Identity and Lived Experience of Daughters of South Asian Immigrant Women in Halifax and Vancouver, Canada: An Exploratory Study

by
Helen Ralston, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita of Sociology
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3H 3C3
Telephone: (1-902) 420-5878
Facsimile: (1-902) 420-5121
E-mail: Helen.Ralston@StMarys.ca

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Abstract

This paper is an exploratory study of identity and lived experience among *second generation daughters* of South Asian immigrant women whom I have previously interviewed in two metropolises of Canada: Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the east coast and Vancouver, British Columbia, on the west coast. My research addresses the following questions: (1) How do South Asian Canadian young women today identify and create a space for themselves as *Canadians* ? (2) How do they interact with other members of Canadian society and contribute to shaping its future? (3) How do they resist discrimination in a multicultural society?

My research involves systematic *qualitative* case studies to uncover the intersecting race, gender and class "relations of ruling" in the social, economic and political structures and processes of society which impinge upon identity construction and the lived experience of the "new" second generation. It uses a feminist theoretical perspective. It brings together three important theoretical concerns, namely, (1) conceptualization of lived experience and its associated methodology; (2) theorizing on race, caste, class and gender interconnections; and (3) theories of identity construction. My objective is to show how these interact to produce identity and the specific lived experiences of the young women inside and outside the home. The intersecting of gender, ethnicity, race, caste and class relations is examined in four spheres of everyday life: (1) language, education and paid work experience; (2) family relations, sexual relations, dating and marriage; (3) identity construction, representation and resistance in a multicultural society; (4) cultural, religious, social and political organizational experience.

In this initial stage of the project, a case study approach has been adopted. Data have been collected in face-to-face semi-structured interviews with samples of 15 to 29 year old daughters (8 in Halifax, 10 in Vancouver) of diverse backgrounds.

*Introduction**

This paper is an exploratory study of identity and lived experience among eighteen *second generation daughters* of South Asian immigrant women whom I have previously interviewed in two metropolises of Canada: Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the east coast and Vancouver, British Columbia, on the west coast. My research addresses the following questions: (1) How do South Asian Canadian young women today identify and create a space for themselves as *Canadians* ? (2) How do they interact with other members of Canadian society and contribute to shaping its future? (3) How do they resist discrimination in a multicultural society?

Review of second generation immigrant youth research

Canadian research which relates to second generation South Asian youth has focussed on issues of parental cultural dilemmas about socialization of children, especially in terms of different gender codes for relations with the opposite sex and dating (Basran 1993; Buchignani et al 1985; Ghosh 1981, 1983; Dhruvarajan 1993; Kurian 1988, 1991a, 1991b; Kurian and Ghosh 1983; Naidoo 1980; Siddique 1983); intergenerational conflict (Buchignani et al 1985; Kurian 1988, 1992; Sandhu 1980; Srinivas 1992; Vaidyanathan and Naidoo 1990; Wakil, Siddique, Wakil 1981); assimilation to Canadian society (Buchignani et al 1985; Buchignani 1987; Kurian 1989); and confusion about cultural identity (Sandhu 1980). Virtually all of this research has been from the standpoint of first generation immigrant parents. A few researchers (Kurian and Ghosh 1983) interviewed parents and children in the same family. Most studies described these aspects of settlement as "problems" for both immigrant parents and their passive, silent children. The exceptional qualitative research of Evelyn Nodwell (1993, 1994, 1997) adopted a different perspective and standpoint to describe how second generation Hindu Indo-Canadian youth in

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Vancouver, British Columbia, were active agents in construction of their identity and integration of Indian culture into their lives. Vijaya Joshi (1995), in Melbourne, Australia, and Sonal Pathak (1997), in Atlantic Canada, chose a similar perspective in their research among their peers. Recently, Randal Tonks and Arnand Paranjpe (1999) presented results of their research in Vancouver with immigrant and Canadian born youth which dealt with their attitudes towards multiculturalism and national identity.

In Britain, also, much of the research has emphasized socialization, intergenerational conflict and the "problem" of second generation South Asians being "caught between two cultures." A few researchers (cf. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1989) explored both first and second generation experience of family life. For more than twenty years, some British feminist scholars have critiqued this approach, adopted the standpoint of the second generation (cf. Ballard 1978, 1979; Brah 1978, 1987, 1996; Drury 1991), and emphasized their agency in creating, challenging and contesting lived experience, power relations, and identity construction (Brah 1987, 1996; Drury 1991; Puar 1994; Trivedi 1984).

In the United States, there has been a number of quantitative studies dealing with "survival" and "growth and adaptation" of the "new" second generation, the offspring of post-1965 new immigrants to the United States — Asians, Hispanics and Blacks (Portes 1993, 1994, 1996). Using US census data and adopting the economic sociology of immigration approach to immigration (Portes 1995a), studies have focussed on what Portes (1993, 1995b) refers to as "segmented assimilation" to describe diverse possible outcomes of "adaptation" to American society. Some studies have combined census data analysis, ethnographic and survey research (Fernández-Kelly and Schauffler 1994; Portes 1995b; Zhou and Bankston 1998) to investigate segmented assimilation among specific ethnic immigrant children. Issues such as household demographics, social and economic circumstances (Jensen and Chitose 1994); language and bilingualism (Portes and Schauffler 1994); educational progress (Portes and MacLeod 1996) have been the focus of attention.

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Theoretical approach of the study

My research involves systematic *qualitative* case studies from the standpoint of the daughters (<u>not</u> their parents) to uncover the intersecting race, gender and class "relations of ruling"—in Dorothy Smith's (1987) terms—in the social, economic and political structures and processes of society which impinge upon identity construction and the lived experience of the "new" second generation. It uses a feminist perspective. It brings together three important theoretical concerns, namely, (1) conceptualization of lived experience and its associated methodology; (2) theorizing on the interconnectedness of race, caste, class and gender as social constructions; and (3) theories of identity construction. My objective is to show how these interact to produce identity and the specific lived experiences of the young women inside and outside the home. The intersecting of gender, ethnicity, race, caste and class relations is examined in four spheres of everyday life: (1) language of communication, education and paid work experience; (2) family relations, relations with boys, dating and marriage; (3) identity construction, representation and resistance in a multicultural society; (4) cultural, religious, social and political organizational experience.

Taking the standpoint of second generation daughters, and following Dorothy Smith (1987, 1992) and Roxana Ng (1981, 1984, 1986, 1989, 1993a, 1993b), "lived experience" is conceptualized as the practical activities of everyday life—what actually happens, what people do—rather than as "perceived experience." Smith's sociological inquiry begins with a woman, "the knower who is actually located; she is active…at work…, … hook(ed) into extended social relations linking her activities to those of other people and in ways beyond her knowing" (1992:91). Smith's goal is to discover women's experience and to link it to "the politics and practice of progressive struggle" (Smith, 1992:88). In this study, I explore from the perspective of the daughters of South Asian immigrant women "the generalizing and generalized relations (of ruling) in which each individual's everyday world is embedded" (Smith, 1987: 185) in the respective regions.

Gender, ethnicity, race, class and caste are conceptualized as interconnected social constructions, produced and maintained in social relationships which are characterized by differential power relations—"relations of ruling" in Dorothy Smith's terms—in struggles over the means of production and reproduction in multicultural and multiracial societies. Feminist researchers in the 1980s—such as Cassin and Griffith (1981), Ng (1984, 1989), Stasiulis (1987, 1990a) and Abele and Stasiulis (1989) in Canada; Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983) in Britain; and Bottomley and de Lepervanche (1984) in Australia—criticized attempts to separate these concepts as distinct analytical categories in the interests of definitional clarity. Since 1987, when I began my research programme adopting this conceptual approach to study South Asian immigrant women, theorizing about race, class, gender intersections has developed considerably, and studies conceptualizing them as *interconnected* categories for description and analysis have burgeoned (cf. Agnew 1991, 1996; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Bannerji 1991, 1993a; Bottomley, de Lepervanche and Martin 1991; Larner and Spoonley 1995; Ng 1993a, 1993b; Pettman 1992, 1995; Ralston 1996b; Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995; Taylor 1994). US anthologies (Andersen and Collins 1992, 1995; Rothenberg 1995; Chow, Wilkinson and Zinn 1996); *Race, Gender & Class: An Interdisciplinary & Multicultural Journal* (launched in 1993); a Race, Gender, Class section of the American Sociological Association (created in January 1996); a ListServ on ASANet for RGC Studies—all testify to increased interest in interconnected race/gender/class as a conceptual approach.

I explore contradictions in notions of "difference" (cf. Barrett 1989; Spivak 1989; and Ram 1993, for a critique). I draw on Blumer 's (1969) symbolic interactionism, Goffman's (1959) theorizing about the presentation of self, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) conceptions of the socially constructed reality of everyday life and the dynamic nature of identity as a sense of self in interaction with others (cf. Brah 1996: 20-21; Waddell and Vernon 1987; Taylor 1994).

Identity and culture are conceptualized as being dynamic and "inextricably linked concepts" (Brah 1996:21) which are continually shaped and reconstructed subjectively and socially in historical, social and economic relations of ruling along many axes (such as race, gender,

ethnicity, caste, religion and national origin)—as much for the native-born dominant Anglo-Saxon residents as for first and second generation immigrants (cf. Hall 1990:225). I examine the processes and institutional frameworks within which individuals and groups are identified and represented and how race, racism and racialization enter into these processes (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Bannerji 1993c; Bolaria and Li 1988; Bottomley et al 1991; Das Gupta 1989; de Lepervanche 1980, 1991; Li 1990; McConnochie 1988; Miles 1989; Ng 1989; Stasiulis 1987, 1990b).

Socially constructed representations and identities are reinforced by state policies and practices which govern culture, education, employment, organization and citizenship (Agnew 1996; Brah 1996; Carty and Brand 1993; Giles 1997; Gunew and Yeatman 1993; Ng 1993c). Brah (1996) has provided an innovative theoretical framework for the study of "difference," "diversity" and commonalities of experience which links them to analyses of "diaspora," "border" and "location." Her insights on "diaspora space" (1996:209) as "the site where *the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native* (her emphasis)," where "economic, cultural and political effects of crossing/transgressing different 'borders' are experienced…(and where) belongingness and otherness is appropriated and contested" (1996:242) have informed my analysis.

I argue that, rather than being "caught between two cultures," second generation daughters in multicultural and multiracial societies create, live and operate in what Homi Bhabha (1994; Rutherford 1990) has theorized as "the third space," an in-between hybridized space where identities, diversity, differences and boundaries of intersecting race, class and gender are negotiated and redefined in everyday life. Ghosh and Vijh (1997), by drawing analogies from the physical sciences, have presented a novel, lucid and useful elaboration of Bhabha's conception of "the third space" as an *ideal* case, something newly created, an interphase between two (or more) cultures "which evolve this third space as a medium of exchange and transaction between partners of equal power" (p. 8). Felski (1997:12), in discussing the "multiple, interconnecting axes of affiliation and differentiation" implied in the notion of hybridity, stresses that "affiliation

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… does not preclude disagreement but, rather, provides its necessary precondition." I would add, furthermore, that the reality of lived experience is not between "partners of equal power" but involves rather disparity in power relations along axes of race, gender and class.

Following those who conceptualize first and second generation immigrant women and women of colour as dynamic and creative agents in constructing identity and shaping experience (cf. Agnew 1996; Bannerji 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Bottomley 1988, 1991; Brah 1996; Glass and Wallace 1996; hooks 1984, 1990, 1992; Joshi 1995; Nodwell 1993, 1994, 1997; Pathak 1997; Ram 1993; Root 1996), I draw on their theorizing to describe and analyze how the daughters in the research samples construct a space for themselves, challenge, contest and resist representations and intersecting race, gender and class relations of ruling (Bannerji 1993c; Giles 1997; Parmar 1982, 1989, 1990; Pettman 1992, 1995); how they claim marginality as "a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (hooks 1990:149-150).

Qualitative feminist methodology

To achieve the theoretical objectives outlined above, I have adopted a qualitative feminist methodological approach. This approach puts women at the centre of inquiry, enables them to articulate their experience, and is directed towards social change. It involves a plurality of research practices (cf. Oakley 1981, 1998; Cook and Fonow 1991; Olesen 1994; Reinharz 1992; Smith 1992). In this initial stage of the second generation research programme, exploratory data have been collected, during January and February of this year 1999, in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, with both closed and open-ended questions. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews establish personal contact and interaction between interviewer and interviewee, allow participants to talk freely about experiences and issues of concern to them, while at the same time maintaining a common base for comparative purposes. The interviews provide basic demographic life data and allow open discussion of aspects of identity and lived experience in the focal areas of the research programme. In Dorothy Smith's approach of "institutional ethnography" (1987:160-161), interviewing, recollections of institutional experience—in family,

school, work, various organizations, for example—and other methods "are constrained by the practicalities of investigation of social relations as actual practices." The women interviewees "are indeed the expert practitioners of their everyday world" (p. 161). It is the role of the sociologist to investigate and to disclose "the extralocal determinations of (their) everyday experience" (p. 161).[1]

A case study approach has been adopted. Strictly speaking, the term "second-generation" is used to refer to children who have been born in a settlement country to which both their parents have migrated. In fact, I have found that such daughters prefer to call themselves *first* generation Canadians. For my projects, besides children born in Canada, daughters who migrated there before the age of 5 years are included in this category, because the major proportion of their primary socialization and all their secondary socialization and schooling occurred in the settlement country (cf. Brah 1978:197). Samples of 15 to 29 year old daughters (8 in Halifax, 10 in Vancouver) of diverse backgrounds have been drawn from children of women in my previous projects. Getting the samples has presented many challenges, such as: establishing eligible interviewees from the original samples of mothers;[2] finding the *mothers* (the interviews were

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[1]On February 19, 1997, I presented the results of my research with South Asian immigrant women in British Columbia to participants, agency workers and other interested persons in a public talk at the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. Several young women attended that talk. Informal conversation with some of them following the talk sparked my interest in *their experiences* as Canadian daughters of women who came to Canada many years previously—from India, Pakistan, East Africa, Fiji or elsewhere. Of particular satisfaction was to hear their comments to the effect that the talk was "educational" because it rang true to their taken-for granted experience but also gave them insights into how it fitted in to the larger world.

[2]The interviews with Atlantic Canada mothers were conducted between 1988 and 1991. In the 1986 census of Canada (Statistics Canada 1988) there were approximately 3,800 South Asians scattered throughout the four Atlantic provinces. About half the South Asian population resided in Nova Scotia, with nearly 40 per cent in the Halifax census metropolitan area (CMA). Since I was interested in exploring how region of settlement influenced lived experience of South Asian women of diverse backgrounds, a directory prepared by the Indo-Canadian Association of Nova Scotia (INCA 1988) proved to be a useful tool for drawing the sample in the three maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The directory was considered by several informants to give a fairly comprehensive listing of the relatively small population of South Asians in the region, because the list was not based on membership in an association but rather on self-identification or identification by other South Asians. My sample was drawn in proportion to the census distribution of South Asians in the four provinces. The total Atlantic Canada sample of 126 first-generation immigrant women aged 15 years and over comprised one-tenth of the estimated total population of South Asian women of that age in the Atlantic region at the time. Of these 126 women, 48 (40 per cent of the total) were selected randomly from the directory. Interviews with the British Columbia mothers took place between November 1993 and December 1994. There it was not possible to draw comparable samples. There was no directory or list of eligible participants for the study. A preliminary indication of the ethnic, linguistic, and religious composition of the South Asian population was obtained from 1991 census data and from lists of organization members and contact persons of bodies such as the Vancouver Multicultural Society of British Columbia and other similar societies. With the help of key informants and resource persons in the heterogeneous

conducted in Halifax 10 years ago; in Vancouver, over 4 years ago) so that I could locate the daughters; setting (frequently changed) mutually suitable times with young women who have very active, busy lives; and revising the semi-structured interview schedule in the light of what the first interviews revealed.

The relationship I already have with the mothers of the interviewees of this research programme made it especially important to establish the confidentiality of the interviews with their daughters. In two cases, a mother spoke on behalf of the daughter and said that she was not interested. On the other hand, in some instances my introductory letter had not been received or the mother was away and the daughter herself responded to my follow-up telephone call. All the interviewees agreed to the interview in a preliminary telephone call. I have conducted all the interviews myself and obtained written consent for them. They have been audio-taped, with the consent of the participant. The interviewee chose the location of the interview and was the first to propose a convenient time for her. Only one of the daughters who were contacted declined to be interviewed; the mothers of two young women who were in high school said they did not want to participate; the mother of another married daughter in her mid-twenties did not want me to contact her.

Having read the interview description and signed the consent form, none of the participants showed the slightest concern about confidentiality of the interview. Only once did a young woman stop in her tracks, when about to tell me of her first date, and comment with a laugh, "You won't tell my mother about this?" The young women were entirely at ease and freely communicative in the interview situation. They offered me refreshment in an informal casual manner; I did the same when the interview occurred at my residence or office.

Profiles of the daughters

South Asian community and in government and non-government organizations, a snowballing method was used, with a deliberate attempt to select women of diverse ages, class, community backgrounds, countries of origin, dates of entry to Canada and to locate women who were *not* organization members. The British Columbia sample of 100 women was drawn in proportion to the distribution of South Asians in the 1991 Census (Statistics Canada 1993): 74 in metropolitan Vancouver; 26 from other places in British Columbia.

Like their mothers, the interviewees were of diverse backgrounds in terms of age, birth order, heritage language, parents' national origin, religious identification. The 10 Vancouver interviewees ranged in age from 19 to 29 years, with a mean of 23 years and a median age of 22. The 8 Halifax interviewees ranged in age from 17 to 24 years, with a mean of 22 years and a median age of 24. All but 3 Vancouver and 3 Halifax interviewees, respectively, were born in Canada. In the Vancouver sample, 5 were the eldest/elder child in a family of 2 children in 7 cases; 3 children in 3 cases. In the Halifax sample, 3 were the elder of 2 children; 3 were the youngest child in a family of 3 or 4 siblings. One interviewee in both Vancouver and Halifax was married; the remaining young women in each sample had never married; 3 had partners, but only one lived with her partner. Five Vancouver women and 3 Halifax women named a caste membership; others had no knowledge of their caste. With respect to religion, in Vancouver, 4 identified with Sikhism; 2 with Hinduism; 2 with Christianity; one had no religious identification. In Halifax, 4 identified with Hinduism, 1 with Islam; 1 with Sikhism; 1 with Christianity; and 1 had no religious identification. Both parents of the interviewees were living, except in the case of one interviewee in Vancouver who was the daughter of a single mother, and one in Halifax whose father had died when she was aged 12 years.

In terms of education, all the interviewees in both samples were highly educated. The youngest women were completing high-school diplomas and had plans for college or university. Among the others, post-secondary education was the norm. Of both Halifax and Vancouver interviewees, 2 were completing post-graduate degrees.

In terms of paid work, only 2 women (both in Vancouver) had full-time paid work—1 as a lawyer, the other as a marketing agent for a phone company. Four in Vancouver and 4 in Halifax had permanent part-time paid work—tutoring, marking for university professors, working in a cafe, customer service with a cable company, regular baby-sitting; 1 in Vancouver and 1 in Halifax had casual work. Of those without paid jobs, 2 in Vancouver and 3 in Halifax were full-time students; 1 in Vancouver was "between jobs" and 1 in Halifax was a full-time homemaker and caregiver of 9-month old twins.

Four spheres of everyday life experience inside and outside the home

1. Language of communication

Having interviewed over 200 South Asian immigrant women, the majority of whom spoke relatively fluent but accented English, the most striking impact for me on first contact with their daughters was their *Canadian accent*, the rapidity of their conversation and the richness of their Canadian English vocabulary and contemporary idiomatic language of youth. of the 18 interviewees spontaneously gave the heritage language as their "mother tongue"— one (who had migrated at age 4 years) with some hesitation in her voice, said "Punjabi, I guess;" another remarked, "If stranded, I can communicate in Tamil"; a third stated that she could understand, but not speak her Hindi mother tongue; a fourth could use Punjabi to communicate and had recently made a conscious choice to learn more, as she wished to pass it on to her children as their heritage language. Of the 13 daughters who identified English as their mother tongue, 5 also spoke the heritage language more or less fluently; others could understand it but spoke it minimally. All the young women communicated with their parents and siblings in English. In some instances, the parents spoke with a daughter in Hindi or Punjabi, as the case might be, but the daughter responded in English. If a grandparent was living in the household, or a mother spoke with relatives and friends in the heritage language, then the daughter would be able to communicate, at least minimally in her language. When asked why English was their language of communication at home, the young women gave answers such as the following: "It's never been a topic of issue"[1]; "That's what I know!"[2]; "I don't know really, I was exposed to so much English;"[3] another, "I grew up in a predominantly white, English area."[4] Two gave the responses

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[1]Interview #1 AC, 6/2/99.
[2]Interview #2 AC, 6/2/99.
[3]Interview #3 AC, 7/2/99.
[4]Interview #8 BC, 21/1/99.

like the following: "My mom was a teacher; she taught in English. We found it easier to talk in English."[1] Another, who migrated to Canada at age 4, said "When I first came here, I only spoke Punjabi. At kindergarten I had trouble, so the teacher said to try to speak more English at home. It became a pattern."[2]

If parents spoke both languages with the daughter when she was a child, one interviewee related, "I got confused, so they shifted to English. I was embarrassed to speak Urdu. I wanted to distance myself. My brother and sister didn't think it cool to talk Urdu."[3] In contrast, another young woman found that parents being fluent in English as immigrants was an asset: "I was lucky. I would use both languages with them."[4]

Several daughters in both Halifax and Vancouver[5] had formal heritage language classes as young children. As adolescents and young adults, three daughters have taken steps to learn to speak and/or read and write their heritage language.[6] Seven young women were fluent in French, two of them having had French immersion or bilingual education. Others had a functional knowledge of French, Spanish or German.

In sum, unquestionably the young women in my samples use Canadian English as their language of communication in all spheres of their life. It is an integral aspect of their identity. As intelligent, highly educated women who live in predominantly English-speaking regions of Canada, some have learned *French* as Canada's other national language—perhaps with a view to future job opportunities, although none gave this as an explicit reason. Their heritage language, even when named as their mother tongue, is part of their family cultural identity, which some women, as they mature, consciously cultivate for their own sake or for that of their future children. I emphasize this feature of my face-to- face interviews to draw attention to the impact of racialization as integral to their lived experience and identity construction.

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[1]Interview #6 BC, 18/1/99; interview #7 BC, 19/1/99.
[2]Interview #8 BC, 22/1/99.
[3]Interview #4 AC, 14/2/99.
[4]Interview #1 BC, 13/1/99.
[5]Interviews #3 and #8 AC; interviews #2 BC, #3 BC, #4 BC, #6 BC, #8 BC
[6]Interviews #5 AC, 15/2/99; #3 BC, 16/1/99; #9 BC, 22/1/99.

2. Family relations, relations with boys, dating and marriage

All the interviewees spoke freely of their relations with parents and siblings, relations with girl friends, and relations with boys. The issue of primary concern for the majority of the interviewees was relations with boys. The parental code for relations with boys varied along a continuum of not permitting any acquaintanceship with a boy classmate who might call the daughter at home about an exam or homework, to the other extreme of acceptance (albeit reluctant) of a daughter living out with a male partner.[1] In between those polar extremes, relations with boy friends varied — for example, as part of a social group that included a brother, or as a visitor to the home, or as a date for a proposed arranged marriage, or as a short-term or long-term date chosen by the daughter herself, or as the daughter's choice of live-out dating partner with a view to marriage. These were possible varieties of relations with boys that might be permitted or lived out in any specific family.

The interviewees described relations with a number of significant others in their lives: parents, brothers, older and younger sisters, Canadian peers, The Community. They discussed ways in which rules about relations with the opposite sex varied for daughter and son. For example, a son could go out with girls and/or bring home his girl friend, while the daughter could not do either.

A university student interviewee aged 20 related that she did not conform to this parental rule,

> 'Dated?' Oh, no. They say I'm not allowed. [There's] no choice, it's not acceptable. According to them I'm not allowed to talk to boys after classes. That's where our differences are. We have arguments on and off. I ignore them. I have guy friends. I talk to them on the phone. They (my parents) don't know. One of my best friends is an East Indian guy. We're totally platonic friends. I don't understand my parents. My brother can have girl friends who visit here. My brother knows I have boy friends. My brother is my best friend. He understands. He hates the double standard.……They [our parents] don't understand what it's like growing up here. They have the same expectations of traditions as their

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[1] I was told of no personal lesbian relationship by my interviewees.

parents in India had with them. They can't understand. It's hard to explain where we're (my brother and I) coming from. They can't see.[1]

And again, a married interviewee of 27 related,

> [The hardest thing growing up was] being different from my peers, the white kids in school. I had curfew, no make-up, no dating. Our parents didn't understand. They raised us the way they were raised. It didn't work in this country.[2]

There were others who did not conform with the expected behaviour. For example, one daughter of 25, who lived in an apartment away from her parents' home, related,

> Most of the time it (dating) was secretive. Both my sister and myself, we both had relationships without my parents knowing.… My parents don't know about my (present) partner. I'm not comfortable in doing that. I'd be surprised if they didn't know. When we were growing up it was definitely not on. We couldn't have male friends. They couldn't phone us. (But) my sister did that. Our brother supported us. Our brother had a different way of dealing with it. My sister and I lied about it. He brought female friends to the house. They were nice to them. Also he backed off from them (our parents). He was more 'defiant'. They were scared of alienating him I think.… The hardest thing for a daughter growing up is the rules about socializing. Feeling very restricted. The whole dating thing being a big deal. It still is. That conflict with my parents. Anxiety about lying. I'm still an anxious person.[3]

On the other hand, there were those who did conform, while at the same time trying to change the parents' expectations and attitudes. For example, an 18-year old daughter stated,

> Dated? No (I haven't). I'm sure they (my parents) are quite happy about that. It's unspoken that it's a cultural thing. Dating's not acceptable. I think my sisters have.… The hardest thing (growing up) is probably balancing the two cultures. When you grow up in Canada you develop a Canadian mind set. But your parents are still very Indian because they grew up there. So they prefer that you be the ideal Indian child. But that's not really reasonable because I was brought up in a different country. So I was always working through that and came up with a lot of compromises. I don't think it's easy for anybody. [My Question: compromises?] Well, friends: I have had male friends- but my parents weren't so comfortable about that. At school or going out, I would introduce them. If they met them and saw who they were, that they were just my friends, it was okay.… Trying to get them used to the idea gradually, it took a while.[Question : You'd bring them home? Reply-Negative nod.] They wouldn't come here. They'd meet them at

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[1]Interview #4 BC, 17/1/99.
[2]Interview #5 BC, 18/1/99.
[3]Interview #4 AC, 14/2/99.

school. If they called on the phone, I could answer, definitely, but after, "Who was that? What did they want?" If they called too often, they wouldn't tell me not to talk to them. They would frown, but after a while, when they found I wasn't doing very much at all, it was okay.… I think it had a lot to do with they preferred my not being secretive about it. It you're secretive about it and it's completely innocent, you're just putting ideas into their head. They don't know what's going on.[1]

Others ignored the no-dating rule with the knowledge and tacit (albeit reluctant) acquiescence of the parents. For example, a 20-year old Christian interviewee with a Christian mother and a Hindu father told of her dating experience as follows,

I have a boy friend… right now. I've had two others in the past. They're all white. When I was younger, mom said I couldn't date till I was 16. Then she said not until 18. So she never wanted me to date. But they didn't really mind I guess I had my first boy friends when I was 16. They don't want me to date someone who is Black (Afro- American) or Muslim. Right now I would date only Christians. They like who I am with now. They've met him.[2]

In this case, the daughter remarked, "I talk to my mom" and "I get along with my dad; he is a more quiet type." The mother's wishes were heard, but not heeded in terms of actually dating. On the other hand, both mother and daughter shared race and religion boundaries which were not to be crossed in dating.

A 17-year old high school interviewee had learned since childhood from her parents that caste was an impregnable boundary and the overriding criterion for any future relations with boys:

I get on very well with my mother and with my father. We have an arrangement— It has to be my caste—[when I do have a boy friend.] I haven't had any boy friends.…[The hardest thing growing up is] the difference of culture. [Q: What difference?] My friends date. They are allowed to do that. For me not to do that is very different.… My friends are allowed to go out and do lots of things. For me it's different. Like I have to ask and make sure I'm allowed. My friends ask why I'm not allowed. My parents are more protective than some of the others. Also, they [my friends] don't understand, like, "Why do you have to marry someone who is [your caste]? Why can't you marry someone who is black, who is white?" It's hard to explain.[3]

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[1]Interview #5 AC, 15/2/99.

[2]Interview #8 BC, 21/1/99.

[3]Interview #2 AC, 6/2/99.

Throughout the interview, this lively young woman's responses about places to visit or to live and the like were qualified by whether or not such places provided opportunities for meeting families of her own caste. While conforming to parents' expectations of her relations with boys and, ultimately, an arranged marriage, she creatively sought ways of meeting her objective; namely, boys of her age within the caste boundaries that were socially constructed by her parents.

Birth order appeared to make a difference in how a daughter was socialized in boy-girl relations. For example, an 18-year old high school interviewee exclaimed,

> My sisters! Oh, they are my champions. Being the third child it gets easier. One's 10, the other's 8 years older. I think my sisters had it a bit rougher. My parents are very Indian. When I was an adolescent, my sisters were very instrumental in getting my freedom, getting me to dances. *They* weren't allowed to go. My parents relied on my sisters' opinion (for me). My sisters knew more about what was going on in the culture than my parents. My parents weren't really sure what was proper for us. My parents trusted my sisters, if they said I should go out really late to a party. My sisters are much like parents. They are kind of like the Canadian side of my parenting. They were protective of what's proper.[1]

These reflections revealed that having good relations with older sisters played an important role not only in socialization of the interviewee but also in socializing the parents to Canadian customs for girl-boy relations and dating. Immigrant parents were concerned about "what's proper" in Canadian society. For example, a 20-year old interviewee, the eldest of five children, observed,

> They [my parents] have no problems with dating. They trust me to make a good decision and they trust my decisions. I was 16 when I first dated. He was 20 and my mom thought him too old. It didn't last!......My mom was raised differently. The way she thought about raising us has changed a bit. The way she raised us was different from how she was brought up. She learned on the go. She didn't know if the way she was bringing us up was going to turn out right. Being a full time mom with five kids, working full time and taking care of her mother and stuff like that. The transition for my sister was a lot easier. She's 16 and very beautiful. Because she's the baby, they try to protect her a bit more—when she gets calls from boys. She's got everyone's attention![2]

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[1]Interview #5 AC, 15/2/99.
[2]Interview #10 BC, 25/1/99.

A 25-year old interviewee living away from her parents' home testified to the positive role her siblings played in her socialization:

> My siblings were very, very important. There was a lot of things—like not feeling able to tell my parents about what was going on in my life. I couldn't really look to them when I was confused about things. I think that was why it was very important that I had them (my sisters). My siblings are 6 and 7 years older. There is quite a gap.… I relied on them a lot. They looked out for my safety in ways that my parents couldn't, because they didn't know what I was doing. So I think that was important.[1]

Another interviewee described her experience, as compared with that of her sister, as follows,

> I started dating when I was 17. (My parents) didn't know about my first boy friend. They had opinions. They talked about dating. They felt comfortable about me. They said when I was older. My second date is my present boy friend. I told them immediately after the second date (with him) when I was 19. They still wanted me to wait till I was older Not till I was 19 did I tell them. My friends came to the house before.…[Q. Boy friends?] Oh no, not male friends. My current partner is the first one to come. They already knew him. Again they wanted me to wait. They've accepted it. My sister started dating when she left home. She left home when I was 10—ten years ago.[2]

Some interviewees identified a daughter's greatest difficulty growing up as being largely dependent on her mother's attitude and behaviour with respect to relations with boys. For example,

> I was very fortunate because I had a very progressive and open minded mother. At times I would criticize her views about the kind of behavior that was acceptable. Indians are usually very strict.…No make up, no socializing with guys after school. No staying over at a friend's house. They are expected to spend as much time as they can with their family. All my friends were like that. I don't think that in my case it was like that.…Fortunately it was not a huge problem for me because I didn't really have a big interest in dating. But [for me] it was a lot less rigid than for other East Indian families.… I could say, "Mom that's totally unreasonable." She would say, "Okay, I'll be more flexible." I wasn't going to do anything to violate that code because I didn't want to.[3]

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[1]Interview #4 AC, 14/2/99.

[2]Interview #8 AC, 27/2/99.

[3]Interview #9 BC, 22/1/99.

Some interviewees chose not to date because they wanted not only to complete but also do well in graduate studies. A 29-year old law graduate observed,

> I get on very well with my mother. She's my best friend. … I started dating only when I graduated from law school. She didn't have any problems about dating. But I didn't do it (date), because I was very concerned about getting good grades and getting a job.……I was very fortunate because I had a very progressive and open-minded mother. At times I would criticize her views about the kind of behavior that was acceptable. Indians are usually very strict—much more strict than westerners, more strict with a daughter than with a son. I don't think that in my case it was like that.[1]

A married interviewee aged 29 related her story of relations with boys as a young girl as follows,

> My parents were strict. I was not permitted even going out with *girls*—to movies, to the mall. They (girls) were allowed to come to our place. In high school and even in university, because I lived at home, it was always an issue until I was old enough to decide myself when I would go out. Often they would say, "No," and I wouldn't go if they did. [Q. "Boy friends?"] It was just a given that I didn't go out with them or have them home. I had one boy friend before marriage. I was in university. I told my parents. I hadn't dated in high school. My parents were not big on dating. They realized they'd brought me to Canada and I was growing up here. They were quite accepting of it when I told them.[2]

"The Community" is perhaps one of the most important "significant others" in identity construction and negotiation between daughters and parents. Possible censure by "The Community" for bringing disrepute on it was an important factor in parents' expectations and rules for relations with boys, according to several interviewees. For example,

> [The hardest thing for a daughter is] pressures from the community because everybody has such high expectations and visually you can tell by their body language whether you are being accepted or not. That was the biggest thing, when growing up in the white world.[3]

Recognition by "the community"— religious, caste, regional— as a "proper member" played a key role in the construction of identity within cultural boundaries. To quote a Vancouver interviewee,

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[1]Interview #9 BC, 22/1/99.
[2]Interview #7 AC, 22/2/99.
[3]Interview #1 AC, 6/2/99.

> When company is over, you must have impeccable conduct, behave in a certain manner. Other East Indian families will talk about it. That's a big thing. Not ever to do things that will give your family a bad reputation. The smallest of things can give your parents a bad name. Being seen with a guy for instance.[1]

A 29-year old married interviewee also spoke of the parents' concern about attitudes of the community towards a daughter's boy friend:

> I dated with my husband for three and a half years. I dated others before him. The first boy friend I had, I guess I had to break the ice. It took them a while but they got used to it. When I got rid of him, they were ever so happy, because he turned out to be not that great. They were fine after that. I wouldn't tell them right in the beginning because parents always want their children to be happy and they are so concerned, always so concerned what others are going to say. Right? So we had to make sure that, when it came to telling them about (my husband), that it was a serious relationship. They knew we were dating, but before I had him over or anything, it had to be a serious relationship. They actually wanted him to come over right away.[2]

Neither of the two married interviewees had arranged marriages. Neither married a man of the same community background; in fact one married a Canadian-born white man of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. All of the other interviewees reported that they would like to marry, but that they would also like to continue having a career. Only one interviewee wanted an arranged marriage, but with someone brought up in Canada. This young woman commented as follows,

> I've been brought up that way. I'd prefer someone who had been brought up here. There's a difference between people brought up here and people brought up in India. Here there's a more modern outlook; there it's a little strict—like a woman's place…. I was in India this summer and there was a big difference. Girls do more womanlike things—like household stuff, look after the kids and listen to their husband. I guess that's the way it is there. It's much more set there. Here it's a little more lenient. Brought up in Canada, everyone knows that you can be equal here. There I think there's still a line. I would see myself as working as well as being married.[3]

On the other hand, several interviewees spoke of the positive advantages of an arranged marriage, for themselves as well as for others—in terms of level of commitment and freedom to concentrate on studies and career—and the disadvantages of community pressure. For example,

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[1]Interview #9 BC, 22/1/99.
[2]Interview #6 BC, 18/1/99.
[3]Interview #2 AC, 16/1/99.

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I don't think an arranged introduction is a bad way to go. I am open to it if it worked out.… I think it's a good thing for many people—the kind of arranged marriages that work, where the boy or girl is free to say yes or no, to get to know each other. The reason I'm for it is I think that there's more of a level of commitment as opposed to a love marriage, where there's greater freedom to get a divorce almost. Whereas in an arranged marriage both partners make more of a commitment to make it work. There has to be freedom for the couple even after they're married. There's too much pressure from community to stay together if it's not working and if something's going wrong, if they are very, very unhappy. That's the toss up, the level of commitment and the pressure from community to stay together.[1]

And another interviewee, living with a partner whom she planned to marry, commented,

I would have been against it in high school. I have changed—especially doing (graduate studies) It's such a long time, 4 years, maybe 5 years. I had always thought if I didn't meet someone, I would have accepted an arranged marriage.… I wouldn't have been averse to it. I think that most of my close friends are the same way.… Some of them have married. I would see myself as having a full-time career.…My mom and dad wanted and did (have full time careers).[2]

Interviewees who were opposed to an arranged marriage, made comments like the following,

I can't see myself getting to that point. I've had relationships since I was 16 years old in typical western pattern. My peer group is not made up of people who were socialized in that pattern. I don't think it's something I'd be very comfortable with.[3]

And again, another interviewee (not of Punjabi regional background) declared more adamantly,

No! I am totally against that. If I went to Punjab, they'd probably want me dead!…If mom wanted to do that, to pick someone, then *she* can marry him! It's not my choice to be with this person for the rest of my life. I'm not going to base the marriage on somebody else's choice. Mom's not like that at all.…I'm not very attracted to East Indian people.…I know so much about their culture. I'm not accepting of that. I'm not going to stay home and cook roti. The way they treat girls! I don't know how girls can live with it. I tell my mom hundreds of times, "If I were (my Punjabi friend) , I'd just run away from home."[4]

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[1]Interview #2 BC, 16/1/99.
[2]Interview #6 AC, 17/2/99.
[3]Interview #4 AC, 7/2/99.
[4]Interview #7 BC, 19/1/99.

In sum, "significant others" — parents, brothers, older sisters, the Canadian peer group, The Community — were key actors in "relations of ruling" for these young women's lived experience. As I have noted at the outset of this section of my paper, the issue of primary concern for the majority of the interviewees in both Vancouver and Halifax was relations with boys and dating. Some might call it an issue of "intergenerational conflict." In my opinion, the conflict is cultural, stemming rather from the immigrant parents', *and especially the immigrant mother's*, experience of alienation and her attempts to reconstruct her own identity, values and meaning system in a new settlement country. The process and experience of migration involves a major rupture in her world view and consciousness of cultural identity.[1] She crosses not only territorial borders but also cultural, social and psychic boundaries. I would argue that their daughters, the interviewees of this exploratory study at least, through interaction with their peers since birth or very early childhood and everyday experience of a Canadian lifestyle, have constructed a Canadian value system, cultural identity and world view. Their peers are the most significant others of everyday life. Aware of how their mothers have been socialized in a different culture and society to different values, attitudes and codes of conduct, each interviewee, rather than being a passive, silent or confused daughter, was an active agent in choosing her responses and actions in the various spheres and social contexts of everyday life.

3. Cultural identity, representation and resistance

"How do you like to identify yourself?" I asked, well on into the interview. The laughing tone of voice and manner in which a quick response was made, together with further commentaries and analysis suggested that the women had been so often represented by others as "different" because of skin colour that they had to explode the myth. For example, a post-secondary student's response:

> A human being. The other day I was out. This gentleman asked, "What's your name." I always tell people my nickname, which is T…. He said, "That's very

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[1]For a discussion of alienation and identity among South Asian immigrant women, some of whom were mothers of the interviewees, see Helen Ralston (1998b).

interesting. Where's that from?" "That's my name," I said. I thought at that moment, "Either you like it or we just have a conversation. You don't have to know where I'm from or whatever." He says, "Where were you born?" I said, "Vancouver." Then he was kind of getting to that point, "What is your ethnic background?" I said, "I'm Indian." He said , "Indian?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Indian, as in, 'From India'?" I said, "What other Indian?" He was confused. I was quite mean.… Yeah. I can be very tough that way…. Sometimes I just want to know if they are a bit ignorant, or where their mentality is from or whether they are going to be interesting to talk to. I just want to test them a bit. I'm annoyed when someone says, "Oh, you're Indian." They must know what I'm talking about. Some people don't know, they think I'm First Nation. I've met that sometimes.… But I was raised in such a way by my parents- like, "You are Canadian. Your heritage is in India. So you are Indian and I never had that, "East" in front of Indian.[1]

And again, another interviewee, who was a medical student, responded,

A 25 year old female student! .Canadian. A *Canadian* of East Indian culture. To the question, "Where are you from?"— e.g. patients, "I am Canadian — with 'East Indian' background." Or "My parents are from India", if they don't understand. You have to say "East Indian" here (in Canada).[2]

And a third woman of 20 in her third year at university, responded,

What do you mean? I'm Indian and Canadian. A typical struggling university student, a decent person, very caring. I like to make people happy—Don't try that! — I like to have fun. But I'm also serious at the same time. I think of the future quite a bit. I have options. I've yet to pick one.…[3]

An 18-year old Grade 12 student responded as follows,

What a question? How do you mean? I'm open-minded when it comes to other people. I've had a lot of experience with different cultures. I see myself more Canadian than Indian, although the Indian part is there. I'm very conservative. I think that comes from Indian part of me. In my family, I'm the quieter one, the peacemaker one. I'm good at adapting to different situations and people. Indian people are different from ordinary Canadians. For example, in dealing with elders. (I'm) not more formal but more proper, submissive, because I'm younger. In Canadian society, I state my opinions more. I can do it with my parents, but not with other Indian people. [Q. Example?] I'd speak out more with hospital supervisors [in my volunteer work], teachers, social workers than I would to a lady at the gurdwara. It would be rude to differ with her or to contradict her.[4]

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[1]Interview #1 BC, 13/1/99.
[2]Interview #6 AC, 17/2/99.
[3]Interview #8 AC, 27/2/99.
[4]Interview #5 AC, 15/2/99.

In other words, she would define the situation and present herself and interact in the situation according to what was expected of a young woman of her age *in that cultural context.* For her, identity was dynamic and fluid, constantly being created, defined, negotiated and reconstructed.

Similarly, a 17-year old Grade 12 student, who had a strict upbringing according to Hindu religion and caste rules, identified herself as follows,

> I'm Indian. I always do say that. I assume that they are asking, "What cultural background?" Obviously they know I'm Canadian. Well, I'm Canadian-Indian. When you talk to me, you can tell that I was born here, raised here, by my voice. I assume they are asking, "Are you Lebanese? Are you...What cultural background are you?" I say "Indian." I have two personalities almost. In school I'm completely Canadian. People won't think I act differently. With my Indian friends, I'm completely Indian. With my Indian friends, I act differently. I act differently towards everyone. In school, no one bothers asking. No one thinks me different. I feel at home. They know me. I think I'm more open with Indian people for some reason. I don't know why. They know more of how I live. They feel the same. They're in the same situation. With Canadians, you have to watch what you say. You have to be careful. What you say may be puzzling to them. You kind of have to explain. [For example?] Well, dating. I was asked to the grad. I had to say, "No." My friends didn't understand why, because I didn't have a date anyway.…I had to explain and they still didn't understand. The grad's a big thing!…[1]

On the other hand, a 29-year-old professional woman, who migrated at age 4 years, by contrast, identified herself thus:

> I guess I would identify myself as Indo-Canadian. I think it most accurately describes me. I don't see myself as just Canadian or just East Indian. Because I am a hybrid. Most frequently I am asked, "Where are you from?" I get asked that a lot by professors, teachers, employers. "How old were you when you came?" They say, "You speak English very well." It used to bother me when I was younger. I've got used to it.… Canada is home.[2]

This woman explicitly articulated her consciousness of hybrid identity. For her it is an integrated, positive identity. She attributed her comfortable sense of identity largely to her mother's way of socializing her: "I was very fortunate because I had a very progressive and open-minded mother."

Several young women made reflective comments on *how they respond to others who are curious or puzzled by their identity.* They recognized that such curiosity is aroused by

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[1]Interview #2 AC, 6/2/99.
[2]Interview #9 BC, 22/1/99.

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assumptions and judgments of difference in skin colour as the most salient marker of identity. In these encounters with other Canadians, they were aware of being racialized as "other" and consciously choose which identity to claim as their own. For example, a woman who migrated at age 4 months (because her mother was not allowed to travel on a plane during her pregnancy) and is now married to a white Canadian, identified herself as follows,

> If someone asks, "Where are you from?", I say, "I am from Canada" even though I know what they are probably asking.....But if they ask, "What is your background," I will say, "Indian. I was born in India, brought up in Canada." Also, some people, they see my skin colour and ask, "Oh, where are you from?" So often, just because I know that, I know why they are asking, I'll say, "I'm Canadian from Nova Scotia!" (Laughs) I know why they're asking, just strictly from appearances. On the phone I have never been asked, "Where are you from?"[1]

Similarly, a 22-year old woman, remarked,

> When asked, I'll say, "I'm Canadian. I'm Canadian, I'm Hindu, of Hindu background." I don't know. When asked, "Where from?" Toronto [her birthplace], I say. That's what I love to say, because they look at me and always assume that I'm not from here. Sometimes I'm asked, "Punjabi?", because of my looks. "No, I'm not Punjabi," I'll say. I can't answer them [Punjabi customers] at the bank [where I work] if they come up and speak Punjabi. I say, "Sorry, I can't understand you." First of all, I don't speak the language (they) speak, and as for the language I do speak, there's very little of what I can speak! When I say "Canadian," you know that's not what they really want to know from you. They think, they assume you are something else. Just when it comes out, to decide to [say Canadian], there's just a bit of vindictiveness there.[2]

A 25-year old medical student analyzed how she identified herself in these terms,

> In terms of *nationality*? Or all those things? It's hard for me to answer that because I think I alter my identification a lot depending on who is asking me. For example, An elderly person in hospital wants to know where my parents are from. So, "Pakistani." I would say, "Canadian," if I'm away traveling. That would be my primary identification, I guess. I will say now [at this period of my life], "Muslim." When I was younger I didn't believe in it, so I wouldn't say it. Now it's part of my identity, even if it's not a part of my belief system. It's not easy for me because I don't do what Muslims do. It's more important to me to identify with Muslin now. It's important to identify with the Muslim community now that it's targeted in a lot of instances. I guess I don't like some of the reasons that I feel

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[1]Interview #7 AC, 22/2/99.
[2]Interview #10 BC, 25/1/99.

compelled not to identify with it. I don't practice and a lot of people would not consider me Muslim because of that. It might have bothered me more in the past. It's not an easy identification for me, because I don't do the things, but it's not something I want to erase. My life would be better if there were a better understanding of it. A question like "Where are you from?" might have bothered me more in the past. For one thing, I've been very protected, I think, from a lot of racial dynamics. And another thing, probably because I am moving into a professional field where you have to deal with a lot of people, what's become more important to me is the spirit in which that question is asked. And there's a generation difference and also a *regional* difference in what people mean by that question. I think it's likely that a person of colour will be asked, "Where are you from?" I find it particular to here [Halifax], "Where are you from?" Something I find very different from Montreal, when I came back [from studies there]. That's what I missed when I came back. I find this a pretty homogeneous place. There's just a different kind of attitude to immigrants here. *Personally*, it's a dual thing—how I think about myself. I'm not really "Canadian". Not really "Pakistani". I'd have to say that, in my own mind, it's definitely double. It's something I value. A good thing. Not always a source of conflict. Although it has been. I haven't put it with a hyphen. Maybe because I have distanced myself from those [Muslim] communities to some degree. I don't really feel a part of them. Maybe that's what it is.[1]

Another young woman, born in Canada, with a high school certificate and further training at a Fashion Career college, described her developing sense of positive self-identity as follows,

Being 19, I'm just starting to identify with myself. In high school, you go through trial and error.… I used to be embarrassed that I was East Indian because a lot of people have a kind of stereotype of an East Indian: Eats curry, lives in a pink house in Surrey, lives with mom and dad, going to have an arranged marriage. I don't like to be categorized at all.…Now it's different. I say, "I'm from Goa." They'll ask me "Are you black? Are you half this, half that?" It's getting easier to say, because I take pride in the fact that I'm from Goa. Because I'm *not* from Punjab… I say that I'm Canadian too. But a lot of people then ask, "Where were you born?" I say, "I was born here, at St. Paul's Hospital." They say, "No, no! Where are your parents from?" … One guy asked me, "Where did your mom live ten years ago?" I say, "Here." Then he said, "Fifteen years ago?" "Here," I said. "I'm not a new immigrant fresh off the boat." … To me, I'm Goan! The people there are all liberal. They dance. They party all night. Not a lot of temples there. They're mostly Christian. I find it easier to say that I'm Goan.[2]

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[1]Interview #4 AC, 14/2/99.
[2]Interview #7 BC, 19/1/99.

This woman disassociated herself from stereotypical characteristics of East Indian/Punjabi people of Vancouver and consciously chose what she identified as the more "liberal" Goan characteristics, which she had experienced from growing up with her mother (a single woman), her grandparents, an uncle, and her two visits to Goa. At the same time, she firmly identified Canada, and specifically Vancouver, as home. "I know it (Vancouver) in and out.… It's familiar to me, so it's kind of boring!" Moreover, she identified her mother as "the epitome of a hard-working Canadian."

Another 20-year old undergraduate university student observed,

> I'm daily asked "Where are you from?" I say, "I'm Fijian. I was born in Canada. My parents are from Fiji. I'm of Indian descent." … Canada is my home. I was born here, brought up here. It's what I know. [I'll stay here permanently.] I prefer it to the US. There are lots of them [Americans] at school. I'm a die-hard Canadian![1]

By contrast, two women responded promptly, "Canadian"[2] and two, "Indo-Canadian,"[3] with little or no further comment. For example,

> *Canadian* (her emphasis). I'm very proud to be born in Sri Lanka. It's not that I'm *Indo*-Canadian. Being Canadian includes multiculturalism. You don't need to add it (Indo) on.[4]

The interviewees also addressed how they had experienced multiculturalism working out in their lives and in their identity construction. Some of their responses were as follows,

An 18-year old high school student:

> Multiculturalism has helped me because you learn about people. You see differences. You see where you are in the whole spectrum and where you fit in. My friend is Palestinian.…We have huge discussions in English class. What we might consider good? Or bad?… It's an ongoing discussion! There's Indian Pakistani, Palestinian, Greeks, Canadians in my class,—a very mixed class of about 22 or 30. A great class. It (multiculturalism) is important. In our school especially. Our school is very proud to be "the most Multicultural school east of Montreal" (as described in recent Halifax media reports).[5]

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[1]Interview #8 BC, 21/1/99.
[2]Interviews #1 AC, #3 AC.
[3]Interviews #5 BC and #9 BC.
[4]Interview #3 AC, 7/2/99.
[5]Interview #5 AC, 15/2/99.

A 24-year old university student the anti-racist value of a multicultural education experience:

> I'm a strong believer in multiculturalism. A really strong believer. I feel that if you have multicultural education in school, it will help you, and everyone around you. Those are the steps in avoiding racism…. If you have the education you will be able to fit into an interracial community, you will be more accepting of everyone else, more accepting of difference.…That's why I'm so strong. I was raised in a multicultural society and having friends from and knowing Italian, Filipino, Chinese, Black culture.[1]

Probably the most telling indicator of how multiculturalism was lived out by the interviewees is provided by their accounts of whom they socialized with, dated or married. Building a multicultural and multiracial community in a democratic society implies and demands crossing ethnic and racial boundaries in friendships and everyday activities.

A 29-year old married interviewee celebrated her experience of interracial marriage as follows:

> We always joke. My parents, strict as they were with dating and going out, we are (now) the true picture of a multicultural family: My husband is white, my children are of course mixed. My brother's wife is Chinese. When they do have children, they'll be mixed. We just laugh. Race shouldn't really matter.… For us it's never an issue worth talking about. If multiculturalism comes up, we sometimes joke, "We are the expression of multiculturalism. We describe the true meaning of it." It shouldn't matter. I married the man I love. Same with my brother.[2]

By contrast, a Vancouver post-secondary student articulated clearly the racialization process and boundary construction among ethnic and racial groups that "co-exist" together in a society. For her, by contrast, building a multicultural and multiracial community in a democratic society implies and demands crossing ethnic and racial boundaries in friendships and everyday activities.

> I experienced "reverse racism" at college. It was from my own East Indian ethnic background. It was with my fellow race. Because I went to a multicultural [high] school, my friends to this day are Italian descent, Laotian descent, African-American descent, Muslim. We all are basically a mosaic ourselves. They are my friends. But when I got into college I had never been in a community or in a

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[1]Interview #1 BC, 13/1/99.
[2]Interview #7 AC, 22/2/99.

school that had so many East Indians that it was new to me. But I still had my friends that I grew up with. So for me I was faced with racism in the sense that they wanted me to hang out with them, with the Indian crowd, whereas I didn't want to, because those were my friends. So I was kind [of] put right in the middle. People would look at me in a strange way like, "O, look at her, she's with *those people*". That was in the beginning. But once they got to know me, they knew that it was just, "That's T__ ! She's like that, she hangs around with everyone." I didn't have just one group of friends that I hung out with. I had many friends. They (the East Indians) stuck together and I would know all of them and be acquaintances with them and maybe once in a while we would all go out for coffee or we would go out for dinner. I had two groups of friends then. But I didn't just get into their group and stay with their group. That was the only kind of racism in my experience. I think they were just thinking that I was betraying them, now that I look back at it.…They wanted me to join them. But I already had my group of friends. I had the core to growing up. I was always told, "Be friends with everybody. It doesn't matter who or what. Just make sure you know why you are friends with them and why they are friends with you." For me, it was more a betrayal because I was with the multicultural group rather than just the Indian group.[1]

However, one 23-year old Halifax interviewee had a less rosy view of the *reality* of multicultural Canada:

I definitely think it's a good thing. It will improve. Sometimes, however, although we think we are multicultural, racism is there, but it's more subtle.…At university there are a lot of non-white students. That's a good thing.[2]

Periodically throughout the interviews, the young women were asked to describe any racism and/or sexism they might have experienced in their interaction with peers or persons in authority in school, work or other social situations. In elementary school, several interviewees first encountered racism among their peers. They described children's taunting behaviour and derogatory racist remarks, like the following, and how they responded or resisted:

[There was] only one incident. In grade 3, I was playing on the swing and someone called me "Paki". In elementary school, most of my friends were white. Now I hang out with brown people.[3]

There were ignorant comments made. I didn't know what they were talking about. They asked stupid questions. Someone asked if I was dipped in chocolate when I was born. That was when I was very young. I was in elementary.[1]

[1]Interview #1 BC, 13/1/99.
[2]Interview #3 AC, 7/2/99.
[3]Interview #3 BC, 16/1/97.

At the public school down the street, they called me "Paki," swore at me. One day it was snowing, they were throwing snowballs at me aged 12. I was very quiet, head down, shy then. Then I made friends. I got used to the environment. There were about four or five Punjabi in my grade. They didn't have as much trouble because they'd grown up with those kids. The others picked on me.[2]

In Elementary school stages it was bad.… It was visible: like taunting. Kids would tease, kids would taunt. When I went to Junior High it subsided a little. Then in High School I never felt different from other students. They were everything— predominantly white, then black, then Asian cultures. There was a big group of minorities there.[3]

When I was walking home or on the playground one day. I was a lot younger — grade primary to grade 3 or 4. They picked on me, called me names like, "Walking mud puddle," "chocolate ice cream." I came home and cried. Eventually I learned how to deal with it; I answered them back.[4]

Despite their experience of racialization of identity, by and large, however, the interviewees, contrary to expectation, expressed little experience of racist discrimination — as typically reported by one young woman as follows,

There was nothing major even when I was a little kid. Just the odd comment. I think it had a lot to do with the way I was brought up with my parents. I haven't been brought up as typical Indians.… I've got friends who are Punjabi. They have very strict families and very strict rules. That's the way they were brought up. We did encounter, when we were little, things like "Why are you brown?..." Nothing major sticks out as being traumatic.[5]

Similarly, in the workplace, few interviewees had experienced racism. A 22-year old Vancouver interviewee commented,

I have heard of it with others. Definitely. I am outgoing, friendly. I think it (my experience) had to do with my personality. It does not fit a stereotype. That's just a guess. I don't know what people are thinking before they get to know me. But I have never had anyone verbalize anything racist. Also the neighborhood I live in, the places I have worked, like Simon Fraser University, at the library there are people of all races. There are not many places I have worked that are a white-dominated neighbourhood, where I would feel uncomfortable. High school was

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[1]Interview #8 AC, 27/2/99.

[2]Interview #4 BC, 17/1/99.

[3]Interview #1 AC, 6/2/99.

[4]Interview #3 AC, 7/2/99.

[5]Interview #10 BC, 25/1/99.

very mixed. I have heard of cases that it (racism) has been a factor, but not that many. It's not common.[1]

On the other hand, a Halifax university student perceptively described the interconnection of race and gender in her experience with a teacher. For example,

> I would say that I have had *sexism* experiences. It's harder for me to identify racially enmeshed phenomena. I think of them more in terms of gender than in terms of race. Most are pretty subtle: e.g. My instructor misunderstood my performance. We work in small groups, students and instructor. Right now I'm being shut up by persons in the group, as are other girls in the group. But my tutor is criticizing me for not speaking up. It happens to other women—white and one black. I don't think he understands that it's because I'm being intimidated. So it's a very subtle thing. More a lack of recognition. He doesn't see what's going on. More than that, it's an active sexist thing. But I think that it's a phenomenon he doesn't see. It's something that's not being reflected on when I get evaluated.[2]

A Halifax woman of Hindu affiliation reported, as follows, that for her the shocking experience was racism expressed towards her by a Sikh woman of colour:

> There was one job where I did experience racism and persecution. I actually worked for an Indian woman at a sandwich shop—a Sikh woman and I was a Hindu.…I thought I would try working for an Indian woman. I said I would get my nose pierced. She said, "You can't do that. I can't have customers being afraid of you. It looks bad." I said, "It shouldn't be a problem since our families are from the same area." She said, "Customers won't like it." She wanted me to wait. But I went and had it done. And customers complimented me on it! She said only people of a lower caste have their nose pierced. She said, her culture, her Sikh group don't have piercings; they have their hair cut. They have different traditions. My brother told me different. I inevitably did it because she said "No." She finally accepted it. Then I left the job (and got) my present job.…That experience threw my off kilter. I was shocked. I don't understand. My friends were shocked, discussing it with them. That's because it was coming from someone of my own colour. It had been a long time since I experienced racism.… I think I get more insulted when it comes from someone of colour than when it comes from a white person. I grew up with black kids and white kids, so I got picked on by both of them. You let that go after a time. You hear things in media on black/white relations in Nova Scotia, so I figured maybe things had changed a little. But they didn't! I have daydreams. I suppose acceptance is the only way to get over it-—if *they* (her emphasis) can learn to accept.[3]

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[1]Interview #2 BC, 16/1/99.

[2]Interview #4 AC, 14/2/99.

[3]Interview #1 AC, 6/2/99.

For this independent young woman, sure of herself and her identity, mutual acceptance of difference is the key to harmony and justice in social relations.

In contrast, one Vancouver interviewee, a physically beautiful young woman who had completed a course at a Fashion Career College, described with pride her positive experience of affirmation and praise for her skin colour as follows,

> I have an agent, B___ , with a talent agency. They offer a course on etiquette and manners. I took the course. Mom wanted me to take the course. She was keen on that from her upbringing … because she learned all those things from the British.… B___ is the agent for jobs. I did a show for them. And for a hair salon. It's been pretty good. It's been completely opposite. B___ wanted to touch my skin (at the talent agency). The woman was in complete awe. "Your skin's so soft. Not brown or black. Your skin tone's amazing!"

4. Religious, cultural, social and political organizational experience

In marked contrast to their mothers,[1] the young women in my samples had little or no involvement in South Asian ethnic or cultural organizations. Some noted that they had participated as children with their parents. Some had been active as university students in an Indian, Indo-Canadian or Punjabi cultural association; the two women who *were* active in an ethnic organization at the time of the interview were students. One young woman worked as a volunteer for a multicultural organization to help her mother who was a board member. The remark of one interviewee summed up the evident lack of present interest in such cultural organizations among the sample: "We have grown out of it."[2]

Nor were the women in either Halifax or Vancouver active at the time in a women's organization, one remarking, "I am not a big feminist"[3]; another, "I flirted with a Women of Colour organization at (university), but it was not well developed.…I was less interested in that.… I had a stipend for work with a feminist group which organized a Sexual Assault Centre."[4]

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[1]See Ralston (1995).
[2]Interview #6 AC, 17/2/99.
[3]Interview #3 BC, 16/1/99.
[4]Interview #4 AC, 14/2/99.

All but one of the Vancouver women, and all but one of the Halifax women identified herself as belonging to a particular religion. In one Vancouver case, where the parents were of a different religion, the daughter identified with the mother's religion; in a similar Halifax situation, the daughter did not belong to a specific religion. They would go to gurdwara, temple or church "to pray"[1]; "it's peaceful to sit there and listen"[2]; "to sit down and think…a quiet place"[3]"to sing—they do a lot—to feel in touch"[4]; "to listen to the (Sikh) songs...it's part of my culture.…I went to a camp to learn how to sing them"[5]; "it's a value instilled in me since I was young"[6]; "going to church gives me a sense of belonging, makes me feel better"[7]; "I see value in learning, in growing spiritually in fellowship"[8]

However, for the majority of those who belonged to a religious organization, their participation in organization activities was only occasional and for social reasons; for example, for seasonal religious festivals, for blessing special events such as weddings, births, deaths, birthdays, a new job, a new house of their family or friends. The daughters would accompany parents on these occasions. Several commented that when they were young, they were regular temple or church participants with their parents. Some attributed their decline in participation to their busy lives as students or paid workers. In most cases the daughters considered that their parents, especially the mother, were more active in formal religious participation than they were. On the other hand, some young women made statements about their personal religious activities at home, such as the following: "We have a prayer room in the house, so it's not as if I'm not practising my religion.… It's important to me;"[9] "I use the (Sikh) prayers (at home) morning, afternoon, evening;"[10] "I pray differently from my parents;"[11] "I pray more than my mother (of

[1]Interview #2 AC, 6/2/99.
[2]Interview #4 BC, 17/1/99.
[3]Interview #9 BC, 22/1/99.
[4]Interview #3 AC, 7/2/99.
[5]Interview #5 AC, 15/2/99.
[6]Interview #5 BC, 18/1/99.
[7]Interview #7 AC, 22/2/99.
[8]Interview #8 BC, 21/1/99.
[9]Interview #8 AC, 7/2/99.
[10]Interview #1 BC, 13/1/99.
[11]Interview #7 BC, 19/1/99.

the same religion), I'm used to giving everything up to God."[1] One young woman observed that, while she no longer visited the temple or recited prayers privately, she did perform the Hindu ritual of fasting for her partner during the month of October—a ritual permitted for an unmarried woman.[2]

Three young women immediately responded "No" when asked if they belonged to a particular religion; one, however corrected herself and commented: "I refer to myself as Hindu, but not practising Hindu.…I lack interest, I guess."[3] Another observed, "I have faith in my own beliefs.…I pray at night. In my actions, I try to be good."[4] A third young woman, "I have no idea (of my parents' religion.…They occasionally go to a temple, but I have no idea what for.…I have never really thought about religion."[5]

My attempts to arrange a meeting time for an interview had alerted me to the busy, active lives the women had as students and/or full-time or part-time paid workers. In the interviews, many remarked that they were "too busy" for organization activities of one kind or another. Nevertheless, some students or university graduates found time for organized activities directly related to their school, college/university or profession; for example, a mentoring association for students in the same programme, an advocacy society that addresses political (rather than social) concerns of medical students, a human rights commission.

Others were regular, active volunteers in organizations providing services in hospitals, such as tutoring for children, preparation of a young child for the birth of a sibling; in high schools, for example, assessing needs and providing services for the independent student group—"kids in school who can't live with their parents"[6] , being a designated school representative to promote awareness of a Kids Help phone line, working on the student council. Others again were active in various sports clubs.

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[1]Interview #8 BC, 21/1/99.
[2]Interview #8 AC, 27/2/99.
[3]Interview #1 AC, 6/2/99.
[4]Interview #6 AC, 17/2/99.
[5]Interview #10 BC, 25/1/99.
[6]Interview #5 AC, 15/2/99.

Conclusion

The Canadian daughters of South Asian immigrant women whom I have interviewed, contrary to much of the literature, are not passive, silent young women who are caught between two cultures and confused about their identity. On the contrary, they are very active, articulate creators and constructors of a dynamic, fluid sense of identity. In interaction with significant others—parents, siblings, peers of their own gender and community and with peers and elders of both sexes in school, work and social life—in a multicultural society, they shift and negotiate their identity positions to create a space for themselves. They consciously choose how they will present and represent themselves within family and community and to the outside world. At the same time, however, they are moving and acting in a space where intersecting race, gender and class "relations of ruling" in social, economic and political structures and processes of society impinge upon identity construction and the lived experience. They must constantly mediate and negotiate their identities in that newly created space. Racialization — meaning, in Robert Miles's (1989:84) terms, the use of biological characteristics to identify a collectivity — patriarchal sexism, and classism set boundaries to their inclusion, recognition and self-realization in Canadian society. Furthermore, the sense of identity, interaction processes and choices of friends and partners among at least some of the interviewees suggests that "second-generation" immigrant (or first-generation Canadian) daughters might well be constructing a new kind of multi*racial* Canadian society that would include a multiplicity of identities and where greater equality of recognition and experience might prevail.

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