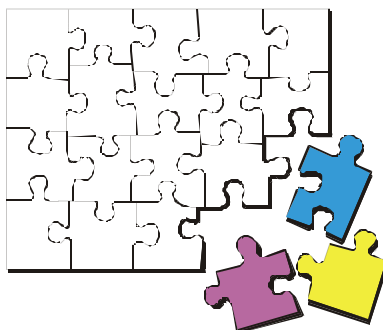


COLOUR, CULTURE AND DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS: ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA

April 2000



Written By

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and
SANGEETA SUBRAMANIAN**

For

**THE COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS (CASSA)
AND
THE SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S CENTRE (SAWC)**

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*The study represents the views and interpretations of its authors,
and not necessarily the policies of OASIS, CIC.*

And a woman who held a babe against her
Bosom said. Speak to us Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of to-morrow,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not
To make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as
Living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the
Infinite, and He bends you with His might that
His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for
Gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He
Loves also the bow that is stable.

*Khalil Gibran
"The Prophet"*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians and the South Asian Women's Centre undertook this research to explore and document settlement issues faced by new immigrant youth of South Asian background who came to Toronto at or over the age of 8 and are now between 16 and 24. The research is part of a larger study that is examining the gaps in settlement services for newcomer youth in Ontario. This research was conducted under the aegis of the Centre of Excellence in Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) and the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University and with financial assistance from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Settlement Directorate Ontario Region.

This study has been about exploring, deciphering and decoding the lived realities of South Asian youth living in Toronto. The focus group format employed to explore the experiences of South Asian youth involved organizing groups with the diversity within the broader South Asian community in mind. Focus groups were firstly held along gender lines. Secondly, we held separate groups for Tamil youth because of their particular pre-immigration experience of civil war. Thirdly, we held separate groups for Muslim and Sikh youth since religion is a significant identifier in their lives relative to other communities now living in Toronto. There were a couple of groups that were mixed and reflected the ethno-linguist and cultural diversity within the South Asian community as a whole. However, we always maintained separation by gender.

By deciphering their experiences we begin the process of understanding of how racial and cultural differences inform their lives and sense of self or identity. We learn how they cope with the pressure by defining their sense of space and location in this society. We learn that the youth are constantly balancing the dual needs of cultural conformity and resistance without having to negate their cultural identity. Some youth cope by leading bifurcated lives straddled in two cultures. It is remarkable that in spite of having to engage in processes that require tremendous amounts of energy which could be emotionally, psychologically and physically draining, the youth manage to survive in an environment that is quite hostile to their very being. Youth in this study came across as having agency derived from a dual consciousness, a sense of active and conscious role in evolving a new culture that encompasses selected aspects of both cultures.

Without minimizing or negating the challenges that youth face in arriving at this location, perhaps being young positions them somewhat differently when compared to the parent generation. It could be that time is on their side, they have more scope to develop a hybrid culture because their ideas are not yet cemented as in the case of some of their parents. The parents cling on to their culture to provide a sense of stability and security especially since they might have experienced a loss of social and economic status. Giving up their culture is more threatening to the parent generation than it is to the youth who are still questioning and experimenting. Moreover, youth and their parents find themselves experiencing shifts in their respective roles within the family and especially with the outside world. In the face of barriers such as language and unfamiliarity with mainstream institutions, youth often find themselves in the position of intermediary, translating, interpreting and negotiating for or on behalf of their parents. Some parents can only access mainstream institutions with their children as cultural brokers. Without the assistance of their children they are at a risk of being very isolated. This creates awkwardness for the youth and places an unwarranted burden on them. Parents on the other hand find their power, authority and ability to control their youth somewhat compromised. Needless to say, this experience of shifting roles places both parents and youth at risk with profound implications for family dynamics. It is these differences in the existential realities between South Asian parents and children that exacerbates the already challenging process of adaptation and settlement for youth and their families.

We learn from the youth and parents that parents approve of what modernity has to offer in terms of opportunities made possible by technological progress in more advanced industrial societies such as Canada while simultaneously disapproving of “westernization” of their children. Parents approve of modernization by their children because this represents access to better education, better living standards as well as making it possible for their children to have globally portable skills and professional credentials. The parents, however, seem to reject “westernization” of their children because it is a threat to their traditional cultural beliefs, values and mores, thus strongly disapproving of South Asian youth who adopt so-called Canadian ways of dress and behaviours. The youth are thus left with struggling to maintain a balance between modernization and “westernization.”

Integration is a difficult process as made abundantly clear by youth who spoke with us. It is a challenge for service providers and especially the education system if we are to truly facilitate this according to the principles of pluralistic integration enshrined in the Canadian constitution, Human Rights Legislation and the Multiculturalism Act which promote the acceptance of immigrants as full members equally entitled to the liberties and privileges enjoyed by the rest of society. However, like the youth said, firstly, we can begin with not taking for granted that all are comfortable and satisfied with the ways in which institutions are structured and how they go about delivering what they are supposed to. Secondly, we should recognize that there is broad-based acceptance that change has to happen. Thirdly, we should take action.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY

Purpose and Rationale

South Asian youth have immigrated with their families for any number of reasons – better overall life, better economic and educational opportunities, safer and healthier lives, civil war, to mention a few. Some of the South Asian immigrant youth have often escaped from civil war and are dealing with the aftermath of their trauma while settling into a new culture and simultaneously learning a new language. The youth, regardless of the reason for immigrating, are faced with high unemployment rates, peer pressure to fit in and significant pressure from their families to succeed academically and pursue professional careers, strict codes of behaviour around gender relationships and dating. (SACLI, 1999; Kurian, 1983, 1991; Wadhvani 1999).

Although there are support services available to newcomer immigrants of South Asian origin, there are few services that address the particular needs of youth in the community. In order to address this critical gap and the need to facilitate settlement and integration of South Asian new immigrant youth, born outside of Canada and are now between 16-24, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and the South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC) jointly undertook this research project. The purpose of the research was to explore the settlement challenges and concerns faced by immigrant youth of South Asian background to help meet their needs and assist them to integrate in a new culture while maintaining their cultural identities and strengthening their family structure and support.

South Asian, for the purposes of this research, includes youth whose origins or ancestors would be from the Indian sub-continent which includes the countries of Bangladesh, Butan, Fiji, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Thus, youth coming to Canada anytime after the age of 8 or later as newcomers from countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, as well as South Asian youth born in England, and countries of Africa, the Middle East are included as participants for the study. The study focused on 16 – 24 year olds from the various ethno-cultural and linguistic groups to help reflect the diversity within the South Asian community in Canada. This included youth from Farsi, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, and Urdu speaking communities. Moreover, by reaching out to different groups we included South Asian youth from the major religions – Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism.

Many differences exist in the cultures, languages and religions among the various groups within the collectivity commonly known as South Asian. Throughout this report the term South Asian will be used since the groups have a commonly shared history of colonialism and racism in the contemporary societies that are racialized. Moreover, as Shakir states, “‘South Asianess’, is a political expression that should be used not to homogenize the diversity and heterogeneity of South Asians but rather to construct an identity that could be meaningful within the Canadian context, especially as a base for political action. The expression, says more about the commonality of post-colonial migrant and minority Canadian experience than about the rediscovery or resurrection of a past common traditions.” (*Shakir 1995:6*). Thus, in keeping with this spirit, the expression South Asian will be used except where it is necessary to refer to the specifics and particularities of the experiences of any of the ethno-cultural sub-groups that constitute the collectivity.

Objectives of the Study

- ❑ To explore and document issues faced by new immigrant youth
- ❑ To identify challenges in the settlement process of new immigrant youth
- ❑ To identify and bridge gaps between youth views and the views of parents
- ❑ To build alliances between parents and youth

This project was undertaken as an initiative of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) put in place to serve the needs of new immigrants, that is, people who are in their first 3 years of their settlement process. The principle behind this initiative is to have programs in place for “serving the diverse needs of family.” Therefore, the desired outcome of this project is to build on the existing supports and services targeted to South Asian immigrant youth. It is hoped that the findings of this research will not only enhance the services delivered by South Asian agencies through the ongoing participation of youth and their families in identifying barriers to accessing appropriate services and support but also inform organizations and agencies within the broader Canadian society. The findings of the research will be helpful for policy makers and practitioners in educational, social and community agencies, as well as staff within the health system, to make effective interventions when working with South Asian youth and their families.

For the purposes of this report the information is organized into 6 chapters:

Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Chapter 3 Context: Locating the Research

A. Provides the framework for analysis

B. Provides a glossary of terms

Chapter 4 Methodology

Chapter 5 Findings

A. Demographic Highlights of South Asians in the GTA

B. Overview of Participants

C. Highlights from Focus Group and discussion; and

Chapter 6. Draws conclusions; and presents

A. Recommendations

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purposes of this study a literature search of Canadian sources was done to help locate existing studies on South Asian youth in Canada. The search was done not so much to start the current work with a set of formal propositions but rather to see what was available to help locate this project within a context of existing material on South Asian youth. Since there is very little literature available on South Asian youth in Canada, the following works on and about South Asians in general will be reviewed.

Although there are studies on South Asian immigrant needs and the adjustment and adaptation of South Asian families in Canada, (*Basran, G. and Ghosh, R., 1983; Kurian, G. and Siddique, M., 1983; Henry, F., 1983; Kurian, G. and Ghosh, R., 1983; Buchignani, N., 1987; Ishwaran, 1987; Kurian, G., 1991; Israel, M. and Wagle, N.K., 1993; Saidulla, A., 1993; Agnew, V., 1993; Srivastava, A., and Ames, M., 1993; Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, 1994, 1998; Shakir, U., 1995; Arora, A. and Mutta, B., 1997; Zamana Foundation, 1997; South Asian Legal Clinic, 1999*), they do not deal directly with youth experiences. The experiences, concerns and difficulties are dealt with indirectly by talking of what issues are being faced by South Asian families in general. Then there are reports on youth issues and needs. These reports are about youth in general; the only study dedicated specifically to South Asian youth was by Wadhvani, Z., 1999.

The reports on youth issues and needs have been usually undertaken by mainstream organizations, like the City of Toronto (*Toronto Youth Profile, City of Toronto 1999*); Central Toronto Community Health Centres (*Making Money, Toronto, 1999*) to name just a couple. These reports provide a good overview of youth profile, issues, needs, as well as new policy and programming initiatives to stimulate discussions about difficulties faced by youth. The main purpose of all these studies is to help improve educational, recreational, health and the broader social services for youth in general. The latest report: Toronto Youth Profile, states clearly that "it is hoped the profile will contribute strategy for youth that engages youth as partners in shaping that city's future, builds on best practices, and forges partnerships to create economic and cultural opportunities for youth." (*City of Toronto, 1999: 1*).

While these reports are necessary to help set policy and programming to meet the needs of youth, they are superficial in terms of dealing with the specific challenges and concerns of ethno-racial youth, such as South Asian youth. Merely citing statistical information on current demographics is not sufficient for exposing or revealing the lived realities of South Asian youth. The presence of South Asian youth and youth from other so-called visible minority ethno-racial groups is quite evident and has, in fact, been evident for many years. Simply knowing about the presence of visible minority communities and their youth has not made any significant changes in structural or systemic barriers with regard to services (*James, C., 1995*). Moreover, while statistical information is necessary, qualitative data is equally important for providing insights into the psychosocial processes that occur within youth. Therefore, in essence, it could be argued that mainstream organizations and their commissioned studies typically continue to consciously or unconsciously either obfuscate or render the lived realities of racial minority youth invisible. This conscious or unconscious expression of racism would undoubtedly be reflected in policies and programs because one cannot develop a policy or program for that which one does not see. Hence, the continuation, maintenance and development of policies and practices predicated on domination, segregation and marginalization of racial minorities. This does not come as a surprise to many in the marginalized groups because many members of these groups have come to learn first-hand that often truth lies outside the establishment. Many of the members of marginalized groups also know that their indigenous knowledge and wisdom is negated by the establishment whose decisions affect the quality of their lives by continuing to make decisions on partial truths.

It is interesting to note that the role of racism and its impact on employment opportunities for youth is evaded by merely stating that “differences in employment patterns and income levels do exist but that it is too complex to determine what caused these differences,” (*City of Toronto, 1999: 10*). Moreover, these differences are dismissed not only by stating that these are too complex, but also by indicating that long-established ethnic communities, such as the Chinese community, have their own infrastructure that these communities provide a wide range of opportunities for their own youth (*City of Toronto, 1999: 10*). The reasons for this are not examined. Could it be that youth from the so-called ethnic communities face barriers in accessing jobs in mainstream organizations and have little choice but to look for opportunities within their communities of origin? This report alludes to the possibility that by accessing opportunities within their own communities youth might be restricting their mobility

(City of Toronto, 1999: 10). The way this restriction is constructed is problematic in that it lays blame at the feet of the visible minority communities and youth rather than examining structural and systemic racism within the larger dominant Canadian society. Discrimination experienced in accessing jobs is a serious difficulty, sometimes posing impenetrable walls for especially the first generation racial minority immigrant youth.

Another important report dealing with concerns and challenges faced by youth in Ontario is the study commissioned by the Ontario Government, Report on Race Relations to Premier Bob Rae (*Lewis, S., 1992*). This report deals with racism as the central systemic issue and its implications for racial minority youth with regards to educational, recreational, social services and employment opportunities. It is about anti-Black racism as Lewis, himself, concluded: "it is true that while every visible minority community experiences the indignities and wounds of systemic discrimination throughout Ontario, it is the Black community which is the focus. It is the Black employees, professional and non-professional, on whom the doors of upward Equity slam shut." (*Lewis, 1992: 2*).

However, while focus on Black youth is not an issue per se, the report reveals a gap in that it does not examine and explore the problematics with the social of Black/African Canadian identity. In other words, the study does not examine complex questions such as how, why, by whom and for what purpose or utility is this identity constructed in Canada. In fact, some would say that this report is about Caribbean African Canadians and not continental Africans and that the diversity within Black/African Canadians is not addressed. Moreover, the social construction of Black/African Caribbean Canadians also poses difficulties because it often seems to refer to Jamaicans of African descent. The question raised is whether anti-racism has become about Black anti-racism, and specifically about anti-racism for Blacks from the Caribbean and about continental African and other racial minority groups.

Once again, we see the experiences of South Asian youth made invisible even in broad or general studies on racism and anti-racism. Perhaps a partial answer for this erasure lies in Henry's explanation of how racism against South Asians is constructed. Henry explains that contradictory stereotypes of South Asians as both visible and invisible are created by racism (*Henry, 1983: 46*). Hence, the racist phenomenon of, "now I see you, now I don't," when it comes to South Asian presence and realities in Canada.

While it could be argued that studies dealing with general issues of adaptation and settlement of South Asian adults and families do in fact deal with youth issues, there is a gap because the focus is from the adult perspective. As mentioned earlier, the only study specifically on youth issues, albeit suicidal ideation, revealed through literature search, is the one done by Wadhvani (1999). Since it is the only one focussing solely on South Asian youth, it will be dealt with singularly.

Wadhvani's study is the only Canadian study that I am aware of which deals directly with South Asian youth. She focussed on the specific issue of suicide ideation amongst South Asian youth. Her study was prompted by the recent notable increase in suicides amongst South Asian youth (*Wadhvani, 1999: 4*). The study reveals a disturbing and distressing trend amongst South Asian youth. She reports that 30% of the 104 participants in her study indicated that they had considered suicide and that gender and place of birth were significant factors in determining the proclivity for suicidal ideation. Among the factors she cites above she reveals an even more disturbing reality that, of those who considered suicide, 50% thought that "family pressures" were the number one cause or reason for thinking about suicide as an option. An even higher percentage (60%) of her participants cited school as the main source of stress which played an important role in their suicidal ideation process. As is commonly known, suicide ideation, attempt and completion, is usually a result of a culmination of reasons and/or events in a person's life. The other variables found to be predictors of suicidal ideation are gender and depression. Wadhvani found that 80% of those who had admitted to having engaged in suicidal thoughts were females. Moreover, 60% of the participants who indicated that they were "always depressed" had considered suicide (*Wadhvani, 1999: 77*).

According to Wadhvani, "mainstream literature tells us that age, gender and nationality, in addition to a host of other factors, predict who is at risk of contemplating or attempting suicide." Her study reveals similar findings on the basis of which she concludes that "South Asian Youth can be said to have some commonalities with youth from the dominant society;" (*Wadhvani, 1999: 77*). She also tells us that "there is preliminary evidence that suggests that the reasons why they do what they do is different." (*Wadhvani, 1999: 77*).

Wadhvani's extensive literature review on the subject of suicide is very helpful in framing the overall understanding of the problem of suicide. Her seminal work reveals a serious gap

or absence in the body of literature on this phenomenon vis a vis South Asians in Canada. Moreover, her literature review reveals that she has had to rely heavily on information developed and produced outside of Canada. The significance of Wadhvani's study lies in the fact that it is the first one to deal specifically with South Asian youth. She rightfully points out that her study is not about providing answers to "why South Asian youth are committing suicide," but rather to explore "who is at risk." (*Wadhvani, 1999: 76*). In attempting to answer this question, she examines what it means to be a South Asian youth in North America. Her information on the sites of conflict and contestation are useful, especially her section on "To Be Young and Brown in North America-Issues of Identity" (*Wadhvani, 1999: 21*). The information on Intergenerational Differences, Dating and Marriage are helpful in thinking about factors impacting on South Asian youth settlement and integration. Again, to help with constructing a framework to understand this she has to rely heavily on information from outside Canada. She draws from Gibson, 1988; Sandhu, 1997; Das Gupta, 1997; Das, A.K. and Kemp, S.F., 1997, to name but a few.

The overall importance of Wadhvani's work, therefore, lies in the fact that it is the first one to make specifically South Asian youth the focus with regards to a serious problem such as suicide; secondly, she gives us very important information to help us understand what are some of the factors that influence South Asian youth to suicidal ideation; thirdly, she explores the implications for policy and program development and design; fourthly, her study reveals a paucity of Canadian studies on South Asian youth and South Asians in general. More specifically, there is a message and lesson to be gotten from the fact she has had to rely heavily on information produced outside of Canada.

With reference to other works referred to, rather than examining each author's work(s), the literature will be organized thematically and then reviewed collectively and, where appropriate, specific reference will be made to particular authors' work.

Most of the existing literature on South Asians in Canada reviewed for the study being undertaken can be broadly or arbitrarily categorized under the following headings:

1. **Literature on immigration, settlement and adaptation:** Kurian, G., 1991; Buchignani, N., 1987; Ishwaran, 1987; Israel, M. and Wagle, N.K., 1993; Basran, G. and Zong, Li, 1998; Henry, F., 1983; Kurian, G., and Ghosh, R., 1983; Siddique, M., 1983.

2. **Literature on needs and settlement services:** Arora, A., and Mutta, B., 1997; Council of Agencies Serving South Asians 1994, Zamana Foundation, 1997; South Asian Legal Clinic, 1999; Saidulla, A. 1993.
3. **Literature on family and women's issues:** Agnew, V., 1993; Kurian, G., and Ghosh, R., 1983; Riverdale Immigrant Women's Center, 1993; Shakir, U., 1995; Srivastava, A., and Ames, M., 1993.

These categories are not mutually exclusive; however, for the purposes of this study, the literature explored, as mentioned earlier, is arbitrarily categorized only to facilitate discussion.

1. **Literature on immigration, settlement and adaptation**

The literature and especially earlier works on immigration, settlement and adaptation do not take into consideration historical and structural factors impacting on and adaptation patterns (*Basran, 1993*). The researchers do not examine the reasons for South Asian immigration within the context of colonialism, imperialism and/or capitalism and globalization (*Shakir, 1995*). Moreover, the researchers do not provide a critical analysis and the implications of immigration or of state policies such as multiculturalism. The earlier writings do not examine the ideology or principles on which the policies are predicated. Some authors seem to assume an inherent neutrality and objectivity in Canadian policies. For example, the immigration policy and practices that prefer educated and skilled immigrants is not questioned. The adverse effects of devaluation, demoralization, unemployment and under-employment are not examined, hence, the undeniable reality of racism is left untouched.

Within this literature on immigration, settlement and adaptation some authors do attempt to negate racist notions of immigrants being a drain on Canada and its social institutions, especially the social services sector, by statistically arguing that immigration is, in fact, economically beneficial to Canada (*Kurian, 1991: 425*). Many of the authors do not problematize the Canadian institutional policies, programs and structures and their differential impact on South Asians and other immigrant communities. Kurian, for example, states: "While the general successes of Indian immigrants is quite evident, there are some aspects of their life which could be remedied making their lifestyle in tune to life in urban North America." (*Kurian, 1991: 421*). Thus, it can be said that many writers and earlier works place the burden of adaptation entirely on new immigrants and not a burden to be shared by

the host society. They do not see this as a mutually reciprocal or interactive dynamic between the host society and new immigrants.

2. Literature on needs and settlement services

Literature on needs and settlement services clearly articulate the extent and nature of services needed due to the cultural, linguistic specificities, as well as immigration trends. For example, the Tamils being the largest ethnocultural groups among the broader South Asian community have unique linguistic needs as well as issues arising out of the need to immigrate because of the civil unrest and open warfare in Sri Lanka (*CASSA 1994, 1998; SALCI, 1999*).

These studies also explore the reasons why mainstream agencies are failing South Asians. They report that mainstream agencies are unable to provide services that are culturally appropriate and sensitive because of systemic racism and language barriers. Therefore, it is found that South Asians do not access mainstream services because clients themselves are very aware that the mainstream agencies do not understand South Asian culture and this is further exacerbated by the prevalence of racist stereotypes (*SALCI, 1999*).

The needs outlined by these studies focus namely on employment, language and family issues (*CASSA, 1994, 1998 and SALCI, 1999*). The gaps in services identified by these reports include:

- Language needs;
- Employment and career needs;
- Access to information;
- Access to services;
- Harassment and racism;
- Liaison with school boards;
- Cultural conflict including counselling for parent-child relationships;
- Health and housing needs of seniors and elder abuse; and
- Overall inappropriate models of service delivery.

It is interesting to note that the identified needs seem to remain the same no matter when the study was done; however, the extent of the need seems to increase. The studies on service needs are very useful for policy and programming; however, the continued shortage

and inadequacies within existing services persist because of a lack of funding. In fact, it could be argued that the rate of cuts or availability of funding dollars is diametrically opposite to the rate of growth in the demand for settlement services (CASSA, 1998).

Within this political reality of funding restraints existing settlement services are faced with unrealistic expectations from funding organizations to increase efficiency and financial accountability in spite of the doubling or tripling in the need for services. While financial accountability and efficiency are not bad principles to uphold, the implied message is problematic in that it suggests that the settlement sector is not good at matters of money. This perspective sidesteps the more important issues of access, availability and effectiveness of services which are all tied to funding. Instead, as Richmond states, settlement service agencies are being strongly encouraged to forge partnerships and to collaborate (*Richmond, 1996*). This approach to surviving funding cuts is not very healthy because it does not take into account the inequities in resources that exist among settlement agencies. In a sense this proposed strategy is fostering partnerships among unequals. As Richmond states, there is an irony in this because funding structures are on the one hand encouraging partnerships and on the other encouraging competition among agencies for the limited supply of dollars. In fact, this is quite evident in an example cited by him, bigger and more powerful agencies collaborate with smaller agencies to build up their own at the expense of the smaller agencies (*Richmond, 1996: 10*). He goes further to say that the funding climate is, in effect, generating fear and a sense of crisis among agencies.

These studies also argue that mainstream agencies are known to make only superficial attempts at addressing the needs of South Asians and other racial minority communities. For example, some mainstream organizations have employed some racial minority staff, but have not made fundamental changes in their policies and structures. In short, these attempts amount to mere tokenism. According to Agnew, even white feminists or organizations run by white feminists end up exercising tokenism because, while they have included some of the interests of South Asian women in their work, they remain structurally unchanged (*Agnew, 1993*). Thus, as Shakir states, "the cultural/linguistic/racial 'inappropriateness' of mainstream services to South Asian immigrant women's needs is not a case of neglect or oversight, but a manifestation of "cultural imperialism". (*Shakir, 1995: 1*). As a strategy to transform this, Shakir suggests "that a true model can only be achieved if the very articulation of South Asian women's needs and experiential reality decenters the

mainstream discourse and leads it to develop a new epistemological map which, along with the concrete struggles of the marginalized classes, changes the structural relations of power that exist in Canadian society.” (*Shakir, 1995: 2*) Therefore, Shakir’s analysis and critique is very helpful in understanding how South Asians in Canada find themselves facing and negotiating problematic institutional policies and programmatic services located in the context of cultural imperialism.

3. Literature on family and women’s issues

Literature on women and family, especially the earlier works, focussed on its husband-wife relations, decision-making, structure and changes in the face of a new environment. Most of these analyses are predicated on the notion that South Asian culture is pre-modern and hence the persistence and perpetuation of patriarchy. Therefore, it is believed by many that cultural traditionalism or pre-modernity is at the center of greater gender inequities among South Asian families. Thus, many authors hold the view that the assimilation and or acculturation of South Asian women into the modern Canadian culture will lead to gender equality. Implicit in this position is the assumption that gender equality is a creation of advanced industrial or modern societies. (*Kurian, G., 1991; Srivastava, R.P., 1983; Siddique, M., 1974, 1977 and 1983*)

Naidoo and Davis deal with what they call transition and duality of the experiential realities of South Asian women in Canada. According to these authors, South Asian women in Canada have an unflinching commitment to their family and home; deeply held values entrenched in their cultural heritage; and they simultaneously exhibit future oriented aspirations which are very contemporary. (*Naidoo, J., and Davis, J., 1988*).

The problem with many of these writings is that they see the gender oppression of South Asian women in Canada as simply being located in South Asian culture. This is not only a simplistic view of gender inequality within South Asian families in Canada, but also very reductionist. In that, it not only reduces South Asian culture but also ignores gender differences as well as differences among South Asian cultures. These authors fail to identify the specific ways in which gender inequities and oppression among South Asian families in Canada are uniquely created and maintained by historical factors such as racism, classism and cultural imperialism.

South Asian feminists like Shakir, Srivastava and Ames, challenge the reductionist view mentioned, including white socialist feminists by pointing out that their analysis is based on racist stereotypical assumptions of South Asian women being passive victims of oppressive cultural structures like the family (*Srivastava, A., and Ames, M., 1993; Shakir, U., 1995*). These authors as already cited above highlight the need for a critical analysis of Canada's multiculturalism policy and racism and how these homogenize differences (*Srivastava and Ames, 1993 and Shakir, 1995*). Srivastava and Ames and Shakir help us to understand the prevalence and persistence of gender inequities experienced by South Asian women in Canada identifying not only the historical specificity of South Asian women's gender oppression, but also the impact of cultural imperialism, racism and classism in construction of gender relations in an advanced capitalist society like Canada.

Shakir also provides us with a stimulating and provocative politicized conceptualization of "difference" for South Asian communities in the context of understanding violence against women or, as she states it, wife abuse in the South Asian community. Shakir argues that cultural imperialism and Western epistemology is a "cultural articulation that is in a relation of dominance and power with immigrant communities through the historically specific experiences of imperialism and racial, economic, political and social control," (*Shakir, 1995:2*)

Unlike many studies on issues facing South Asian families, Shakir locates her analysis and understanding of wife abuse within a larger reality of disempowerment, marginalization and racism. She contextualizes these in a way that is specific to the historical experience of South Asians rather than a simple manifestation of male violence or patriarchy. By integrating culture, cultural imperialism and racism, Shakir demonstrates that culture is important not only in creating oppression, but also in the social construction of resistance (*Shakir, 1995: 9, 16*).

Shakir's work is also important in reminding us that the racist understanding and criticisms of South Asian cultural practices and especially those related to the family and gender oppression should be evaluated according to different criteria from those which apply to white culture. She also reminds us of the importance of challenging the racist view and portrayal of South Asian women as passive by identifying their sites of resistance; also the social construction of resistance. In short, Shakir proposes a more complex

conceptualization of South Asian women living in Canada, their cultural, economic, political and social locations, than conveyed in current literature. She helps us challenge the stereotype of passive, impotent South Asian women constantly struggling and battling their cultural heritage or systems and to *broaden* our perspective of South Asian women as constantly negotiating and re-negotiating their identity and cultural location.

As mentioned earlier, there is very little material on South Asians in Canada, even less on South Asian youth. This disturbing lack of information raises critical questions like--why and what does this gap mean, particularly when one takes into consideration the history of South Asian presence and contributions in Canada. Therefore, it is within this context of a significant lack of Canadian literature on South Asian youth that this project is being undertaken. It is hoped that this project will assist us with the process of understanding the experiential realities of South Asian youth living in the Greater Metropolitan Area and its surrounding municipalities. We also hope that those reading this report will carry the work forward by being either stimulated by some of the ideas or motivated by the gaps in the literature.

The underlying themes in this project deal with identity construction, ethnic organization and assimilation/acculturation. Therefore, Shakir's work mentioned above will help to decipher and decode the lived realities of South Asian youth. In addition, wherever applicable, reference will be made to theories on and about representation, identity construction, negotiation and maintenance and resistance to provide a broader understanding of racial minority youth living in a racialized society such as Canada. Some of the works referred to will be by authors like Dei, G., Mazzuca, J., McLssac, E., and Zine, J. (1997); Dei., G., (1996); James, C., (1999; 1995; 1994); Solomon.,P., (1992) whose works critically examine the role and impact of the educational system as a social institution on the lives and outcomes of minority youth. Moreover, since there is a complex of psychological and social processes involved in shaping identity theories on race and racism, these theories will be referred to in order to help the reader understand the construction and re-construction of identity in relation to the social context within which South Asian youth are negotiating their identities.

CHAPTER 3: THE CONTEXT: LOCATING THE RESEARCH

As the debate concerning the number of immigrants needed and to be allowed to settle in Canada continues, some are dealing with the far more vital question about how we are to treat those already here. Therefore, any serious attempt at responding to the question cannot be satisfactorily answered unless we know what immigrants themselves want, what their problems are and how they wish to see their lives in relation to the wider community.

Although the main attention of the research is on settlement and adaptation issues facing youth one must explore these in relation to identity development since challenges and concerns related to settlement and adaptation are intricately tied to identity particularly because youth are the focus of this study. We also know that change and adaptation to new physical and social environments entail a set of complex interactions between emotions and behaviours embedded within intricate and sometimes perplexing psychological processes. For some, this starts with the tearing of one's roots from the "home" environment, abandoning familiar people and surroundings and then transplanting oneself into a new place, a whole new sphere. Whether the migration is temporary, cyclical or permanent, from one country to another, from a rural to an urban setting or *vice versa*, this process tests one's adaptive capacity. Migration, therefore has been known to threaten the psychosocial well being of immigrants. The Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees states, "Migration *per se* does not predict an increased risk of mental disorder. However, certain contingencies may be part of the migration experience. When they occur, they increase the risk of developing mental disorder." (*Health and Welfare Canada, 1988: 1*) According to the Task Force these contingencies include:

- ❑ Drop in personal socio-economic status following migration;
- ❑ Inability to speak the language of the host country
- ❑ Separation from family;
- ❑ Lack of friendly reception by surrounding host population;
- ❑ Isolation from persons of similar cultural background;
- ❑ Traumatic experiences or prolonged stress prior to migration; and
- ❑ Adolescent or senior age at time of migration. (*Health and Welfare Canada, 1988:1*)

Parents and their children begin immigrating to Canada from various parts of the globe with a sense of being and continuity, to a greater or lesser degree, regarding cultural norms, customs, values and language. The process of immigrating means that they are faced with having to adapt culturally in terms of both material and psychological manifestations. Sometimes the process of cultural adaptation is accompanied by feelings of loneliness, isolation, alienation, even helplessness and powerlessness, in individuals who find their values and customs to be more distinctly different and whose expectations are more discrepant with the realities that exist.

Thus, the adaptation process can be particularly trying if the person is young and facing two environments that are dramatically different, as in the case of South Asian youth, since they are not only confronted with the developmental challenges of adolescence but also adjustment problems as immigrants and intercultural conflicts resulting from value differences between the host culture and the culture of origin (*Naidoo, J. 1984; Wakil, S.P., Siddique, C.M. and Wakil, F.M. 1981*). Moreover, the already difficult process of adaptation is exacerbated when the contingencies mentioned above are at work in a racialized society like Canada. Therefore, the pivotal question “Who am I?” during adolescence takes on a myriad of nuances for ethno-cultural and racial minority adolescents.

To explore and document the challenges and concerns experienced by South Asian new immigrant youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who immigrated to Canada at or over the age of 8 places them at a very crucial stage in their development of self or identity. It is a stage when all adolescents become self-conscious about how they look, how they sound and how they come across, especially to their peers. Fitting in is of critical importance to youth. This is also a time when youth start to think about and explore their beliefs, values, gender roles, sexuality, preferences, social and political affiliations including their ethnic and racial identity.

Therefore, explorations concerning the question “Who am I?” by South Asian youth is more intriguing and complex when one keeps in perspective that their identity is evolving in the context of a racialized society like Canada that is rooted in a Eurocentric culture. In other words, in addition to the question, “Who am I?” asked by all adolescents regardless of ethno-racial or gender identity, for South Asian youth it becomes equally important to ask,

“Who am I ethnically?” “Who am I racially?” and “What does it mean to be South Asian in Canada?”

A. Framework For Analysis And Some Underlying Assumptions

Identity is embedded in both psychological and social processes, therefore understanding how South Asian youth deal with questions related to identity development, construction, reconstruction and maintenance become very important in a multi-racial country like Canada. Moreover, since it is said that identity is socially constructed within a complex of psychological processes, identity development must be understood in relation to its social and historical context (*Erik Erikson 1968*). The complexities of this dynamic become clearer when we consider what Erikson said about this dynamic as quoted in Tatum (1997). Erikson stated, “we deal with a process ‘located’ in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his [her] communal culture In psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflections and observations, a process taking places on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself [herself] in the light of what he [she] perceives to be the way in which others judge him [her] in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he [she] judges their way of judging him [her] in the light of how he perceives himself [herself] in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him [her]. This process is, luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful, or elated, “identity-consciousness.” (*Tatum 1997:19*).

Therefore, any attempt at understanding the adaptation and settlement challenges and concerns of South Asian youth must be contextualized within the realities of their everyday experiences in Canada where cultural imperialism and White supremacy are exercised through Eurocentric institutions that reinforce a racialized society. By racialized we mean that people in Canada are differentiated on the basis of their skin colour which plays an important part in determining their status in Canadian society. In Canada, a person’s skin colour becomes extremely relevant in how s/he is treated, what s/he can access, what opportunities are available, basically what would be the quality of her/his life. Several studies done in recent years by George Dei (1993,1996) and Carl James (1993) pertaining to racial minority youth as well as reports such as, *Towards a New Beginning* (1970), *Report on Race Relations to Premier Bob Rae/The Stephen Lewis Report* (1992) and *The Visible Minority Project* (1989) have documented and substantiated this reality. Skin-colour racism,

must therefore, be recognized as an integral element, just as sexism, classism and heterosexism are, of institutional oppression in Canadian society.

Hence, the underlying assumption that skin colour racism is a given in Canadian society. The next contention is that oppression is exercised on the basis of skin colour in that domination of certain individuals and or groups of people by others is a reality. Canadian history is replete with acts of racial oppression and “most graphically manifested in the relationship between White society and indigenous peoples.” (*Henry et al. 2000: 3*). The systematic subjugation of minority groups cannot take place without access to power. In turn this power provides access to resources, facilitates mechanisms to influence others and opens up avenues to decision making and control. The benefits of racism or discrimination on the basis of skin colour accrued to members of the dominant group/society are privileges which are bestowed to them unintentionally or unconsciously by virtue of membership. Often these rewards, advantages or benefits are invisible to the recipients of these privileges. (*McIntosh, P. 1990 : 31-36*). Skin colour racism or racism, terms which will be used interchangeably, as a form of oppression, involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the major institutions of society. By this definition, only Whites in Canada can be racist, because only Whites as a group has that kind of institutional power, support or sanction. The prevalence of racism is very evident in the collective values, beliefs and the general cultural practices in Canada. An examination of the media and other major social – political institutions makes this reality very apparent through its discourse and particularly through its discourse on race and racism. (*Henry et al. 2000 : 3*). Skin colour racism, must therefore, as mentioned earlier, be seen to be an integral aspect, just as sexism, classism and heterosexism are, of institutional oppression in Canadian society which is inherently patriarchal. Therefore, the experiences of ‘class’ for racial minorities is mediated through “race.” Consequently, the intersecting of skin colour and class makes the experiences of class oppression for minority people different from that of the White members of society. Similarly, the experience of sexism for racial minority women is mediated through race, making their experiences of it very distinct from White women (*Lorde 1984; Bannerji 1993, Kohli, Desai and Mukherjee 1995; Dei 1994*). The concept of intersecting marginalities is helpful in understanding the complexities of oppression experienced by South Asian youth as they negotiate their adaptation, settlement as well as their identities.

Therefore, analyzing and understanding the settlement and adaptation challenges and the concerns of South Asian youth will be done by employing an integrated anti-racism framework since “it moves beyond a narrow preoccupation with individual prejudices and discriminatory actions to examine the ways that racist ideas and individual action are entrenched and (un)consciously supported in institutional structures (*Dei, G. 1996 : 27*). Another reason for using an integrated anti-racism framework is because it helps to understand how differences affect and mediate people’s lives while also facilitating a discussion on how we can within our differences create solidarity regardless of colour, culture, sexual orientation or abilities and capacities. This framework, according to Dei, also helps to “explore how difference is named, lived, experienced, imagined and acknowledged define, conceptualize, and perceive “difference” from the standpoint of those who occupy the margins of society and continually have to resist their marginality through collective action.” (*Dei, 1996 : 37*). Moreover, this framework allows for exploration and understanding of the simultaneity of the intersecting identities as sites of oppression or resistance, as the case might be, and how these get expressed by South Asian youth. This framework also facilitates the exploration of intra group similarities and differences as in the case of Tamil youth that have a different pre-immigration experience of civil war unlike the rest of the South Asian community. It also allows for examining the impact and implications of religion in the case Muslim and Sikh youth. Since this study is an exploration, the researchers will attempt to analyze and work with what the youth have shared with us. The data will be analyzed in terms of the principle factors in the marginalization of South Asian youth and their identity development, construction and reconstruction in Canada as they cope with the challenges of settlement and integration.

In short, an integrated anti-racism framework will be employed to understand and report on the issues of adaptation and settlement of South Asian youth in the context of Canadian society. It is an integrated framework because it offers a tool for analyzing and addressing racism and the other interlocking oppressions of ableism, ageism, classism, heterosexism and sexism. The framework is very useful in understanding how the interlocking social constructs and categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and race impact peoples' lives in an overlapping and cumulative manner. An integrated anti-racism framework reveals whiteness as normative and exposes how this gets constructed to ensure white power and privilege as well as cultural supremacy. It, therefore, acknowledges the role of social institutions in producing and reproducing racial, gender, and class-based inequalities and marginalization

of certain voices in society. Anti-racism also puts people marginalized by white supremacy at the centre of the transformation process rather than being relegated to the periphery of the process or as an add on. (*Dei, G., 1997: 27; Kohl, Des and Mukherjee, 1995*).

Having outlined why an integrated anti-racism framework is used, it would be amiss not to comment, however, briefly, on the problems of language. Since the question of language is beyond the purview of this study a glossary of terms is provided to facilitate a clearer understanding of how various terms are used.

It should, however, be stated briefly, that language of colour and race is inappropriate and misleading. The term race is misleading because it is based on erroneous biological assumptions that physical differences such as skin colour, facial features including hair colour and texture are somehow related to intellectual, moral or cultural superiority or inferiority. Race, from an integrated anti-racism framework, is a socially constructed concept that has no basis in biological reality. It is rather a construct in that it derives its meaning and significance from its social definition that affects the lives of members of the worlds' majority people/racial minorities (*Henry et al 2000*).

Moreover, to refer to groups who have little or no institutional power as visible minority or people of colour is objectionable not because they are loaded terms but also because every person has colour, White being a colour just as much as Black or Brown. To confine the term to the so-called "non-White" members of a society is perhaps another manifestation of unconscious racism because it suggests that such a person is reducible to her/his colour and the only significant feature of this person. It should be made clear that this does not suggest that a colour-blind approach be taken because it also problematic in a racialized society.

Members of racial minority groups are also very aware of sometimes being referred to by the seemingly less offensive term, immigrant. This may be less offensive, however, it is problematic in that it is misleading because Canadian history is a history of successive waves of immigrants. The term immigrant is appropriate when referring to the fact that someone is a recent arrival, according to government policies, 'recent' refers to up to three years. It can be argued that it is also quite acceptable if the term were strictly used, regardless of colour, to refer to members, of Canadian society that are not naturalized or

have gone through the legal process of becoming Canadian citizens. Language of colour becomes a problem when the term immigrant is indiscriminately applied to members of racial minority groups regardless of their length of stay or settlement in Canada.

The point of taking time to outline some concerns with language was to show that apparently innocent and even well intentioned terms contain an ideological bias and that there is always the potential in these terms to be highly offensive to those they are meant to describe. In light of the above, for the purposes of this study the term skin-colour will be used instead of “race” since skin-colour carries with it more than the significance of “colour” alone. Wherever necessary to make a particular point the term “race” will be used with caution. With reference to using the term “immigrant,” it is used as it is applied to recent arrivals who qualify for services under the ISAP program or as stated above when referring to non-Canadian citizens regardless of racial or cultural identity.

B. Glossary Of Terms

- **Acculturation** is defined as a process which minority groups and immigrants go through in response to overt or systemic pressures from the dominant group to adopt, conform or adjust to dominant values, customs, behaviours and psychological characteristics. (*James, C., 1995: 7*)

- **Assimilation** is an aspect of the acculturation process. During acculturation individuals incorporate cultural elements of the dominant ethnic group, while in assimilation considerable elements of their ethnic or racial subcultures are relinquished in order to “fit it.” This theory of assimilation is premised on the idea that the power of the dominant group will be too much for any minority group to resist, and therefore the group will assimilate into the majority. (*James, C., 1995: 7-8*).

- **Anti-racism** refers to processes and actions of identifying and eradicating racism in all its various forms. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 405*)

- **Culture** is a dynamic and complex social construct comprising a set of values, beliefs, norms and ways of interpreting and interacting with the world, “which a group of people has developed to assure its survival in a particular physical and human environment. (*James, C., 1995: 2*). A **Sub-culture** is expressed by a group of people within a larger

socio-political structure who share cultural characteristics which are distinctive enough to distinguish it from others within the same culture. (*James, C., 1995: 5*).

- **Democratic Racism** is an ideology that permits and sustains the ability to justify the maintaining of two apparently conflicting values. One set of values consists of a commitment to a democratic society motivated by egalitarian values of fairness, justice, and equality. Conflicting with these liberal values are attitudes and behaviours including negative feelings about people of colour, which have the potential for differential treatment or discrimination against them. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 407*).
- **Dominant group** is the group of people in a given society that is the largest in number or that successfully shapes or controls other groups through social, economic, cultural, political, or religious power. In Canada, the term has generally referred to White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant males. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 407*).
- **Ethnic Group** refers to a group of people who share a common ancestry and history, who may or may not have identifiable physical or cultural characteristics, and who, through the process of interacting with each other and establishing boundaries with each other, identify themselves as being members of that group. (*James, C., 1995: 5*). It is a group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity, with a prevailing loyalty and adherence to certain beliefs, attitudes and customs. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 408*).
- **Ethnocentrism** refers to a tendency to view events from the perspective of one's own culture, with a corresponding tendency to misunderstand or diminish other groups and regard them as inferior. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 408*).
- **Eurocentrism** refers to a complex system of beliefs that upholds the supremacy of Europe's cultural values, ideas, and peoples. European culture is seen as the vehicle for progress toward liberalism and democracy. Eurocentrism minimizes the role of Europeans in maintaining the oppressive systems of colonialism and racism. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 408*).
- **Exclusion** is a process of disempowering, degrading or disenfranchising a group by discriminatory practices and behaviour. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 408*).

- **Inclusion** refers to a situation that exists when disadvantaged communities and designated group members share power and decision-making at all levels in projects, programs, and institutions. *(Henry et. al., 2000: 408).*
- **Integration** is the process that allows groups and individuals to become full participants in the social, economic, cultural, and political life of a society while at the same time enabling them to retain their own cultural identity. *(Henry et. al., 2000: 408).*
- **Mainstream** in the context of anti-racism, the dominant culture and the political, social, educational, cultural, and economic institutions through which its power is maintained. *(Henry et. al., 2000: 409).*
- **Marginal** refers to the status of groups who do not have full and equal access to the social, economic, cultural and political institutions of a society. *(Henry et. al., 2000: 409).*
- **Minority group** refers to a group of people that is either small in number or has little or no access to social, economic or political power. *(Henry et. al., 2000: 409).*
- **Race** is a socially constructed category used to classify humankind according to common ancestry and reliant on differentiation by such physical characteristics as colour of skin, hair texture, stature, and facial characteristics. *(Henry et. al., 2000: 409).*
- **Racial Group** refers to a group of people who share biological features that come to signify group membership and the social meaning such membership has in society at large. Skin colour becomes the basis for expectation regarding social roles, performance levels, values, norms and morals of the group and non-group members alike. Skin colour/race is often the basis upon which status-allocation and group membership takes place. *(James, C., 1995: 6).*
- **Racial discrimination** is any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race that has the purpose of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life. *(Henry et al., 2000: 409).*

- **Racism** is a system in which one group of people exercise power over another group or other groups on the basis of skin colour; an implicit or explicit set of beliefs, erroneous assumptions, and actions based on an ideology of the inherent superiority of one racial group over others, and evident in organizational or institutional structures and programs as well as in individual thought or behaviour patterns. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 409*). **Cultural racism** is deeply embedded in the value system of a society. It represents the tacit network of beliefs and values that encourages and justifies discriminatory actions, behaviours and practices. **Individual racism** is a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious, personal prejudice. **Systemic racism** consists of policies and practices, entrenched in established institutions, that result in the exclusion or advancement of specific groups of people. It manifests itself in two ways: (1) **institutional racism**: racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or of a prejudiced society; and (2) **structural racism**: inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society that exclude substantial numbers of members of particular groups from significant participation in major social institutions. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 409*).
- **Racist discourse** is the ways in which society gives voice to racism, including explanations, narratives, codes of meaning, accounts, images, and social practices that have the effect of establishing, sustaining, and reinforcing oppressive power relations. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 410*).
- **Racial ideology** is the whole range of concepts, ideas, images, and institutions that provide the framework of interpretation and meaning for racial thought in society. It creates and preserves a system of dominance based on race and is communicated and reproduced through agencies of socialization and cultural transmission such as the mass media, schools, and universities, religious doctrines, symbols and images, art, music, and literature. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 410*).
- **Representation** is the process of giving abstract ideological concepts concrete forms (for example, representations of children, women, South Asians). Representations include kinds of imagery and discourse, and involve constructions of reality taken from specific points of view. Representation is a social process of making sense within all

available signifying systems: speech, writing, print, video, film, tape, etc. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 410*).

- **Skin colour** carries with it more than signification of colour: it also includes a set of meanings attached to the cultural traits of those who are a certain colour. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 410*).

- **Stereotypes** are false generalized conceptualizations of a group of people that result in conscious and unconscious categorizations of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 410*).

- **Whiteness** is the social construction that has created a racial hierarchy that has shaped all the social, cultural, educational, political, and economic institutions of society. Whiteness is linked to domination and is a form of race privilege that is invisible to White people who are not conscious of its power. Whiteness, as defined within a cultural studies perspective, is description, symbol, experience, and ideology. (*Henry et. al., 2000: 411*).

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Having little or no information often presents difficulties for schools, community workers, family professionals such as counsellors, social workers and therapists interested in helping, programming and particularly developing pro-active interventions. To address the lack of services, recruitment and participation rates or disengagement is often related to a lack of information and understanding of settlement experiences and concerns of South Asian youth. Therefore, it is hoped that this study is a beginning in trying to address this and more importantly to help inform structural transformation and intervention strategies. Moreover, we hope the qualitative, descriptive information gathered through this study will generate an interest in more in-depth research on topics identified by the youth.

Therefore, this research is, in every sense of the word, from the margins, in that it is emergent, unfolding and changing. It is also about meaningful input from racial minority youth sharing their experiences, in their own voices, on the margins of a society that sees whiteness as normative. This is very much a research from the margins, in the words of Kirby and McKenna who explain, "research from the margins involves two interrelated processes--firstly, inter-subjectivity: an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all are respected as equally knowing subjects; secondly, critical reflection: without reflection and analysis of the social context, research remains merely functional, enabling people to function within the status quo rather than to interact with and change social relations." (*Kirby and McKenna, 1989: 34*).

Methodologically, we employed a qualitative research approach because it would be most appropriate in facilitating an exploration of historical and contemporary social, political and economic structures of the dominant culture affecting South Asian youth, who are at the center of this work. Moreover, this approach facilitated not only an exploration of the dialectical relationship between the culture of racial minority youth and the dominant mainstream culture, but also the coping and survival strategies engaged by South Asian youth in their own words.

The specific qualitative method of inquiry employed was focus group discussions. This allowed us to put the accounts, stories of South Asian youth, their views and understandings, at the centre. Dialogical interaction between participants during focus group discussions significantly enriched their role in the creation of knowledge. It also restrained us from imposing our preconceived conceptualizations of how they negotiate and construct/reconstruct their identities. In essence, the qualitative method of focus group discussions as quoted by Dei, “ ... allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to that complexity, to respect it in its own right.” (Dei, G., 1997: 32). Thus, at all times the experiences of South Asian youth, their views and understanding of their own experiences, as well as their parents’ views and understanding of their children’s lived realities were handled respectfully and with integrity.

Procedures

To achieve the project objectives consistent with the principles and assumptions outlined above an Advisory Committee was established according to the following terms of reference:

- Provide guidance and direction to the research project;
- Attend committee meetings;
- Identify outreach strategies for recruiting participants;
- Help with recruiting participants and organizing focus groups;
- Act as interpreters if necessary; and
- Provide feedback on the draft report.

With these expectations in mind, the executive directors of the two partnered agencies, CASSA and SWAC; a co-ordinator of the Settlement Education Partnerships in Toronto program; a staff from SAWC, three female and two male volunteers between the ages of 18 and 24 were all on the committee.

Once the participants' and parents' consent forms, and publicity materials were developed, as many as 30 organizations such as settlement service agencies, schools, community colleges, and universities were approached to assist with the recruiting and organizing of focus groups. Wherever we got support and entry to conduct the focus group discussions, we worked with a contact person whose assistance was invaluable. The contact person was

responsible for randomly selecting youth and parents for the groups, arranging both the time and meeting place.

Sample Selection

The South Asian as defined for the purposes of this project referred to individuals whose origins could be traced to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Youth recruited for the study had to be new immigrants who had come to Canada at the age of eight and over and were now between the ages of sixteen and twenty four. In addition to recruiting participants of both genders, steps were taken to ensure representation of the diversity within the South Asian community. The youth were recruited from the different linguistic communities, namely, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati and Tamil; this roughly also represented youth who were Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Attempts at recruiting South Asian parents, with teenage children fitting the criteria stated above, were largely restricted to settlement agencies and informal networks. Focus groups were firstly held along gender lines. Secondly, we held separate groups for Tamil youth because of their particular pre-immigration experience of civil war. Thirdly, we held separate groups for Muslim and Sikh youth since religion is a significant identifier in their lives relative to other communities now living in Toronto. There were a couple of groups that were mixed and reflected the ethno-linguist and cultural diversity within the South Asian community as a whole. However, we always maintained separation by gender.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were used to meet the central goal of the project to “identify and document” the challenges faced by South Asian new immigrant youth in the Greater Metropolitan Area Toronto as well as how South Asian parents perceive and understand youth settlement issues. However, the underlying aim of this study was twofold. The first purpose was to obtain information regarding the concerns related to settlement as experienced by the participating youth to inform intervention strategies aimed at ameliorating difficulties faced by new immigrant South Asian youth. The second purpose was to bring the youth and parents together. Bringing youth and parents together was not only to start a dialogue between youth and the generation, but also to introduce and facilitate the notion of intra-generational (youth talking to youth) and inter-generational (youth and parents talking) interaction. The purpose behind this was to get the participants to understand and address

some of the issues at both the personal/individual as well as the public/community level--in other words, both individually and collectively.

The fact that this project involved youth, some of whom would be below the age of 18, consent forms for both participants and parents to complete were developed and administered to participants before they got involved in the focus group discussions. These consent forms included information about the study for the youth and their parents to consider before participating in the discussions. The youth were concerned about confidentiality around two areas: firstly, with raising issues around family and parental relationships and, secondly, about commenting on experiences regarding teachers and schooling in general. The youth were promised confidentiality and assured that we would take measures such as using pseudonyms to ensure that the promise is kept.

There were 21 focus groups organized of which only 13 actually took place. With regards to focus groups of female youth, 6 groups materialized while there were 4 groups for which none of the females showed up in spite of being confirmed the day before. There were 5 focus group discussions held with male youth and for 2 of the organized groups none of the males showed up--again, in spite of being reminded of the time and venue the previous night. Two focus groups were organized for the sole participation of parents, only 1 materialized. For the purposes of this project, we were expected to have 2 focus groups where both parents and youth would engage in a dialogue to help with examining possibilities for programming interventions. Of the 2 groups planned and organized for this purpose, only 1 took place.

The 13 focus groups held with youth resulted in us having 94 youth participating with an average of about 8 to 10 in each of the groups. Of the 13 focus groups 4 were pilot groups and the data from these are not included in the study. The data used to generate a working socio-demographic profile of the youth involved in the study was drawn from 9 groups that had a total of 63 youths involved collectively. With regards to parents, we had a total of 16 parents participating, 15 mothers and 1 father. Needless to say, there was an overwhelming presence of mothers and a disappointing absence of fathers in general. It is very unfortunate that neither of the organized groups with an even participation of both mothers and fathers nor the group with a balanced number of mothers, fathers and youth took place.

Data Collection: Designing Focus Group Discussion Guides and Survey Questions

The advisory committee being mainly South Asian in cultural background and representative of settlement service providers, parents and youth was very helpful in developing the discussion questions. The need to “identify and document” the challenges faced by South Asian new immigrant youth and how South Asian parents perceive and understand youth settlement issues guided our design and development of the focus group questions. This was an important decision especially since this particular study was a component of a larger study, with many other participating agencies and organizations, undertaken by CERIS with funding and parameters set by the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University and Citizenship and Immigration Canada Citizenship. The advisory committee for this project had to be very clear about its own focus and agenda, which was South Asian youth. The first set of questions included some of the questions required for the larger study. The questions were first pilot tested with a group each of female and male youths who met the project participant criteria and shared similar backgrounds with those we planned to work with for this study. The discussion guide was adjusted according to what we learnt from the pilot test.

The questions were structured in a way to maximize participation. To ensure this we structured questions that were open-ended with lots of room to probe and used language that was easily understandable. This worked very well because it allowed us to facilitate participants sharing their own thoughts, ideas, and insights in their own language and in meaningful ways. It also allowed participants to really engage in a dialogue with each other and at the same time it made it possible for us to deal with random comments generated within the group. This format was also very appropriate because it did not put pressure on participants to answer every single question, especially in the case of more reticent or less talkative participants. However, when necessary, this format also facilitated a fuller range of questions on a particular topic or issue to gain a better understanding of their views. Having a few focal questions around the central theme of settlement “challenges and difficulties” worked well. In addition to the focus group discussion guide, the participants completed a survey pertaining to sociocultural characteristics. This included age, gender, education level, family type, etc., to help us develop a working participant profile.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved several steps. Firstly, to transcribe the focus group discussions. Secondly, to summarize the quantitative data and attach numerical values to assist with developing the participant profile or descriptors. Since the focus was on narrative data, no interview schedule was developed. Therefore, with regards to some of the qualitative data no finite numerical values could be attached to issues raised. Instead, we relied on cursory counts were applicable within each group.

Thirdly, the analysis entailed the structuring and coding of the narrative data. We engaged a flexible framework directed by the words of the youth and parents. The data was then arranged and cross-referenced according to the themes that emerged from the narratives. The cross-referencing helped in making connections not so much by the facilitators but rather by the participants themselves. The analysis was then approached collaboratively by two researchers with each bringing her own perspectives based on individual histories as well as socio-political and cultural locations.

Some Reflections on the Process

A research project, regardless of scope, encompasses a variety of activities and processes requiring the involvement of many people at various stages. Retrospectively, it can be said that the project has meant experiencing excitement, anxiety and frustration.

The excitement was largely evoked by the youth who shared their experiences openly and candidly, according to them this was due to the lack of such opportunities to speak out on their issues and the abilities of the facilitator(s) with whom they shared a cultural and racial heritage. In some instances, some of the youth (both male and female) openly talked about their vulnerabilities concerning schooling, family relationships and peer pressure in the very presence of some of their peers with whom they had experienced difficulties but did not voice their frustrations previously. On other occasions, some youth stayed behind to talk to the facilitator to discuss more personal issues such as depression and where to get particular kinds of help. Some even wanted information about career choices and how to approach their applications to post secondary institutions.

This, no doubt, raises questions of trust, confidentiality and the ethics of research as a whole. It is quite a privilege to be trusted by the youth especially. Therefore, when working

with participants of any research, but especially youth and members of marginalized and disenfranchised groups, this privilege must be handled with considerable respect. Many youth did in fact ask about the purpose and use of the information generated by the research. Again, this question could be attributed to their experiences of how their stories and knowledge is appropriated, of being given explicit or implicit promises of making a difference in their lives and/or of their socio-political consciousness and savvy. This is a challenge to all involved in this project.

A challenge, especially for the funding institutions, social settlement agencies and other organizations involved with South Asian youth, to bring about changes in policies, programming and delivery that are committed to the principles of equality and inclusion based on social justice for all.

Points of tension and frustration came largely from the fact that often researchers are required to work with a methodology and tools for their study on criteria and principles established by persons outside the experience of the principal participants of the study. For example, one difficulty was presented by having to recruit youth that fit tightly into the age (16-24) together with the simultaneous requirements pertaining to their immigrant history. That is, the youth had to be newcomers and had to come to Canada at the age of 8 and over. This overlooked the reality that many youth who fit the study criteria will not participate if their friend(s) could not participate. This requirement also overlooked the fundamental knowledge that most youth prefer to be in small groups and not be separated from their friends. Having focus groups was very good in terms of gathering qualitative data, but not without challenges when it came to recruiting participants.

To mitigate against the difficulties of recruiting participants, both youth and parents, it was very important that the 30 settlement agencies, schools, colleges and universities be contacted to help with in this regard. However, this did not work in many instances. Some of the contact persons worked very hard but could not entice students regardless of the \$15.00 honorarium. The biggest barrier in recruiting youth 16 and 24 was the fact that we could not plug into existing programs since there are very few services for them. Another reason for youth not participating readily was because many had to work, they would make a commitment to participate and on the day of the scheduled focus group we would learn that they were called into work. Some of the participants that were present at a focus group also

indicated that their friends were not allowed to stay after school. The difficulty with some of the agencies and organizations was due to having no services for youth and at times when there were services these were used mainly by younger children or by South Asian youth who were Canadian-born. This is an interesting piece of information for agencies to note in terms of who accesses services and it raises the following questions: (1) Why do newcomer South Asian immigrant youth not access these services? and (2) What can be done to help South Asian youth access the needed services?

Another reason for this strategy not working was the fact that when there were some youth programs, there seemed to be a lack of trust or level of disengagement experienced by both the youth and staff of various agencies and organizations. There could be several reasons for this. With some agencies we found that they had a very informal approach to programming for youth in that working with youth was not a priority. Resulting in the youth programs and initiatives being stuck at the out-reach stage or being halted at the infancy phase or being given an *ad hoc* status. This became evident when youth did not show up for the focus groups on several occasions in spite of being reminded the day before. Perhaps it could be that both the youth as well as the agency and organizational staff did not see immediate or direct pay off in participating. Another explanation for experiencing difficulties with recruiting youth from settlement agencies could be that some settlement agency staff simply could not or did not return calls because of being affected by the “overworked and underpaid” syndrome that is so endemic in this sector.

Since there were no programs from which to draw participants from, the researchers had to rely on informal networks. While this helped in having a random sample it did present some challenges namely related to entry and trust. For example, in spite of being South Asian entry into some of the communities was not easy. The level of trust between participants and researcher is always a challenge; however, with some groups this becomes even more evident. In the case of youth, this only reinforces the importance of being able to engage with them in other ways; for example, engage with them while they were participating in other activities before introducing the research component. However, this can only be done if there are services and programs already in-place and are directed at the targeted population. This strategy becomes very important when we heard our experiences being confirmed by a very respected community activist. According to him, the various ethno-cultural subgroups in the larger South Asian community would only work with a member of

their own community. Based on his as well our experiences we concluded that, in the absence of this, the community (especially parents) will work with an outsider if that known insider were to endorse the outsider or if the insider and outsider were working as a team. By commiserating we came to the conclusion that this is very burdensome because it places a tremendous responsibility on a few people. Moreover, it also restricts intra-group dialogue and collaboration. In light of this it also becomes very important that agencies serving South Asians and South Asian ethno-specific organizations begin a dialogue and engage in joint initiatives while respecting the uniqueness of each ethno-cultural sub group and the need to maintain autonomy.

We felt that it was important to share these reflections with the hope that some of these challenges will be addressed in the future by policies, programming and by changing some of the ways in which we design and do research with some communities and population groups.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

A. Demographic Highlights Of South Asians In the GTA

- South Asians constitute the second largest visible minority community (24.7%) or 329,840 in the GTA. (South Asian Legal Clinic Initiatives, 1999: 4)
- South Asians represent 8% of Ontario's population. (South Asian Legal Clinic Initiatives, 1999: 4)
- There are 49,305 South Asian youth between the ages of 15 and 24. (CMA Toronto, Census: 1996)
- Majority 58.1% of the youth arrived between 1991-1996 (CMA Toronto, Census: 1996).
- The employment to population rate for South Asian youth, 15-24 years is 37, with 35 for females and 40 for males. (CMA Toronto, Census: 1996).
- The unemployment rate for South Asian youth, 15-24 years is 24, with 27 for females and 22 for males. (CMA Toronto, Census: 1996 in South Asian Legal Clinic Initiatives, 1999: 8).
- The unemployment rate for South Asian youth is about 22% while the rate for youth in general is about 15%. (Metro Toronto: Access and Equity Centre, 1996)
- South Asians speak many languages – Bengali, Gujerati, Farsi, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, Urdu, to name but a few. (South Asian Legal Clinic Initiatives, 1999: 4)
- A study done by the Toronto Star found that 38% of South Asians surveyed earn less than \$30,000 per year. Of these South Asians earning less than \$30,000, 15% earn under \$20,000 with only 10% earning more than \$75,000 per year. (South Asian Legal Clinic Initiatives, 1999: 5).

B. Overview Of Participants

There were a total of 94 youth that participated in the project of which 31 were part of the pilot focus groups and the remaining 63 were in the focus groups. The data gathered from the 63 youth was analysed and used to produce this report.

In spite of the random selection of participants, there was an almost even number of females and males. Of the total number of 63 participants, there were 32 females (50.8%)

and 31 males (49.2%). The majority of the youth were between the ages of 16-18, with 18 (28.6%) being female and 20 (31.7%) being male. For those individuals between 19-21, there were 5 (7.9%) females and 10 (15.9%) males. In the 22-24 range, there were 8 (12.7%) females and only 1 (1.6%) male. Only 1 female, (1.6%) did not reveal her age range. The majority of females who were in the 22-24 range (6 out of 8 females in this age range) were young mothers. Again, the overall age breakdown reflects the fact that most of the participants, both males and females were in grade 11-13.

18 females and 14 males totalling 32 (50.8%) of the participants were from Sri Lanka. The next largest representation, 11 (17.5%) or 5 females and 6 males were from India; followed by 5 females and 5 males totalling 10 (15.9%) from Pakistan; with 2 (3.2%) males being from Kenya; with 1 (1.6%) female each from Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. There was 1 (1.6%) male from Kuwait. Of the 63, there were 5 (7.9%) or 2 females and 3 males that did not indicate their country of birth. The large representation of youth being from Sri Lanka is reflective of the fact that Sri Lankans are the largest of the South Asian community in the Greater Toronto Area.

Almost half of the youth, 30 (47.6%) had been in Canada from between 0-5 years. Of those, there was a larger number, 18 (28.6%) of females and 12 (19%) males that were here for 0-5 years in Canada. In the 6-10 year category, there were 8 (12.7%) females and 7 (11.1%) males. In the 11-15 year category, there were 2 (3.2%) females and 6 (9.5%) males. Only 1 (1.6%) male had been here for 15 years or more. Of the 63 participants, 4 (6.3%) females and 5 (8%) of males did not answer this question thus making the majority of the participants eligible for support services under the Immigration Settlement Assistance Programme.

There were 32 (50.8%) youth who indicated that their mother tongue was Tamil. There were 13 (20.6%) of the youth who were Urdu speaking; 7 (11.1%) who spoke Punjabi; 2 (3.2%) who spoke Gujerati and only 1 (1.6%) each for Bengali, Hindi, Katchi and Sindhi language groups. There were 5 (7.9%) who did not indicate their mother tongue. Having 32 (50.8%) youth indicating Tamil as their mother tongue corresponds with the fact that the majority of the youth in this project were from Sri Lanka as shown in Figure 3.

With regards to religious representation amongst the youth, 31 (49.2%) were of the Hindu faith; 16 (25.4%) were Muslim (religion was Islam); 9 (14.3%) were Sikh and 2 (3.2%) were Christian. The remaining 5 (8%) indicated 'other' without explaining what the 'other' meant or did not answer at all.

Of the female youth participants, 10 (15.9%) were in grade 13; 8 (12.7%) were in grade 12; 5 (7.9%) were in grade 11; and only 2 (3.2%) were in university. There was 1 female (1.6%) who did not indicate her grade level and 6 females (9.5%) who were not in school. These 6 females were the 6 mothers who had come from Sri Lanka. With reference to the males, 3 (4.8%) did not indicate their grade level; 2 (3.2%) were in grade 10; 9 (14.3%) were in grade 11; 7 (11.1%) in grade 12; and the same number, 7 (11.1%) were in grade 13; and 3 (4.8%) were in university. Thus, the majority of males and females in the sample were in high school between grades 11-13.

With regards to the parents' level of education, the youth indicated that 55 or 44% of their parents had post-secondary education. Of the 55, 30 (24%) were fathers and 25 (20%) were mothers. A further breakdown of this reveals that more fathers; 30 (24%) had completed a post-secondary education. In fact, 8 (12.7%) of the fathers compared to 5 (7.9%) of mothers had professional or post-graduate degrees. At the extreme ends of the categories, although the difference between mothers and fathers is not significant, that is, the percentage at the lowest level of education of 'some high school education,' was greater for the mothers; 19 (15%) compared to 17 (13.5%) for the fathers. At the professional or post-graduate level, there were 8 (6.3%) fathers and a slightly lower number, 5 (4%) of mothers who had achieved a professional or post-graduate degree. Overall, the majority of parents who had completed a professional or post-graduate degree were fathers.

Data on parents' employment status in Canada was obtainable for only 115 parents since some of the participants were in Canada without their parents. Of the 115 parents, 38(33%) of the fathers and 22(19%) of the mothers were working. There were only 4 (3.5%) of the fathers while a significantly higher number of mothers about 18 (17%) that were not working according to the data gathered from the youth. Again no conclusive reason can be given for this especially since about 33(29%) did not answer this question.

Much to our surprise, 27 (42.9%) of the youth did not indicate the type of family they were from. Of the remainder, 24 (38.1%) were from a nuclear family; 7 (11.1%) were from extended families; 1 (1.6%) was from a single, sole parent family and the remaining 4 (6.3%) indicated 'other' without explaining what 'other' meant. No conclusion can be drawn about the type of family because there was a large number, 27 (42.9%) of the youth that did not indicate the type of family they were from.

As in the case of the Type of Family (Figure 10), a significantly large number of youth, 20 (31.7%) did not indicate the reason(s) for their family's immigration to Canada. The majority of youth, 16 (25.4%) indicated 'Better Educational Opportunities;' followed by 12 (19%) who indicated 'Overall Better Life;' with another 9 (14.3%) indicating 'Civil War' as the reason for immigrating to Canada. There were 2 (3.2%) who indicated 'Politics In Home Country;' and 4 (6.3%) who indicated that 'Better Economic Opportunities' was the reason for coming to Canada. 'Better Educational Opportunities' ranking as high as it did, is in keeping with what the parents generally indicated in their focus groups. One would have expected to see a higher percentage of youth who would have selected "Civil War" as the reason for coming to Canada because of the high almost 50% of the youth in the study being from Sri Lanka.

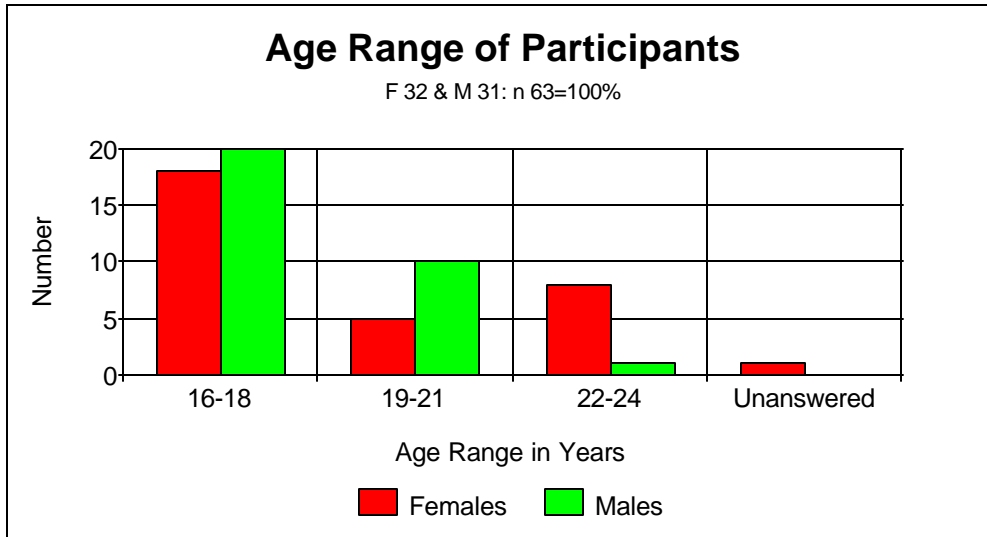


Figure 1

Gender Distribution And Number

In spite of the random selection of participants, there were an almost even number of females and males. Of the total number of 63 participants, there were 32 females (50.8%) and 31 males (49.2%).

Age Range

The majority of the youth were between the ages of 16-18, with 18 (28.6%) being female and 20 (31.7%) being male. For those individuals between 19-21, there were 5 (7.9%) females and 10 (15.9%) males. In the 22-24 range, there were 8 (12.7%) females and only 1 (1.6%) male. Only 1 female, (1.6%) did not reveal her age range. The majority of females who were in the 22-24 range (6 out of 8 females in this age range) were young mothers. Again, the overall age breakdown reflects the fact that most of the participants, both males and females were in grade 11-13.

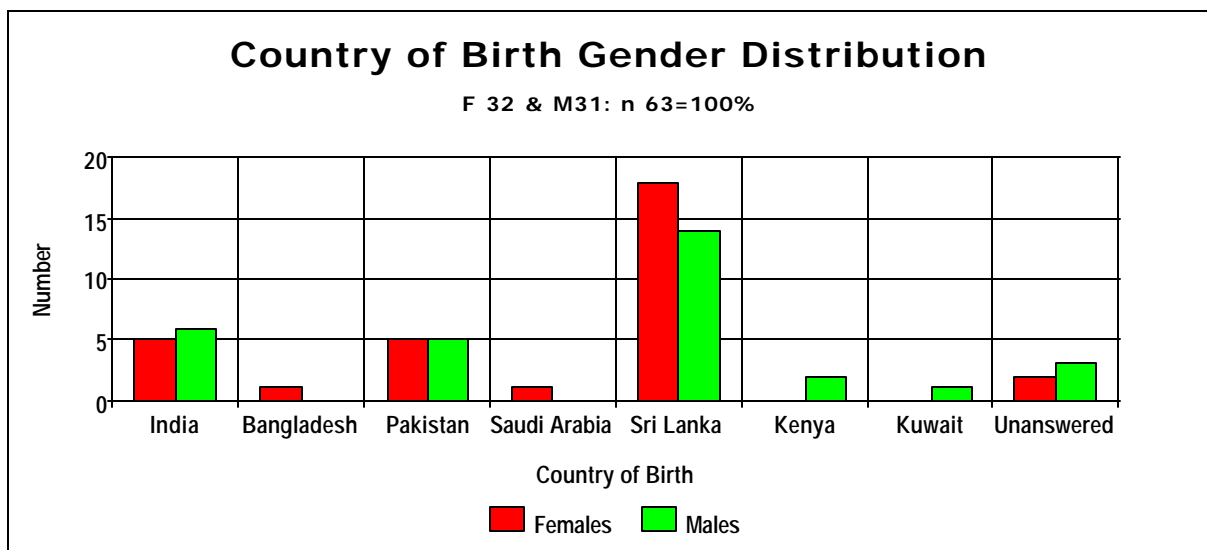


Figure 2

Place Of Birth

18 females and 14 males totalling 32 (50.8%) of the participants were from Sri Lanka. The next largest representation, 11 (17.5%) or 5 females and 6 males were from India; followed by 5 females and 5 males totalling 10 (15.9%) from Pakistan; with 2 (3.2%) males being from Kenya; with 1 (1.6%) female each from Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. There was 1 (1.6%) male from Kuwait. Of the 63, there were 5 (7.9%) or 2 females and 3 males that did not indicate their country of birth. The large representation of youth being from Sri Lanka is reflective of the fact that Sri Lankans are the largest of the South Asian community in the Greater Toronto Area.

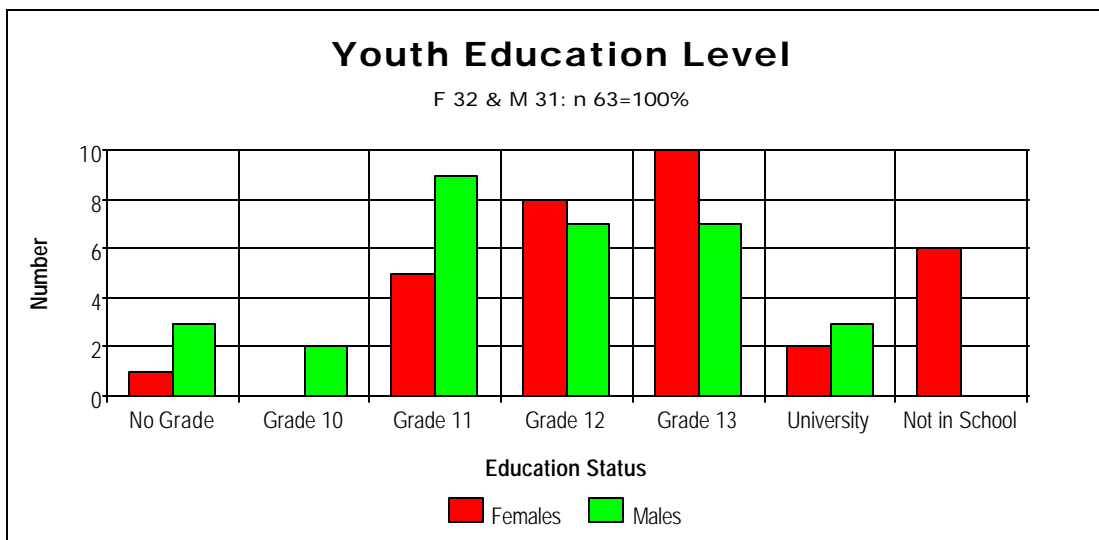


Figure 3

Level Of Education

Of the female youth participants, 10 (15.9%) were in grade 13; 8 (12.7%) were in grade 12; 5 (7.9%) were in grade 11; and only 2 (3.2%) were in university. There was 1 female (1.6%) who did not indicate her grade level and 6 females (9.5%) who were not in school. These 6 females were the 6 mothers who had come from Sri Lanka. With reference to the males, 3 (4.8%) did not indicate their grade level; 2 (3.2%) were in grade 10; 9 (14.3%) were in grade 11; 7 (11.1%) in grade 12; and the same number, 7 (11.1%) were in grade 13; and 3 (4.8%) were in university. Thus, the majority of males and females in the sample were in high school between grades 11-13.

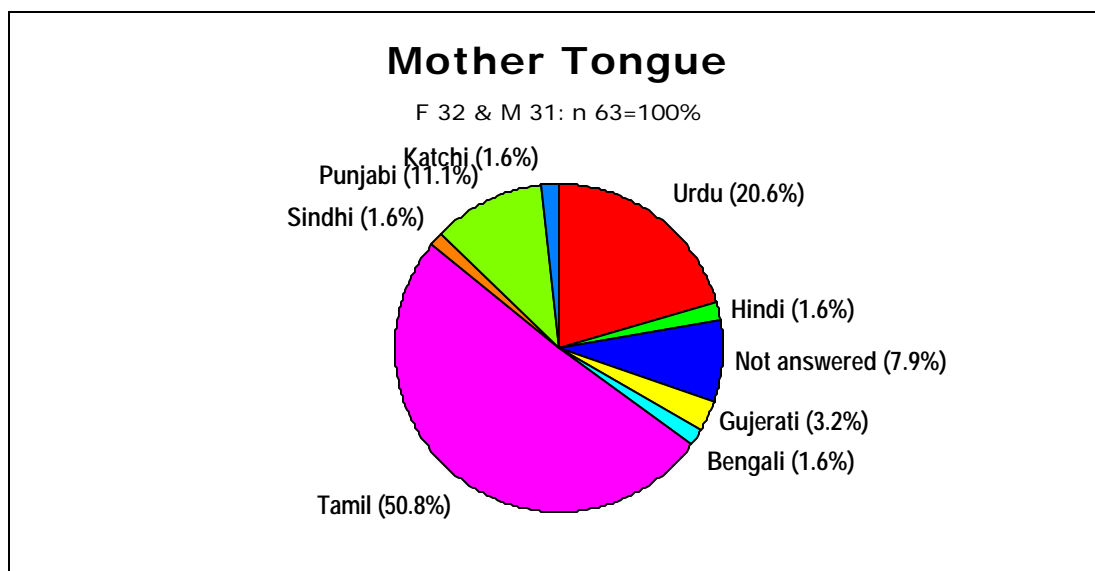


Figure 4

Mother Tongue

There were 32 (50.8%) youth who indicated that their mother tongue was Tamil. There were 13 (20.6%) of the youth who were Urdu speaking; 7 (11.1%) who spoke Punjabi; 2 (3.2%) who spoke Gujarati and only 1 (1.6%) each for Bengali, Hindi, Katchi and Sindhi language groups. There were 5 (7.9%) who did not indicate their mother tongue. Having 32 (50.8%) youth indicating Tamil as their mother tongue corresponds with the fact that the majority of the youth in this project were from Sri Lanka as shown in Figure 2.

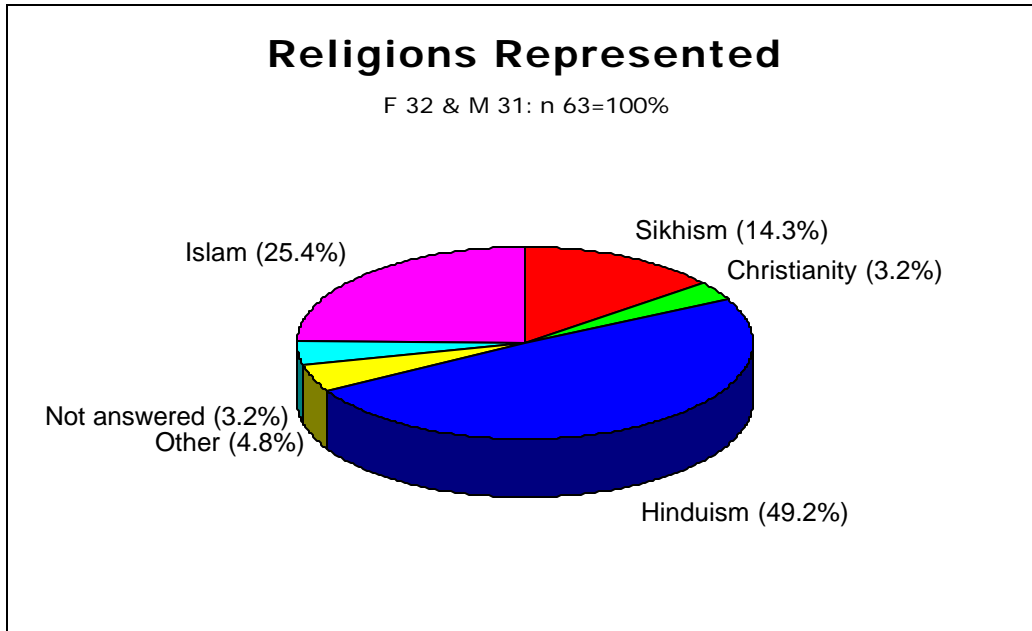


Figure 5

Religion

With regards to religious representation amongst the youth, 31 (49.2%) were of the Hindu faith; 16 (25.4%) were Muslim (religion was Islam); 9 (14.3%) were Sikh and 2 (3.2%) were Christian. The remaining 5 (8%) indicated 'other' without explaining what the 'other' meant or did not answer at all.

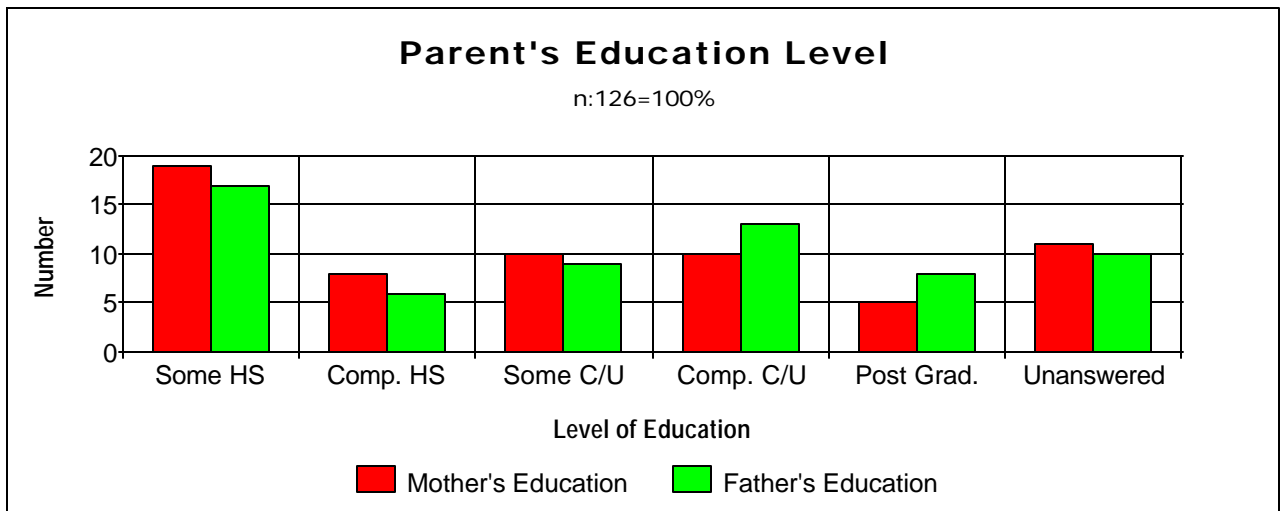


Figure 6

Parental Education Background

With regards to the parents' level of education, the youth indicated that 55 or 44% of their parents had post-secondary education. Of the 55, 30 (24%) were fathers and 25 (20%) were mothers. A further breakdown of this reveals that more fathers; 30 (24%) had completed a post-secondary education. In fact, 8 (12.7%) of the fathers compared to 5 (7.9%) of mothers had professional or post-graduate degrees. At the extreme ends of the categories, although the difference between mothers and fathers is not significant, the percentage at the lowest level of education, that is, only some high school education, was greater for the mothers; 19 (15%) compared to 17 (13.5%) for the fathers. At the professional or post-graduate level, there were 8 (6.3%) fathers and a slightly lower number, 5 (4%) of mothers who had achieved a professional or post-graduate degree. Overall, the majority of parents that had completed a professional or post-graduate degree were fathers.

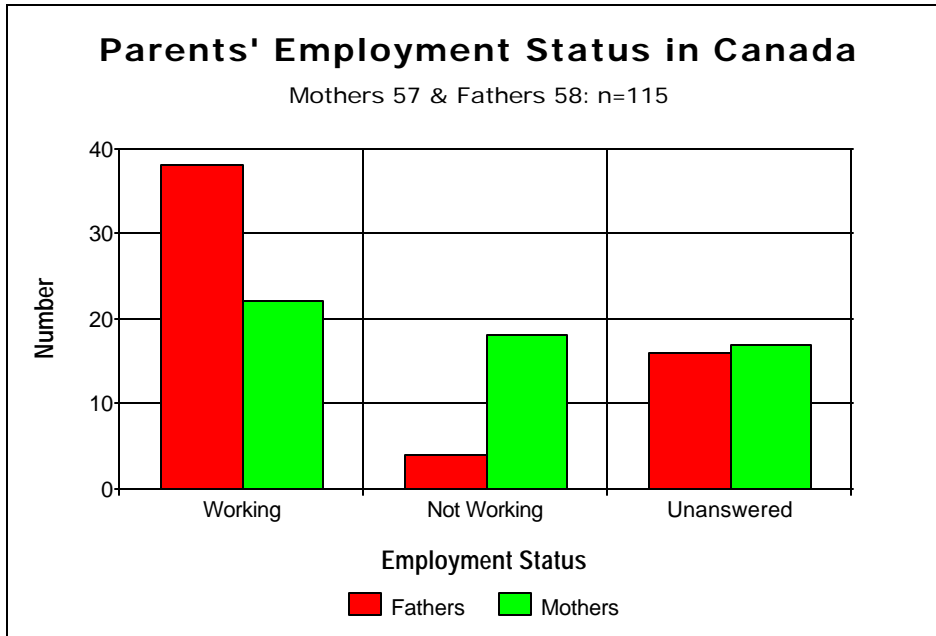


Figure 7

Parents Employment Status In Canada

Data on parents' employment status in Canada was obtainable for only 115 parents since some of the participants were in Canada without their parents. Of the 115 parents, 38(33%) of the fathers and 22(19%) of the mothers were working. There were only 4 (3.5%) of the fathers while a significantly higher number of mothers about 19 (17%) that were not working according to the data gathered from the youth. Again no conclusive reason can be given for this especially since about 33(29%) did not answer this question in their focus groups.

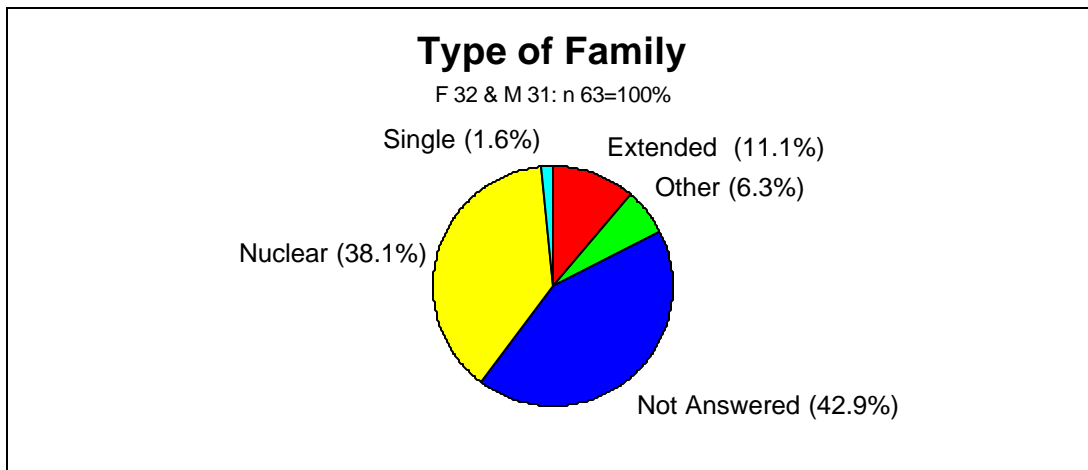


Figure 8

Type Of Family

Much to our surprise, 27 (42.9%) of the youth did not indicate the type of family they were from. Of the remainder, 24 (38.1%) were from a nuclear family; 7 (11.1%) were from extended families; 1 (1.6%) was from a single, sole parent family and the remaining 4 (6.3%) indicated 'other' without explaining what 'other' meant. No conclusion can be drawn about the type of family because there was a large number, 27 (42.9%) of the youth that did not indicate the type of family they were from.

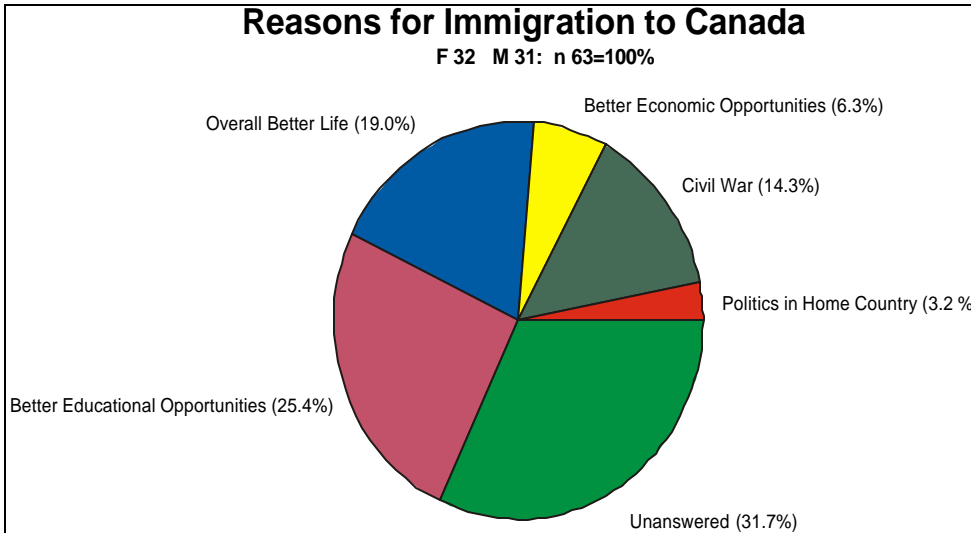


Figure 9

Reason For Coming To Canada

As in the case of the Type of Family pie graph (Figure 8), a significantly large number of youth, 20 (31.7%) did not indicate the reason(s) for their family's immigration to Canada. The majority of youth, 16 (25.4%) indicated 'Better Educational Opportunities;' followed by 12 (19%) who indicated 'Overall Better Life;' with another 9 (14.3%) indicating 'Civil War' as the reason for immigrating to Canada. There were 2 (3.2%) who indicated 'Politics In Home Country;' and 4 (6.3%) who indicated that 'Better Economic Opportunities' was the reason for coming to Canada. 'Better Educational Opportunities' ranking as high as it did, is in keeping with what the parents generally indicated in their focus groups.

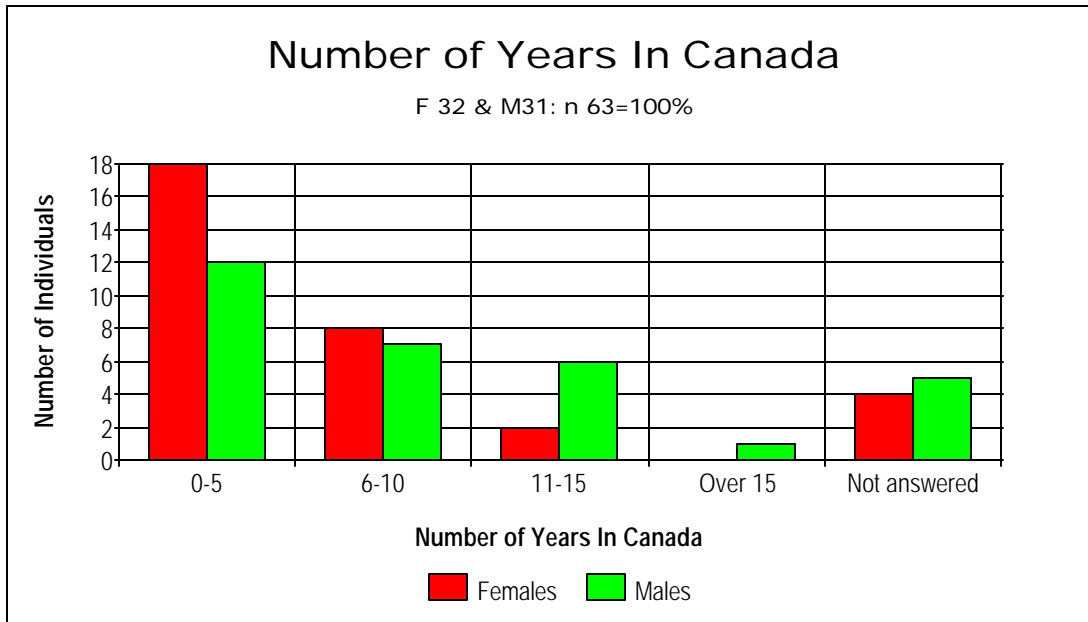


Figure 10

Number Of Years In Canada

The majority of the youth, 30 (47.6%) had been in Canada from between 0-5 years. Of those, there was a larger number, 18 (28.6%) of females than 12 (19%) males who were here for 0-5 years in Canada. In the 6-10 year category, there were 8 (12.7%) females and 7 (11.1%) males. In the 11-15 year category, there were 2 (3.2%) females and 6 (9.5%) males. Only 1 (1.6%) male had been here for 15 years or more. Of the 63 participants, 4 (6.3%) females and 5 (8%) of males did not answer this question thus making the majority of the participants eligible for support services under the Immigration Settlement Assistance Programme.

C. Highlights from Focus Groups and Analysis

As human beings, as social animals, most of us need a sense of belonging from the day we are born till the day we die. This need is most pressing in our adolescence, when we are 'growing up', trying to find our place in this world as potential adults, to define who we are and where we belong in this world order. South Asian youth involved in this study shared their stories about how they deal with the questions of identity and belonging as they adapt to a new culture.

What the participants had to say about Cultural Identity

Male: *I speak Punjabi all the time. ... I am proud of my culture. If I'm going to speak English and act like a White person, that ain't going to make me White, right. ... So, I just say, you know what, if you're going to be classified by culture or your colour, represent your culture all the way.*

It is interesting here that the participant has brought all the dimensions of racialization – language, colour of skin and culture – and used them almost as interchangeable constructs. This is probably a reflection of the fact that racial minorities face prejudice and discrimination on account of the fact that they speak differently, dress differently, have a different skin colour and follow different religious and social customs. All these, which are an integral part of their cultural identity makes them 'targets' for racist behavior, and consequently are seen as key to pride in one's cultural identity. The youth adopt traditional dress, for example, Muslim girls who choose to wear the "hijab"¹, or Punjabi youth who take pride in speaking their mother tongue as a form of resistance, as a way of coping with the racism and the everyday indignities that they face in everyday encounters with the dominant culture.

Female: *Ultimately it is about a person making a choice. Sometimes one decides to wear it in spite of your parents not wearing it because of your own consciousness of your religious identity.*

The other interesting question that this raises is, if the youth had white skin colour and could be accepted as 'White' if they managed to shake off the accent and cultural differences, would there still be such pride in maintaining a distinct identity? So, somewhere in the 'hierarchy of immigrants', White immigrants even if they are not of English, French or

¹ "Hijab" literally means a barrier or a curtain. It is commonly used to refer to a head dress, covering, or scarf that women use in such a way that no part of their hair is visible in public. This is in keeping with the Islamic regulations concerning modesty.

American descent, seem to be placed higher than the 'non-White' immigrants, even in the perception of the immigrants themselves.

Male: *...we were the only 15 Indian kids in the whole school and we always stuck together. We went through thick and thin together, we had White people trying to beat us up, and everything during school.*

Male: *We support each other, doesn't matter what kind of South Asian you are. We get in there to help our guys out even when they are not part of our small group. I can remember even in school...there were like 20 White guys, they were making fun of us. They were like calling us Pakis and stuff. And we just jumped them.*

Female: *In our group there was like three White kids and then there was a couple of Chinese people and I was the only Indian person. If anybody said something, oh yeah, look at that Paki or whatever, right. They would go and yell at those people...they would actually defend me.*

The educational institution is often the first place where the youth encounter skin-colour racism. The schoolrooms and playgrounds become arenas where visible minority youth learn more than science and baseball – they learn that no matter what their skills and capabilities are they will always be seen as inferior by a White dominant group because of the colour of their skin. These narratives clearly illustrate that children from the South Asian community are targets of racial harassment, which includes racial slurs, ethnic and racial jokes, threats and physical assaults. What they also illustrate is that the youth have pretty much had to come up with their own responses to this form of harassment. There were no quoted instances of how institutions or authority figures such as teachers dealt with such incidents. In fact, the participants gave instances where not only some “mainstream teachers” but also some teachers and others such as police officers with South Asian backgrounds shared the negative stereotypes about South Asian youth and behaved in a discriminatory manner.

Male: *You want to make it [racism, harassment] stop but you can't. Like, if you want to tell the teachers or something, then you are afraid they [the peers] might beat you up at school*

Male: *We can't trust or depend on anyone. Cause, okay, these so-called Indian teachers that are like community leaders or even Indian cops, like Indian police officers, they have this perspective of Indian youth as being you know, bad*

This is perhaps because of a general unwillingness to acknowledge and report racial conflict, harassment or violence. McCaskell (1993) reported that teachers were reluctant to

report racist incidents because they did not want to be seen as lacking control over their classes; department heads did not report them because it “looked bad”; principals were reluctant to report them because they reflected negatively on their school; and superintendents did not report them because they were supposed to provide leadership.

Male: *If you are Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, you may have frictions between each other...but if an outside group, say like, West Indian or black people come or White people come, or Chinese people come and try to mess with any one of us, they are all going to combine and they are all going to go after that group.*

Male: *Predominately, I would say, I made friends or assimilated easily in a South Asian group. And I guess that's true for anybody in any culture because, you would say hi a little more easily to a person that's brown than person that's White. And I'm sorry to say that, but that's the way it is, and that's the way it works, I guess.*

Male: *In between students themselves, you see segregation. You see black person sitting in the back of the cafe, you see brown people sitting on the left side of the cafe, you see White people in front of the cafe, like kids among themselves segregating each other just because of colour or race. **New Voice:** I don't think that's purposely done... **New Voice:** I think its purposely done to avoid conflicts between each other.*

Male: *...it's only like when you are alone in there, in the school or something like. Like if I'm Sikh and I'm alone in the class or school. Then I see most of the people picking on me...I used to get off at the bus stop and they used to make fun of me, like they used to make fun of my turban. And once I got into a fight, and then a group of Indian guys...were passing by...and they saw me getting into a fight and they got out of their car...and got to help me.*

The narratives illustrate how diverse immigrant communities feel the need to join forces when threatened by the dominant group, even though under normal circumstances these groups see themselves as being culturally distinctive and not part of a ‘homogeneous’ South Asian community or the derogatory ‘Paki’. More importantly, it traces the pathways that lead our children and youth to take violence as a way of life, as a way of surviving in a hostile world in which they are treated unjustly based on an accident of birth – the colour of their skin.

All we want is to fit in...

Male: *Because when people from outside come here and they don't have a job...they go out and do drugs, gangs and violence and everything. I think the reason they try to do that is cause they try to fit in. Because a lot of people are not willing to accept you, ... it would click in your head, that it seems*

people here do drugs, they are in gangs, they go clubbing, whatever. So, you think, in order to fit in, you must do all of these things.

Male: *But they should know themselves that, if I have to do that to fit in, then that's not worth it. But they want to fit in so badly....*

Male: *...basically what happens is that youth come over from South Asia, they use Canadian born and raised kids, like South Asian kids as role models. So whatever we do, they think that's cool and they think that's what's right.*

Male: *...but I think the way it [violence] got into our community was ...it is about black pop culture. ...they are all talking about drugs, and violence and gangs...Even the Indian remixes that come out today have a lot of that stuff mixed into it. You know people look up to rappers and hip hop artists as role models, right...if these guys think it is okay to do it, it is okay to do it, right. And that's basically what happens.*

The process of immigration, of uprooting oneself from the familiar and comfortable and resettling in an unfamiliar environment is in itself a stressful experience. Fitting in, making friends, and getting a sense a belonging can all be an overwhelming challenge. The adaptation process can be particularly difficult if the person is young since they are not only confronted with the developmental challenges of adolescence but also problems and intercultural conflicts resulting from value differences between the host culture and the culture of origin (Naidoo, J. 1984; A.K. 1984; Wakil, S.P., Siddique, C.M. and Wakil, F.M. 1981; Kurian,1991). Therefore, the pivotal question “Who am I?” during adolescence takes on a myriad of nuances for ethno-cultural and racial minority adolescents. It is also a time when the children need positive role models who can help provide purpose and direction to their lives.

The participants in the study very dramatically show us the limited options that South Asian youth have in terms of making life choices and the tremendous pressure they face to “be cool” or “one of the gang”. Faced with racist attitudes and racial harassment, the youth are obviously drawn towards other racial minority youth that are respected or even feared by the dominant group. Belonging to or becoming a part of this ‘select’ club often brings in power and privileges which are other wise denied because of the colour of the skin. It is not surprising then that the youth find the pressure to belong to this group difficult to counter or resist or that these become the role models.

Female: *I was expecting that yeah, maybe the Whites or the blacks, yeah, they might, you know, isolate us. So, it was very shocking when the Asian girls started ignoring me and they were mostly friendly with the Whites. And it was*

shocking that they were ones saying bad things about their own country and culture. And saying that the culture over here is much better.

Female: *I think what happens is that once you've lived, cause I've been here like, 10 years now, you tend to hang out with people that you can relate to. Not that I wouldn't hang out with someone who just came from Pakistan, but I have more to relate to with let's say who been here for 10 years as well. I think its cause once you have been here for a long time, not that you forget that you're South Asian, or you don't have any brown pride, but I don't know, we kind of adapt to the culture that we're in..*

It is interesting to see a different perspective on South Asian youth solidarity. While the boys clearly state that they come together regardless of their inherent diversity, the girls seem to face the challenge of getting accepted by their own race as well as the dominant race. So it is not just the Whites who tell the newcomers that they are different, it also others from their own community. One reason for this could be that there is not so much physical violence against South Asian girls and therefore, the need for numbers, for sheer muscle power is not so great. It could also be that the ones who have spent a longer time in Canada have strived so hard to 'fit in' and be 'accepted' that they fear that any attempt on their part to support the newcomers might lead to exclusion from the group.

Alternatively, this could even be due to the socialization process that young South Asian girls go through where they are told in many ways that it is not desirable to 'stand out' in a crowd, to draw attention to themselves. In a society dominated by Whites, this might get translated in to acquiring some kind of pseudo-White status or self-loathing, which could be a result of internalized racism.

It is also evident from the study that youth attending schools that have a significant number of South Asian students are able to adapt and fit in better than youth that attend White majority schools. The process of adaptation into a new environment is made easier by others from similar cultural backgrounds that have been in Canada longer and can help the newcomers settle in to the new culture and environment. The youth that have been in Canada longer probably start playing a kind of mentor role for the newcomers.

Male: *For me, the school that I go to is very multi-cultural and its kind of really interesting to be in a school of this sort because you feel confident,...*

Female: *...you're new in the country and you have no one, if you have someone who talks your language and then could translate stuff for you its much easier for you to communicate with other people. And you have some kind of support rather than being alone.*

Some schools seem to have recognized the very important role that peers from similar backgrounds/cultures can play in the adaptation process and seem to have adopted a form of 'buddy' system. Pairing a new student with another student who acts like a cultural broker and makes the process of settling in and making sense of the new environment much easier.

Female: *...your counsellor always like, hooks you up with another student who might be from the same country or the same class as you. That makes settling down in a new school much easier. Like you make friends much faster and you get to know other people quicker.*

Media in general, and television in particular, came through as a powerful socializing agent. Some participants felt that watching programs on television had helped them learn how to speak, how to act, and basically behave like a typical teenager.

Male: *It was basically see what the culture and the ways are - the behaviour - on the TV and I saw all these things, ...I was, you know, able to adjust quite easily*

However, many of the participants saw television, in particular and the media in general, as perpetuating many stereotypes that already exist about minority ethno-racial or ethno-cultural and religious groups. They felt that the media was biased in the way it covered news relating to the South Asian community. Negative stories about the community seem to get a lot more space and coverage in media as compared to similar events in other communities and positive achievements are either completely ignored or reported as a form of tokenism.

Parents just don't understand...

Female: *I think a lot of Indian families, South Asian families for that matter, don't understand the youth or today's culture. They just go back into their days when they were young and say, we couldn't do this when we were your age so why should you be able to do it.*

Female: *... not just parents but any adults, like old people in our culture, they judge people by the way they look, the way they dress. They expect everyone to be all-Indian, all-the-way, to be innocent, to know their culture and everything. But they don't realise that this is not India, its Canada.*

Male: *I think that parents need to understand what you're going through in school. You are going through different stuff from there, that they need to change their ways too, a little.*

Female: *...females are the worst off. They have it the hardest because adolescence, in our culture, isn't really considered adolescence and they don't understand. It's seen just as your kids are having some sort of problem. I don't think South Asian parents understand adolescence really well.*

Female: *...for example, puberty isn't really talked about. You don't talk about it especially with women. So, but, it doesn't come up, it never comes up. In Western culture, everything is talked about, it's open. I'm not saying that its better, its different. Our ways are different and their ways are different. But being in a country with their ways, and we have our ways, its very hard. There should be a middle, a balance.*

Male: *...anything dealing with sex or dating or marriages, they tend to stay away from it. Its something they don't want to discuss. But I'd say, I'd rather hear it from them, personally. Rather than hearing from your friends. Because they are your main source, they brought you up.*

Male: *My parents think differently toward my sister than me. Like I wouldn't get into trouble, but my sister would.*

The issues revolving around conflicts between parents and children due to the cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country came up more with the girls groups. This is understandable and probably to be expected given that in the South Asian tradition it is the women and the girls who are seen as the 'custodians' of family values and culture. Consequently, parents are more anxious about their daughters retaining traditional values and customs. This anxiety gets manifested in many forms – restrictions on dress, denying permission to participate in social interactions such as going to the movies or visiting the mall except with a select group approved of by the parents, controlling friendships etc. Male siblings also seem to appropriate the role of parents when it comes to deciding what is "acceptable" for their sisters and cousins. Probably as an extension of the double standards that prevail in the patriarchal societies.

Male: *Like she [his sister] can't go to school wearing like a mini skirt and like a little top that shows her stomach, because I know how guys think, too, right. And I refuse to let her wear that.*

This brings up the very central role of significant others – "what will people think"- with which the parents identify. Parents seem to be seeking constant affirmation from their peers that they have been 'good' parents and have done a good job of raising their children with their culture and traditional values intact.

Female: *...our community and society doesn't let people be people. They kind of have the idea, like, a certain way that all parents must be and a certain way all kids must be. So then, when parents see themselves going, oh, I'm being too*

liberal with my children. They go, okay, you can go to the movies but make sure nobody sees you

Female: *...you're the middle class, working folks, you know you don't want your children to go astray because you have a reputation to keep.*

This could in part be a parental response to the downward economic and social mobility they experience as newcomers to the country and their desire to recapture some of the lost status through children who are not just doing well, academically or professionally, but also have retained traditional values. The manifestation of this could range from dressing appropriately, to speaking the mother tongue, to knowledge of religion, scriptures, to marrying the girl/boy that the parents choose. In many cases the downward economic mobility associated with immigration is felt on a daily basis. Where earlier the children did not have to help with household chores either because the mother did not work or there were servants to do these tasks now find the parents insisting that they help out and take more responsibility around the home. The greater the difference between the economic circumstances in the home country and the one in the host country, the greater the level of discomfort and conflict.

It could also be a reflection of the parental anxiety that if the children become too well adapted into the host culture, then this would influence whether or not the children see themselves as having primary responsibility as care givers to their parents in their old age. There is a very real fear that they will be 'abandoned' to institutionalized care facilities, a very western concept. Therefore, the parents also want to control the friendships and peer group contacts that the children the make.

Male: *Its diverse out here. They somehow don't want us to blend, unless we are blending with people they like, you know.*

Female: *I can have Indian friends over, not others.*

Female: *..I can't bring girls home....unless my mom like knows them really, really well. If I brought someone home and my mom doesn't know her, my mom will flip out.*

Male: *Don't go out late. Can't have these friends.*

Male: *It's because they are very judgmental.*

Male: *...they want you to hang out with somebody who is smart.*

Again, it would appear that anxiety on this front is greater and hence the control is greater on girls as compared to boys.

Female: *I guess South Asians parents tend to put more restrictions on you because they know that you're going to be easily influenced because you are young. There's so much of a difference in our ways and Canadian ways.*

Parents who participated in the study felt that there was need to impose some restrictions on where the children went, with whom and for how long. While some parents were of the opinion that the children should go straight to school and come back home, others felt that some exposure to the larger society was good as long as they (the parents) had control over it. The concern was that if parents did not monitor the whereabouts of the children and the associations they were forming then other children who are undisciplined or disrespectful might influence them. Perhaps understandably so, there was greater parental concern about the daughters with many of them expressing the opinion that they would be reluctant to let their daughters go out alone, even if it is to the library. But they did not see it as a problem because even in the home country the girls seldom went out alone, either a parent or a male sibling always accompanied them.

Mother: *She does not go alone. My daughter wants me to accompany her.*

Father: *Instead of mother or father accompanying children all the time, I have tried pairing brothers and sisters. So the daughter does not feel someone is policing her.*

In addition to the gender dimension, there is also clearly a religious dimension to the experience of conflicts within the home arising out of cultural differences with the children from Muslim household facing more stringent expectations in terms of dress and the kinds of people with whom they can associate. Girls from Muslim families seem to face the maximum parental pressure, though there are significant differences from one family to the next. The girls feel that they have to fit into a certain mould to be accepted among their peers and at the same time, adopt a completely opposite set of behaviors for their parents. One of the coping mechanisms that girls seem to develop to survive this schizophrenic kind of existence is to start leading dual lives.

Female: *I think a lot of girls, they are more liberal here. They were a lot more conservative back in their countries. But then, over here, I guess they come and because of the peer pressure and everything, so they change for their friends. And they know that their parents wouldn't like it, so they don't act like that in front of their parents.*

Female: *I know some people who come to school and change the way they dress cause they don't, dress up like that when they come out of [their] house because of their parents. They come to school and they change the way they look and everything. They put their makeup. Yeah, like they have makeup stored like in their lockers and they just come to school plain and they would never do all that stuff, at home.*

There has been no documentation of what effects this has on the mental health of the girls but participants in the study did indicate that 'feeling stressed out' or depressed was not unusual. The participants also gave many anecdotes where the girls had been estranged from their families as a result of getting into relationships that the family did not approve of. Or because they had done the 'unforgivable' sin of becoming pregnant.

Female: *It's really hard for the girls. Do you know how many of the girls are depressed?* (General agreement in the group).

Female: *My friend, she was South Asian, right and she got pregnant, so her mom and dad kicked her out of the house. And she had an abortion and her parents, they're not going to take her back so she's living in a foster house right now.*

Coming from a culture where the concept of dating did not exist when they were growing up and even today it is not really common practice, parents have a hard time dealing with relationships that their children have with the opposite sex. They are not comfortable with this for many reasons. Firstly, it means acknowledging the growing sexuality and sexual awareness of the children. Secondly, it seems to symbolize an erosion of cultural values and all that is 'bad and wild' about western culture. The parents fear that this the thin edge of the wedge and that very soon their children are going to become like those 'western youth' – drinking, smoking, drugs, sex and rock'n'roll. Lastly, coming from a culture where marriages arranged by parents/elders in the family are still very much the norm, the parents are concerned that if they allow their children to date then they might select their own partners, who may or may not be acceptable to the parents, especially if he or she is from a different ethno-cultural, racial or religious background.

Male: *My dad goes, he can go date whoever he wants and he can date them now. My mom goes, you are not dating until you have a diploma..*

Male: *My dad says it doesn't matter what race, but my mom says she has to be Indian.*

However, there were also examples given where the parents while not being completely supportive or understanding, still did not think that the only response was to disown the

child. They are working together at finding a more positive outcome. Some of the participants also suggested that the children might be underestimating and pre-judging the parents.

Female: *Like a friend of mine, her parents didn't kick her out of the house, they were supportive. Okay, you were stupid, you made a mistake, you were young, its over with. Let's just start fresh. And they know she's still with the guy, there's no point in breaking the relationship now that you've gone so far. So might as well talk, and in a couple of years get married.*

There is also evidence that parents are also trying to change and adapt to the new culture with different norms on many issues including parenting and the relationship between parents and children. Sometimes, when there is more than one child in the family, the older children rebel and this may lead the parents to realign their expectations.

Female: *My parents have changed because they realize that... Things aren't the way they are back home*

Female: *With me they've changed because of my sister, because my sister is older. They were stricter with her... My sister fought and fought.*

The parents, who participated in this study, came through as being very aware of the pressures that the children were feeling. Yet they were torn between what they had been brought up to believe was right and had accepted unquestioningly and the need to justify any restrictions they may place on their children in terms of clothing or food or friendships etc. The children see their peers having a certain lifestyle and may ask for certain things like computers at home or eating out often and the parents who are still struggling to find economic security find it difficult to meet these expectations.

It was also apparent that these facts were not kept hidden from the children and in most cases the children were made fully aware of the difficulties the parents were facing and the reasons for continuing to stay in Canada in spite of the problems and challenges. In fact, the children were often told that the reason the parents were willing to go through all these hardships and indignities is so that they (the children) can have a better life here, instilling in them a sense of responsibility and obligation. Perhaps it is this strong sense of indebtedness to the parents that helps to keep the family together and retain cultural identity.

Some parents expressed that the children needed advice but would be reluctant to take it from parents who were seen as being too old or out of touch with the way things happen in Canada. Perhaps in the process of resettlement and trying to fit into the new culture parents lose some of the traditional authority and the children start looking elsewhere for positive role models. But there is still a lot of reluctance to seeking counselling or accessing programs that would help parents and youth and that needs to change.

Many parents also said that they (parents) have to be sensitive to the fact that the children are facing tremendous challenges in fitting into the new environment. The children often had very little say in the decision to immigrate and in most cases were very reluctant to leave the home country and all that was friendly and familiar for something that was unfamiliar and at times, overtly hostile.

Father: *...after coming here they face such a different environment and so many stress and strains here that they can't cope with that. It is a shock and if we pressurize him more, he will break...*

My mom is more understanding...

Even within the parental relationship, there are differences in the way mothers and fathers deal with parenting issues. Mothers are usually referred to as the emotional support, the mediator, the buffer between the children and the father, and often as someone the youth feel closer to and more comfortable in discussing any problems that they might be facing. The mothers traditionally play this role in many South Asian families. The mothers, even if they are also working outside the home, are still seen as being responsible for the upbringing of the children and will often get blamed for any rebellion on part of the children. It perhaps gets accentuated in a situation such as immigration because areas of conflict are likely to increase as a result of cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country.

Female: *We talk to our mothers more, cause they are basically more attached to children while fathers are like the, job, the financial well being, not the emotional. Mothers are seen as the emotional supporters and the nurturers.*

Female: *Yeah, I think my father is more strict than my mother. My mom's, more into, they're young now, so if they're not going to go to the movies now, when are they going to go the movies. If they are not going to wear the clothes now, when are they? Not that she promotes it, she's more liberal.*

Male: *... like my mom knows I guess all of my friends. And she knows who I hang out with and who I had a fight with, or whatever. Like my mom's sort of close to me so she knows certain aspects of life pretty well.*

Male: *If it was something to do with family, obviously, I always go to my mom, first. I feel comfortable talking to her.*

The interesting point here is that there does not seem to be either a gender or a religious/ethnic dimension to this. Across all participants, male and female, as well as across all ethnic and religious backgrounds participants reported that it is the mother who is the person they would feel more comfortable talking. Even going so far as to say that at times the mother knows about their friends, especially those of the opposite sex but would not tell the fathers. So it seems like the mothers are not averse to doing some deception of their own on behalf of the children!

I don't want to become a doctor....

Better educational opportunities for the children is one of the important reasons why many South Asian families immigrate to Canada. Many parents are willing to experience downward mobility in their careers and social status as they see it as a sacrifice they are making to ensure a better future for their children. Even when parents had come here due to external factors such as civil war or conflict in the home country, they felt that the children had gained because Canada had better educational facilities than the home country. There is a wider range of options available in terms of courses and also the level of technology in the schooling system.

Father: *So purpose of coming to this country is all for the betterment of the career opportunities for children.*

Mother: *...in Canada the choice is more varied and moreover technology, the application of technology in learning, no way we can compare to Canada.*

This expectation, added to the central role that education has always played in the South Asian culture as the only way in which one can move up in life, means that there is a lot of pressure on the kids to perform well academically.

Male: *Our parents want us to have like office jobs because the jobs they have now are, they have the low jobs.*

Male : *How you are doing at school is always a big impact. Because remember, that's the main reason all of our families came here.*

It was also interesting to hear from the girls about their career goals and/or aspirations. Many of the girls expressed the desire to enter into careers that are not traditionally seen as being available to or expected of girls. It also raises the question of whether the girls would have been able to have such non-traditional career aspirations if they had remained in their home country.

Female: *I want to be computer teacher.*

Female: *I want to be an air force pilot.*

There is also the expectation that the children will go into careers that are valued in their community. Children who want to pursue other careers other than professional courses or computer technology find that parents are not very supportive.

Male: *...want their children to go into an educated career instead of athletic career, right. So, and if the kids want to go into an athletic career, they don't support them enough.*

Female: *I don't want to become a doctor, but my parents want me to.*

Oh my god! You can speak English!

Language and the many prejudices around whether and how you speak English are one of the major issues that children from racial minority groups have to face in school. It is also a way in which the system distinguishes and discriminates. Aptitude and skills tests that are not appropriate for someone who comes from a different country and a different educational system are used to and often students of South Asian origin are denied access to advanced level courses based on these tests.

Male: *They see a brown person who doesn't speak English well and think that all brown people can't speak. They'll stick them in ESL [English as Second Language].*

Male: *They just look at your English knowledge and they'll put you in ESL for other subjects too.*

Mother: *My daughter was finding it very difficult to adjust here. Sometimes she would come home crying from school saying that I don't want to go there because I am looked at differently because of the way I talk, the way I look, the way I walk, the way I dress.*

There is also a tendency for counsellors and teachers to have lower expectations from these students and to discourage them from taking advanced courses that would be helpful in getting admission into universities at the post-secondary level. Often, the counsellors seem to encourage these students to think about alternatives to university education such as community colleges or trade schools even when the children have good test scores and overall good grades, reflecting the racism that is so ingrained in the White Canadian consciousness. It is also very ironic, because most participants in the study stated 'better educational opportunities' as the reason for immigrating to Canada.

Male: *They took my tests in math and English, my scores were well above average. The counsellor told me you should go into community college and maybe handy-work is good for you.*

Male: *My mom is like is there something better than general. She said, yes there's something called advanced. She said put him in advanced. And my mom was really mad and she took it to the principal.*

This brings us to the critical role that parents and the larger community play in making sure that the children get treated fairly and on the basis of their true skills and aptitude. In recent years, the largest category of immigrants from South Asia has been the 'independent' or 'skilled worker' category. Thus, increasingly these children are coming from families where the parents are educated, often very highly educated, and place a great deal of emphasis on education as a way to better one's position in life and society. Unless, counsellors and teachers recognize this and the importance that education plays in their lives, South Asian youth will not get a fair deal out of this education system which has so much to offer.

The participants also offered some wonderful insights about how the curriculum content and design could help in dealing with some of the racism and prejudices that exist because there is very little knowledge or understanding about racial minorities and their contributions to Canada. This brings up the very critical question: what role do we see the education system playing in building a nation that is inclusive, equitable and accepting of all minorities?

Female: *...obviously about European people, plus we also have like black history month, and people respect them because they learn about them. And you*

know what people don't have any respect for people they don't learn about, obviously, right, like us.

Female: *We should learn about different cultures, their countries, their histories, their importance in the world. I'm not going to stop a person on the street, you know, I'm Pakistani and this is my culture. You seem to learn it at school, that's the general thing.*

Even schools that have a number of students from a specific ethnic community because of their location do not have courses for the mother tongue. Even if they are offered, they are offered on Saturdays and not as part of regular day school – almost like an extracurricular option. Also, many of the students work weekends making it difficult for them to attend these classes.

Male: *Like West Humber, at least 65-70% of the school was Punjabi, right. Like TCI, there's a lot of Punjabis there too. I think they should, like they have Spanish courses.*

Male: *... because Spanish is not an official language of Canada, so why not Punjabi.*

Even in other activities like sports, the schools often do not offer options that the South Asian youth excel in such as cricket or soccer as opposed to hockey, football or basketball. The youth also pointed out that sporting activities were largely limited to competitive sports. Students who could compete for their schools had access to space and sports equipment leaving youth simply interested in having a good time with other youth no access to sports after school. With no access to space and equipment they were left to their own creativity and devices to come up with things to do.

The effects of the exclusionary curriculum in perpetuating prejudice and discrimination based on cultural stereotypes are reinforced by racist behaviour on part of teachers. The teachers seem to forget that when an authority figure behaves in a discriminatory manner he/she gives out the message that this is acceptable behavior. No amount of anti-racist policy statements can counter the powerful impact of seeing people who are considered role models behaving in a discriminatory manner.

Female: *...sometimes they don't know how to explain to class, right. So, he just embarrass everyone in front of the class.*

Sometimes, the teachers are not racially discriminatory but they may place demands on the students without being aware of the special needs and challenges faced by these students. For example, many South Asian youth work after school to help supplement the family income. The time these youth have after school hours is severely restricted and teachers need to become sensitive to these issues.

Male: *...[parents] want you to work and make money for the family and help out...it's hard because you can't be successful at school and then have a part-time job working 5,6,7 hours a night, plus coming home and doing your home work*

Male: *I don't think any teacher who sits in a class and hands out assignments and expects them back the day or the day after who doesn't know what your real life is... after 3:00 you are working 12:00 in the morning or whatever. He doesn't know what you are going through. But he expects his work done just because that what he gets paid for. He doesn't care what you going through, right.*

Racial minority teachers who could perhaps be positive role models to these youth are often themselves victims of discrimination not just from the system but are also seen as being powerless in countering racist behavior from the students. Participants reported instances where the students would harass or be overtly racist towards a South Asian teacher and would face no negative consequences of their behavior.

Male: *...he's an Indian teacher. And all the students are really very bad with him, even [saying] things like shut up stupid, they just don't listen to him.*

Female: *... even if it's a small mistake that they [the teachers] make, I mean, it might be a general mistake that any human can they just label it, oh she's brown. Even a White teacher can make a mistake like that, but they don't see it like that.*

At the same time, many of the participants also felt that the school system was very good here in spite of all its limitations. They feel that the schools here offered more choices in terms of courses one could take and there was not so much emphasis on performance in standardized exams and ranking the students on the basis of the academic performance.

Male: *I love the access that we have here, the electoral options and things like that, I love the opportunities that are here*

Male: *...the school services are good in general. I mean there's a lot of things you could do at schools here.*

The youth also shared experiences of having teachers who were supportive and the difference this made in the process of adaptation.

Male: *I had a nice teacher. He was really nice – he doesn't look like he was going to come after you – he tells you everything word by word so we could understand.*

Female: *It helps when you talk to teachers, ask them if you will be able to handle the course and they help you after school.*

Female: *Like, if you need extra help with English, My teacher always says come to me after school and I'll help you.*

These stories poignantly highlight the tremendous challenges that South Asian youth face in the process of adaptation into a new culture. It also serves to focus on the critical role that the educational institutions and the teachers play in this phase of their lives and how efforts to make schools safer for children from minority groups needs to become a priority.

All the participants in the study have learned to cope and to find “happiness” in their new environment. For some, Canada has provided opportunities that were not available in the home country. Though many of them have been here for many years, a sense of belonging is still missing. Canada is not yet home.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Freedom to speak one's language, practice one's culture and religion are enshrined in various human rights legislation and policies at both the provincial and federal levels. As Canadians, we are bringing up our children with the belief that, no matter who you are, regardless of class, race, or gender you have equal access to Canadian political processes and services within the economic, education, health and social sectors. Yet the experiences of South Asian youth participating in this study bear the hallmarks of a fundamentally inegalitarian society. The experiences of South Asian youth reveal contempt against them and that the processes of in-justices are at work despite the ideology of egalitarianism and meritocracy. Skin-colour racism and discrimination is the most powerful unifier as experienced and expressed by South Asian youth. This could only persist through an entrenched and rooted ideology of language superiority and cultural supremacy in a radicalized society.

The experiences related to being marginalized took precedence over other difficulties that are specific to particular ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious or national origin and pre-immigration history. There could be many reasons why Tamil youth did not want to talk about their experiences of trauma associated with civil war. Some Tamil youth did not see themselves as refugees because they did not perceive themselves to be conventional refugees in that many of them arrived in Canada directly from Sri Lanka and not via a United Nations refugee camp. Many wanted to distance themselves from the negative connotations and stereotypes attached to refugees, distinguishing themselves as landed immigrants was very important. Perhaps, it was also an issue of trust, intra-group as well as trust *vis a vis* the researches. Researchers are often outsiders who are seen to impose themselves on the participants, get what they can and leave. Hence it is said that research can be voyeuristic. Regardless of pre-immigration history, ethno-linguistic or cultural differences, overwhelmingly, the youth revealed that the issues related to skin-colour racism and discrimination were of paramount interest to them not the "uniqueness" of the diversity within the broader South Asian community.

The youth articulate and analyze the tensions generated by the conflict between how they see their culture and themselves and how they are perceived and treated by the dominant culture. The comments of the youth clearly reveal what strikes them as unjust and how they

have come up with strategies to survive. They demonstrate an understanding of the material barriers and existential experiences of everyday indignities in their everyday encounters. Some Muslim female youth and Sikh males involved in this study said that sometimes they find themselves having to comply with two competing values systems. On the one hand their religious requirements and simultaneously having to meet their own need to fit-in the larger youth culture within the Canadian context. South Asian youth have come up with creative ways to manage these competing demands. They see themselves as being in the process of imbibing two systems of values and expectations. No significant differences were found in educational expectations for males and females. Females expressed interest in “non-gendered careers. This reveals the diversity of lived realities within South Asian women and challenges the commonly held stereotype of South Asian women being oppressed and restricted. An outdated stereotype that could have serious negative implications for youth seeking direction from teachers and guidance counsellors who might hold the view that South Asian culture is homogeneously traditionalist and sexist. Muslim females also expressed a strong sense of agency that came across through their comments about to wearing the hijab. Some of the Muslim young women insisted that wearing a hijab was based on choice and freedom to decide as well religious pride and faith and not solely because their religion expects women to be modest.

In the face of these experiences South Asian youth have devised strategies to cope with a sense of realism and pragmatism to help them live up to their parents’ expectations. Expectations they think they must honour because of the sacrifices their parents made by immigrating and the difficulties and hardships their parents’ endure in the name of doing everything within their capacity to ensure success for their children in a society where there is very little hope for themselves. The youth revealed an acute awareness of their parents struggle to maintain their positional power as parents in spite of odds being stacked against them. Since both youth and their parents find themselves experiencing shifts in their respective roles within the family and especially with the outside world. In the face of barriers such as language and unfamiliarity with mainstream institutions, youth often find themselves in the position of intermediary, translating, interpreting and negotiating for or on behalf of their parents. Some parents can only access mainstream institutions with their children as cultural brokers. Without the assistance of their children they are at a risk of being very isolated. This creates awkwardness for the youth and places an unwarranted burden on them. Parents on the other hand find their power, authority and ability to control their youth

somewhat compromised. Needless to say, this experience of shifting roles places both parents and youth at risk with profound implications for family dynamics. It is these differences in the existential realities between South Asian parents and children that exacerbates the already challenging process of adaptation and settlement for youth and their families. Sense of unmitigated duty and obligation seems to keep the family in check or survive with complex challenges and great difficulty in new country as all members try to establish a sense of home.

The role of parental expectations is something all youth have to deal with, however, in the case of South Asian youth this takes on special significance. The youth are under tremendous pressure to succeed because their parents endure many unwarranted burdens especially when seeking access to employment in a society that does not recognize their credentials and experience. Their parents realize that in such an environment, South Asian youth have to swim up stream while non-racial minority youth have the privilege to drift with the tide.

The youth have to understand how teachers, counsellors and others in this society operate against them and their culture in order to confront systemic barriers to their full participation and success. Regardless of gender, the youth consistently seem to suggest that maintaining an intact sense cultural identity and keeping their parents' expectations in focus helps them to maintain a balance and continue working hard. Implied in this is also a sense of cautious optimism that they will be respected and accepted by working hard. South Asian youth strongly influenced by the their parents' orientation to work and education reveal high aspirations of social class. In spite of their awareness of the major constraints imposed by systemic barriers their aspirations remain unaffected.

Within the context of school, it seems as if much of the youths' time is spent in coming up with strategies to deal and cope with teasing, harassment, name-calling and systemic discrimination within the educational system, which fosters Euro/Anglo-centric cultural supremacy. The youth have to come up with strategies on their own to avoid the effects of stereotypes and violence perpetrated by their non-South Asian peers, and negative expectations of their teachers. Many of the youth expressed a lack of faith in the system to do anything about any of the above mentioned problems. The emerging dimensions of coping strategies seem to indicate that they draw on their own abilities and a sense of

security by consciously seeking out other South Asian youth to create a feeling of belonging and cultural identity with their South Asian peers. The youth are very aware of the differences that exist within the collectivity known as South Asian. They did not see these differences as operating antagonistically in the context of their lives here in Canada. The youth regardless of their specific ethno-cultural, linguistic or religious identity demonstrated the need to coalesce despite the intra group differences when faced with an external threat. The youth revealed that this strategy was critical in fighting off attacks on their pride and dignity from other non-South Asian youth.

While they recognized the invaluable assistance and direction given them by some teachers they indicated that they have to constantly battle against many teachers and guidance counsellors who ask them to lower their expectations. Many felt impeded by teachers' assessments of their abilities as well as not having good reliable information and advice about educational opportunities. Through this study, the youth tell us about how the education system continues to make the error of applying culturally biased intelligence, aptitude and general knowledge and skills tests to immigrant children. The youth also expressed serious concerns about being classified as being inadequately prepared to deal with the demands of the curriculum, not having the ability or capacity or intelligence resulting in them being placed in a wrong or inappropriate grade level when they arrive as newcomers.

In addition, from what the youth told us, it can be concluded that it is still not recognized by educational leaders how much of what is taught is biased and offensive to immigrant children. Muslim youth expressed that they found representations of Muslims as terrorists, violent and evil that is difficult to accept. The youth expressed that the education system must play a critical role in confronting and changing the stereotypes that exist in society by having curricula materials that reflect the presence and contributions of South Asians not only in Canada but also in the global context. Having curricula activities and reading materials that reflected their diversity and their contributions would help them maintain their pride in their cultural identity as well as address their marginalization in Canadian society. They also expressed that the South Asian community should become actively involved in challenging the education system. They thought that South Asians should learn from the African Canadian community about lobbying for change. The youth recognized that having Black History/Black Liberation Month is an important, meaningful and necessary first step in

the process. They expressed that the education system needed to go beyond this and to have curricula materials and activities that included all ethno-cultural and racial groups that all students must be exposed to.

The youths' experiences within the school are such that they have become disillusioned and very suspicious of the system that is supposed to facilitate equality of opportunity and access to better life chances. The youth consistently expressed that schools should be a caring place that makes all students feel and think that they belong and have something to offer as well as contribute. Comments made by the youth reveal that they are acutely aware of systemic discrimination and how this places them at the center of the struggle between what the school expects of them and the expectations of their parents. Not to mention their own expectations which might not be consistent with those of either the school or their parents. Being conscious of these dynamics many students did not have any recourse to challenge the discriminatory practices since in many cases they felt that they could not turn to their parents or the South Asian community for help. Often this left many of the youth feeling like they had no control over their lives. Many of the youth felt angry and other said that they were left with vulnerable ego states and a weakened self-esteem because of the perception of having little or no control. To cope with these feelings, some of females expressed that they had experienced depression and some said that they turned the anger towards themselves. Some of the males coped by engaging in fights or indulging in false escapes such as drinking or taking drugs.

Along with comments on what the education system should do the youth mentioned that Canadian media should become more responsible in their treatment and representation of South Asians. They also indicated that the South Asian community had a role to play in ensuring positive and balanced representations in the media by using political processes to reduce the racial harassment targeted at South Asians.

A. Recommendations

There are very few services available for youth in general, however, services for South Asian youth seem to be even fewer. In the absence of formal support services, many South Asian youth rely on informal supports usually provided by friends and family.

The participants came up with many suggestions on how parents, teachers and the larger community can help make this process of transition an easier one. Their “needs for support” and suggested recommendations are organized under education, social services, parents and the larger community.

Education

1. Make the curriculum more inclusive by specifically including content that gives the students an understanding of other cultures and traditions. There is also a need to ensure that the younger generation recognizes the many ways in which ethno-racial minority groups have contributed to the development of Canada as a nation. Schools should actively educate to promote anti-racism, and anti-discrimination.
2. This inclusive framework needs to go beyond the classroom. After-school programs should be geared towards including students of all cultures. Sports that are more popular in South Asian countries like cricket and soccer could be introduced. This way the newcomers would find at least some activities that are familiar and it would also give them a sense of belonging.
3. Schools also need to give serious thought to the process by which newcomers are systematically restricted from taking advanced level courses even though they may perform well in aptitude tests either because of the discriminatory practices or because of the way in which the ESL program works.
4. School guidance counsellors need to approach their counselling from an integrated anti-racism framework which would help them make their interventions more insightfully and address the needs of **all** students regardless of skin-colour, culture, class, ability, sexual orientation, etc. (see framework for analysis).
5. There is a need to develop more accurate ways of determining where a student should be placed in terms of grade and levels of study. School boards need to put resources into developing aptitude tests that are not discriminatory or Euro/Anglocentric.
6. ESL classes need to be flexible, graduated in level and be of a high quality to integrate students into their subject areas at the level of sophistication they need for their academic work rather than the “same size fits all” structure that currently exist.

7. The mentoring or 'buddy' system needs to be institutionalized, so that already integrated youth can help newcomers gain an understanding about the school and its education system, as well as, the "Canadian" culture.
8. The Settlement Education Partnership in Toronto (SEPT) program should be seen as an integral part of educational services with full recognition of SEPT workers as part of the educational team and not as outsiders or interlopers "spying" on teachers. When students outside the City of Toronto heard about this program from other focus group participants expressed a keen interest in having SEPT extended to their areas.
9. Schools that have a large number of students from a similar ethno-linguistic South Asian background could find ways to provide classes for the mother tongue as part of regular school rather than in the evenings or over weekends.
10. Schools need to have more cultural programs, as this would foster greater understanding of different cultures among the students.

Social Services

1. Counsellors are needed to act as mediators among youth, parents, and teachers, as intergenerational issues come up in the process of settlement and integration. Community centres could offer programs for youth and parents which would help resolve some of these issues.
2. The youth need drop-in centres where they should be able to get together, participate in games and learn while having fun.
3. There is a need to provide youth with information about the services and opportunities available in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. For example, youth who need to work and support or supplement the family income know about how they can continue with their education.
4. Agencies such as Coalition of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC) could establish a South Asian Youth Council for the Greater Toronto Area. The Council could play an advocacy, liaison and facilitation role with local school boards and principals; settlement services; municipal departments and other social/health institutions to implement some of the other recommendations.

Parents

1. The basic shift that the youth want from the parents is in terms of their attitudes and their desire to steadfastly hold on to traditional customs that are not necessarily appropriate in the new environment and can result in making the adaptation process more problematic than it already is.
2. To recognize that their children go to schools which are multi-cultural and are likely to have friends who may not necessarily be from the same ethno-cultural or ethno-racial background. They need to be supportive of this kind of diversity as it would help the children adapt in a multi-cultural multi-racial setting.
3. To become aware of how the educational system really works and what is the long-term implication of their child getting put in ESL and not being allowed to take more advanced courses. Parents need to first educate themselves so that they can combat discrimination in the schools.

The larger community

1. The larger South Asian community has the responsibility of taking a more active interest in the way the schools are run. The community needs to get involved in making the educational system more inclusive and equitable.
2. It would also be good for the community to support initiatives by youth that are aimed at celebrating their culture and traditions. The youth today feel alienated not just from the dominant White society but also from leaders and people of influence from their own communities.
3. Media should go beyond paying lip service to multiculturalism and human rights and have stories and articles that reflect the positive aspects of the South Asian community, especially the youth.

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YOUTH: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Name:(optional) _____
2. Gender: Female: _____ Male: _____
3. Age Range: **(check one only)**
 16-18
 19-21
 22-24
4. Country of Birth: _____
5. Number of years in Canada: _____; from age _____ to age _____
6. Country you lived in before coming to Canada: _____ for _____ years
7. Immigration Status:
 Citizen
 Landed Immigrant
 Refugee
 Other **(please specify)** _____
8. Type of family you live in: **(check one only)**
 Nuclear: living with parents and siblings
 Sole-Support Parent: living with one parent
 Extended: living with parents, siblings and other family –
 grandparents/uncles/aunts/cousins
 Other **(please specify)** _____
9. Marital Status: **(check one only)**
 Married/common-law
 Single
 Divorced
 Other **(please specify)** _____
10. Do you have any children? Yes: _____ No: _____
 If yes, how many children do you have? _____ What are their ages? _____
11. Religion:
 Christianity (Christian)
 Hinduism (Hindu)
 Islam (Muslim)
 Sikhism (Sikh)
 Other **(please specify)** _____

18. Father's Educational Level: **(check one only)**

- Some High School
- Completed High School
- Some College/University
- Completed College/University
- Professional Degree
- Postgraduate Degree (Masters/Doctorate)

Father's Employment Status in country of origin:

19. Was your father employed outside the home? Yes: _____ No: _____

20. Father's Employment Status in Canada:

- Working, full-time
- Working, part-time
- Not working, but searching for work
- Not working and not looking for work
- Other **(please specify)** _____

21. Reasons for immigrating to Canada **(check the one that applies the most to your family)**:

- Politics in home country
- Civil War
- Cultural/religious intolerance
- Better economic opportunities in Canada
- Better educational opportunities for children in Canada
- Better health and educational opportunities in Canada
- Overall better life in Canada
- Other **(please specify)** _____

22. Name some of the aspects of settling in Canada that presented you most difficulty:

23. When you need help, from whom/where do you seek it?

24. What services would you like to have available to youth like yourself?

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

YOUTH: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What are some of the reasons for your family to immigrate to Canada?
2. What are some of the things you remember about your early experiences as a newcomer to Canada?
3. What are the concerns or challenges and difficulties you faced and/or are facing now?

Areas to probe: School/Education
 Work/Employment
 Social/Family, Peers, Friends
 Health

4. Who did/do you turn to for help when facing difficulties?
5. Could you tell us what you would like to see in terms of help for youth?

Probe: Who, What, Where, etc.

PARENT: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What are some concerns or challenges and difficulties that youth in your family face/faced as newcomers to Canada?
2. What makes it difficult for youth?
3. How do/did you deal with the difficulties your children face/faced?
4. Knowing what you know now, would you change the way you dealt with your children's difficulties? How would you go about it?
5. Could you tell us what you would like to see in terms of help for youth?

Probe: Who, What, Where, etc.