you are going to get over it and you are not going to get a double lunch. You are in Calculus as a senior, that is an accomplishment, but you need to finish it. You have to stay with it. I was struggling because it wasn't clicking for me. I could have had a tutor, I could have had other ways to get to where I wanted to be. But instead, I was like screw it. So decisions like that I think I was allowed to use a mentality of a high schooler to make decisions.*

Sandra's desire for more guidance was a common issue among children of immigrant mothers in this study. The expectation of higher education was firm, but the guidance on how to achieve it was not readily available. Thus, immigrant mothers in this study learned the details about the college experience through their children, family friends, and co-workers. For example, Ravinder learned a lot through Mandeep's and Sandra's schooling experiences. Her son Navinder had a lot more parental and sibling guidance as he navigated his schooling experience. In essence, immigrant mothers and their children in this study often learned together how to navigate the American schooling experience. Therefore, the density of social networks, proficiency in English language skills, depth of financial support, and length of work schedules influenced the ways both the children and their immigrant mothers learned together about the

importance of education. Varying degrees of social capital influenced the ways they built certain capitals, such as navigational and social capital.

As mothers and children learned together the different ways to navigate the American schooling system, their connectedness to each other grew, although individually they grew in different ways. Sandra shared how she and her mother have grown:

Sandra said: *The one thing that I think is interesting. We grew up because we were getting older. Obviously she also got older, but she was already an adult. There has not been much of an evolution because she started out as an adult on this learning curve and she ended as an adult on this learning curve, whereas, we were immature and bratty and ridiculous to being adults. So I think that a lot of that I haven't seen it change because she wasn't immature. She, I think kind of way back then to now, I think she has a little more faith in herself and in another sense she doesn't have as much faith in herself because we are now adults and she can rely completely on us to figure it out. I remember a time when I was younger and she had to figure out the healthcare stuff, she had to figure out what insurance to go with and now she just figures you are old enough why don't you tell me.*

Sandra highlighted how the connectedness between immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study also encouraged the development of reliance, one that does not do justice to the confidence, knowledge, and strength their mothers possess. Sometimes mothers, like Ravinder, carried the weight of both parents for the majority of their lives. As their children grew and became more responsible, the mothers started to shift some of that weight onto their children. Essentially, it provided an opportunity to exhale. However, other children, like Bhavdeep, asserted that this mother became very self-reliant and did not want to “overburden” her children.

Bhavdeep said: *She has grown more confident over the years and very self-reliant. As children we helped her as much as we knew. By learning together, she realized that she did not need to depend on my emotionally absent father. That same confidence inspired me to get a good education.*

Thus, Bhavdeep highlighted the connectedness between an immigrant mother and her

child, which is based on supporting each other as they both learned how to navigate American systems. Both immigrant mothers and their children were novices in navigating American systems, although the mothers brought more maturity and life experience. The shared immigrant experience strengthened the emotional connectedness between mothers and their children, which supported the co-development of various capitals outlined in the Community Cultural Wealth model. These capitals were used to by mothers to encourage their children to further develop them through education in order to achieve the “American Dream” of social and economic upward mobility.

Navigating Outside of the Home

Children are a primary source of support for their mothers as they navigate the American system outside of the home. Their English and Punjabi language skills are an important resource. Children can translate both languages, which are needed to support communication between service providers and their mothers. Many children of immigrant mothers develop skills early on that non-immigrant children build later in life. These experiences build linguistic, familial, and navigational capitals.

Amanjot highlighted how his mother, Sukhjeet, relied on her daughter to help navigate the banking and healthcare systems in the United States.

Amanjot said: *One of the things that my parents didn't do was the outside work. When it came to banking and Medicare that responsibility was never put on me. They would always joke around when I was young and say you don't have a lot of street smarts. You don't know how to do simple things. They put more responsibility on my sister. She is older. When they have questions they first go to my sister.*

Amanjot believed his parents, particularly his mother, went to his sister for advice because they had faith and trust that she could navigate the system. Because of this faith and

trust, Amanjot's sister developed a deep reservoir of knowledge, which they also continued to access. Amanjot, as a younger child, was not given this responsibility because his sister had already managed it. Thus, he did not have the opportunity to build the same kind of knowledge base. This example shows that some immigrant parents rely on their children as if they are adults because they have knowledge about navigating the American system.

Parmveer and his mother Baljinder discussed how their intimate bond grew deeper as Baljinder began to rely on Parmveer. Baljinder entered the workforce with little support from her husband. She was determined to work outside the home, but was new to making decisions with great confidence because often her husband made them. Thus, she had little experience navigating American society alone outside the home. Baljinder spoke about when Parmveer showed her how to use an ATM. As she fought back tears, Baljinder proudly highlighted her son's critical support.

Baljinder said: *I had a Jeep given by my boss to do my work. There was a gas station close by. After living here for five years I got my first credit card. I got a Discover card. Then I would take my credit card inside and ask for gas. The gas station guy said, "I will teach you how to use it outside." I said no, I want to do it this way. I thought I would not be able to learn. My son taught me how (slightly tears up). I didn't know how to use it all. I did not know how to ask and where do I go (holding back emotion). The gas station guy would explain it to me in English and then one of his customers is going come and I won't know what he said. Then the next day I have to go to him again. I will take him the card again and he will say I showed you yesterday. I did not know want to give him the opportunity to tell me that.*

Thus, Parmveer helped Baljinder learn how to use an ATM/Credit Card machine at a local gas station because of his English language skills and intimate relationship with his mother. He was only about eight years old. Through his knowledge he was able to preserve his mother's humanity by preventing her from feeling degraded because of her limited English language skills.

Sandra highlighted how her mother's reliance on her from a young age carried into her adulthood even though her mother had cultivated the skills that Sandra once provided.

Sandra said: *When I came home to visit she needed to get new glasses. She came to me in the evening and said I'm so excited that you're here because you will help me pick glasses. I said, "Mom, you're perfectly capable of picking up the glasses that you are going to wear on your own." But from the moment that I came in she was like I am not going to pick glasses unless you're there with me. So I go with her. When I was a kid I was happy to tell her this is what you need. This is what you should have, but they're your glasses. You have to feel good in them because you have to wear them. She was like I'll take anything as long as you pick it. As soon as we are there, she is like you are in charge now. Just guide me. She says (in a Punjabi accent), "tell me vhat to do beta"¹⁵.*

Sandra's mother's reliance was both endearing and frustrating. Sandra was frustrated because she knew her mother had the capacity to pick out glasses that were good for her because over the years she had learned how to communicate her needs with Sandra's guidance. However, Sandra's mom still found comfort and security in Sandra's decision-making on something she was capable of doing. This was a reflection of the deep and secure bond between mother and daughter.

Navigating English Language Learning

English language learning was a critical aspect of the immigrant experience for the Punjabi Sikh mothers who participated in this study. Learning to communicate in the English language provided access to job opportunities and created a sense of belonging in America. Therefore, the ability to communicate and be understood was a humanizing process that created belonging in a new social and cultural environment. Most importantly, English language proficiency was a key tool for accessing social mobility and stability. By knowing the English language in the United States, these immigrant women could harness job and social opportunities

¹⁵ Term of endearment for child.

that provided both mobility and stability. Through this mobility, immigrant women could access resources for their families, which in return created stability. This stability was particularly important because migration was initially an unstable process. Many immigrant women in this study hoped that enduring instability in the short term would create a future of stability for their children in America, a sense of security that they felt their home country, India, could not guarantee.

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study often participated in English language learning inside and outside of the home with their children. Their children provided support for language learning through linguistic and cultural translation, which helped form linguistic and navigational capitals. In addition, their children's language learning activities, such as television watching, were also learning opportunities for mothers. Essentially, mothers and children learned the English language together. Thus, the act of mothering lent itself to language learning, particularly for immigrant mothers with limited English proficiency.

Often, limited English proficiency is a hurdle in the American integration process. Tajwant said, "I was afraid that I will never understand English in my life." This fear propelled women like Tajwant to participate actively in language learning activities. Often, dependent wives who migrated with their children to America spent a lot of their initial time in the home. Thus, television programming was often their first in-depth experience with American culture while living in America. Children's television programming, which they watched with their children, was where mothers and children learned the English language together.

Ravinder said: *I learned English from Mandeep [son] ... He would watch TV and he would tell me mom this what I learned today from TV. He learned from TV and I learned from TV.*

The television programming that Ravinder and Mandeep watched together was similar to Sesame Street and other televised learning programs. These shows explored American culture and taught the English alphabet. Mothers often watched these programs with their children.

Bhavdeep recalled watching adult programming, such as “Wheel of Fortune,” with his mother. This television show played a critical role in his mother’s English language development. Bhavdeep’s and his sister’s English language learning was also reinforced by this programming. It was one of the few shows they got to watch with their mother, who worked in a vegetable factory during their childhood. After arriving home from work, she would have a short break before cooking dinner. It was during this time that they watched this show together.

Children translating for their mothers was another way that language learning became a joint practice for participants in this study. Children often serve as linguistic and cultural brokers for their immigrant parents (Orellana, 2009). Gurinder spoke about how he often translated for his mother when speaking with service providers, such as the phone company or credit card companies. He highlighted how he was asked to intervene when his mother’s limited English proficiency became a hurdle for her to communicate her perspective.

Gurinder: *She spoke English and it was broken English. I was a translator at times. Definitely you know with the phone company or whatever.*

Ravneet: *When did you become the translator?*

Gurinder: *When I was younger I think it was when things were much more involved. Even now it’s when things are much more involved. It’s always like ‘talk to my son’ or it’s more like ‘do talk to my son’ ... it’s when they don’t have the language skills to articulate what they need to say ... when it’s a back and forth it’s definitely talk to my son, talk to my daughter.*

Playing the role of translator helped develop Gurinder’s English language skills and increased his knowledge about how to engage with service providers. Gurinder shared what he learned with his mother, who also increased her knowledge base about the American system, thus harnessing and further developing navigational capital by leveraging linguistic capital.

Sandra highlighted how this role of child translator played out into adult interactions between mothers and their children. The sense of responsibility for translating spoken language also nurtured the role of providing emotional comfort during spoken interactions. Children often understood the emotional discomfort their mothers felt when unable to communicate their thoughts in English. Thus, they intervened during a conversation, such as Sandra did, to create this comfort.

Sandra said: *I know my Mom well enough, I can tell when she is feeling anxious, there are times when I hear her talking to my friend's parents. I can tell that she's a little bit more animated which means she is anxious, not totally relaxed. I feel anxious for her because I don't want her to feel uncomfortable ... I know what she is trying to say and it didn't quite get across. I don't want her to feel dumb. If you translate for someone you're basically saying you could not say that on your own. So I have tried to join the conversation in the past and say something that kind of goes along with what she said to make sure that the thought has carried.*

Interestingly, Sandra intervened not to completely translate a thought her mother was trying to communicate, but to help maintain the flow of the conversation. Sandra acknowledged that, since her childhood, her mother's English language proficiency has improved. However, she was still misunderstood because of her accent or sentence structure. This miscommunication could stall a conversation. Sandra maintained the flow of her mother's thoughts by using her English language skills, rather than translating her mother's statements from Punjabi into English.

One of the greatest fears immigrant Punjabi Sikh women with limited English proficiency had in this study was not being able to learn English. Prabhjot said, "Yes, I was afraid that I will never understand English in my life. That is what I was afraid of." Although the immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study were very resilient in their desire to communicate despite the linguistic obstacle, many still had a feeling of inadequacy. They felt as though they had a severe

limitation that was preventing them from reaching their full potential. Parmveer highlighted how he believes this “inadequacy” has remained with his mother, although her English abilities have improved over time and she can get her point across in English.

Parmveer said: *Even now when we are like at home she was speaking to me or like my sister and she can speak it fine, but when she gets out and is under pressure it is a lot harder. They don't have the belief in themselves or the confidence that they can do it. I know it frustrates my mom. For us it's like a simple thing talking or ordering some food. My mom's having difficulty with it. She will say, 'Why can't you guys do it for me?' For us it's like just a simple order. We kind of don't take that into consideration of how difficult it is.*

Parmveer's perception of his mother showed how unaccented English, when spoken grammatically correctly, influenced his mother's perception of herself as an immigrant in the United States. Although she could communicate in English, she had internalized her accented English as a limitation, which impacted her self-perception as an English speaker. Thus, she relied upon her children for support, even when she did not need it.

Kulwant shared how not knowing the English language, but having increased family responsibilities as an immigrant Punjabi Sikh mother, increased the stress she felt in the United States.

Kulwant said: *Puth¹⁶, the experience is that when we came to this country, we knew very little English. Because of this, education is very important in your life. For parents who come here first, it is very hard for them. They have to work; they have to think about children's study, and their games. They have to do triple jobs. Within that they have to do more work. For you guys, you will have to do less work, it will be easy.*

Thus, the ability to speak English would make it easier to navigate America when caring for one's family. One could learn new information and ask questions. Hence, the importance of education was reiterated because through schooling one could enhance one's English language skills, specifically the children of immigrant mothers.

¹⁶ Term of endearment

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers' participation in schooling provided an opportunity to further develop their English language skills and their children's. For Navdeep, this participation consisted of volunteering in her children's classrooms whereas Parminder enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses in her local neighborhood.

Navdeep arrived in America with a Master's in English, but spoken English in the United States was very different from what she used to in India. Navdeep highlighted how engaging in her children's schooling and taking college courses to obtain a teaching credential were critical to her English language development.

Navdeep said: *Well I taught for five years English over there [i.e. Punjab], so the accent as you said was different ... actually it made a difference when I started going with my kids to school. Started in preschool with my son. I used to stay there because it was a parent participation school. I stayed there for two or two and half hours. We learned some songs ... it gave me more experience in talking in English.*

Thus, Navdeep's participation in her son's classroom helped her develop her English language skills by learning songs and speaking with other parents and teachers. Interestingly, her son's preschool was one of the first American institutions she engaged as an immigrant in the United States. Thus, Navdeep and her son began their American schooling together. In a sense, they supported each other's social capital development. Navdeep would not have entered an elementary school classroom if it was not for her son. They both learned English, although at different levels, and how to engage in a new cultural system.

Navdeep added: *Going to the children's school I learned a lot. I would go with them whenever there was a special event in their classrooms and I would go on fieldtrips with them. So that made a difference ... the education set-up in India is entirely different. The kids were learning things here that I learned as I grew up. I was doing my Bachelor of Education and I learned about phonics and stuff like that. They were learning about phonics in kindergarten and first grade. So that was kind of a refresher course for me. We did not learn English through sounds and all that, we just read a lot, starting in 6th grade, and from there on cramming*

things and stuff like that. But here the things were different. I learned a lot by going to my kids' classrooms.

Navdeep highlighted how participating in her children's classrooms helped "refresh" the English language skills that she had "crammed" into her head while in India. The "refreshing" happened because of a new style of teaching, and also because the need to speak English in an American way was pressing. Thus, in many respects, Navdeep and her children were learning English together in the classroom, building their social capital. Through her parental participation in her children's schooling, Navdeep was able to enhance her English language skills, which was necessary in America to harness various opportunities. Navdeep later enrolled in college courses to gain her teaching credential.

Parminder shared that she and her daughter, Inderpreet, attended neighborhood ESL courses together. Parminder arrived in the United States along with her children and husband. A male relative had applied for them to come to America through the family reunification process. Parminder had very limited English proficiency. She had a high school education and worked hard as a stay-at-home mother in her Punjabi village. She and her husband migrated along with their children in order to provide their children with better opportunities for social and financial mobility and stability. When Parminder arrived in the United States, she discovered the pressing need to have English language skills in order to enter the job market and navigate the new American system. She was hoping to gain basic language skills. She learned of an ESL course being offered in her neighborhood. Parminder joined the class and brought her daughter along with her. In the evenings they would both go to class. Parminder often practiced her language skills with her daughter, which encouraged Inderpreet to also enhance her English skills. In essence, Inderpreet was learning English in her public school classroom and in her mother's ESL course. Parminder and Inderpreet also learned English together by practicing it together. This

process reiterated the importance of an education to Inderpreet because her mother was modeling it to her by taking ESL courses, thus leveraging and further building their aspirational, linguistic, social, and navigational capitals.

Navigating the Job Market

Children in this study helped their immigrant mothers navigate the American employment system through their language and social skills. This support also helped their mothers who were small business owners. By providing this assistance, children became very knowledgeable about a system that many non-immigrant children learn at a later age. Out of necessity these children played active roles in their mothers' employment experiences, thereby creating a deeper bond and sense of responsibility towards each other and building aspirational and navigational capitals.

Kulwant shared how her daughter helped her navigate the employment system in California. As Kulwant moved from one manual labor job to another, she worked hard for an increase in pay by a few cents or a dollar. After becoming a baptized Sikh [*amritdhari* Sikh], she no longer wanted to work near meat products because *amritdhari*; Sikhs often avoid handling and consuming meat and alcohol. Although her factory job was stable and gave her decent pay, she chose to leave it because of her religious commitment. As she navigated her social network to find out about other job opportunities, she came upon an office job that paid much better than her previous factory jobs. She asked her daughter to fill out an application on her behalf. Later she got the office job. Surprised that she was hired and given better pay than other initial hires, Kulwant knew that her daughter's ability to fill out the job application played a key role in getting her this job. Most importantly, Kulwant's daughter knew how to write in English.

Rashminder described how her mom wanted her help talking to business associates in English when she ran into obstacles. Prabhjot, Rashminder's mom, co-owns a small family business.

Rashminder said: *This morning there was a problem. My mom told me to call and say that the item they wanted was broken. She wanted me to lie and all this stuff. Mom I don't want to do this because I don't want the guy to get mad at me. Every time the person gets mad she will give me the phone. You talk to them. It's because I can argue in English with them. She will try to blackmail me too. She says, "if I knew English then I would not need to ask anyone." I was like Mom you know English. And then she will blackmail us with that. She always says it. I understand that it is not the best English. But we are doing fine. We are well off. She will say, "if we knew English we would be unstoppable. Only if we could talk English like you guys." My Mom sees my cousins that are not doing anything with their lives. Born and raised here and have not finished high school. My mom will say, "Wow what a waste of English." She will say, you know the language how can you be so no good. If we knew the language, then see what we would have done. Only because of the little we know we have been able to do this.*

Rashminder highlighted the integral role she had in her family business because of her English language skills. It was frustrating for her to translate because she was asked to do it when Rashminder believed her mother did have the English language skills to communicate. Also, Rashminder felt that her mother would "blackmail" her into arguing a point that would put her on the receiving end of anger. She felt uncomfortable doing it, but was pressured by her mother, not because she did not want to use her English language skills, but because she was reluctant about the content she was expected to translate. Her mother acknowledged that this language support was essential because it was her lack of fluency that served as an obstacle to achieving more in the United States. She felt that her limited English proficiency would not suffice if the conversation with business associates got complicated.

Learning & Growing Together Inside/Outside The Home

Because immigrant mothers and their children learned together, it became difficult to

distinguish between their reflections of their children's opinions or their perceptions of their own opinions. Often research participants would say, "he felt" or "she knew." Also, their thoughts and beliefs were shared and it became difficult to understand the origins of the beliefs. This made it difficult to distinguish between a reflection or a perception of an opinion. Because learning together encouraged a deep emotional bond between mothers and their children, the reflections and perceptions of both parties became mutually influencing. Also, a strong trust was formed between mothers and their children in this study. Because of this trust, mothers were guided by their children's opinions on how to adapt to American society.

Sandra said: *One thing I will say it was hard to know what was her perception and her reflection of our perception because we were like Mom don't wear a suit, don't do this and that. She naturally wanted to do whatever made us happy. She would change out of her suit¹⁷ and she would try to be as American as she could.*

Sandra highlighted how the relationship between mothers and their children became less hierarchical, although children still had a tremendous amount of respect for their mothers.

Sandra acknowledged that her mother was clearly independent and knew a lot more than Sandra or her brother did because she moved halfway across the world without much help. She believes that the large amount of stress and responsibility managing everything on her own became overwhelming. Thus, she relied on and appreciated greatly the support received from her children.

Sandra said: *Now that we are here she likes to rely on us to do it. Do the leading. I think this was true when we were growing up too. She assumed we were good, because we were here and understood how things had to work, as opposed to, let me figure it out and teach the kids or ask around how it should be done.*

Sandra highlighted the reasons why her mother allowed them to guide her. She knew that they understood the system better and had a stronger grasp of the English language because they

¹⁷ Traditional Punjabi dress

were raised here. Ravinder wanted to utilize the children's navigational capital that they had developed. As a steadfast immigrant mother who worked long and odd hours as a medical professional, it was easier to turn to them for advice. Inevitably it was a learning experience for Sandra and her mother, Ravinder.

Ravinder said: *They guide me. I am telling Mandeep I grow up with you. I know how much you know. When you was learning, I was learning the same way too.*

Ravinder and her children learning together was not a reflection of less maturity or authority on part of Ravinder, but of an acceptance that, although she and her children started off at different phases in life, they learned together on a shared immigrant journey. In many respects, this learning together encouraged their emotional relationship to grow in strength and depth.

Many children of immigrant mothers in this study functioned as adult partners in managing the household. This was even more reflective of children, immigrant or not, who grew up in homes infected with alcoholism and domestic violence. These families experienced a compounded effect of both immigrant status and violence in the home. Most often it was the father who was an alcoholic and perpetuator of violence. Ravinder recalled how Sandra mothered her younger son as she worked long hours and her husband was absent because of his alcoholism. This kind of partnering created learning experiences and emotional bonds, which strengthened a sense of responsibility for family, although in many respects Sandra and her siblings were forced to grow up very quickly.

Ravinder said: *Sandra played a big role. When my youngest son was eight years old he said to her, "you are not my mom. I don't have to listen to you." She was like his mom because she took care of him. She would touch his head and call me. I would get phone calls, Ravinder's head is warm and he is running a fever. She would make meals for him. Now she teases me sometimes that mom you could have been a child abuser because the way I was fixing everything for them for dinner and lunch. She took a big responsibility.*

One may infer that one of the reasons that Ravinder allowed her children to guide or “lead” her was because they fulfilled adult responsibilities. Sandra recalled baking sweets and taking them to Narinder’s class for his birthday as well as attending sporting events on behalf of her parents. She was Narinder’s surrogate mother, although she was approximately four years older than he was.

Parmveer recalled a similar experience of helping his mother manage the household as she worked. He was about four years older than his sister, too.

***Parmveer said:** I was taking care of my sister on the weekends because my mom sometimes worked on Saturdays. I fed my sister and took her wherever she needed to go and just stuff around the house. My dad would, for example, clean up the house and my mom would come home and say the house is dirty. It was exactly how she left it. I had to pick up my own. It was my responsibility to help her out.*

Many of the children I interviewed stayed home alone as young children. They were managing the household and taking care of younger siblings. Sandra recalled passing her summer vacation as an elementary school student by watching English soap operas and taking care of household chores. Her teacher wondered why she was watching these shows at a young age. Sandra wondered what the alternative was. She cleaned the house, took care of her brother, and watched TV. Thus, these examples of “parentification” reflected increased responsibilities, which also increased specific kinds of social capital, such as navigational capital.

As the mothers recalled these experiences, they had a sense of guilt for leaving their children home alone, along with a tremendous amount of respect for their children because of how much responsibility they shouldered at a young age. They also believed their children were mature because of these experiences. The mothers trusted their children to behave and their

children honored this trust. Often they did not leave their children with babysitters because they did not fully trust leaving them with strangers. They thought it would be more harmful for them because in the family units, they grew up in Punjab-only family members or with close Punjabi friends (almost like family) who took care of their children. Thus, their children grew up fast out of necessity and were mature beyond their young years. This maturity allowed them to provide good advice to help guide their mothers in their integration into American society.

Gurinder highlighted how his parents, particularly his mother, leaned a lot on him.

Gurinder said: *“Yea, it’s different. I feel like they leaned on me. They trusted me a lot. So I never violated that trust. I was like I don’t need to break that trust.”*

By learning together, a tremendous amount of trust was built between parents and their children. So much trust was built, in fact, that the children felt an intense responsibility not to break it. The process of upholding this trust required a strong sense of responsibility to oneself and one’s family as evidenced by the above data. This responsibility guided many of the life decisions children made, such as educational choices.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted how the process of integration for immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study was intimately tied to the process of “learning together” with their children how to navigate various aspects of American life, which built social capitals addressed in the Community Cultural Wealth model, such as aspirational, navigational, social, resistant, and linguistic capitals. These “learning together” experiences for immigrant mothers and their children focused on three specific social phenomena: 1) adaptation to American culture; 2) providing English language support; and 3) enhancing social and emotional connections between

mothers and their children. By navigating schools and job markets, as well as managing household responsibilities, immigrant mothers and their children developed a deep intimate emotional and social connection rooted in trust and responsibility; this bond would support the development of educational goals through a collective process rather than an individual decision.

The process of “mothering” in this study lent itself to joint English language learning and understanding of American culture. Ravinder, Rupinder, and their children cited fond memories of enhancing their English language skills and social connections by watching television programming such as “Sesame Street” and “Wheel of Fortune” together. Navdeep shared how her experience of volunteering in her children’s kindergarten classroom “refreshed” her English language knowledge because she was present during phonics instruction and compelled to engage English speaking adults, such as teachers and parents, as well as children. Lastly, Parminder remembered taking her daughter Inderpreet with her to neighborhood adult ESL courses. Inderpreet served both as emotional and intellectual support. She was able to help her mother with her English exercises and socially support her in a new environment. In return, Inderpreet was exposed to more hours of English language instruction. Furthermore, Inderpreet stated this experience was a source of inspiration to continue with her higher education despite the obstacles, because her middle-aged mother took the initiative to learn English in order to provide for their family. Thus, “learning together” to build an English language skillset served to deepen social and emotional bonds and developed a sense of belonging for immigrant mothers and their children in America.

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers’ adaptation to American society was often facilitated by their children. Children were able to protect their mothers’ humanity by, for examples, supporting them in English language conversations and teaching them how to use technology

without having to endure demeaning interactions. Sandra spoke about how she helped her mother maintain the flow of English conversations, not by translating statements into Punjabi, but by adding comments to support her mother's English statements. Baljinder highlighted how her son, Parmveer, taught her to use an ATM/Credit Card machine at a gas station. He helped her gain independence without having to face a cashier who Baljinder thought would make her feel "dumb" if she asked how to use the machines. Rashminder shared how she spoke to her mother's business associates when conversations got "complicated." Lastly, Kulwant's case addressed the large role her daughter had in securing her an office job by managing her job application process. It is important to note that, although children were supportive and protective of their mothers, their experiences were sometimes very frustrating. For example, Rashminder felt that her mother would "blackmail" her into translating statements into English that would put her on the receiving end of anger. Sandra became very frustrated with her mother's deep dependence on her to do things in her adulthood that Ravinder was completely capable of doing, such as picking out her glasses.

Nonetheless, children in this study developed a tremendous amount of trust and respect for their mothers, which deepened their emotional and social connectedness. Although the experiences were often frustrating for the children, they developed a deep sense of understanding for why their mothers needed their support even when they gained English language proficiency. Moreover, as the children in this study were supporting their mothers, they, too, were enhancing their knowledge base, which most children in America do as adults. Thus, they enhanced their social capital. In essence, "learning together" encouraged personal growth in immigrant mothers and their children in this study, while helping both gain a sense of belonging in America.

CHAPTER 8: VALUE OF EDUCATION - EDUCATIONAL MESSAGING FOR MOBILITY AND STABILITY

Introduction

The value of education that children garner from their immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study is strongly rooted in their families' immigrant stories. These stories are embedded with social values that are transmitted through educational messages. Furthermore, these social values reflect various kinds of social capital that children of immigrants in this study garnered through their shared immigrant journeys with their Punjabi Sikh mothers. These immigrant journeys are rooted in the search for opportunities that provide mobility and stability. Immigrant parents, particularly mothers in this study, understood that a period of instability was inevitable; uprooting families from their home country and replanting them in America would surely bring about such turmoil. It was understood widely that the first generation, particularly the parents, would sacrifice the most in order to offer more to the 2nd generation, their children. A key opportunity that immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study wanted their children to harness was higher education. They believed education was a critical tool that would lead to more opportunities for mobility and stability; that was what animated their move to begin with.

Immigrant mothers in this study often reminded their children of the sacrifices they made in order to increase their children's opportunities in America, which, for the most part, could not have been garnered without an education (i.e. high paying careers, access to social mobility, and increasing knowledge about American systems). Children, in return, felt responsible for achieving a higher level of education, not as an individualistic, but as a collective, goal. The fruit of achieving a higher education would be shared with the entire family just as the immigrant journey had been a collective endeavor.

In this chapter, I will highlight how the value of education was constructed by immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study and their children around three main concepts: 1) immigrant “success”; 2) increased life choices; and 3) service to family and community. The first concept, “immigrant success,” addresses how mothers’ abilities to provide resources for their children to attain a higher education and their children’s achievement of a college education were important indicators of the migration process being successful. In this study, six out of twelve mother-child pairs spoke directly to this meaning-making process. In essence, immigrant mothers constructed their successes as migrants based on their children’s educational achievements. In return, children were cognizant of this meaning-making process and determined their own success, in large part, based on their ability to achieve educational goals. The second concept of “increased life choices” reflects how the value of education was constructed by immigrant mothers and their children based on the ability of higher education to increase and improve their economic and social life choices. In this study, nine out of the twelve pairs of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and one of their children spoke directly to this social process, thus highlighting that education became a necessary tool to unlock a multitude of life choices that many mothers thought would not be possible for their children in their home country of India. It is important to note that India’s large economic growth happened after many of these mothers had already decided to leave their home country. Many of them witnessed in India that mobility and stability for those who did not have economic advantages based on inherited land and self-owned businesses were largely a result of their attainment of a higher education. Moreover, a higher education that led to careers in medicine and engineering resulted in the most economic and social mobility. Careers in these fields were high paying and in-demand. The last concept of service to parents and community reflected how the value of education was based on its ability to

increase the economic and social capital of an individual to better serve his/her family and community. Through more knowledge and resources, children could ensure that they would be able to take care of their parents in old age and their families, all while helping their ethnic and religious communities become a fabric of American life by providing access to opportunities and fighting inequities.

The three aforementioned concepts will be explored throughout this chapter in three sections: 1) education as a collective goal; 2) cultural continuity and change; and 3) mobility and stability. The first section will highlight how the value of education is an indicator of immigrant success, tool for increasing life choices, and an avenue for serving family and community, which is nested with the social process of education being a collective goal. The second section addresses how these three main themes about education will go through cultural continuity and change as they are practiced in second and third generations. Lastly, the section on mobility and stability will illuminate how the value of education is deeply embedded with the social processes of immigrant families striving to achieve their goal of economic and social mobility and stability.

Education as a Collective Goal

In this section, interview data are presented to highlight how educational achievements are not individual successes, but collective accomplishments, for children of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study. Education is a collective goal because immigrant parents strived to replant their families in an adopted country in order to provide their children and future families access to increased opportunities. They supported financially, emotionally, and socially their children along the path to higher education. Many sacrifices were made in hopes that their children would obtain the key to their future higher education. Thus, immigrant parents,

particularly immigrant mothers in this study, served as intimate sources of inspiration for their children. In short, they were key sources of aspirational capital. Although children developed many strategies for achieving a higher education on their own, their families were the inspiration for this goal.

Amanjot shared how his mother and father used their migration experience as an example of why he should do well in school. He, in return, felt responsible for making them feel that their sacrifices and hard work had been worthwhile. They had served more as sources of inspiration than vessels of obligation. He felt that being inspired by his parents carried with it a solemn responsibility to fulfill their dreams.

Amanjot said: *It was like Amanjot, we came here to America. We really worked our butts off to make sure you have a really good future. My mom and dad basically broke it down and told us we don't want you to fail. We don't want you going down the wrong road because we have sacrificed so much so you have all this food in front of you and we always try to meet your needs. Not at any point were we not able to provide for you the things you needed, even if it was toys or clothes. Even if it took us more work we would be able to provide for you. It was a moment that clicked for me that okay I'm not here at school just for myself. From that point on I paid more attention to what's going on with them socially, physically, and mentally. Seeing not only their development through the years but also their deterioration from work. They put so much aspiration inside me. They always inspired me to go further than what I'm capable of and just keep trying because they are trying.*

Amanjot's parents had this conversation with him after a parent-teacher conference in elementary school. The teacher informed them that he was not doing well. Now as an undergraduate student at a prestigious university in California, he remembered the conversation as a critical point in his life. He realized the importance of education and what it meant to his family. If his parents could keep overcoming obstacles, then he could, too. They were his source of aspirational capital to overcome various obstacles in his life to obtain a higher education. He was attending school not only for himself, but also for his family. His academic

success would show that his parent's sacrifices were worthwhile. It would be a form of validation for migrating to America that only he could provide.

Manmeet added how Asian parents, specifically immigrant Indian parents, supported their children in pursuing educational goals. She found this support to be in contrast to the support provided by the majority of American families.

Manmeet said: *That it was worth for them to move their entire life to help us, to give us this opportunity and we took advantage of the opportunity. That moving to America was not in vain. If you take like the example, they often help you finance your education, even after college if you need to live with them that is okay. You need any kind of help and they are always there. In traditional American household the kid is 18 and the kid is gone. They figure out how they are going to pay for college. Maybe the parents will help. They get loans and work part-time jobs. After they graduate they are pretty much on their own. Whereas in our community, the kids are involved somewhat. There never really is a separation. It's their [Indian parents] success also because they have invested so much. With it's time or finance. They sacrificed so much for their kid's education so it is their goal also.*

Manmeet highlighted how immigrant Indian parents were invested in their children's educational goals through devotion of time and finances. The accumulation of these finances for immigrant families across educational and class levels was based on sacrifices and hard work, the types of sacrifices and kinds of hard work varied across class and education levels. However, all immigrant families encountered obstacles in order to reestablish their families in a new country. Thus, the ultimate goal of social mobility and stability was achieved by immigrant parents by supporting their children's educational goals. Therefore, achieving a higher education became a collective goal.

Parmveer shared the emotional and social aspects of education being a collective goal for immigrant families in this study.

Parmveer: *That's part of what is expected of us. They came here for us. They left their family and all their friends and came here for the opportunities for themselves and us. That's why I want to get as far as I can.*

Ravneet: *In some ways you are kind of a representation of your parents?*

Parmveer: *Yea, it's like I am like the reason why they came. Sometimes other parents come and their children start straying away. What is their family value? You see their parents crying. That's like their product and they're not happy with. My mom sees my sister and me in school and she is proud of us. It's like we are living their dream. They are living their dreams through us.*

Parmveer conveyed that pursuing educational goals would reflect the success of his parent's migration. He wondered if their sacrifice was worth it. Also, parents often sacrificed the most by leaving their friends and family behind and reestablishing themselves in a new country. Thus, they didn't always get to live their dreams of a lifetime of stability and mobility. It was their children who they worked hard for in order to ensure that they would get to live a life of more stability and mobility. Thus, they lived vicariously through their children. Moreover, children were cognizant of this dynamic. Therefore, the process of achieving educational goals became a collective endeavor.

In Kamal's case, her mom shared how her high level of formal education helped her navigate the American system as an immigrant in easier ways than other family members who had less of a formal education. These examples reiterated the importance of education.

Kamal said: *She [mother] would say, you know me I have this, I went to college, and I learned these things and a lot of people don't. And we experienced it. She would talk about it after the experience. I think I learned that it [education] was valuable period. There was just a lot of value to it. It was just going to make life all around experience more pleasant, I guess. It was going to help you. I don't know how. There was never a direct thing about how. You know, I was never told monetarily it was going to help me directly. Just that life would be better. I would have a better personality and be a better person if I had more knowledge. I think that is it. That was the main thing, life would just be easier. I wouldn't say*

easier but it would be easier to get through life and get to the things I wanted for myself and for my family in the future if I had an education.

Kamal's mother's reflections on how her education helped her integrate into American society served as an example for why Kamal should seek a higher education. She was reminded that education would not make life itself easier, but it could give her tools to better navigate life's obstacles.

Sandra shared why her immigrant family valued education. She reflected on the ways her extended immigrant family believed that if their children got a higher education, then their struggles would be worthwhile. It would mean they were able to provide their children with educational opportunities they did not have. Many of them believed she had "arrived" by achieving a Bachelor's degree and obtaining a stable and professional job.

Sandra said: *For the most part none of them went to college and most of them did not even finish high school. So for them I have "arrived" because they have given their child something they did not have. The struggles they had. The adjustment. The struggle of being somebody new in a new country and having to replant yourself. I think it's a feeling that you have accomplished it. All of the struggle was worth it if your child does graduate ... It does suck when I see some of my cousins goofing around and spending their parents money and never going to school or doing anything when they finish school. You know how hard your parents worked to get you to the point that you are at. I think it does, they say it. They say it makes everything that they ever had to do, to work up to this point, worth it to know that they have this degree.*

Sandra's statement showed that education was a collective goal because her immigrant aunts and uncles felt that their hard work was worthwhile if their child got an education. It meant that they were able to provide their child with opportunities they did not have. Being able to provide access to mobility and stability, neither of which they enjoyed in their native country, would legitimize the decision to immigrate.

Bhavleen shared how her parents' reflections on their childhoods and their children's experiences in college reminded her that achieving a higher education was an important collective goal. Just as they were responsible for providing her with resources to access a good education, she was responsible for harnessing the attendant educational opportunities.

Bhavleen said: *My dad one day was at the airport and picking my brother up. He was like this is crazy, my son is coming home [from college] on a plane. I used to come home on a bike or walk home, but my son is coming home from school on a plane. I think about that sometimes and it's crazy where they were and where they brought their kids. It's like a whole world of difference. And seeing that they went from the village to here and what kind of life we are living in our house. It is very different from theirs. It would be really pathetic if we did not make something of ourselves because they went from nothing to this and they gave us an amazing life. We have this life and we can make something out of it. It is seeing that progress that makes you think I have to do something with this too.*

Bhavleen's experience highlighted how her parent's perseverance and courage inspired her to harness the opportunities provided to her, rather than revel in the comforts her parents had worked hard to create. Also, she was optimistic and appreciative of what her parents had been able to give her, despite many obstacles. Life in America was not smooth-sailing and was full of various emotional and financial complications. The resilience, courage, and faith modeled by her mother nourished her gratitude.

Sukhwant's, Bhavleen's mother's, statement provided insight into why Bhavleen felt this way. Sukhwant highlighted the parental perspective on why educational achievement is a familial goal.

Sukhwant said: *I would've felt like I would not have gotten any fruit from coming to America. What was the point of working so hard if there is no difference being in India and here? But now I do have that support that I do work hard and my children are getting an education and their life will be easier.*

Thus, immigrant mothers, such as Sukhwant, in this study highlighted why immigrant Punjabi Sikh families expected their children's lives be better in America than in India.

Education was a tool that allowed children to harness the opportunities for stability and mobility that would make life in America different than it was in India. This tool was obtained by valuing education as a collective goal that represented success for both parents and their children. It created a mutual sense of responsibility

Cultural Continuity and Change

Children of immigrant mothers in this study were socialized with various values of education ranging from hard work to mobility. The children in this research study shared how they would like to pass on these values to their own children through a process of cultural continuity and change. They hoped some values would remain the same, while others would be new.

Sandra shared that working hard and persevering were values that she wanted to instill in her children. She learned these values by watching her mother settle in California.

Sandra said: *Just knowing that you have to work hard and sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's boring and extremely challenging. Sticking with it you can achieve it and accomplish it. Knowing how long it took her to get through her Bachelor's Degree program and knowing that she kept going and kept at it. I hope they have that, too. They don't take it for granted or give-up because it is challenging.*

Thus, Sandra learned about the values of education by watching her mother persist in her own education while working as a medical professional in the United States. Although her mother did not attend P.T.A. meetings, parent-teacher nights, or participate in other forms of traditional parental involvement in schooling, she still showed her daughter through her actions the social values required to attain a good education.

Amanjot added that he was not too concerned about instilling the importance of education in his children, but was instead concerned about inculcating them with the values of hard work and struggle.

Amanjot said: *Similar things that I want to communicate to my children are hard work and struggle, but I haven't thought about education. It hasn't crossed my mind. I would definitely want my children to be people who are well-educated, like a four-year college education. I want them to most focus on the idea of struggling; putting the grind out, that kind of an education that you can't get from schooling. At the end of the day have enough money to provide. I'm pretty sure I'm going to raise them to go to a four year university. The core education values and beliefs and stuff can't be taught. They are some things that they have to witness. I have to figure that out.*

Amanjot highlighted that the core educational values of hard work, perseverance, and courage couldn't be taught to children in a theoretical vacuum; they had to be displayed practically. Children had to "witness" these values in action. Interestingly for him, he believed that they were best displayed outside the context of education. His mother taught him these values by showing them in her daily responsibilities related to family and work.

An important aspect of maintaining the importance of education was the cultural continuity and change in child socialization practices. For example, how would the development and delivery of messages around the value of education remain the same and change in future generations? The children of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study shared their meaning-making process by imagining how they would raise their own children. Some were parents, others were not. This section will explore how the children of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study believed the values of education and their transmission of them would continue similarly or change in following generations.

The process of child socialization around education was intimately tied to its value being passed on from one generation to another. Child-rearing practices concerning the value of

education were reflective of not only the importance of schooling, but also the experiences one needed to have in order to develop a deep value for education. The following participants highlighted how they wanted to preserve the expectations for higher education. Some would choose to follow similar practices with which they were socialized while others would chose not to.

Amanjot provided a metaphor of a bridge that led one from their desires to achieving their goals. This bridge consisted of a lot of struggle and skill building. Amanjot and his parents had different bridges. His consisted of struggling to get an education in order to harness prosperous career opportunities whereas his parents' bridge consisted of working hard manual labor jobs in order to provide their children with resources to gain an education. Amanjot said, "Education is the bridge ... it's just a grey area between understanding what the situation is and where you're going to end up." Thus, it is the social process that takes place on the bridge that links one's desires to achieving one's goals. Essentially, the bridge consisted of child socialization around education, which was deeply embedded in lessons learned from an immigrant journey filled with struggles and triumphs.

Amanjot continued that he wanted his children to have the same value of hard work, responsibility, and desire for a good career path that his parents, particularly his mother, had instilled in him. He felt that he gained these values by watching her do hard manual labor in a vegetable factory. As a professional, he believed that he would most likely be unable to model the same depth of the aforementioned values because he planned to work in an office rather than a vegetable factory. Thus, the next best option, he reasoned, was to send his future children to Punjab to experience farming.

Amanjot said: *I'm just going to send them to Punjab and tell them to start farming for a couple of weeks or year ... I think that would be great [slightly laughs] ... put them through some rigorous stuff from when they are little kids or something.*

Although Amanjot would like his children to endure rigorous manual work, he is adamant about wanting to spend more time with his children than his parents spent with him. He says, “keep them closer than my parents did ... I wish I had more time with my parents.” Amanjot understood that his parents were unable to spend a lot of time with him because of their long and unusual work hours at the vegetable factory.

Sandra shared how she wants to instill in her children the belief that getting a higher education is not optional. She grew up understanding that after high school came college. Although her young children are very excited to learn right now, she wants to ensure that this expectation is instilled in them as they get older. By being educated in America, she would be able to provide more guidance on the process of getting into a good college. Her mother was good at creating the expectation, but did not have the knowledge to help guide her through the different schooling phases.

Sandra said: *I would like to take that and instill it in our kids in the sense that you have to get an education. You get here and there and where you want to be through school. But knowing what I missed out on, my parent's involvement beyond the expectation of getting a good education. But involvement in education is what I would say that I am doing different because I am aware of the fact that I wished my parents would have been there.*

Rashminder also highlighted how her involvement in her future children's education will be different from that of her parents. Essentially, she shared that being educated in America will afford her the ability to be very aware of how to move through the schooling process and enter a “good college.” Thus, she will be able to provide more detailed guidance than only setting an expectation of higher education.

Rashminder said: *I think all the education stuff, they will have the advantage of knowing what kind of school they want to go to. Do they want to go to a highly ranked school or a small college that is good. I will be able to give them resources to make that decisions ... I think me being educated helps ... If there is any PTA meeting, go, if there is any concert, go. It's not a waste of time. It helps kids so much. They are more confident about who they are. What their parents look like and the way they dress and all that. I wasn't as much. My parents did not know that you should go to a concert. Me being educated helps me make better decisions about them. The decisions I am making for myself, I will make for them. This school is good or bad. This stuff works or does not work.*

Rashminder highlighted the value of being educated in America. Although her parents set expectations for education and used their personal life experiences as examples, she missed having them at P.T.A. meetings or at school concerts. She felt that their presence would have boosted her confidence. But her parents did not attribute much value to attending those functions because the expectation had been set at home and it was difficult for them to attend meetings after long hours at work. Rashminder hopes to provide her children with the kind of parental participation that she missed out on during her schooling.

Sandra addressed how she wants to foster curiosity in her children, which means answering a lot of questions until they are satisfied. She did not experience this kind of parenting. Sandra shared an incident at her parent's home where she was answering a lot of her children's questions and her mother got annoyed.

Sandra said: *"Everything is a teachable moment. Doing a lot of talking with them because to some degree it gives you a headache because they talk so much now. We are always talking about what they did in school and how that relates to what is going on here ... you know, just trying to continue learning all of the time ... my mom does joke around with me sometimes because Johnny will ask me a question or Mary will, 'well why, well why.' Everything is why. And I answer each 'why' until I have satisfied them. And my mom has said, if I was that age, oh God, 'mai thappar marnaa si [give a slap]. [Laughs] Thanks, mom. That is awesome. I want to foster the curiosity than be annoyed by it. Although it is very easy to get annoyed.*

Sandra highlighted how her child's socialization practices regarding learning were different from hers and her mother's. She wanted to foster curiosity by answering questions whereas Sandra's mother would get annoyed conducting such a parenting practice. Asking and answering a lot of "why" questions rather than expecting children to observe and not talk are changes in child socialization practices between her immigrant Punjabi Sikh mother and herself. This change was influenced by Sandra being raised in an American environment. Also, her knowledge of American systems contributed to her abilities to answer a lot of "why" questions and spend more time with her children. Sandra's mother was often learning with her children and spent long hours working as a medical professional. She had little time to spend with her children in the ways Sandra now does.

Parmveer shared how he plans to bring up his mother's experiences as an immigrant in America to socialize his children with the importance of education. He said, "I think I'll bring up my mom a lot. Yea, I'll tell them that I can get my own things. That you need to look out for the family. Make sure that you're respected." By evoking the memories of his mother's hard work, resilience, and courage, Parmveer would like to show his children that education is not only a means to an end, but fosters the respect you have for your family.

Bhavleen addressed her desire to socialize her children with pressure to be responsible and achieve a good education without manipulating them. She believed her parents were able to socialize her with this pressure without "kut-mar" [physical discipline].

Bhavleen said: *"I see how people turn out when they don't have that kind of pressure you know. I am thankful for this pressure. Pressure sometimes has a negative connotation ... I don't know how they did it, I can only hope to do the same with my kids. Somehow they did something right without making us feel like we are the mercy of their "kut-mar." It's not like they are even constantly guilt tripping us. They do their fair share, [but] it doesn't feel like they're always doing it or anything. Something about how they raised us, made us realize that this is important."*

Bhavleen has highlighted how she wants to maintain the educational expectations or “pressure” without constantly guilt-tripping or employing physical discipline tactics as her parents did with her. However, she was concerned about the process of doing this kind of child socialization. Some of her concern could be attributed to her parents being immigrants and she being part of the 2nd generation. The circumstances that propelled them to practice certain child rearing skills may not exist for Bhavleen; therefore, she may be able to maintain the educational value, but change the process of, child socialization.

Kamal shared how she wanted to pass on the value of education to her children in similar ways as her mother did with her.

Kamal said: *The same way my mom did. Bring it back to experiences and books like autobiographies, that really help when you see what a kid is interested in and associate it with someone who had done it. They can see where and how that education, how those experiences will get them there. I think that is the number one way. To relate it to a real person.*

Thus, Kamal highlighted that she, unlike some of the other research participants, plans to use similar child socialization practices used by her mother. Like her mother, she plans to focus on the experience of learning. They both view it as a lifelong process. Kamal wants to instill that value into her children. Both Kamal and her mother have at least a Bachelor’s Degree. Kamal’s mother’s focus on autobiographies as a tool for child socialization is influenced by her teaching background and higher formal education.

Mobility and Stability

The value of education is embedded deeply in its ability to provide access to life stability and mobility. Many people migrate to the United States to increase their life choices in order to have stability and mobility in their lives. The immigrant mothers and their children in this

research study believe that education increased life choices related to economic, social and emotional well-being. Many of the immigrant mothers asserted that they migrated to the United States in order to increase their children's access to career and social opportunities. They believed that their home country, India, did not allow all its citizens to access a wide variety of choices based on hard work as was the case in the United States. Thus, America became a dreamland where the first generation struggled and persisted with the hope that the second would achieve its dreams. Many of the women saw and heard about this success while in India through relatives and the media.

In this section, I will show how economic and social mobility are intimately tied to the value of education and achievement of "immigrant success" for the mothers and children in this research study, thus illuminating how various kinds of social capital are leveraged to develop educational messages that highlight the importance of education. Issues concerning career opportunities, marriage marketability, and personal development will be discussed in relation to the value of education. It is important to note that economic and social mobility were often intertwined in statements made by immigrant Punjab Sikh mothers and their children.

Often the immigrant mothers in this study spoke about enduring hard manual labor and working jobs where they were paid less than they deserved. Their credentials from their home country were often not honored in the USA. Thus, they had jobs that did not fully value their skills and knowledge. The immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in my study expected their children to obtain high paying careers that valued their skills. If their children met this expectation then their own sacrifices had been worthwhile. Migration would be deemed successful if it led to mobility and stability.

Kulwant said: *I found out that those who become educated will have a better life for themselves as they will have the means to live a more comfortable lifestyle. We have had to work very hard for very little pay.*

The comfortable lifestyle afforded by a child's well-paying job also benefits immigrant parents. Amanjot added that the success he will achieve by attaining a higher education will also makes his parents' lives better.

Amanjot said: *Less struggle, better jobs, more money, less problems. That's what it basically comes down to ... what I put into academia is going to translate into the future as to what is better for me. I think in bettering myself it's going to better my parents more than anything else. That is going to have a ripple effect on future generations...*

Amanjot's statement highlighted how educational achievement by children of immigrants created mobility and stability not only for them, but also for their families. The sacrifice of one generation uprooting itself from its home country and establishing a new life in America allowed future generations to have economic and social mobility and stability. Thus, education became a familial goal rather than an individual aspiration.

Amanjot also highlighted how education is a tool that lets him access opportunities that lead to economic and social mobility and stability.

Ravneet: *Do you in any way feel like education changes your thought process about life?*

Amanjot: *Yes, definitely it does in the sense that it lets you know that there's more out there than what has been in front of your eyes for so many years ... you can wrap your finger around it and really understand it.*

Amanjot shared how education helps one become aware of the opportunities that exist in the world. Manmeet added how harnessing these opportunities increased life choices. Thus, the main purpose of attaining a higher education was to increase options on how to live one's life.

Manmeet said: *Education equals more opportunities. At the end of the day it is your choice what you want to do with that education. With an education you can become a multimillionaire if you really wanted to, or you can use that same degree and start a non-profit, you can do whatever you can with what you have.*

At least you have the choice to do whatever you want to. This is one of the reasons they came to the U.S. was to gain more opportunities and choices for their kids than they had.

Navdeep added that, as an immigrant, she believed that an education would give her children more life choices. She remembered how terrified she was when she found out that her son, a special education student, would not be able to read.

Navdeep said: *It was really different experience for me when I learned that my son would not be able to read. I used to go to meetings in his special education school. And I just could not stand the idea that my son would not be able to read. I would cry and used to feel miserable. What can I do? What other sources can I use so he can read. It was really important to me to give all my children an education.*

Navdeep's disappointment in her son's inability to read was rooted in the notion that her son's life choices would decrease. She believed that an educated person should know how to read and through this skill could access more life opportunities. Eventually Navdeep was able to teach her son how to read and write his name.

Navdeep added that she wanted to make sure her daughters obtained an education in order to gain a sense of independence. Thus, through education they could gain independence, which would help create mobility and stability in their lives.

Navdeep said: *I think that is the importance of education here. That we can earn. That we don't have to ask our husbands for anything, we can be independent. We can give our children whatever we want. I think that is the only importance of education for women here. Maybe you think differently. Maybe the girls think it differently. I think it's to be independent and have money in your own hands and use it the way they want on themselves and their kids.*

This increase in life choices made available through education included social mobility and stability. Achieving a higher education also positioned women and men differently in the marriage market than those with less formal education.

Rashminder highlighted how achieving a professional degree in law would not only increase her marketability for jobs, but also in the marriage market.

Rashminder said: *Because of the stuff that has been engrained into me. Because of my parents. The marketability and work. I think there is a truth to it. The kind of guy I am going to get if I am a lawyer is very different from the kind of guy I will get if I am a high school graduate. So, I do agree with that. Even if I don't want to. It's engrained into my mind and there is no way I can separate myself from that. But going through the system I think your way of thinking changes through education.*

Rashminder shared how obtaining a higher education influenced not only her career choices, but also her life choices. Most importantly, she personally believed in notions of marriage marketability being linked to educational achievement. It was not only her parents who espoused this belief. She continued that, with an education, one's way of thinking or "sochnee" changed. Rashminder said, "Growing up with an education you begin to question what is right and wrong. What is appropriate and what is inappropriate." Thus, she believed that by attaining a higher level of education she would meet a life partner who also thought in similar ways. For her, one's level of education was a good way to measure this kind of thinking.

The role of higher education in breaking the "glass ceiling" was also mentioned by participants in this research study. Rashminder shared how attaining a professional degree would help her break the glass ceiling for future generations. She believed that children of immigrants had to obtain a high level of formal education "because maybe we have something to prove." This desire to "prove" something is nested deeply in the notion of social class mobility.

Rashminder said: *I was talking about social class. I feel like because of where I was raised and the type of family I was raised in there is a limit in how far I can go up. Like it's not totally the sky is the limit. Like I can get up high as I can. Then my kids, will know my mom is a lawyer, they can go up much higher and become president you know what I mean. I don't have the opportunity to get that high because I don't have that back up. Like mom and dad were immigrants and I became a lawyer. Well, I can become a judge. But when my kids grow they will have the opportunities to go further, where as I had to find the opportunities and*

really seek them out. I had to be really determined to get how far I have gotten. It won't be as hard of a path for them.

Rashminder highlighted how the value of education also lies in its ability to provide social class mobility. She acknowledges that there is a glass ceiling because of her immigrant background. Education is the primary tool that will allow her and future generations to push against this ceiling in hopes of breaking it. Thus, each push reflects a step towards mobility that is not limited only to immigrants and their children, but also to their grandchildren. The notion of family extends beyond the first and second generations; it includes, also, third and fourth generations.

Lastly, education was also a tool children of immigrants could use to help their ethnic and religious communities gain social stability and mobility in an adopted country, America. A reoccurring theme in this research was the need to serve one's ethnic and religious community with one's education. Parminder shared how getting a higher education allowed one to demand one's civil rights for themselves and their community.

Parminder said: *Education is most valued in America. A well-educated person can get a good job and a well-educated person can demand their rights in every way a well-educated person is on the top more than in India. A well-educated person is necessary here.*

Thus, immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers, such as Parminder, in this study believed that it was important for their children to gain an education in the United States in order have access to financial and social resources. It was even more important to have this educational background in America than India.

She continued by highlighting that an education is even more critical in America for children of immigrants because they don't have access to the resources that their families may

have built up over generations in India. They are starting anew in America. Thus, their education was the primary resource they had in an adopted country.

Parminder said: *Children are concerned that we should have enough to eat. If you're not educated you can still get food to eat in India. Our family believes they will eat food if they get an education or not. But the kids here know that without an education there is nothing. They will not get a good job without a good education.*

Rupinder highlighted how a “good education,” which existed at the intersection of formal education, moral integrity, and common sense, allowed one to serve others.

Rupinder said: *The meaning of having a good education is having a good heart, helpful to others, explain to others with love, explain the situation, that this is meaning of this situation and this is the way it can be done. Until someone explains it to us the argument or conversation does not enter into our mind. Good education is when that humbleness comes into the person. Be kind, have patience, and have the ability to listen and help another person listen. That is a good education.*

Through this “good education” one will be able to help others by explaining complex institutions and guiding their community members to tangible resources to solve problems. Thus, the value of education lies in its ability to provide mobility and stability to oneself and one’s communities.

Conclusion

The meaning-making process concerning the value of education for immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study centered around three main concepts: 1) determining immigrant success; 2) increased life choices; and 3) service to community.

Throughout this chapter these three main concepts were explored in terms of how they were related to three distinct social phenomena: 1) education being a collective goal; 2) cultural continuity and change of child socialization practices concerning education across two generations; and 3) education being a tool for mobility and stability. Ultimately, the findings in

this chapter support the notion that social values, such as hard work, resilience, courage, responsibility, and faith, are transmitted by immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study through educational messages. These educational messages are comprised of family lessons and stories from a shared immigrant journey. These lessons and stories highlight the importance or “value” of a higher education.

Predictably, this process of developing, conveying, understanding, and acting upon educational messages was not always a smooth road. Children in this study often questioned why their parents thought education was important, for example, in terms of marriage marketability or how they expected future generations to be reared with the same values. Nonetheless, the children often agreed to the “big picture” idea of why education was important, but understood that their context of being raised in America would lead to some changes in how the value of education was interpreted and imparted to future generations. Interestingly, the children in this study planned to carry their immigrant parents’ life stories and lessons learned into their future children’s socialization practices, particularly when their circumstances, such as working in an office, would not allow them to model specific aspects of “hard work.” Based on the perspectives highlighted in this chapter, immigrant parents, specifically mothers, know that they are paving a path for their children and will not reap many of the benefits of their immigrant journey. It is their children who will be the primary beneficiaries. The goal of immigrant mothers in this study was to provide resources to their children in order to give them access to tools, such as an education, that can increase their life choices in order to create mobility and stability in their lives. These resources are garnered through social dynamics that reflect the social capital within immigrant families, such as aspirational, linguistic, familial, and navigational capitals. In return, these educational messages are understood by the children in this

study, which results in creating a sense of responsibility to harness the opportunity of higher education in order to achieve the goals that reflect why their families chose to migrate to America (increased life choices and mobility and stability in life for future generations). The children also developed a sense of responsibility to share these benefits with their parents and communities through service. Education was a tool not only to be used for themselves but also to support others. In essence, immigrant parents, specifically mothers, in this study, begin the relay race for mobility and stability in an adopted country and their children are the torchbearers.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This research project developed out of a need to highlight the dynamic ways that immigrant parents participate in their children's schooling, which do not conform to conventional notions of parental involvement. This study illuminated how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers participated in their children's schooling by leveraging human and social capital, which was created through a shared immigrant journey with their children. Previous research studies have shown that immigrant parents are using their knowledge and skills to participate in effective ways in order to maintain high educational expectations (Gibson, 1988; Barton et. al., 2004; Lopez, 2001). However, more research needs to be done to illuminate what this social phenomenon looks like, particularly the process of transmitting social values, which support the importance of education. Thus, this research study was an attempt to better understand the social processes embedded within immigrant parental participation by using the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in California as a case study.

This project highlighted a kind of immigrant parental participation that capitalized on the strengths within minority communities. Often these strengths have been overlooked and immigrant parental participation has been understood through a deficit perspective where the benchmarks are traditional notions of parental involvement. This strengths-based investigation required using "anthropological stances and methods of inquiry that counterbalanced deficit discourses" such as "funds of knowledge," "community cultural wealth," "standpoint theory," and a grounded theory approach (González, Wyman, & O'Connor 2011, 491). Interestingly, all these approaches were best practiced through a qualitative framework.

By taking a standpoint feminist approach to qualitative research, I ventured to understand how immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in this study, all situated in California, made meaning of

their life experiences at home, work, and in general American society (Harding, 2004; Rayaprol, 1997). An integral part of this kind of investigation was comprehending the different ways immigrant women made sense of their gender roles as immigrants. This process required conceptualizing women's experiences in dynamic and varied ways in order to not re-victimize them (Bhachu, 1999). This research project was a humble attempt to illuminate Punjabi Sikh women as agentic human beings who cultivated a tremendous amount of resiliency, courage, and faith through their immigrant journeys often filled with obstacles and triumphs. My attempt is best illuminated by K. Olson's and L. Shopes' (1991) statement, "Only by being citizen-scholar-activists rooted in a community over an extended period of time do we have the opportunity to develop the networks, the political insights, and the creditability that may enable our research to be useful in a process of social change. By doing work where we have personal commitments, our academic contributions are more likely to come out of a personal, creative, politically engaged self, one that has a social – and not simply academic – purpose" (p. 201).

Summary of Findings

The findings from this research study show that immigrant parental participation was a dynamic and nuanced social process through which social values were transmitted from one generation to another through the cultivation of human and social capital embedded within a shared immigrant journey between mothers and their children. Therefore, it was important to understand what the immigrant experiences of immigrant parents, specifically immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers in California in this study, were in order to have a better understanding of the context in which mothers developed the value of education as immigrants and "learned together" to adapt to American society with their children, which is known as constant acculturation

(Gibson and Koyama, 2011). These opportunities for “learning together” to adapt to American society lent themselves to the co-construction of human and social capitals illuminated in the Community Cultural Wealth model by immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children that I studied (Yosso, 2005). This learning was done by leveraging “funds of knowledge” (González, Wyman, & O’Connor, 2011) located within immigrant families, which allowed them to survive the hurdles of resettling in a new country. These “funds of knowledge” were strengths immigrant families had in order to navigate through different environments, such as work, home, school, and general American society. Often one’s ethnic community served as social and moral resources (Zhou, 1997), as when Sandra’s family took the advice of a fellow immigrant Punjabi Sikh family’s daughter to allow Sandra to leave home for college. Another example involved Kulwant’s desire to connect her children to their faith community, Sikhs, in order to buffer them from going the “wrong” route and not pursuing a higher education. These kinds of historically constructed knowledge and resources were developed into different kinds of human and social capitals, which were then used by mothers and their children to develop, interpret, and enact educational messages.

The processes of constructing, understanding, and enacting educational messages illuminated just how social values regarding the importance of education were transmitted from one generation to another. These social phenomena were complex and nuanced processes through which social values underwent a process of cultural continuity and change. Ultimately, they (the mothers) highlighted that the value of education lies in providing opportunities for social and economic mobility and stability, of which parents expected their children to be the primary beneficiaries. Immigrant parents mostly paved the road to these opportunities in their lifetimes. The key tool for harnessing these opportunities was higher education. Higher

education was not simply a degree, but a vehicle for better understanding and managing life circumstances. The purpose of immigrant parental participation was to encourage the development of educational aspirations in their children, by conveying educational expectations through messages that contain social values, such as resiliency, courage, hard work, faith, and service, which were rooted in life lessons from the immigrant experience. Therefore, struggles and difficulties endured by the mothers in this study were transmuted into messages full of educational aspirations and expectations. In return, their children interpreted these messages and utilized the human and social capital embedded in them to pursue educational goals. Moreover, “immigrant success” was constructed by immigrant Punjabi Sikh families in this study based on the educational achievement of children. This construction was rooted in education being a collective goal that was pursued, supported, and whose benefits were reaped by, the entire family.

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh Women’s Experiences

Unpacking immigrant women’s experiences, particularly those of Punjabi Sikh women in California, was a feminist project rooted in the need to illuminate the “voices within” the varied obstacles and triumphs the women in this study encountered during their transnational journey. South Asian women’s experiences in the United States, particularly immigrant Punjabi Sikh women who are also mothers, has been, for the most part, overlooked in immigrant and South Asian studies. This case is particularly salient in creating a narrative about Punjabi Sikh migration, the oldest and largest South Asian group in California, to the United States. More studies have been done in the United Kingdom and Canada (Bhachu 1988, 1991, 1996, 1999; Sharma, 1995). These studies served as references for designing this research project because

often Punjabi Sikh community activists look to the United Kingdom and Canada to anticipate trends that may occur in American-based Punjabi Sikh communities because the diaspora in the United Kingdom and Canada is older and larger than that in the United States. Because the Punjabi Sikh diaspora is younger in America, the immigrant population is particularly larger in numbers compared to 2nd and 3rd generations in this community.

Interestingly, a study on Indo-Canadian immigrant women highlighted that South Asian mothering particularly lent itself to participation in schooling because this activity most often fell within the realm of domestic responsibilities (Sharma, 1995). Thus, it was imperative to not only interpret the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in California across migration and education levels in more dynamic and less “victim” orientated frameworks as part of a feminist project in migration, but also to gain a more complex and nuanced understanding of immigrant parental participation. The general findings from this project highlighted that education was not simply a degree, but a vehicle for better understanding and managing life circumstances. The development of these beliefs could be traced through immigrant Punjabi Sikh women’s reasons for migration, initial impressions of the United States, role in decision-making, experiences with familial substance abuse and domestic violence, challenges with the English language, and navigating the American workforce.

Overall, the findings regarding immigrant Punjabi Sikh women’s experiences across different contexts supported Bhachu’s (1998) belief that Sikh women’s earning power in immigrant households did “... not necessarily lead to the reversal of role but to recognition by women that they have a right to assert their opinions about household management and to negotiate more favorable positions for themselves vis-à-vis their menfolk.” Thus, for example, this pattern was shown in the case of Tajwant Kaur, who gave her paycheck to her husband and

received a monthly allowance, but felt she could advocate for more trips to visit family in Canada and order in dinner rather than cook once she started contributing money to the family income. However, an increased right to assert opinions by being a wage earner was a complicated process. Sandra Kaur, for example, shared that her mother earned more than her father and had the means to leave their abusive marriage, but chose not to because she feared the social stigma that would come from the community and her family. This social stigma was heavily embedded within notions of patriarchy. Thus immigration did not lead to a continuation or change in patriarchal norms, but, instead, to a redefinition or renegotiation of them (Louie, 2002).

It is important to note that some of the women in this study wanted to work outside of the home to gain independence. There was not a financial need for them to work. Often they were negotiating with their husbands the need to work outside of the home to gain independence. Some other women had to work as a means of survival. For some this necessity to work to help establish the family in America was compounded by their husbands' substance abuse problems. Ultimately, for the vast majority of women, they immigrated to America for the economic opportunities and were expected to contribute to the family income in order to establish the family in America. In a community where arranged marriage is a common practice, many Punjabi Sikh women, in this study, shared that they migrated as dependent wives in order to have access to economic opportunities that would help soothe various social and personal issues back home. For many, marriage was an avenue for mobility, not merely for their personal mobility, but for that of their natal families and future children. Some of these women were aware of the struggles they would encounter on the path to achieving the "American Dream" whereas others only saw America as a "dream land."

Immigrant Punjabi Sikh women that I studied spoke about the “2nd shift,” a concept made popular by Arlie Hochschild, of coming home from work to another set of familial responsibilities. It is within this context that the children of these mothers were a tremendous support. They helped their mothers manage care-taking responsibilities and other household needs, such as paying bills. The children were witnesses to and co-partners with their mothers on this immigrant journey where their mothers modeled values such as resiliency, courage, and faith, to them. These were necessary values to accomplish any goal in life, particularly education. The mothers and children I studied developed deep social and emotional bonds with each other, which encouraged the development of the belief that individual successes were really collective accomplishments.

Resiliency, courage, and faith played critical roles in how the Punjabi Sikh women in this study navigated their experiences as immigrants in California. The practice of these characteristics was nested deeply within the experiences they had in America at home, at work, and in society at large. As they navigated decision-making, language issues, emotional instability, and the job market, we saw how their resiliency, courage, and faith were tested and enhanced. They refused to allow their victimizing circumstances to create a “victim-hood” in them. The children of the women in this study were often the guiding light for their mothers’ decisions to move forward. Thus, children were a strong source of social and emotional support by mirroring courage and resilience to their mothers during moments of difficulty. Ultimately, mothers modeled resiliency, courage, and faith to their children who mirrored it back to them. This process supported the children’s attainment of aspirational, familial, and navigational capitals as outlined in Chapter 2 (Yosso, 2005).

As children supported their mothers through difficult circumstances, they also learned how to navigate the American system. In many respects, they became partners in life. In Prabhjot's, Ravinder's, and Kulwant's cases, their children helped provide the emotional and social support that their husbands could not give because of their substance abuse issues. These shared experiences, among others, between mothers and children, were often used by mothers as examples when socializing their children with the importance of education. Education meant more life choices and access to information on how to best harness good opportunities.

The importance of education was also rooted in the transnational experience. Immigrant Punjabi Sikh women in this study often spoke about the role their education from Punjab played in the United States. They also compared the life experiences of married women in Punjab to those of women here in America. In addition, they compared the role of education in Punjab versus America in harnessing opportunities for growth. Through these comparisons they highlighted the importance of their resilience and courage. These values fueled their success in the United States. Also, these women's children were reminded about why their mothers had made sacrifices and overcame obstacles in order to provide their children with more life choices. Thus, as the social and emotional bond between mothers and their children grew through immigrant experiences, children also began to feel responsible for obtaining an education in order to access these life choices and make the most fulfilling decisions.

A major finding in this study was that educational and social class levels influenced the resources the immigrant Punjabi Sikh women had in order to manage their new lives in the United States. However, they did not create large differences in the characteristics and values these women enhanced while reestablishing themselves and their families. The manner in which these women expressed their beliefs, the examples that they highlighted, and the obstacles they

encountered varied across education and class levels, but did not necessarily create a difference in the degree of resiliency they displayed.

Learning Together

The shared immigrant journey between immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children in this study created opportunities for “learning together” to adapt to American society, such as navigating schools, the job market, and English language learning. These “learning together” opportunities occurred during a process of constant acculturation where parents and children were simultaneously integrating into American society. These opportunities required leveraging “funds of knowledge” within the family and communities to co-construct human and social capitals according to the Community Cultural Wealth model, highlighted in Chapter 2, which served as resources and strategies for acculturation. Thus, the family was not a “problem” that children of immigrants needed to overcome, but a source for actively developing strategies and devices to respond to daily challenges (Arzubiaga, Noguerón, and Sullivan, 2009). These practices lent themselves to the development of social capitals, which directly challenged deficit views of Communities of Color. Thus, immigrant parental participation was composed of these practices and the development of social capitals, and did not fit into traditional Bourdieuan notions of capital gained through growing up in white middle or upper class families or undergoing socialization through their proxy, American schooling.

This study illuminated that “learning together” opportunities were forms of immigrant parental participation in schooling, which were grounded in social relationships that supported the co-construction of knowledge, which formed cultural wealth, such as aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capitals (González, Wyman, and O’Connor, 2011;

Yosso, 2005). The findings in this study showed that “learning together” opportunities centered around three main social processes: 1) adaptation to American culture; 2) language support; and 3) enhancement of social and emotional connections. Of the twelve pairs of mothers and children in this study, nine pairs spoke directly to the process of adaptation to American culture, which included learning how to use ATM machines, understanding the cultural nuances of communication, and managing caretaking responsibilities in the home. English language learning was also a prominent theme for “learning together” opportunities; seven out of twelve pairs spoke about this phenomenon. These opportunities consisted of watching children’s programming together, such as “Sesame Street” or attending adult ESL classes together, or having a child translate business documents. Inevitably, all “learning opportunities,” regardless of the frustration, deepened the social and emotional connection between mothers and their children, which only then encouraged a shared responsibility for educational achievement.

A prominent finding in this research study was that the process of “mothering” lent itself to joint English language learning and understanding of American culture. Ravinder, Rupinder and their children cited fond memories of enhancing their English language skills and social connections by watching television programming such as “Sesame Street” and “Wheel of Fortune.” Navdeep shared how her experience of volunteering in her children’s kindergarten classroom “refreshed” and “enhanced” her English language knowledge because she was present during phonics instruction and compelled to engage with English speaking adults, such as teachers and parents, as well as children. Lastly, Parminder remembered taking her daughter Inderpreet with her to the neighborhood adult ESL courses in which she enrolled. Inderpreet served both as emotional and intellectual support. She was able to help her mother with the English exercises and socially support her in a new environment. In return, Inderpreet was

exposed to more hours of English language instruction. Furthermore, Inderpreet stated this experience was a source of inspiration to continue with her higher education despite any obstacles, because her middle-aged mother took the initiative to learn English in order to provide for their family. Thus, “learning together” to build an English language skillset served to deepen social and emotional bonds and develop a sense of belonging for immigrant mothers and their children in America.

Also, immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers’ adaptation to American society was often facilitated by their children. Children were able to protect their mothers’ humanity by, for example, supporting them in English language conversations and teaching them how to use technology without having to endure demeaning interactions. Sandra spoke about how she helped her mother maintain the flow of English conversations, not by translating statements into Punjabi, but by adding comments to support her mother’s English statements. Baljinder highlighted how her son, Parmveer, taught her how to use an ATM/Credit Card machine at a gas station. He helped her gain independence without having to face a cashier who Baljinder thought would make her feel “dumb” if she asked how to use the machine twice. Rashminder shared how she spoke to her mother’s business associates on behalf of her mother when conversations got “complicated.” Lastly, Kulwant’s case addressed the large role her daughter had in securing her an office job by managing her job application process. It is important to note that, although children were supportive and protective of their mothers, their experiences were sometimes very frustrating. For example, Rashminder felt that her mother would “blackmail” her into translating statements into English that would put her on the receiving end of anger. Sandra became very frustrated with her mother’s deep dependence on her to do things in her adulthood that Ravinder was completely capable of doing, such as picking out her eyeglasses. Thus, the shared immigrant

journey between immigrant mothers and their children in this study created a very strong co-partnership, which had its affordances and constraints. At times it became very frustrating for the children because the relationship had elements of “co-dependence” while the children wanted to support a sense of independence in their mothers.

Nonetheless, the children I studied developed a tremendous amount of trust and respect for their mothers, which deepened their emotional and social connectedness. Although the experiences were often aggravating for the children, they developed a deep sense of understanding for why their mothers needed their support even when they gained English language proficiency. Moreover, as the children in this study were supporting their mothers, they, too, were enhancing their knowledge base, which most children in America gained far later as adults. Thus, they enhanced their social capital. Ultimately, all of these experiences contributed to the mothers’ and their children’s educational aspirations and expectations.

Value of Education

The social transmission of values, such as resiliency, courage, faith, and perseverance through educational messaging ultimately led immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children, in this study, to construct meaning regarding the value of education. The meaning or “value” of education centered around three main concepts: 1) immigrant “success”; 2) increased life choices; and 3) service to community.

The first concept, “immigrant success,” addressed how mothers’ abilities to provide resources for their children to attain a higher education and their children’s achievement of a college education were important indicators of the migration process being successful. In this study, six out of twelve mother-child pairs spoke directly to this meaning-making process. For

example, Sandra Kaur spoke about how her immigrant family believed she had “arrived” because she got a college education and had a well-paying job. Parmveer Singh spoke about how he was the reason his parents came to this country. In some respects, he was a reflection of them and their “success” in America. It disheartened him to see other Punjabi Sikh parents cry when their children went down a path of segmented assimilation (downward mobility). He felt they were crying because they were not happy with their “product.” Interestingly, Rupinder Kaur stated that she always wanted her children to gain a higher education because she believed they would not be able to work as “hard” (in terms of physical labor) as she did because they were raised in “softer” environments with less corruption and easier access to luxury items, such as air conditioning and smooth roads. The “air conditioning” and “smooth roads” symbolized some of the big differences between the American and Indian systems. Sukhwant Kaur supported Rupinder’s statement, by using the metaphor of rabbits being raised in cages (children of immigrants in America) versus the jungle (immigrant parents from developing countries, such as India). Sukhwant said, “ ... it's like having a pet. Like a rabbit. You keep that rabbit at home in the cage. That pet learns only how to live in this cage, which is this house and this society. The same rabbit, if it lives in the jungle it has to face so many bigger animals every day, every second. It has to think about how to survive. That is how we learned-in the jungle-how to survive. And you learned how to live in the cage.” Interestingly, Sukhwant also added in her interview that her children responded to this comparison by stating, “that’s how you raised us.” They highlighted, therefore, that some immigrant parents, such as Sukhwant, provided the resources that allowed their children to live comfortably in a “cage” because it indicated the parents’ “success” of being able to provide a safer and more comfortable environment for their children to grow in comparison to their own upbringings.

Rupinder added that she believed other immigrant parents expected and accepted working in harsh and physically strenuous conditions because they needed to replant their families in America and needed immediate access to money. Thus, her expectation was that her children would “move up” or fare better socially and economically than she did (Zhou, 1997). Because of this expectation she had tried to provide as many resources as possible to encourage them to work hard in educational environments, which made them “softer.” Therefore, she knew her children could work hard and be resilient, but not in environments requiring intense physical labor, because her expectation was for them to work in less physically strenuous environments. Her son, Bhavdeep Singh, understood what his mother was saying, but was uncomfortable with being called “soft” and felt that his finance work tired him mentally, which in turn affected his physical state. Lastly, Sukhwant highlighted how the concept of “here” and “there” (Suárez-Orozco, 1987) was not only used by children of immigrants to develop educational aspirations and expectations, but also by parents. Sukhwant spoke about how her immigrant journey to America would not have been fruitful if her children were not accessing better opportunities than they would have in India. By seeing her children excel in school she felt like they were supporting her as she continued to do hard work. In essence, immigrant mothers constructed their successes as migrants based on their children’s educational achievements. In return, children were cognizant of this meaning-making process and determined their own success, in large part, based on their ability to achieve educational goals.

The second social process of “increased life choices” reflected how the value of education was constructed by immigrant mothers and their children based on the ability of higher education to increase their economic and social opportunities. In this study, nine out of the twelve pairs of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children spoke directly to this social

process. These increased life choices consisted of marriage marketability, lifestyle choices, and breaking glass ceilings. For example, Navdeep Kaur spoke about the independence women gained to not only make their own money, but also in deciding how to use it. Rupinder concurred with Navdeep, but added that the independence also extended to her son; she wanted her children (a son and daughter) to not be dependent on anyone, let alone a spouse. Thus, increased opportunities also meant increased personal freedom, although the mothers were not always comfortable with the variety of choices their children could make with their freedom. These increased choices were opportunities that many of the immigrant mothers felt they never truly had. Thus, education was a necessary tool to access a multitude of life choices that many mothers thought would not be possible for their children in their home country of India. Also, education would help their children decide how to make “good” decisions.

It is important to note that India’s large economic growth happened after many of these mothers had already decided to leave their home country. Many of them witnessed in India that mobility and stability for those who did not have economic advantages based on inherited land and self-owned businesses was largely a result of their attainment of a higher education. Moreover, a higher education that led to careers in medicine and engineering resulted in the most economic and social mobility and stability. Careers in these fields were high paying and in-demand. Increased life choices also included access to better wages and work schedules that would allow children to spend more time with their families than their immigrant parents did with them. Often times, parents were working long hours with varying work schedules, such as night and weekend shifts. Gurinder Singh, the son of Kulwant Kaur, spoke about the freedom to do more of things he wanted to do, such as practicing hobbies and spending time with family. Interestingly, Rashminder Kaur, the daughter of Prabhjot Kaur, spoke about breaking the glass

ceiling that she confronted in the field of law because of her immigrant background. She believed higher education would allow her to pave the path towards breaking this glass ceiling; her children and grandchildren would actually crack the glass, she thought.

The last social phenomenon of service to parents and community reflected how the value of education rested in its ability to increase the economic and social capital of an individual to better serve his/her family and community. Through more knowledge and resources, children could ensure that they would be able to take care of their parents in old age, while helping their ethnic and religious communities become a fabric of American life by providing access to opportunities and fighting inequities. For example, Ravinder Kaur spoke about how one's education was only beneficial if one was able to support one's community's growth. Rupinder Kaur highlighted that the value of education was in its ability to cultivate values necessary for service. During the interview she stated that education was both in schools and the home. Kulwant Kaur shared how education was a skill and resource that no one could ever take away. Thus, increased life choices reflected a desire to acculturate to American society through an additive process where one integrated into American customs and life choices while holding onto familial and cultural beliefs and helping one's community grow and become a fabric of American life.

In essence, the aim of immigrant mothers in this study was to provide resources to their children in order to give them access to tools, such as education, that could increase their life choices in order to create mobility and stability in their lives. Their "success" was determined by their children's educational achievement and life choices. The resources mothers provided were garnered through social dynamics and relationships that reflected the social capital within immigrant families, such as aspirational, linguistic, familial, and navigational capitals. In return,

the understanding of these educational messages by the children in this study resulted in creating a sense of responsibility to harness the opportunity of higher education. This achievement was necessary in order to accomplish the goals, which reflected why their families chose to migrate to America in the first place (increased life choices and mobility and stability for future generations). The children also developed a sense of responsibility to share these benefits with their parents and communities through service. Education was a tool not only to be used for oneself but also for supporting others. Thus, immigrant parents, specifically mothers in this study, began the relay race for mobility and stability in an adopted country and their children were the torchbearers.

Limitations of this Study

As with any research study, this project has its limitations. With any affordances come constraints. Qualitative studies are rooted in interpretation from design to analysis and reporting. The primary limitation of this project was my inclusion of a small number of individuals from a particular gender, class, and educational background. Therefore, there was only a partial presentation of a diverse, nuanced, and complicated community's practice of immigrant parental participation. The affordance of this design was a deeper understanding of a particular groups meaning-making processes, particularly in terms of "best practices." Thus, this project lays ground for future studies to investigate the many nuanced social processes within the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in California, which contribute to constructing a narrative about immigrant women's experiences and immigrant parental participation in schooling.

As stated in Chapter 3 - Research Methods, the two main demographic limitations of this study were the exclusion of: 1) men/fathers' voices and 2) children of immigrant mothers who

did not attain a college education. The first limitation is particularly important to note because gendered experiences take place through dialectical relationships and not in isolation. Thus, to contextualize deeply immigrant women's experiences in dynamic terms, men's voices must be heard and presented. Their perspectives on decision-making, wage earning, and child rearing need to be included. Although mothers and children continuously brought up their husbands and fathers either as individuals or as parts of the parental and marital unit, these men's own voices were not heard. Thus, their varied experiences and personalities were not included in this study. I would argue that a feminist project should include their voices and future studies should consider this aspect when designing a project plan. However, this project did not include them because of the researcher's time and material constraints, and, also, the aim of this project was to listen only to the mothers' and children's voices because they had been silenced for so long. Furthermore, the women in this study arrived under "dependent" status, which in some ways continued to reflect the patriarchal nature of their marital relationships. Thus, I did not want the immigrant women in this study to censor themselves out of concern for what their husbands may say, particularly since the vast majority of women were new to the concept of research, and feminist-based research especially. I was also building my relationships with the research participants. I wanted to create a "safe" space where the fear of contradicting a more "powerful" or "authoritative" figure was not a concern.

The second major limitation was excluding children who did not attend college. The purpose for this exclusion was the need to understand what immigrant parental participation looked like for children who *did* attain a higher education. Thus, highlighting that immigrant parental participation was "successful" although different from traditional parental involvement which has been deemed as the "right way" to get one's child a good education (i.e. college

education or higher). However, the constraint of excluding the non- college attending population from this study in understanding how their experiences influenced immigrant parental participation, particularly when in some families certain children achieve a college education and others do not. This limitation affects how the findings in this study can be used to develop implications because we are left with the question of why some children from families where there are high educational expectations are not able to attain a higher education. Thus, the implications of the study can only be extended to children who do attain a higher education and do not necessarily meet the needs of students that are not able to access the American educational system.

In addition, in families where no child goes to college, it would be important to understand the circumstances of those families and how they make meaning of the value of education. Another layer to consider would be to include immigrant children who do not attend college. Currently in California, as a Punjabi Sikh community member and community activist, I have noticed the trend of many children, particularly males, not attending college and, instead, entering the work force at an early age; many start with part-time jobs in high school to help their families get established in the United States. Often they enter the trucking industry, which includes large numbers of Punjabi Sikhs in California on both the driving and business ends. Sometimes, these children get involved with drugs and other destructive behaviors because of 1) inter-generational cultural conflict, particularly in a new country where the children and parents are learning to navigate the system; 2) parents not being able to invest large amount of time in their children to navigate problems together because they are often working two or more manual labor jobs, which can include night shifts to reestablish the family; and 3) with India's economic growth has come increased consumerism inside and outside of the country. Non-Resident

Indians (NRIs) have a large hand in this development. Prior to India's vast economic growth, NRIs would travel back home and show off their "wealth," both in terms of their own material goods, and also in providing for their Punjabi families and communities (i.e. villages). These kinds of interactions created "dreams" and expectations of immediate economic wealth once one arrived in America. America was *sohnee de dharti* (the land of gold). However, reality was much different. Therefore, issues with stress, frustration, and depression can rise exponentially without a lot of parental engagement and community support. Thus, there are tarnished dreams to contend with, which lead youth to participate in destructive behaviors such as drug abuse and gang violence. Therefore, this particular group has its own set of social processes that are part and parcel of the immigrant community's engagement with formal education and adds an additional dimension of meaning-making practices.

Lastly, an ethnographic interview project has its limitations as discussed in Chapter 3 - Research Methods. As is known, people do not always say what they do. Thus, an observational study on this particular subject matter, immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers' participation in their children's schooling, would be worthwhile. This study was built off of a two-year ethnographic study of Punjabi language schools, which included various observations, and my own experiences as a community member and activist as discussed in Chapter 3. However, a more nuanced understanding of immigrant parental participation in education would require an observational element to the research design. In addition, a quantitative component to this topic could help develop more generalizable findings outside of the study sample, which was not the aim of this research project. This research study was an opportunity to examine deeply some of the social processes that compose immigrant parental participation. A survey project could help policy makers and practitioners gain a broader understanding of the similarities and differences

across Communities of Color, region, and immigrant status. I hope this qualitative study can help guide such research studies.

Nonetheless, this project afforded an in-depth examination of immigrant Punjabi Sikh mothers and their children's perceptions of immigrant parental participation in schooling. It also provided insight into the immigrant experiences of Punjabi Sikh women, who have been often overlooked in migration studies in the United States. The design of the research project accounted for some diversity within the community across migration periods, and education and class levels. Understandably, in-depth work requires examining the experiences of a small group of people, rather than investigating broadly the experiences of a large portion of the population. The Punjabi Sikh community served as a case study. Similar trends, if investigated, could also be found in other Communities of Color.

Implications of the Study

The implications of this research project influence how social science researchers and education practitioners conceptualize immigrant women's experiences and immigrant parental participation. The immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in California was utilized as a case study because I had the most intimate knowledge of this community as both a member and activist. These perspectives were necessary in order to gain deep understanding about the social processes embedded within immigrant parental participation. Only through these kinds of understandings could this project move beyond being a practice in social analysis to an attempt to contribute to social critique and change. Understandably, the limitations and contextual specifications of this study reflect the inherent complexity and diversity within humanity. However, these limitations should not prevent us from considering implications of this work

beyond a specific context. As was discussed in Chapter 3 - Research Methods, the generalizability has a different character in qualitative work that it does in more conventional social scientific research. In this chapter, I would add that the beauty of this kind of study lies in its ability to bring the reader closer to the nuanced details of social processes, which are necessary for any kind of social intervention. These interventions are ultimately attempts at instituting social change. Nonetheless, this does not negate the need to be aware of specific context-based social processes before developing and implementing interventions.

The implications of this study can be attributed to some kinds of shared experiences across immigrant groups simply because of immigrant status. Just as there are differences between immigrant groups because of historical backgrounds and context of reception in the United States, there are also similarities, such as the need to navigate a new system, learning the English language, children functioning as cultural brokers and linguistic translators, and transnational connections. Thus, this study is not an attempt to perpetuate the model minority myth, particularly considering the limitations of this project as discussed earlier. Rather the argument lies in the belief that a similar study in another immigrant group, such as Latinos, Africans, Arabs, and other Asian groups, would render similar general findings. Therefore, there are broad implications that cross many immigrants groups and some that are specific to the immigrant Punjabi Sikh community in California.

First, immigrant parental participation needs to be conceptualized by policy makers, educational administrators, and teachers from a “support” framework rather than a need to “help.” A need to “help” presumes there are deficits within Communities of Color whereas, “support” tries to leverage the strengths that lie within them. Also, deficit-thinking based on “helping” indicates that minority groups need to be more like the majority status quo (such as

immigrant parents needing to follow conventional notions of parental involvement in order for their children to gather white middle and upper class human and social capital necessary to access opportunities for economic and social mobility and stability). Thus, schools need to move beyond translating school literature from English into minority languages and enticing parents to come to school during normal school hours. Rather, schools need to support the kind of immigrant parental participation as shown in this study, which leverages the wealth of knowledge and capital that already exists in Communities of Color and supports its cultivation. For example, schools must learn how to support the transmission of social values through educational messaging based on life lessons learned through the immigrant journey. In addition, schools need to leverage students' experiences as cultural brokers and linguistic translators outside of only classroom-based curricula into family "funds of knowledge" based "lessons" for school administrators on how to understand the value of education in immigrant families. Thus, college counseling and career decisions need to be understood not as individual choices for students, but as collective decision-making that takes place within families. As highlighted in this study, immigrant parents do not need support in creating and maintaining expectations for higher education, but in gaining knowledge about the details of moving through the college pipeline and developing careers in the United States. Moreover, the immigrant parents that I studied who did participate in school activities did it in order to support the teacher and education administrators in their professional activities, rather than from a desire to critique or "monitor" public servants. They think and do this out of respect for educators as professionals. The parents I studied wondered "who they were" to critique someone in a kind of work that they do not know how to do. This belief was often coupled with long and strenuous work schedules for immigrant families, particularly those from working class backgrounds, which hindered

parental participation in traditional school activities. An implication of this is that college and career guidance sessions need to happen in community centers, outside of the school, led by members from the community (i.e. children of immigrants and/or their immigrant parents who have already gone through the American college system). For example, this might take place in Sikh houses of worship and at Punjabi community events. In these environments, guidance sessions could take place with both parents and children present, particularly when research participants conceptualize education as a collective goal. Also, counselors could help provide information to relieve intergenerational tensions mentioned by research participants, which often exist in immigrant families when making college and career decisions. Moreover, educational systems need to provide financial, moral, and material support to community-based organizations for Communities of Color who are doing this kind of work. These kinds of community partnerships are necessary to “support” immigrant parental participation.

Ultimately, the findings in this study show that the immigrant mothers I studied had a tremendous amount of respect for the American educational system. They had many hopes and dreams invested in the American educational system. They expected it to provide their children with the quality education necessary to gain the tools and skills they needed to harness opportunities for growth; that belief is what prompted their immigration.

Another implication of this study is geared towards education researchers and practitioners. The immigrant journey needs to be conceptualized as a series of shared experiences between immigrant parents and their children, particularly mothers and their children. Because this journey is shared, the human and social capital that exists within immigrant families that I studied was co-constructed as shown in Ch. 7 - Learning Together. Thus, the very act of immigrant parental participation not only leveraged social capital within families, but also

cultivated it through shared experiences between family members, such as between mothers and children. Thus, the skillsets and aspirations children of immigrants had in this study were often far more developed, different in nature, and very future-orientated in comparison to native parentage peers or other classmates who had been in the United States for many generations. The strengths and stresses that come along with them needed particular support and attention from the American educational system.

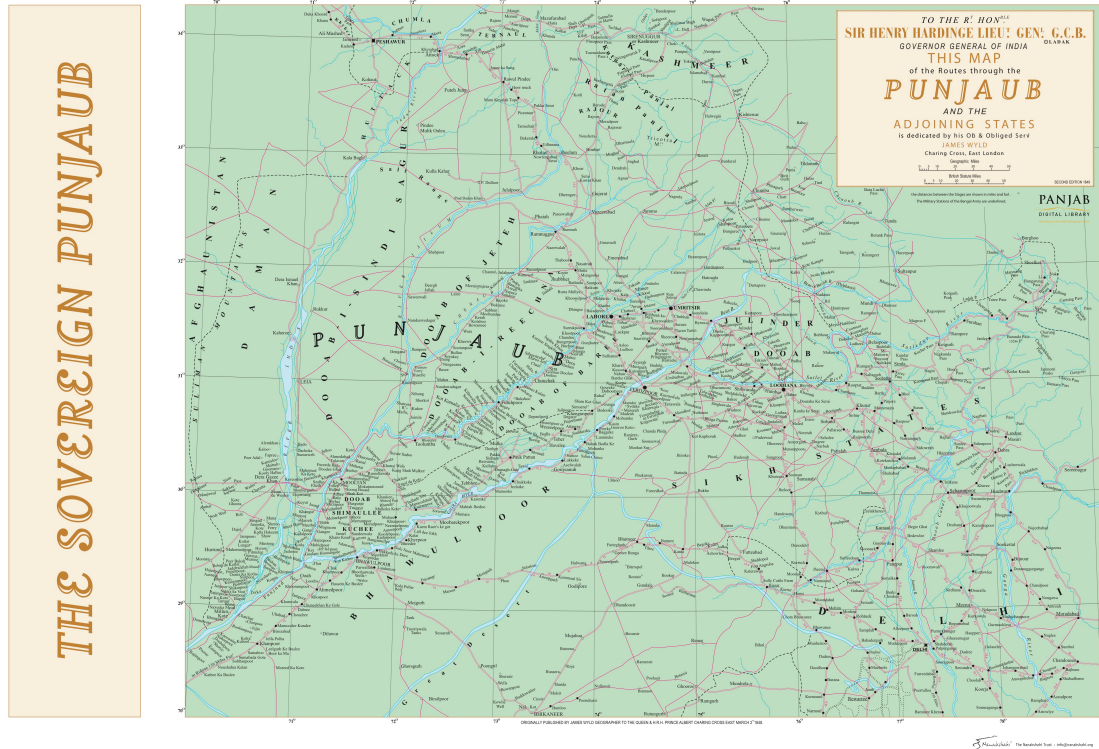
Moreover, the experiences children of immigrants had in their homes built aspirational, navigational, social, and linguistic capitals. These children often developed these capitals through a notion known as “parentification” (Jurkovic, 1997). However, “parentification” does not happen only because of a parent’s mental illness and should not always be viewed as a pathology. Often it is a common cultural and survival practice in many communities where children are raised with intense responsibility to encourage the development of maturity. Thus, adaptive parentification can happen as part of the immigration process (Jurkovic, 1997). Recent research cited in the “Los Angeles Times,” “New York Times,” and “National Public Radio (NPR)” finds that bilingualism has far more benefits than detriments. Many bilinguals have sensed this in their own experiences, but now there is research to support this claim. The articles report that bilingual children are more effective at multi-tasking, prioritizing information in potentially confusing situations, communicating with a wider range of people, and have improved cognitive skills not related to language (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Cuda-Kroen, 2011; Khan, 2011). Thus, the abilities of bilingual children of immigrants are cultivated by further developing linguistic capital. The “learning together” opportunities, such as linguistic and cultural translation, allow for this capital to be built. Linguistic capital also supports the development of navigational, aspirational, and social capitals (Yosso, 2005).

Furthermore, the implication specific to the Punjabi Sikh community in California is two-fold for researchers and community activists. One implication is understanding and incorporating the experiences of immigrant Punjabi Sikh women into the larger narrative of migration in more dynamic terms, which break myths about domestic violence and other obstacles only happening in “less” educated or wealthy homes. The second implication is using this nuanced understanding to create effective social interventions for gender inequity in the Punjabi Sikh community. Such interventions would use the tremendous resilience, courage, and faith displayed by the women in this study to create community-based solutions for mental illness and substance abuse issues. The Punjabi Sikh women I studied relied immensely on their Sikh faith for hope and strength during difficult times. More research and interventions need to be developed where faith is utilized in various ways as a solution to social problems within the community.

Lastly, the findings in this research study show that socioeconomic class is not a fixed entity within the Punjabi Sikh community in California. It is very dynamic and changes throughout the immigrant journey. Also, the correlation between education and class functions differently within the Punjabi Sikh community. Often less educated immigrants are able to run successful businesses that move them up the class ladder in ten to twenty years; however, their social capital does not always rise because of their understanding of all social systems, much like education, does not increase exponentially like their income does. Furthermore, many “educated” persons within the community are not as economically well-off because their educational qualifications are not valued in the United States and they have to take jobs below their skill levels. Therefore, “socioeconomic status” for the Punjabi Sikh community needs to be disaggregated to better comprehend the nuances of social dynamics within this population.

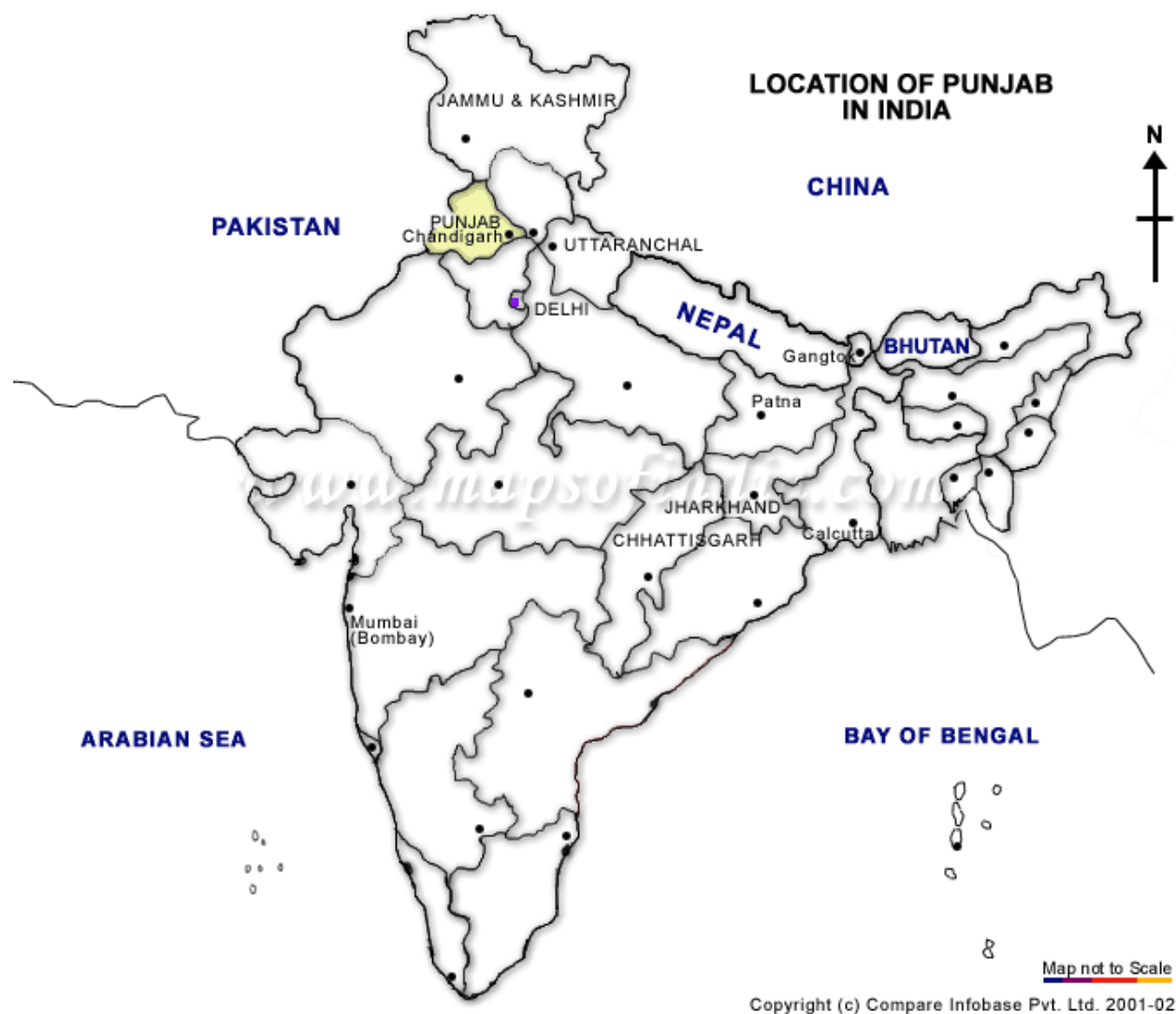
In essence, my hope is that my training in research methods and “insider” knowledge of the Punjabi Sikh community in California has helped lay the groundwork for future studies on immigrant women and children as well as immigrant parental participation. Both topics need to be explored in dynamic ways where we move beyond a “victimhood” or “deficit” perspective. Strengths-based and resilient-focused research projects should not dismiss or de-legitimize the obstacles and inequity faced by minority communities, but should, instead, convert strength acquired through resiliency by Communities of Color into creative and effective solutions that are community-based. My hope is that this project is a productive contribution to this vital work.

APPENDIX A: Historical Map of Panjab



Courtesy of: Panjab Digital Library

APPENDIX B: Map of Punjab, India



APPENDIX C: Chart of Research Participants

Participants Number	Immigration Period	Pseudonym	Relationship	Highest Level of Formal Education	Current Profession	Entry Class Level	Current Class Level
1	1965-1981	Ravinder Kaur	Mother	B.A., B.Sc.	Medical Professional	Working Poor	Upper-Middle
2		Sandra Kaur	Daughter	B.A.	Marketing Manager		
3	1965-1981	Navdeep Kaur	Mother	M.A.	Elementary School Teaching	Middle	Upper-Middle
4		Kamal Kaur	Daughter	B.A.	Not Employed		
5	1965-1981	Rupinder Kaur	Mother	Some College	Federal Employee	Middle	Middle
6		Bhavdeep Singh	Son	B.Sc.	Finance		
7	1982-1990	Kulwant Kaur	Mother	Some College	Book Keeper	Working Poor	Middle
8		Gurinder Singh	Son	J.D.	Lawyer		
9	1982-1990	Manpreet Kaur	Mother	B.A.	Cashier	Middle	Upper-Middle
10		Kulvir Singh	Son	1 st Year of College	Undergraduate		

11	1982-1990	Prabhjot Kaur	Mother	High School	Self-Employed Business Owner	Working Poor	Upper Middle
12		Rashminder Kaur	Daughter	J.D.	Law School Student		
13	1982-1990	Sukhjeet Kaur	Mother	B.A.	Factory Worker/ Nurse	Working Poor	Middle
14		Amanjot Singh	Son	3 rd Year College	Undergraduate		
15	1982-1990	Sukhwant Kaur	Mother	B.Sc. (Some M.Sc.)		Working	Upper Middle
16		Bhavleen Kaur	Daughter	4 th Year College	Undergraduate		
17	1982-1990	Mohinder Kaur	Mother	M.A.	Health/Fitness Instructor	Middle	Upper
18		Manmeet Kaur	Daughter	B.A.	Graduate Student (Masters)		

19	1991-2000	Baljinder Kaur	Mother	M.A.	Federal Employee	Middle	Upper-Middle
20		Parmveer Singh	Son	2 nd Year College	Undergraduate		
21	1991-2000	Parminder Kaur	Mother	High School	Warehouse Packer	Working Poor	Middle
22		Inderpreet Kaur	Daughter	B.A.	Graduate Student		
23	1991-2000	Tajwant Kaur	Mother	M.A.	Store Clerk	Middle	Upper-Middle
24		Yuvinder Singh	Son	1 st year College	Undergraduate		

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