**University of Alberta**

# Cross-cultural Adaptation Strategies of South Asian Family-sponsored Spouses

by

Taooz Yousaf

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

in

Psychological Studies in Education

Department of Educational Psychology


Spring 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

## Abstract

South Asians in Canada are increasingly using the Family Class immigration category to sponsor spouses from their home countries. This qualitative study examined the steps family-sponsored spouses and their sponsors or family members have taken to facilitate their linguistic, economic, social, and cultural integration in Canada. Second, the role cultural community and religious organizations play in facilitating the adaptation of these individuals was explored. Five sponsored spouses from India and Pakistan who had been living in Canada for up to five years were interviewed. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Results highlighted that participants who received their Canadian spouse's support had positive adaptation experiences compared to those who did not receive support. Participants took active steps to learn English, Canadian culture, and used community social networks and organizations to adjust to, learn about, and become independent in Canada. Implications for families, education, and government policy are discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Allah for giving me the ability to learn, achieve knowledge, and successfully complete my studies.

I would like pay heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Noorfarah Merali for her continuous guidance and support throughout my studies. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with such a generous and knowledgeable scientist.

I would also thank my parents, brothers, and sister for the motivation they provided and always being there for me.

I would also thank my husband for his cooperation and continuous support, especially near the end of my studies.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Canada is perceived to be a land of opportunities and prospects, attracting immigrants from all over the world. Immigration has become a key objective in Canadian public policy where newcomers make an immense contribution to Canadian society, stimulating economic and population growth and diversifying the multicultural fabric of the country. According to Statistics Canada, there are 6,186,950 foreign-born individuals in Canada accounting for approximately 20 percent of the Canadian population (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2007). Most immigration occurs under the Economic and Family class categories of immigration (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2010), and the largest immigrant group in Canada is South Asians (Statistics Canada, 2006).

## The South Asian Population in Canada

Out of the entire foreign-born population, South Asians are the largest immigrant group in Canada, representing one-quarter of all visible minorities (24.9 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2006). South Asians are comprised of groups of people with various cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and as well as those from Africa and Europe who are originally from the Indian subcontinent (Ahmad, Driver, McNally, & Stewart, 2009; George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997; Naidoo, 2003; Tiwari & Wang, 2008; Tran, Kaddatz, & Allard, 2005). South Asian migration to Canada occurs mostly under the Economic and Family class categories of immigration (CIC, 2010).

There are 1,262,900 South Asians in Canada representing 4 percent of the entire Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006). Asia is the top source for their migration to Canada including India (48.8 percent), Pakistan (14.6 percent), Sri Lanka (11.7 percent), and Bangladesh (3.6 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2006). They are a recent migratory group where 70 percent of individuals are foreign-born and 29.3 percent are born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006; Tran, Kaddatz, & Allard, 2005). South Asians are one cultural group with a unified value system despite regional differences and the range of religions practiced in South Asia. They are from a collectivist culture where family takes precedence over personal interests. Interdependence and harmony is practiced among family members. Decision-making is done by elders or parents in the family especially with regards to marriage; finding a suitable marriage partner for their sons and daughters. "The binding force for all the regions is the underlying culture of the Indian subcontinent" that is shared among all the members of this group (Ibrahim et al., 1997, p.3).

South Asians are a fairly young population group in the country compared to the rest of the Canadian population. Most individuals are in their prime working age; 424,850 are between the ages of 25-54 and 260,975 are between the ages of 45-64, with the remaining 305,220 being children between the ages of 0-14. The number of South Asian elderly in Canada is very low; there are only 61,550 individuals ages 65-74 and 28,865 ages 75 and older (Statistics Canada, 2009).

After migrating to Canada, most South Asians tend to settle in the major metropolitan cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. According to Statistics Canada (2006), "*Census metropolitan* area is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core" (p. 36). Toronto hosts 684,100 South Asians (13.5 percent of the city's population), the largest visible minority group in the city after Chinese. Toronto alone accounts for over one-half (54.2 percent) of all South Asians living in Canada. This group is more likely to reside in the City of Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Markham and Richmond Hill area (Statistics Canada, 2006).

South Asians are the second largest group in Vancouver, British Columbia, 262,300 in numbers, and representing 6.4 percent of the province's total population. The South Asian community in Vancouver has long roots in the province; 37.3 percent of the population is Canadian born whereas those living in Toronto and other Canadian cities are foreign born and a recent migratory group (Statistics Canada, 2006).

After Ontario, and British Columbia, Alberta hosts the third highest proportion of South Asians in Canada. There are approximately 72,000 South Asians living in Alberta accounting for 2.4 percent of the provincial population (Statistics Canada, 2001, 2006).

Most South Asian migration occurs under the Economic and Family Class mostly comprising of sponsored spouses (CIC, 2012b). Given the collectivist

nature of the South Asian culture and its strong emphasis on family life and the maintenance of cultural traditions surrounding marriage and family, in recent years, the Family Class category of immigration has been increasingly used to reunite families where some members have come to Canada earlier independent of their spouses to become settled prior to sponsoring their families (CIC, 2010). It has also been used to form new families through international arranged marriages, a common cultural tradition among this group.

Many South Asians who are settled in Canada preserve their strong family traditions and cultural heritage through the practice of arranged marriages across international borders. Canadian families go back to their home countries seeking partners to marry their sons and daughters (Husaini, 2001). After getting married in South Asia, the Canadian marriage partner returns to file a sponsorship application on behalf of his spouse to facilitate his or her immigration to Canada (Kumar & Srivastava, 2005).

**Purpose of the Study**

The Family Class category of Canada's immigration system allows citizens and permanent residents to sponsor close family members such as spouses to become permanent residents. The sponsor is responsible for meeting the basic needs of the sponsored persons so they do not become dependent upon social assistance for at least three to ten years (CIC, 2011a; Phythian, Walters, & Anisef, 2009). While national policy encourages migrants who are screened against the points system to ensure their employability and integration in the Canadian labor market and society, Family Class migrants are not screened against such criteria.

Due to this, family-sponsored migrants are considered a potential burden on public resources and therefore the sponsor must be responsible for supporting their integration into Canadian society (Merali, 2008; Phythian et al., 2009). Thus the government of Canada provides resources, programming, and immigrant settlement agency connections to individuals coming under other immigration categories in order to support their integration in Canada, but family-sponsored immigrants do not receive such benefits, thereby making their integration and adaptation more difficult (Lamba & Wilkinson, 1998; Merali, 2008; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008). Previous research has focused on adaptation and acculturation strategies as a construct developed mainly through self-evaluation reports (attitudes and behaviors) using mixed samples while neglecting South Asian family-sponsored spouses (Berry, 2006).

This study will explore the practical steps South Asian sponsored spouses take on a daily basis to integrate into their new host society thus filling the gap in the literature. In the absence of formalized government support and resources available to these individuals, they face greater challenges and barriers in learning the new language, and adapting to the social, cultural, and economic sphere compared to other immigrants.

The purpose of the qualitative research study is two-fold. First, to explore what steps South Asian sponsored spouses, the sponsor or family members have taken that have facilitated sponsored spouses' linguistic, economic, social, and cultural integration in Canada. Second, to explore what roles civil society organizations (cultural and religious organizations and associations) play in the

adaptation and integration of South Asian family-sponsored immigrants.This study will advance the discipline by increasing the knowledge base as well as inform family and cultural community association/organizations' attempts to promote integration into Canadian society to compensate for the lack of government intervention among this disadvantaged group. The remainder of this introduction chapter further describes Canadian immigration categories to contrast the Family Class category from other immigration categories, and also describes the history of South Asian migration to Canada to provide a context for this research.

## Canadian Immigration Categories

CIC establishes immigration categories under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Department of Justice Canada, 2011). The objectives of the Act are to maximize social, cultural, and economic benefits of immigration for the country; facilitating family reunification, pursuing humanitarian goals, and developing a strong and prosperous Canadian economy (CIC, 2012a). According to CIC (2012a), a total of 120,330 individuals migrated from the Asia and Pacific regions in 2011 under various immigration categories. Out of these, approximately 51 percent (61,339) immigrants were South Asians. Most Asians were admitted under the Economic Class (82,301), followed by Family Class (28,678), Refugees (7,182), and Other Immigrants (2,169).

### The Economic Class

Immigrants entering under the economic class settle in Canada to promote the Canadian economy by investing resources, capital, and job creation. Under the

Economic Class, migrants are selected based on the probability of promoting success in the business and the labor market based on points achieved for education, English or French language proficiency, work experience, human capital, arranged employment, and adaptability (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002; Phythian et al., 2009). Spouses and dependents of the economic immigrant class also migrate, but they are not screened against the selection criteria. The economic class is divided into federal skilled workers, federal business immigrants, Canadian experience class, provincial nominees, live-in caregivers, and Quebec selected skilled workers and business immigrants, and their immediate family members (CIC, 2013a; Phythian et al., 2009).

**Federal skilled workers.** In the Economic class, federal skilled workers are selected on a points system based on their professional abilities to enhance the Canadian economy and the labor market (Somerville & Walsworth, 2009). The are eligible to immigrate to Canada only if they have at least one-year of continuous and paid work experience in an eligible occupation within the last 10 years, and have a certain level of skill type in that occupation or an already arranged occupation in Canada or if they are enrolled in a PhD program in Canada (CIC, 2013a). In recent years, 55 to 60 percent of new immigrants came under this class. In 2011, 82,301 Asians migrated under this category, accounting for approximately 68 percent of the total Asian migration for the year (CIC, 2012a). Applicants receive points based on educational achievement (25 points), English or French proficiency (28 points), work experience (15 points), and human capital such as age (12 points), arranged employment in Canada (10 points), and

adaptability (10 points). A total of 100 points can be earned and 67 points are required for admission into Canada. Federal skilled workers are given the opportunity to live and work in Canada, and eventually become a Canadian citizen (CIC, 2013b).

**Business immigrants.** The Canadian government encourages prospective business immigrants to invest in the Canadian economy. Business Immigrants include entrepreneurs, investors, and those who are self-employed. The Entrepreneur Program attracts business immigrants who must hold one-third of the equity of a Canadian business within the first two years of their arrival. They must actively manage that business and employ at least one Canadian citizen or permanent resident (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002).

The Immigrant Investor Program (IIP) attracts investors who demonstrate business and capital management experience. They must have a minimum net worth of $800,000, and are required to make an investment of $400,000 in the development of Canadian society such as establishing new businesses and creating jobs in the labor market thus strengthening the economic sector of the country (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002; Phythian et al., 2009).

Persons under the Self-employed category must become self-employed when they arrive in Canada, and contribute their skills and experience in the area of culture, athletics or farm management (CIC, 2007; Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development, 2002). In 2011, 417 Business Immigrants entered Canada (CIC, 2012a).

**Canadian experience class.** Temporary foreign workers or foreign students who have lived in Canada for some and have gained work experience may apply to become permanent residents in Canada (CIC, 2012a).

**Provincial/Territorial nominees.** Provincial/ Territorial Nominees are immigrants who are nominated by a province or territory to migrate, and contribute their experience and skills in the provincial economy. Provincial or Territorial governments participate in a program called The Provincial Nominees Program (PNP), allowing them to make agreements with the federal government to bring professional immigrants that meet their specific economic needs such as engineers, IT professionals, physicians and nurses. In 2011, a total of 38,420 provincial nominees migrated to Canada and this category has been rapidly growing over the last five years to meet the needs of respective provincial economies (CIC, 2012a).

**Live-in caregivers.** Live-in Caregivers are immigrants who are employed by individuals living in Canada to provide care when there are not enough Canadian or permanent residents available for the positions. Live-in caregivers must be qualified to provide care for children, the sick or elderly, and persons with disabilities. After two years of work experience, they are eligible to apply for permanent resident status. In 2011, 11,247 live-in caregivers migrated to Canada (CIC, 2012a).

**Family Class Category**

The Family Class category of Canada's immigration system allows citizens and permanent residents who are 18 years of age or older to sponsor close family members including spouses, common-law partners, conjugal partners, dependent children, parents, and grandparents to join them here and become permanent residents. The sponsor is responsible for meeting the basic needs of their family members so they do not become dependent upon social assistance for at least three to ten years, depending on which family member is sponsored; the normal expected dependency period that would be required before the person could be expected to reach self-sufficiency (CIC, 2011a; Phythian et al., 2009). Sponsors must support their spouses for three years, and for ten years for parents and children or until age 22, whichever is longer for dependent children (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002).

In 2011, 56,446 spouses, partners, children, parents and grandparents reunited with their family members in Canada. Immediate family has greater probability of entering Canada compared to extended family members; 42,368 spouses and partners entered Canada accounting for 75 percent of Family Class migration (CIC, 2012b). Out of the total spouse and partner migration, approximately 10,000 sponsored spouses are South Asians from India and Pakistan, where India is the top source country of sponsored spouses' migration on an annual basis followed by China (CIC, 2012c). Such a high number of spousal migration from the South Asian region is due to cultural practices surrounding arranged marriages.

South Asians in Canada are a group that is more likely to retain their cultural practices and traditions especially with regards to marriage and marry within their own ethnic group compared to other minority groups (Kwak & Berry, 2001). Cultural values and traditions are retained through the practice of international arranged marriages. In order to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional family system, South Asian Canadian families go back to their home countries to look for partners to marry their sons and daughters (Husaini, 2001). After the marriage takes place in South Asia, the Canadian marriage partner returns and files a sponsorship application under the Family Class to facilitate his or her spouse's migration to Canada (Kumar & Srivastava, 2005).

While national policy encourages migrants who are screened against the points system to ensure their employability and integration in the Canadian labor market and society, Family Class sponsored spouses are not screened against such criteria; they enter the country "regardless of their profession, wealth, linguistic abilities or intention to work…" (Mooney, 2006, p. 2). This is one reason that unscreened family-sponsored migrants are considered a potential burden on public resources and therefore the sponsor must be responsible for supporting their integration into Canadian society (Merali, 2008; Phythian et al., 2009).

The government of Canada provides resources, programming, and immigrant settlement agency connections to individuals coming under other immigration categories in order to support their integration in Canada, but family-sponsored immigrants do not receive such benefits, thereby making their

integration and adaptation more difficult (Lamba & Wilkinson, 1998; Merali, 2008; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008).

**Refugees**

The Government of Canada provides protection to displaced individuals and refugees (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002). There is a distinction between immigrants and refugees based on the circumstances or reasons for their migration. Immigrants are individuals who are born or raised in other cultures, but voluntarily decide to migrate and settle into another society or country to achieve better life for themselves and their family (Berry, 2006).

Refugees on the other hand, are individuals who are forced to migrate or leave their homeland, and ask another country for protection (Berry, 2006). In many cases, these individuals have lived in refugee camps for many years and have faced many hardships, such as torture and trauma due to civil and political unrest (Corrigan, 2006).

Immigrants and refugees also differ in terms of the resources accessible to each group during resettlement. Resettlement agencies support refugees in finding suitable employment, language courses, food stamps, and other community services. Immigrants on the other hand, do not as much resources compared to refugees. Although these groups differ in terms of their status and life circumstances, they go through a similar acculturation process (Bricker & Rosen, 2010). There are three categories of refugees including refugees landed in Canada,

government-assisted refugees, and privately sponsored refugees. In 2011, 27,872 refugees migrated to Canada (CIC, 2012a).

**Refugees landed in Canada.** Persons who land in Canada to claim asylum are given permanent residence if their claim is accepted. In 2011, 10,743 protected persons entered Canada (CIC, 2012a).

**Government-assisted refugees.** Refugees living overseas in a refugee camp are directly sponsored by the Canadian government for resettlement (CIC, 2012a). In 2011, 7,364 refugees came under this program. The government provides immediate assistance to these individuals for resettlement such as income support, housing, health care, and so on (CIC, 2012a).

**Privately sponsored refugees.** Churches and private groups consisting of five or more individuals can also sponsor refugees. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring group to provide settlement support to these individuals such as housing, employment, and other resources (Corrigan, 2006). In 2011, 5,582 refugees migrated under this category (CIC, 2012a).

**Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds**

On exceptional basis, CIC grants permanent resident status to people and families who do not qualify in any other category. CIC makes a decision based on how settled the person is and their family ties in Canada, and what could result if they are deported. In 2011, 2,687 residents were granted permanent resident status under the Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (CIC, 2012a).

## The History of South Asian Immigration to Canada

Canadian immigration policy was influenced by three factors including "the desire of the government to give preference to White immigrants, the needs of the Canadian capitalist market, and the pressures from the international community" (Basran, 1993, p. 340). South Asian migration from India to Canada started in the year 1904 to British Columbia. Most of these migrants arrived in BC on the *Empress of India* and were Punjabi Sikh, mainly with agricultural backgrounds. Leaving their families behind, they were attracted to Canada for economic prospects, earning ten to fifteen times more compared to their incomes back home. These migrants mostly worked in railroad construction, and logging and lumber industries (Johnston, 1979; Tran et al., 2005).

South Asians were not welcomed by British Columbians, but rather discriminated against in all aspects of life. "In many workplaces, discriminatory labor policy was evident, as manifested in segregated accommodations, differential wages, unequal work assignments and career mobility" (Basran, 1993, p. 341). An example of segregated housing is portrayed by the following quote "[t]hey were housed…in an abandoned cannery with no running water, hastily fixed up with a few stoves and electric lights" (Johnston, 1979, p. 3). They were also denied the right to vote and consequently could not enter occupations such as law and pharmacy. In order to be eligible for these occupations during this historical period, candidates had to be on the voters' list. They could not own houses in certain residential areas in Vancouver and were required to give finger prints on legal documents (Basran, 1993).

In 1907, as Chinese immigration increased, the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council started an Asiatic Exclusion League. In 1908, the government of Canada issued two orders, one requiring all immigrants entering the country to possess at least $200, and second, prohibiting any immigrant who came other than by a continuous journey i.e., without going through any transit countries (Basran, 1993). These restrictions were targeted at halting immigration from India. First, Sikh farmers who worked in agriculture making a few cents per day in India, could not afford to pay $200 to enter Canada. Second, the continuous journey restriction pressured steamship companies not to sell Canada-India service tickets at Indian ports (Johnston, 1979).

Following the continuous journey regulation, in 1914, Gurjit Singh chartered the *Komagata Maru* in Hong Kong carrying 376 Sikh passengers to make direct journey to Vancouver, arriving in May 1914. However, "[f]or two months the Canadian government and courts refused the ship landing rights despite illness and inadequate food on board" (Naidoo, 2003, p. 53). On July 23rd, the ship was returned to Hong Kong with the passengers. Between 1920 and 1945, only 675 Indian migrants could enter Canada. Women and children were also deterred; however, eleven women and nine children came intermittently between 1921 and 1923 (Johnston, 1979).

The immigration policy was changed after World War II, due to a lack of available skilled labour, which constrained the economic growth of the country. In 1962, immigration laws removed race, religion, and national origin biases from the immigration criteria. A points-based categorization was introduced, allowing

immigrants who possessed occupational skills, education, and work experience to enter the country. The number of Asians entering Canada increased where South Asians became the second largest immigrant group in British Columbia, comprising 3.6 percent of the provincial population (Basran, 1993; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002; Sheel, 2005).

At the same time, the Family class immigration category was reclassified to allow entry of women, children, and elderly (Basran, 1993; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002; Sheel, 2005). Women started to migrate in large numbers, and India became the top source country of these migrants, mostly from Punjab. Nearly 20 percent of immigrants in the Family class category came from India. There were also a large number of twice migrants - Indian migrants coming from other parts of the world such as Fiji, East Africa, and Britain (Sheel, 2005).

Although immigration policies were revised and became lenient in allowing immigrants of South Asian descent to enter Canada, there was still overt racism, violence, verbal abuse, and hate literature against these individuals. To reduce this negative atmosphere, action was taken by the government and human rights organizations at the national, provincial, and local levels that was largely successful in eliminating overt racism against South Asians (Naidoo, 2003). This change in immigration policy as well as attitude has been reflected in the numbers of South Asians in Canada today, being the largest visible minority group in the country followed by Chinese (Statistics Canada, 2006).

**Reasons for South Asian Migration to Canada**

According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008), there are several general reasons for migration and settlement in Canada under the Family Class. The reasons include being close to family members (58.5 percent), better quality of life in Canada (48.6 percent), improved future for family (27.3 percent), and peace or absence of war (20.8 percent). As expected, the statistics show that the main reason for migration under the Family Class is to reunite with family members in Canada (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008).

There are several reasons that can be identified specifically for South Asian migration to Canada. Historically, Canada offered many economic opportunities and rewards to newcomers, which was a "pull" factor spurring their migration (Buchignani, Indra, & Srivastiva, 1985; Verbeeten, 2007). South Asian migration started mainly due to conditions in Punjab, which resulted in a "push" for many Punjabis. The first reason for their migration was the continuous turbulence in Punjab due to British rule at the time. The contact with the British generated flexibility and independence among Sikhs. Living under British rule, Punjabi Sikhs were "pre-adapted" to immigration. As the economy prospered during the British rule, Sikhs became well off and could afford to migrate to Canada since the journey was quite expensive.

The second reason was that Punjab had an immigration culture. Sikhs migrated to different villages for economic purposes throughout the Indian subcontinent while others went overseas to join the British Indian Army. The third

reason was that land prices were raised tremendously, making agriculture impossible for a lot of these individuals. The final reason was the socio-political events that occurred at the time; the Land Alienation Act of 1900 was passed to reduce land ownership to Sikhs. These events led to estrangement from the British resulting in a "push" for migration to Canada for many individuals, in order to improve their economic and social status (Buchignani et al., 1985).

**Canada's Multicultural Policy and its Objectives around Integration**

New South Asian immigrants need to adapt and integrate into their new society on a linguistic, socio-cultural, and economic level. Integration (i.e., migrants maintain their cultural beliefs, values, and behavior, but also participate in the larger society) can only be possible in a multicultural society. Multiculturalism refers to immigrants' need "to *adopt* the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group [or society] must be prepared to *adapt* national institutions (e.g., education, health, labor) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society" (Berry, 2006, p. 36). Multicultural societies value diversity, have low levels of prejudice, positive attitudes toward different cultural groups, and a sense of attachment and identification with the larger society by all members (Berry, 2006).

Canada is a multicultural society allowing immigrants to not only maintain their heritage culture, but also promote active participation in the larger society. Canada introduced the Multicultural Policy in 1971 at the federal level (Ghosh, 1994). It has several objectives surrounding integration of different cultural groups including assisting cultural groups to grow and contribute to Canada,

assisting with overcoming cultural barriers by learning the English or French language, and improving intergroup relations by reducing ethnic-based racism and discrimination. In 1988, the Multicultural Act was redefined to promote integration of all ethno-cultural groups by recognizing and accommodating diversity and promoting full participation of Canadians of all origins (Banting, 2010; Ghosh, 1994).

As discussed in the previous sections above, this integration process is unique for Family Class immigrants, as they are not provided with the systemic integration supports that other categories of immigrants are provided with: No linkages to immigrant settlement services, no pre-arranged employment or contact with the outside world besides the spouse they are being re-united with, no social or government support programs. How immigrants from Canada's largest minority group, with language and cultural backgrounds that diverge significantly from the Canadian host culture manage to learn English, find employment, navigate the new society, build social capital, and culturally integrate in the absence of such support is indeed a mystery up to this point. This thesis will explore the practical steps that these sponsored immigrants and the family members who sponsored them take to facilitate integration and adaptation, as well as the role civil society organizations (cultural and religious community associations) play in this process.

## Overview of Thesis

The literature review chapter that follows provides a critical overview of the existing research on South Asians' adaptation, acculturation, and integration in Canada. These topics are then integrated, leading to the statement of the problem and a presentation of the research questions guiding this study. The methodology chapter that follows provides a description of the methodology, research process, and the procedures of the study. The emerging themes chapter subsequently describes the research results, drawing on participants' disclosures of their experiences of adapting to life in Canada and the informal supports they drew on to enable them to integrate. The final discussion chapter synthesizes the research findings with existing literature and outlines clear directions for families, education, and government policy to facilitate the integration of family-sponsored spouses in Canadian society.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter highlights the cultural values and orientations of South Asians, and provides a critical overview of the cultural heritage they transport with them across international borders post migration, and reviews research on their adaptation and acculturation in Canada. The chapter describes the existing research on dimensions of cultural variation, and acculturation strategies immigrants employ while adjusting and adapting to their new host society, where cultural adaptation is a broad-level process involving language acquisition, socio-cultural, and economic adaptation. A five-stage identity development model for South Asian adaption and acculturation is discussed in the North American context. The Canadian Integration Index measuring South Asian adaptation and integration is also described. The challenges faced by South Asians during their linguistic, socio-cultural, and economic adaptation and integration are highlighted.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the support systems available to facilitate immigrant integration in Canada followed by a comparison of South Asians' levels of integration with other immigrants. Immigration class comparisons are also presented to highlight differences in resource accessibility to South Asian sponsored persons and immigrants coming under other classes. These topics are then integrated, leading to the statement of the problem and research questions.

## South Asian Cultural Values, Orientations, and Belief System

The Indian subcontinent is comprised of many cultures, religions, nationalities, and belief systems, yet South Asians are unified on the basis of shared cultural worldviews (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Tran et al., 2005). The family is considered to be of utmost importance for maintaining strong ties and transferring cultural knowledge onto future generations. Unity and kinship relationships, cooperation and interdependence among family members is highly valued (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). The elderly are respected for their maturity and knowledge, and the young family members defer authority to the elderly and parents regarding life decision-making (Ibrahim et al., 1997).

Family harmony and interests take precedence over personal interests where children are expected to obey parents and share household responsibilities. Within the family unit, male children tend to be preferred because they are seen as breadwinners whereas female children may be considered a burden for the family due to requiring a dowry in order to get them married. However, Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu (1997) also state that South Asians' value placed on each gender and family structure "varies with generational and educational level, social class, and economic stability…ranging from extremely patriarchal to egalitarian" (p. 5). With regards to marriage, South Asians believe that a person only marries once in their lifetime; their partner is fated for them, and one has to maintain that relationship during good and bad times (Ibrahim et al., 1997).

With a strong family orientation, the unity of the community is also essential for the well-being of its members. The community is considered to be an

extended family and each member has responsibilities towards it (Ibrahim et al., 1997). In Canada, South Asians are provided invaluable assistance through social networking and participation in cultural community activities and traditions. Social networks have proved to be quite beneficial in terms of linking to new jobs, housing, providing social, cultural, and financial support, and finding resources in the community (Buchignani et al., 1985; Tran et al., 2005).

The main religions in South Asia include Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Religion also plays an important role in the lives of many South Asians living abroad; it determines behavior, daily practices, and identity. Most South Asians have been reported to actively participate in religious ceremonies and activities after they migrate to US and Canada (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Tran et al., 2005).

**Transporting Cultural Values Across International Borders**

The importance of cultural maintenance by South Asians results in transporting their traditional values, beliefs, customs, and heritage to the new host society post-migration. These cultural transitions can either enhance or hinder their adaptation and integration into the new cultural community. One reason for this hindrance relates to migrants' values, beliefs, and traditions being very different from that of the host society. However, Canada as a culturally plural society has a multicultural ideology, allowing newcomers to not only maintain and practice their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, but also encouraging active participation in the larger society (Berry, 2006). A culturally plural society

is one that consists of a number of different cultural groups residing together within a shared social and political framework (Skelton & Allen, 1999).

South Asians are the largest immigrant group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006) and the group that recent studies have found is more likely to maintain their cultural identity, family values, and customs after moving to Canada compared to other immigrants (Kwak and Berry, 2001). A study by Kwak and Berry (2001) comparing acculturation patterns of South Asians with other Asian migrants found that South Asians were more likely to transport the cultural values of strong family network, family obligations, parental authority, maintenance of ethnic identity and language with them to Canada. Another study had similar findings where South Asians were more likely to practice and preserve their customs and traditions after migration to Canada compared to other immigrants (Tran et al., 2005). These immigrants have made cultural transitions by travelling to different national contexts across the globe, while still managing to carry their cultural heritage with them to their new host country.

Kwak and Berry (2001) also reported that South Asians had strong cultural retention especially with respect to marriage; marriage is preferred with members of their own ethnic group compared to other Asian groups. This is why South Asians are the largest group for having international marriages to preserve and pass their culture onto future generations (CIC, 2012c). In this process, Canadian South Asian families go to the home countries, to look for marriage partners for their sons and daughters. Subsequently, the Canadian marriage partner returns and

then files an immigration application on the foreign national's behalf to have the spouse join him/her in Canada (Kumar & Srivastava, 2005).

## Adaptation and Acculturation

With the cultural transitions immigrants make to a new country, they also go through a process of acculturation whereby individuals go through psychological and cultural change as a result of being in continued contact with another culture (Berry, 2006). Berry (2006) defines immigrants as individuals who voluntarily move to a new society in order to live a better life and settle permanently. These migrants are considered voluntary because they are attracted to and actively decide to settle in the new society.

In plural societies, when immigrants come into contact with other cultural groups, the greater the cultural differences between the groups, the more difficulties they will likely experience during the acculturation and adaptation process (Berry, 2006). According to Berry (2006), there are six dimensions of cultural variation that influence how individuals interact during acculturation. The dimensions include diversity, equality, conformity, wealth, space, and time. Diversity refers to heterogeneous groups of individuals residing together within the larger society. Equality refers to individuals being treated equally in terms of rights, status, and rewards. Conformity refers to groups following the larger society's norms and social obligations or freely practicing their own culture. Wealth can be distributed equally or lie in the hands of few ethnic groups or families.

Other features of wealth include education, access to information and communications, and personal values. Space refers to how individuals utilize housing, public places, and personal space such as touching during conversations. Time refers to punctuality and personal engagement, which may be different from culture to culture. In addition, language and religious differences can also lead to conflictual relations thereby making acculturation and adaptation more difficult. Berry (2006) states that each culture is different on these six dimensions, which can have positive or negative effects on immigrants' adaptation and acculturation.

There are many contrasts between the South Asian culture and mainstream Canadian culture on these dimensions. For example, South Asian family and community relations are often heavily influenced by age and gender as described above rather than being egalitarian. Also, some of the societies South Asians come from, have rigidly adhered to caste systems distinguishing members based on inherited wealth and social status, rather than interactions across wealth lines and subgroups. Furthermore, the collectivist nature of South Asian culture leads to a different level of interpersonal relationships among family members and next of kin that may have blurred personal space or boundaries compared to North American norms (Buchignani et al., 1985; Ibrahim et al., 1997).

**Acculturation Strategies**

Despite cultural variation, most migrants adapt successfully by taking various routes to adjust to the new host culture and society at large. Berry's (2006) seminal work on acculturation and adaptation has defined the strategies immigrants employ while adjusting to a new culture. These include integration,

assimilation, separation, and marginalization. These strategies consist of two components, attitudes (i.e., preferences) and behaviours (i.e., actual practices) whereby individuals prefer and maintain their own heritage culture or prefer participation in the larger dominant society along with other cultural groups.

Integration involves maintaining both one's cultural identity as well as interacting with the dominant society. Assimilation refers to immersing oneself in the dominant group with little interest in one's own cultural heritage. Separation is the opposite of assimilation; it is the maintenance of one's own cultural heritage while avoiding participation in the dominant group. Finally, marginalization refers to when neither cultural maintenance nor interaction with the dominant group is sought (Berry, 2006).

Berry (2006) points out that the best acculturation strategy is integration into the host society, which is facilitated by having positive attitudes and openness to cultural differences, building relationships within one's ethno-cultural community, and also actively participating in the larger society. This strategy has been found to be related to the best mental health status and adaptation outcomes across numerous studies (Berry, 2006) The dominant society often constrains acculturation-related choices because integration can only be pursued if the larger society is open to and accepts diverse cultural practices. Research shows that South Asians are a group that integrates well within the larger society by not only maintaining their cultural values and beliefs, but also adopting and participating in the larger society (Berry et al., 2006).

## Adaptation as a Broad-level Process – Linguistic, Socio-cultural, and Economic

Migration to a new society can be a stressful process where individuals are uprooted from their homeland, culture, and supportive social networks (Ward & Styles, 2003). Newcomers face the need to integrate into the respective social system that may operate very differently from their own. Integration into a new society is a broad level process cutting across several different domains at the linguistic, socio-cultural and economic levels. Immigrants need to learn the language and societal systems, find employment and housing, adapt and participate in the new host society.

With regards to adaptation and acculturation, Ibrahim et al. (1997) contend that compared to other immigrants, South Asians are a unique group that has already experienced minority status in their homelands when they were colonized by the British. Despite colonization by the British, they were able to maintain strong cultural identity and traditions. With this background, when South Asians migrate to Western countries, they not only clearly understand "White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values, beliefs, and assumptions from a colonized person's perspective" (p. 6), they also do not feel the need to deny these differences and therefore tend to have a stronger ethnic identity post-migration. Taking into account the historical experiences of South Asians as being a minority in their own homeland, these experiences may affect their adjustment and adaptation process in Canada.

## Linguistic Adaptation

When individuals migrate, they often have to learn and communicate in the language of their new respective society. Second language acquisition is a complex process whereby newcomers need to communicate in a wide range of social settings in their host society where they exchange and construct meaning, and are provided feedback about their communication by members of the host society (Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010).

Language mediates all aspects of life; inability to speak the language often leads to difficulties in navigating and settling in the host society such as finding housing, applying for government identification documents, looking for work, using the bank or opening an account, using the public transportation system and medical services, enrolling children in school, and building relationships with members of the dominant society (Hou & Beiser, 2006). Thus language is a cultural process of exchanging and co-constructing meaning. Although second language acquisition in adulthood can be very challenging, the socio-cultural approach to learning language through experience in a wide range of social settings can allow newcomers to adjust and become members of their respective society (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007; Gee, 2004; Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010; Ingram, 1981).

In Canada, language acquisition is very important not only for the integration and adaptation of Canadian immigrants, but also for citizenship. Landed immigrants need to have English or French language knowledge and understanding in order to become Canadian citizens (Hou & Beiser, 2006).

However, under the Family Class immigration category, sponsored spouses enter Canada without being screened against English or French language ability and proficiency. Many South Asian sponsored spouses speak Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi as their first languages and statistics from CIC (2003) show that approximately one-third of sponsored spouses from South Asia have little or no proficiency in English.

In this situation, the sponsor and immediate family members become the key resource for language instruction of their newcomer spouses. Research shows that obtaining citizenship, owning a house, and having immediate family relatives leads to proficiency in the dominant language of the host society (Espenshade & Fu, 1997; Mesch, 2003). Contrary to these findings, a study conducted by Merali (2009) on South Asian Canadians' international marriages showed that sometimes there are sponsor-imposed barriers where the sponsor inhibits female spouse's integration by not letting her take language training, get a driver's license, and build relationships with members of the dominant culture. These women were also abused and neglected and were not able to access support services due to limited knowledge of the English language.

The potential for such a situation is exacerbated by the fact that the government of Canada does not provide language training and access to settlement and support services to sponsored spouses; the sponsor is solely responsible for their spouse's integration. Thus this makes adaptation of this group far more difficult than immigrants coming under other immigration classes

who get access to language training programs and settlement support services (Lamba & Wilkinson, 1998).

**Socio-cultural Adaptation**

In addition to facing communication difficulties when moving to a new society, integrating socially and culturally is also a major challenge, but crucial during the adjustment process. Social integration refers to building social networks, having social trust and political knowledge of the host society. In the Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey, social integration of immigrants is measured by Canadian identity, Canadian citizenship, a sense of belonging to the larger society, life satisfaction, trust in people generally, participation in voluntary activities, and voting in the previous federal election (Reitz, Banerjee, Phan, & Thompson 2009). On the other hand, cultural integration involves modifying original life patterns to accommodate new values, beliefs, cultural worldviews, and ways of behavior of the new respective society (Berry, 2006).

Post-migration, social integration requires navigating the host society in order to settle and adapt. Migrants need to familiarize themselves with the new social institutions in the respective society such as the educational system, justice system, and health care system that may operate differently (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2002). They need to apply for government documentation such as health care cards, social insurance cards, go to driving school or ESL classes, learn to use the bank, enrol children in schools, and so on for which they need to use the public transportation system that may operate very differently in their home country as well. Since many South Asians have limited English language

proficiency, they often need assistance of their Canadian marriage partner to learn the transportation system, get a driver's licence, directions to shopping markets, making friends, and so on (Merali, 2009).

**South Asian identity development model.** Ibrahim et al. (1997) have developed a five-stage identity development model explaining the socio-cultural adaptation process of South Asians in America. These include the Pre-encounter or Conformity stage, Dissonance stage, Resistance and Immersion stage, Introspection stage, and Synergistic Articulation and Awareness stage.

The Pre-encounter or Conformity stage involves acceptance of cultural differences, which is a fact of life for South Asians because of their experiences of British colonization. In this stage, they are proud of their ethnic identity and believe that hard work will result in a successful life, which will overcome all differences. In the Dissonance stage, they realize that hard work is not enough and acceptance by the host society will not be achieved due to perceived differences such as visible minority status. In the Resistance and Immersion stage, South Asian immigrants revert to their own cultural group and reject the host society's values and assumptions. Re-affirmation of their ethnic identity results in stronger ties with members of their own group.

In the Introspection stage, after their ethnic identity is secured, they start questioning their cultural beliefs and recognize that the dominant culture also has some positive elements. In the last, Synergistic Articulation and Awareness stage, South Asians accept and reject certain values of the dominant culture, have positive self-esteem, and recognize that all cultures have positive attributes. This

stage resonates with an integration approach where South Asian immigrants not only maintain their heritage culture, but also accept and adopt certain dominant cultural values.

In order to facilitate socio-cultural integration into the host society, building relationships with members of the larger society provides the opportunity for gaining knowledge about the culture, learning social skills, and obtaining practical information (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985). However, Reitz, Banerjee, Phan, and Thompson (2009) state that South Asians are slower to integrate compared to European immigrants because of their racial minority status and experiences of discrimination and inequality in Canada. Visible minority refers to "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Statistics Canada, 2006, p. 35). Twenty one percent of South Asians report experiencing discrimination in the last five years (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Another reason for their slow socio-cultural integration and adaptation is due to their highly contrasted cultural values from those of Canadian society (Berry, 2006). Experiences of discrimination and inequality due to their visible minority status in the Canadian society and the workplace may lead them to reject the dominant society. This results in reverting to and creating stronger ties with their own ethnic community and going back to the Resistance and Immersion stage of cultural identity development (Ibrahim et al., 1997; Wakil, Sadique, & Wakil, 1981).

Reitz et al. (2009) state that affiliation with one's own ethnic group is positively related to "life satisfaction, sense of belonging, and [political participation such

as] voting…" (p. 718). In addition, memberships in social networks with own ethnic group has been found to protect migrants from psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem associated with acculturation (Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

As South Asian families go through integration and the acculturation process, the individualistic nature of Canadian society is highly contrasted with their practice of collectivism and interdependence among family members. Thus they face greater challenges adapting culturally to the individualistic nature of host society. The family experiences various challenges in order to adjust to the respective society such as weakened power and family status of husbands, working wives demanding more authority, children questioning parental authority, conflicting peer and parental relationships, and transmission of the heritage culture to children (Buchignani et al., 1985).

Contrary to these findings, other research shows that South Asian families acculturate and adopt many cultural values of the dominant Canadian society. In many families, both husbands and wives are employed, practice shared decision-making and egalitarian familial systems (Basran, 1993). Ibrahim et al. (1997) also report that "people in the United States are continually amazed by the egalitarian relationships that exist among South Asian American couples. This reality does not support the belief that South Asian Americans are severely restricted in terms of gender role flexibility" (p. 39). In addition, marginality and discrimination experiences that sometimes occur in contacts with the wider society may create stronger bonds within the family unit (Ibrahim et al., 1997).

Despite challenges and negative experiences faced by some South Asians, a large body of literature shows that they do practice integration in Canadian society; although they may strongly retain their heritage, they participate in the surrounding society to a high degree as well (Reitz et al., 2009). A survey conducted by Tran et al. (2005) showed that South Asians have a strong sense of belonging to Canada, their province, and municipality, "no other visible minority group felt as strongly about belonging to Canada as did South Asians" (p. 24); 88 percent said they had a strong sense of belonging to Canada, while 67 percent said they had a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic or cultural group (Statistics Canada, 2001). They are also more likely to participate in voluntary activities, vote in federal elections, trust fellow Canadians, and have higher life satisfaction compared to other racial minorities (Reitz et al., 2009). In the Ethnic Diversity survey, 40 percent reported that they had participated in social organizations such as sports teams or community associations in the past 12 months (Statistic Canada, 2001). Another study by Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006) found that South Asians openly engage with others in Canadian society, representing an integration profile.

**Canadian integration index.** Wong and Tezli (in print) has developed a model to measure integration levels of immigrants called the Canadian Integration Index. Eight variables were selected from the Ethnic Diversity Survey to measure social and cultural integration. The variables include: voted in federal election, voted in provincial election, voted in municipal election, trust in neighbors, trust in colleagues, sense of belonging to municipality, sense of belonging to province,

and sense of belonging to Canada. This index showed South Asians as the most integrated group amongst other immigrants in Canada. Another striking finding is that visible minority immigrants are integrated to a greater degree than visible minorities who are born in Canada.

With regards to generational differences in integration levels, Ibrahim et al. (1997) also postulated that ethnic identity is mediated by generation in Canada. If one generation experiences discrimination or abuse, they may revert to their ethnic heritage, which is taking a separation profile of acculturation. Regardless of instances of discrimination, the South Asian community of Canada has strong feelings of belongingness to Canada, greater civic engagement, and is socio-culturally well integrated into the Canadian society compared to other minority groups.

With respect to integration of South Asian sponsored spouses, it may be assumed that they maybe more socially integrated compared to other immigrants because they already have family members and established social networks in Canada (Mooney, 2006). However, research on South Asians sponsored spouses entering Canada has suggested that in some cases there are sponsor-imposed barriers to integration such as preventing the female spouses from taking ESL classes and seeking employment or leaving the home (Merali, 2008, 2009). These sponsor-imposed barriers and lack of government intervention may make linguistic, socio-cultural, economic integration and adaptation particularly challenging for some women coming under the Family Class (Phythian et al., 2009).

While sponsored children may have established avenues for social and linguistic integration, such as daily involvement in school and school-based ESL instruction, sponsored spouses may lack these built-in supports. Sponsored parents who come at a later point in life may be insulated against the need for integration in the community at large from established family roles such as being grandparents and involvement in social programs for seniors within their own cultural community. Sponsored spouses are a group where established language training programs and social programming may not exist even within their own cultural communities, suggesting that their adaptation and integration challenges may be unique. Thus it is important to shed light on the adaptation experiences of this group.

**Economic Adaptation**

South Asians make significant contributions to Canadian society as a whole, and are especially instrumental in the economic stability of the country. They tend to be better educated than the national average and many hold professional occupations (Kanungo, 1992). However unemployment and under-employment is widespread among Family Class immigrants who are un-screened against educational qualifications, work experience, and English or French language speaking abilities (Phythian et al., 2009). For migrants who do possess foreign qualifications, finding an adequate job is often very difficult due to non-recognition of foreign credentials by Canadian regulatory bodies (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008).

In addition to non-recognition of foreign credentials, racial and ethnic characteristics affect employers' hiring decisions and consequently result in getting low-paying survival jobs (Simich, Beiser, Stewart, & Mwakarimba, 2005). Birthplace accounts for earning inequality for the large part: "The place of birth … is a proxy for ethnic, religious, and cultural attributes of immigrants. It may also signal the quality of immigrants' education and the relevance of their foreign work experience to potential employers, and may influence their hiring decisions" (Ostrovsky, 2008, p.23).

Ethnic characteristics, discrimination, and language barriers make accessing employment more difficult (Khan & Watson, 2005). However, with the help of South Asian community networks, job-finding could become easier (Buchignani et al., 1985). For sponsored spouses, family members are expected to be a key resource in finding employment, in the absence of settlement agency connections and services, but how this plays out is unclear (Hou & Beiser, 2006). Thus the importance of facilitating the integration of South Asian sponsored spouses, who make up a very large proportion of immigrants entering Canada annually and of enabling them to respond to the challenges of linguistic, socio-cultural, and economic adaptation makes it critical to study this group in order to promote full participation in their new Canadian host society.

## Support Systems to Facilitate Immigrant Integration

Canada's immigration policies focus on fostering economic development in the country by bringing immigrants under the Economic Class to address shortages in various sectors (CIC, 2007). Integration of these newcomers is an

important objective of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. CIC has developed The Settlement Program for the Economic Class and refugees by providing them support services in order to integrate linguistically, economically, and socio-culturally in their new host society (CIC, 2011b).

The Settlement Program provides resources to Economic class immigrants and refugees including language services, community and employment bridging programs, skills development, initiatives to support social engagement, settlement information and support services for the initial three years of settlement. These services are provided by the community-based organizations that are federally funded by CIC. The Immigration Loans Program provides loans to refugees for pre-entry medical exams, transportation costs to Canada, and initial settlement expenses (CIC, 2007). The Resettlement Assistance Program provides reception services, financial support, temporary and permanent accommodation to refugees (CIC, 2011b).

The federal government has established key partnerships and programs to help Economic Class migrants to be integrated in the Canadian labour market. The Citizenship and Immigration's Foreign Credentials Referral Office has implemented a one-year service to recognize foreign credentials of these migrants to ensure their labour market integration (CIC, 2011b).

For Family Class immigrants, their sponsoring family members must sign an undertaking with the Government of Canada to provide for the basic needs and integration assistance required by the sponsored person. The sponsor must ensure that the sponsored person does not become dependent upon provincial social

assistance programs for a specified period of time; three years for spouse and ten years for parents, grandparents, and dependants (CIC, 2007).

While migrants coming under other immigration categories such as Economic Class and Refugees, get access to government assistance for the initial 3 years of settlement in all the integration areas (i.e., language, socio-cultural, economic), sponsored spouses are not able to benefit from these support systems. The only circumstances where sponsored spouses are eligible for government support are when the sponsor has lost a job and did not fulfill the responsibilities, or the sponsored spouse has been abused or neglected (Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2011).

**Adjustment and Integration of Sponsored Spouses Versus Other Immigrants**

The key objective of the Multicultural Act is to promote integration of all ethno-cultural groups by recognizing and accommodating diversity and promoting full participation of Canadians of all origins (Banting, 2010; Ghosh, 1994). Promoting full participation requires equal access to resources by all immigrants regardless of the immigration category they enter under. The Economic Class and Protected Persons Class get access to settlement support services and programs through community-based organizations whereas Family Class sponsored spouses are excluded from accessing these resources. Thus there is a legislated inequality by the Government of Canada because the sponsor is responsible for their spouse's integration without any governmental assistance (Lamba & Wilkinson, 1998).

In the absence of government support services, family-sponsored spouses experience greater challenges while adjusting and adapting to the new host society on a linguistic, socio-cultural, and economic level compared to migrants entering under other immigration categories. Sponsored spouses enter Canada without being screened against English or French language proficiency, thus CIC (2003) reports that approximately one-third of sponsored spouses from South Asia have little or no proficiency in English. Inability to speak either French or English is higher among sponsored spouses than among migrants entering Canada under other immigration categories, such as skilled workers (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2002). As a result, language barriers as well as discrimination make accessing employment more difficult (Khan & Watson, 2005).

Socio-cultural integration is difficult for them where they need assistance of their Canadian marriage partner to navigate the host society. They have to learn to use the transportation system, get a driver's licence, need directions to shopping markets, and so on (Merali, 2009). Without any government settlement support services, they become dependent upon their Canadian spouse or family members to help them learn the Canadian culture and ways of life. How much support they get will invariably depend on the quality of the relationship they have with their spouse once they arrive in Canada.

Economic integration may also be a challenge for sponsored spouses because they enter the country without being screened for educational achievement, qualifications, and work experience and thus may have difficulty

finding an adequate job. As a result, they may face greater challenges entering the labor market compared to individuals migrating under other immigration categories who are screened against such criteria. Due to this, unemployment and under-employment is widespread among these migrants (Phythian et al., 2009).

In Canada, South Asians are the largest minority group numbering 1,262,900, representing one-quarter of all visible minorities (24.9 percent) and 4 percent of the entire Canadian population. Most South Asians come from the Asia-Pacific region including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (Statistics Canada, 2006). In 2011, 56,446 spouses, partners, children, parents, and grandparents were sponsored by family members in Canada. Sponsored spouses, partners, and children accounted for 75 percent of migration under this class (42,368) (CIC, 2012b). Sponsored spouses make up a large proportion of immigrants entering Canada annually, and it is critical to enable them to respond to the challenges of linguistic, socio-cultural, and economic adaptation. It is important to understand how they become active and full members of Canadian society in the absence of government support services, and what factors, supports or resources from their own ethnic communities or families facilitate their integration and adaptation

## Statement of the Problem

The majority of Family Class migrants are spouses from international unions accounting for 75 percent of the total migration under this class. On an annual basis, approximately 42,368 spouses, partners, and children reunite with their family members in Canada (CIC, 2012b). One of the reasons for such a

striking number of spouses entering the country is the maintenance of cultural identity and heritage among South Asians. According to Kwak and Berry (2001), Asians had high levels of retention of their cultural values especially with regards to marriage. This desire to maintain and pass on their cultural heritage onto future generations leads them to choose wives or husbands from their home countries, a fact that is reflected from literature as well as statistics. "South Asians are the least likely of all visible minority groups to marry someone outside their [own] population group" (Tran et al., 2005, p.22). Out of 327,200 South Asian couples in Canada, only 12.7 percent were in a union with a person of a different ethnicity (Statistics Canada, 2006; Tran et al., 2005).

After getting married in South Asia, the Canadian marriage partner returns to Canada to sponsor his or her spouse to join him or her under the Family Class immigration category (Kumar & Srivastava, 2005). There is a legislative inequality in that family-sponsored migrants do not receive the same benefits (e.g., government resources, programs and settlement agency connections) as those coming under other immigration categories (Lamba & Wilkinson, 1998); it is assumed that their Canadian marriage partners will facilitate their cross-cultural adaptation (Phythian et al., 2009). Consequently, these individuals face greater challenges with language barriers and difficulties identifying academic training opportunities, finding adequate employment, dealing with discrimination, and cultural transitions (Phythian et al., 2009; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008). Thus it's important to study this group in order to facilitate their adaptation and active participation in Canadian society.

Existing research has focused on assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization as acculturation strategies used to adapt to the new society among mixed samples of immigrants (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2006; Kwak & Berry, 2001). These strategies consisted of two components – attitudes and behaviors about maintenance of one's own cultural identity or maintenance of relations with the dominant group in society (Berry et al., 2006; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). These acculturation strategies were measured mainly through self-evaluation reports (e.g., "I prefer social activities which involve [nationals] only" or "I prefer social activities which involve [members of my own ethnic group] only") (Berry et al., 2006, p 309). However, for the purpose of my own research study, I define cross-cultural adaptation strategies as the choices or practical steps sponsored spouses make on a daily basis to facilitate their adaptation, and the ways in which their sponsors have supported their cultural adaptation or their attempts to exercise the choices to adapt to the new host society, and explore the use of cultural community associations, religious sources or programs that may contribute to their adaptation.

The rationale for exploring the use cultural community associations or religious sources by sponsored spouses is that since these individuals are not provided any government support systems or programs, the community resources they draw on to help adapting to life in a new society will inform and benefit future sponsored-spouses' adjustment process. In the literature there is a gap in knowledge about these practical strategies used on a daily basis as well as

accessing available cultural community or religious sources by immigrants to facilitate their adaptation.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to fill the gaps in existing research by developing a greater understanding of the self-initiated, partner/family-initiated, and public resource-based strategies that help to facilitate the linguistic, socio-cultural, and economic integration and adaptation of family-sponsored spouses from the South Asian community. The guiding research questions were: (a) What practical steps do partners/family members in Canada take to facilitate sponsored spouses' integration in learning English, finding employment, learning how things work in the new country, and rebuilding their social and community capital in Canada? (b) What practical steps do the sponsored spouses take to help themselves in these areas?, and (c) What role do cultural community and religious organizations and other community resources play in the integration process of South Asian family-sponsored spouses?

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Research Approach: Focused Ethnography

This research utilized focused ethnography, which is a methodological approach developed from Traditional Longitudinal Ethnography. Traditional Longitudinal Ethnographies are characterised by "description of the patterns of behaviour of individuals and groups of people within a particular culture" (Roper & Shapira, 2000, p. 2). However, Focused Ethnography is a "mini-ethnography" (Roper & Shapira, 2000), which "provides focused and efficient ways to understand and give detailed descriptions of complex issues such as cultural perspectives and phenomenon, behaviour, and social context" (Knoblauch, 2005; McElroy, Davis, Hunt, Dadul, Stanba, & Larson, 2011, p. 19). With respect to studying cross-cultural adaptation strategies of family-sponsored spouses, the goal was to learn about and describe their cultural perspectives, social situation, and adaptation experiences as newcomers adjusting to life in the Canadian environment. Focused ethnography studies groups of participants who share certain characteristics or experiences; the participants may not know each other, but the researcher studies the common behaviours or experiences they share (Knoblauch, 2005).

In traditional ethnography where culture is studied holistically, focused ethnography “focuses” on a predetermined topic; in order to focus, it requires the researcher to have background knowledge about the topic. It is used to study culture, subcultures as well as institutions (Richards & Morse, 2007). Exploring adaptation experiences in a new society among the South Asian sub-cultural

group of family-sponsored spouses is a highly "focused" and specific topic, justifying the use of this methodology. In order to conduct this study, extensive literature was reviewed, providing theoretical background surrounding adaptation, acculturation, and challenges faced by these individuals. In this chapter, the participant selection and recruitment process are described, the interview and data analysis process as occurs in a focused ethnography study are outlined, and ethical issues and reflexive dimensions related to the research are also documented.

## Participant Selection and Recruitment

### Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Focused ethnography allows the researcher to study groups who share certain characteristics or experiences, such as South Asians. Data was collected from a purposive sample of five South Asian family-sponsored spouses including both males and females. Participants were selected if they met the following study criteria: (a) self-identification as being of South Asian heritage; (b) marriage took place in South Asia; (c) sponsored by their spouse who was either a permanent resident or Canadian citizen (i.e., migrated under the Family Class category); (d) still married at the time of the study; and (e) length of residence in Canada from two to five years. These shared characteristics of participants allowed an understanding of their collective experiences and strategies used to facilitate their cross-cultural adaptation.

**Self-identification as being of South Asian heritage.** Quality of data is crucial to the whole research process; it is obtained by carefully selecting participants that possess the characteristics to best answer the research question.

Because sample sizes are often smaller in focused ethnography, careful attention was given in selecting an appropriate sample (Wood & Ross-Kerr, 2011). This is why only individuals who identified themselves as South Asians were recruited because they shared group characteristics to answer the research questions.

**Marriage took place in South Asia and sponsored by their Canadian spouse**. This criterion related to having an international marriage which required that the foreign spouse be sponsored to come to Canada in order to be reunited with the Canadian spouse. The marriage had to take place in a South Asian country, followed by sponsorship of the foreign spouse by the Canadian marriage partner. This ensured that the participant migrated to Canada under the Family Class Category of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. According to CIC (2007), permanent residents and Canadian citizens can sponsor family members including their spouse from abroad to join them here.

**Married at the time of the study.** The criterion related to still being married at the time of study reflected the fact that there may be marriage breakdown after the sponsorship since the marriage partner came to Canada. This study was looking at self-initiated and partner/family initiated practical adaptation strategies, so participants had to be married at the time of study to be included and to be able to share their experiences about how their partner or family contributed to their adjustment and adaptation, since they are not connected to any external supports outside their families, in contrast to other categories of immigrants.

**Length of residence in Canada.** During the first few years after arrival in Canada, newcomer sponsored spouses go through the adjustment and adaptation process where they may or may not have experienced challenges, and would have employed or used certain self-initiated or partner/family initiated strategies and community resources to facilitate adjustment in the new host society. They therefore would likely be in a position to be able to reflect upon how these strategies worked for them and what has supported their integration attempts. Participants who have lived in Canada for more than five years were not included because they may already have integrated to a further degree, and their recall of earlier experiences of adjustment and adaptation may not be highly accurate. The rationale for this is that according to normal functioning of human memory, our ability to recall events goes down with time and age (Hooper & Teresi, 1986).

An attempt was made to recruit both male and females because previous research showed gender differences in adaptation pathways of males and females; research showed that women are more dependent upon social support than men (Walsh & Horenczyk, 2001). Sampling both males and females would allow the researcher to examine diverse patterns of adaptation and the use of resources among this group.

**Recruitment Process**

The participants were recruited through advertisements in South Asian community cultural organizations and religious centres in the city of Edmonton where the study took place (see Appendix A). Edmonton ranks fifth among census metropolitan areas with a strong presence of a visible minority population,

accounting for 17.1 percent of the city's population (Statistics Canada, 2006). In each agency/cultural association contacted, the researcher left a study description and a sign-up sheet for interested participants to list their names and contact information for participation in interviews. The researcher periodically picked up these lists from each agency contact person. The community agencies/cultural associations were not notified about who participated in the study. Interested participants were contacted and provided more information about the study; they were given a copy of consent form outlining the research purpose and procedures of the study and written consent was obtained with the signatures of both the participant and the researcher (see Appendix B). An interview time, date, and location was arranged according to their convenience. Recruitment was stopped once data saturation occurred.

**Participant Profiles**

Five South Asian family-sponsored spouses participated in this study. Three of them were women and two were men. Each of the participants are introduced below using their pseudonyms instead of their real names, and describing their demographic profiles and backgrounds, countries of origin, and length of time since their marriage and immigration to Canada.

Saarah is a 32 year old Muslim female from Pakistan, who speaks Urdu as her first language, and can communicate only in broken English. Saarah earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from her home country and was working as a teacher and supervisor at an educational institution prior to migration. Saraah's marriage to her Canadian spouse (Shahid) took place over the phone, with her being in

Pakistan and him being in Canada. The practice of international telephone marriages is common among the Pakistani community. The marriage contract was signed when she was back home and her husband Shahid was in Canada.

Saarah had been married to Shahid for 5 years at the time of the study. Her sponsorship application took 5 months to be approved and get Canadian visa. At the time of the interview, she had been living in Canada for 4 and a half years. Saarah and her husband have 2 children, 1 boy and 1 girl, ranging in age from 1 to 3 years.

After migrating to Canada, she did not start working because she wanted to stay at home, and taking care of her children was a priority. However, she was interested in upgrading herself to eventually re-enter the workforce when her children are older. Shahid works full-time as a taxi driver and was handling his father's clothing business prior to migration. He was sponsored to come to Canada by his uncle and had been living in Canada for more than 15 years.

Shilpa is a 30 year old Hindu female from India who speaks Hindi as her first language and can communicate in English fluently. She has completed 19 years of education, earning a double Master's in political science and media studies, and was working as an writer/editor in India.

Shilpa had been married for 3 years at the time of the study. Her marriage took place in India and her husband (Taporaj) then returned to Canada to file a sponsorship application for her. It took 7 months for the application to be approved. At the time of her interview, she had been living in Canada for 2 years, and working as a Project Manager at a local organization. Taporaj was a student

when he still lived in India and moved to Canada 12 years prior to the study with his family. In Canada, he was working as a Police Officer. Shilpa and Taporaj don't have any children.

Sobia is a 30 year old Muslim female from Pakistan, who speaks Urdu as her first language and speaks English fairly well. She completed 16 years of education, earning a Master's degree in marketing, and was working as a Concert Manager in Pakistan. Sobia had been married for 7 years at the time of this study. Her marriage to Tanveer took place in Pakistan in 2006, where only the marriage contract was signed and there was no cohabitation with her husband. Tanveer then returned to Canada to file a sponsorship application. There was a 2 year delay in the processing of her sponsorship application, so it was not approved until November 2008. She came to Canada in 2009 and was living here with her husband for 4 years at the time of her research interview. Sobia and Tanveer had two children;  2 boys, ages 4 and a half and 6 months old.

After moving to Canada, Sobia did not work and was a stay at home mother; her priority was taking care of her children. She expressed an interest in upgrading and working in the future when her children grew older. Tanveer came to Canada about 11 years ago as an independent immigrant and was a student in Pakistan. He was working full-time as a taxi driver at the time of this study.

Sajid is a 27 year old Muslim male from Pakistan whose first languages are Punjabi and Urdu. He is also able to speak some broken English, and has gained confidence while practicing communication in various social contexts. He has completed 14 years of schooling, earning a Bachelor of Commerce degree in

his home country, and worked as an accountant in the textile industry prior to immigrating to Canada.

Sajid got married in Pakistan 5 years prior to the study. His marriage took place in Pakistan, and then his wife (Tooba) returned to Canada to file a sponsorship application, but went back to live with her husband again. It took 2 years to get sponsorship approval. Sajid and Tooba immigrated in 2011 and were living together in Canada for 2 years at the time of this study. They did not have any children.

After migrating to Canada, both Sajid and Tooba worked; he was working as an inventory receiver at a local department store, while she worked part-time at a restaurant. Tooba had 14 years of schooling, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree. She was sponsored by her brother to come to Canada 9 years prior to the time the study took place, but she went back to Pakistan after living in Canada for some time.

Sohail is a 33 year old Muslim male from India whose first languages are Urdu and Hindi, but who also is a fluent English speaker. He completed 16 years of schooling, culminating in a Bachelor of Technology degree, and was working as a senior software engineer prior to migration. Sohail got married 3 and a half years prior to this study in his home country of India. His wife (Tanzeela) was sponsored to come to Canada by her brother, who was already living in Canada. During her sponsorship application process, she got married to Sohail. She then updated her status on her sponsorship application from being single to married, and submitted the marriage proof documents. Her own and Sohail's sponsorship

applications were therefore processed simultaneously and they both got sponsorship approval. It took only 2 months for Sohail's file to be approved. Tanzeela came to Canada 4 months before him. At the time of the study, Sohail had been living in Canada for 2 and a half years. He and his wife had a 1 month old baby at the time of the research interview.

After moving to Canada, Sohail got a full-time job in his field as an IT software engineer just two months after arrival. Tanzeela had 14 years of schooling, earning a Bachelor of Commerce degree, and worked as an accounting assistant in a retail business. She was on maternity leave at the time of this study.

## The Interview Process

Compared to traditional ethnography, focused ethnography is characterized by short-term field visits, which are compensated for by intensive data collection through the use of audiovisual technologies. For this study, the researcher collected a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time through audio-taping the interviews of family-sponsored spouses in the context they chose such as their home. Tape-recording the data allowed more time to observe, reflect, and make field notes (Knoblauch, 2005). The researcher also recorded arising thoughts, interpretations and took field notes during the interviews, to assess context related factors of participants' integration and adaptation, such as their ability to access a public venue for an interview (such as a public library quiet space), comfort level in communicating in their first language or English, and social interaction patterns, etc. Data sessions were conducted where collected data was presented to researcher's supervisor

(Knoblauch, 2005). The researcher and her supervisor only had access to the data; it was shared amongst them to obtain interpretations and feedback with respect to emerging findings and themes.

The interviews took place in a comfortable and quiet setting without distractions. The participants were greeted by the researcher and moved from general social interaction to research purpose; explanation about the nature of the study was provided (i.e., what was the study about, and why it was being conducted, etc.). Any questions or comments about the research study were addressed. Participants were made aware that consent is ongoing; they can refuse to answer a certain question or terminate the interview at any point. Participants were assigned a pseudonym. They were reassured that any identifying information about themselves or other people mentioned during the interview would be disguised using false names for both themselves and other people mentioned to keep things confidential.

With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio-taped. If a participant refused to have their interview audio-taped, the researcher was prepared to take notes during the interview, but all participants consented to audio-taping. They were also reassured that their real name will not be included on the audio-tape or any written notes or transcriptions and they will be called by their pseudonym only.

Semi-structured interviews for the duration of one to two hours were conducted by the researcher at each participant's home or other preferred meeting location. Participants had the option to do the interview in the English, Urdu,

Hindi, or Punjabi languages; the researcher had proficiency in speaking all of these languages. They were invited to recall and share their experiences of adjustment to life in Canada and the practical strategies and resources they used on a daily basis to facilitate their adaptation, as well as the role played by their spouse/family and cultural community and religious organizations in their integration process.

The interviews were semi-structured where some questions were prepared in advance. There were also open-ended questions to get the full details of participants' experiences without limiting their responses. Participants were prompted or probed to elicit further information about a certain experience. They were also asked any other guiding questions or topics that arose during the interview process. The researcher tried to have a smooth interview to elicit deep reflections about participants' experiences or cross-cultural adaptation strategies. The opening and guiding questions for the interview are listed below.

Participants were first asked some demographic and immigration information such as country of birth, cultural background, first language, country where marriage took place, date and years of marriage, sponsorship application processing time, length of residence in Canada, and sponsor and sponsored spouse's years of schooling completed, profession prior to migration, and present employment status.

Second, the researcher invited the participants to begin the dialogue by saying “Tell me about your experience of living in Canada and starting a new life here”. The list of following overarching questions was created to facilitate dialogue and cover all points of the research questions in the interview:

- What did you know about Canada before arriving? (e.g., about its culture, people, weather, language, etc).
- What did you think your life in Canada would be like? What were your expectations?
- How have your expectations changed since you came here?
- What were your feelings after spending your first few years in Canada and since then?
- What were the main challenges you experienced in adapting to life in Canada and in participating in Canadian society?
- How did you respond to each of these challenges?
- What kinds of decisions did you make about how you would deal with and overcome each of these challenges? (e.g., language barriers, seeking employment, socially integrating, and learning the system).
- What steps did you take to help yourself adjust to life in Canada and integrate into Canadian society?
- How did your husband/wife help you in overcoming any challenges you faced?

- How did your family help you in overcoming any challenges you faced?
- What role did your religious or cultural community or other people outside of your family play in helping you to adapt to life in Canada, if any?
- Tell me about any community programs or services that you made use of to help you be more successful in building a new life here.
- Based on your experiences, what would you advise other newcomers in your situation to do, to help them have a more successful experience adjusting to life in Canada, in terms of learning English, getting a job, making friends, and learning how everything works here?

Any questions arising about the study during the interview process were addressed. At the end of the interview, participants were thanked followed by stressing confidentiality once again. They were given $30 remuneration for their participation in the study. There are several reasons for why remuneration was given: First, many sponsored spouses are underemployed because of lack foreign credential recognition, so participation in research took time away from paid work. Second, sponsored spouses are a recent migrant group who may be unemployed and facing financial challenges. The payment for participation in the study was small enough to not be an incentive and compromise voluntary consent, but large enough to cover the costs of travel by bus, taxi, etc. for research purposes and to compensate for lost work time.

The participants were made aware that there may be a second interview of the same length for elaboration or clarification regarding the first interview responses. If a second interview was not required, there would be a follow-up meeting with the participants to share the emerging themes or patterns from their transcripts; this is called member-checking (Mays & Pope, 2000). The purpose of this meeting was to get their input and feedback about the interpretations of their responses and gain a collaborative understanding of their experiences. For those who had a second interview, the member-checking occurred in a third meeting.

## Data Transcription, Analysis and Interpretation Process

### Data Recording and Transcription

The interviews were audio-taped. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. It was reviewed against the audio recordings to ensure accuracy of the transcript. The audio recordings were kept separate from the transcriptions in a locked safe at the researcher's home. According to University of Alberta policies and procedures, all transcriptions will be kept for five years from the date of study completion in the locked safe at the researcher's home office. Interviews that occurred in participants' first languages were directly transcribed into English using meaning-based translation rather than literal translation. Because meaning based translation is a more accurate representation of described experience in another language and cultural frameworks than literal translation (Larson, 1984). The emerging themes were analyzed in English.

**Analysis Strategy**

In this study, data was analyzed thematically (Merriam, 1998). In the Focused Ethnography methodology, data analysis is a continuous and an inductive process whereby the researcher analyzes the data throughout the research study. Data analysis requires a lot of work and preparation because a massive amount of data is collected with the aid of audiovisual technologies (Knoblauch, 2005). Analyzing the data is not linear and there are no predicted outcomes, only an interest in gaining insights about the particular topic (Wood & Ross-Kerr, 2011). Data collection and data analysis happen "simultaneously" during the first interview or observation, and continues through transcription when patterns or emerging themes become more evident. Merriam (2002) states that "simultaneous data collection and data analysis allows the researcher to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of redirecting data collection, and to 'test' emerging concepts, themes, and categories against subsequent data", these adjustments enhance data collection techniques to elicit richer perspectives (p. 14). Thus data collection and analysis is an iterative process.

Additionally, data analysis is an inductive approach where "one begins with a unit of data (any meaningful word, phrase, narrative, etc.) and compares it to another unit of data, and so on, all the while looking for common patterns across the data. First this is done for each individual participant, and subsequently a cross-participant analysis is conducted to identify shared or collective experiences of the group under study. These patterns are given names (codes) and are refined and adjusted as the analysis proceeds" (Merriam, 2002, p. 14).

As data was collected, the researcher started analyzing it by searching for common patterns or themes. Data was compared while searching for common experiences across participants to generate codes or themes under which strategies used to adapt in each domain (i.e., linguistic, economic, social, and cultural) and types of community/religious resources and programs accessed were subsumed (Merriam, 2002).

Data sessions were conducted to present the themes to the researcher's supervisor in order to gain feedback, clarification, and guidance. Thus, the researcher used an inductive approach to identify and understand the emerging themes about practical strategies and resources that were used by sponsored spouses to facilitate their adaptation. The emerging themes were constantly compared and contrasted with the existing literature. During data analysis, the researcher kept a memo to record her reflections about the data, in a different color ink to avoid confusing it with the data or field notes. Thus the methodological approach of focused ethnography is an instrument allowing detailed insight and analysis of a highly specific topic in an effective manner. Field notes were used to add context dimensions to direct participant quotes in their transcripts to assist with interpretation and holistic data analysis.

## Reflexive Dimensions

Reflexivity refers to self-conscious reflection upon the way research findings are shaped by the researcher, research process itself, methodology, and analysis (Murphy, Dingwall, Greatbatch, Parker, & Watson, 1998). Researchers should record "their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the

research process. Reflective practice such as this aims to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes, a construction that originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695).

For this study, the researcher was an insider to the group being studied; she was not only a South Asian herself, but had firsthand experiences of cross-cultural adaptation. She also had research experience studying culture from various different perspectives through her undergraduate and graduate studies. On the one hand being an insider and possessing knowledge about the group being studied sensitized her to the issue of cross-cultural adaptation, and provided deep insights about participants' experiences. On the other hand, it could lead to biased interpretations according to her personal and research experiences. The researcher was from a Muslim background and immigrated to Canada from Pakistan 14 years ago and was somewhat proficient in English upon her arrival. Given the diversity within the South Asian community in religions, gender, age cohorts, and English proficiency at the time of immigration, variation from her own experiences was to be expected and welcomed as the research process unfolded.

The researcher recognized that being an insider could impact the research, so she took a reflexive stance to record her assumptions and personal adaptation experiences in a reflexive journal called a memo. Her personal experiences became the motivation for the proposed study. The selection of a South Asian sample was also influenced by her ethnic identity. However, her interest in exploring adaptation in the linguistic, economic, social, and cultural domains was

developed by a research project she was previously involved in. Selection of a research design was influenced by the graduate-level qualitative course she attended. These experiences combined, influenced the research findings. However, by recording her interpretations and preconceptions about participants' cross-cultural adaptation experiences, she was keenly interested in learning primarily from them and challenged presumptions that everyone has similar experiences to her own. The researcher took a reflexive stance to ensure findings were not affected by her biases by relating the findings to previous research, and also checking and sharing the data with her supervisor, to obtain feedback, clarification, and guidance with regards to the research process and emerging themes.

## Rigour

To ensure that the qualitative study was rigorous, Beck's (1993) three standard criteria were used, credibility, auditability, and transferability. Credibility was assessed through member checks where the researcher met with the participants to confirm the emerging themes and interpretations of their experiences. The emerging themes and patterns were compared and contrasted with the existing literature as well to see whether the study findings had convergent or divergent evidence. This qualitative study was also credible because the research question (cross-cultural experiences of adaptation), method (i.e., semi-structured interviews), and sample (i.e., sub-cultural group of South Asian family-sponsored spouses) were in congruence with the philosophy and methodology of Focused Ethnography.

In this study, auditability was ensured through the use of a memo or reflexive journal. The researcher was an insider to the group being studied; she ensured that research findings were not biased. To ensure the research was rigorous, in the reflexive journal, she made reflective insights and presumptions about the data, labeled, and kept track of codes, as well as how the entire research process was guided by her. She also kept a diary to record any thoughts, interpretations about the literature and findings throughout the research study in order to work inductively. The data was checked with her supervisor to obtain guidance regarding emerging themes and patterns. Data was analyzed rigorously by confirming or verifying new data with previously collected data.

This qualitative study was also transferrable in the sense that extensive literature was reviewed before starting this research; sponsored spouses experiences in linguistic, economic, social, and cultural domains have been highlighted above. This study built on and filled gaps in the existing literature. Previous research on acculturation strategies mainly used self-evaluation reports using mixed samples whereas this study explored the practical steps sponsored spouses took on a daily basis to integrate into their new host society.

The review of the literature provided a springboard for developing ideas, research interests and questions for the study, making it credible, relevant, and transferable to the research topic, context, and group. This research could be transferrable to other South Asian family-sponsored relatives as well and not only spouses since they face similar challenges where the sponsor is responsible for promoting their integration into society.

## Ethical Issues

Maintaining ethical standards and procedures is crucial for conducting sound research especially if it involves human participants. The qualitative study was submitted for ethical review by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board (REB). This ethics board enforces the Tri-council's guidelines for Ethical Conduct for Research involving Human Participants (TCPS). TCPS's underlying value is respect for human dignity expressed in three core principles; respect for persons (i.e., autonomy and dignity, and confidentiality and anonymity), concern for welfare (i.e., beneficence), and Justice (i.e., fairness and equitability) (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). These principals as well as ethical issues specific to the South Asian population are discussed next.

The key feature of autonomy and dignity involves allowing the participants free, informed and ongoing voluntary consent. As already mentioned, consent was an ongoing process, not a single event in time (Halai, 2006). There are different ethical issues that need consideration while studying minority populations. With regards to voluntary participation and consent, recruitment was done through community associations/religious centers, or cultural organizations rather than through personal contacts of the researcher. This ensured voluntary participation because for South Asians, having personal contacts with the researcher may lead them to feel obligated to participate in the research study due to the collective and community-oriented nature of the culture (Pernice, 1994).

Also, the sign-up sheet for participation was picked up by the researcher, but the organizations/centers were not informed about who was involved in the study and who did not take part. Further, the researcher did not follow-up with individuals who declined to participate and did not ask them about their reasons.

Another ethical issue specific to South Asian participants was that some individuals misunderstand their rights as sponsored persons and may think participation in the study would affect their immigration status or marriage relationship (Merali, 2008). To guard against this, in the consent form, they were reassured that participation will not affect their status in Canada, the study was not being done by the government, and results would not be shared with the government. Consent was obtained by signing the consent form at the time of the interview. Participants were made aware that consent is an ongoing process; their participation is voluntary throughout the research study. They could refuse to answer a question, terminate the interview or withdraw from the study altogether at any time, without any further contact or inquiry by the researcher.

Ensuring participants' confidentiality and anonymity is of utmost importance in research (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010). At the beginning of the interview, participants were assigned a pseudonym; false names were given to the interviewee, places, and other people mentioned. The master list linking participants' real names with the pseudonyms was kept separate and confidential from the field notes, and transcriptions, in a locked cabinet in researcher's office.

Pseudonyms were used during interviews and throughout the research process, including during data sharing with the supervisor and the creation of the actual master's thesis. All the information about participants and their experiences was not discussed with anyone and remained confidential. There was a follow-up meeting during which participants were allowed to withdraw or modify any information.

Being an ethical researcher requires foreseeing potential benefits and harm to the participants before the research begins. According to Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2010), welfare of the participants "consists of the impact on individuals of factors such as their physical, mental,…economic and social circumstances" (p. 9). The researcher was cognizant of the fact that participants may get emotionally distressed while recalling their initial experiences adjusting to the new culture in a foreign land if these were challenging experiences for them. In order to be prepared for this, they were made aware of this possibility in the consent form and informed that the researcher had a list of free counseling resources they could access where they could be served in their own language if they did experience any distress.

Participants were given $30 remuneration for participation in the study; this was not an incentive to participate, but to compensate for lost employment time and taking transportation to the research interviews. Many sponsored spouses are a recent migrant group who are usually unemployed and dependent

upon their sponsor for financial needs (Merali, 2009) so this amount compensated for their time, effort, and lost employment time for participation in the study.

According to Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2010), an important feature of justice (i.e., fairness and equity) is vulnerability. "Vulnerability is often caused by limited capacity, or limited access to social goods, such as rights, opportunities and power" (p. 10). Ethnic cultural communities who have been treated unfairly and inequitably are an example of vulnerable populations. In the proposed research, South Asian family-sponsored spouses could also be considered vulnerable populations who are being treated unfairly and inequitably by the government because they are not allowed to access any government support resources while immigrants coming under other classes do receive such benefits to help them adapt to Canadian society.

Sponsored spouses were not only vulnerable, but also a marginalized group in research; most research on adaptation employed mixed samples. Thus the proposed research was conducted to pay special attention to this vulnerable and marginalized group in order to shed light on their experiences. In the next chapter, the results of the research study are presented, drawing on participants' own words about their adaptation and integration experiences.

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

## Emerging Themes

This chapter outlines the main themes that emerged from this study related to steps and strategies Canadian marriage partners and family members take to assist South Asian sponsored spouses with their integration and adaptation, the self-initiated strategies the foreign marriage partners use after their arrival, and the role of religious and community organizations in this process. All themes are illustrated with supporting quotes from the research participants' interviews. Spouse/family strategies will be covered first to set the context for the experiences, and steps that sponsored spouses themselves took to integrate from this springboard.

## Spouse/Family-Initiated Adaptation and Integration Strategies

### Spousal Roles In "Immigration Preparedness"

Cross-cultural adaptation is often a difficult process for many newcomer husbands and wives. However, this process can either be smoother or more challenging depending upon the behaviour and attitudes of the Canadian marriage partner. Out of the five participants in this research study, three had positive adjustment experiences (Saarah, Shilpa, and Sohail), whereas two had negative and particularly challenging experiences (Sobia and Sajid) in the new host society. The first theme in relation to spouse/family-initiated strategies and steps to facilitate new marriage partner's integration in Canada relates to their role in preparing these foreign partners for life in Canada prior to their arrival and establishing a solid financial base to allow them to grow and learn once they

actually arrive. The participants who had this type of support found the integration process much less challenging, whereas those who lacked this immigration preparation from their spouses had a more difficult experience in Canada.

Saarah stated that before she came to Canada, her husband had prepared her for life in Canada. She said "I knew everything from beforehand … Shahid [husband] had prepared me for everything so Shahid had put me in a very comfortable zone, so I was not in fear and that stayed like that ... about Canada, about the atmosphere ... how's the weather here ... he used to say that don't do too much preparation for fancy shiny clothes, you don't get to wear these here". She added that during their long distance relationship, they used to talk to each other quite often and that "I was very comfortable, very much comfortable. Shahid is cooperative and that he was very caring so I was like he will guide me in everything, he will tell me … I was cushioned/relaxed on this fact that my husband's here".

She further added that she did not experience any challenge in adjusting to her life in new society. "After coming to Canada…I don't think that I …. When I had to do my son's admission (in school), that was my challenge. Other than that I didn't, didn't feel anything to be too challenging …. [and] so for me challenge, so if there was no one to help then I would say that it would be a challenge, for me Shahid never created any problem". This shows that a Canadian spouse's positive behavior, support, and preparation about life in Canada facilitates the foreign spouse's adjustment process.

Shilpa also stated that “it makes a difference to a great extent if you have someone who already has lived here for 10 years….My husband was here already, so he knew the system. As for my family, my in-laws are in Canada so they also knew the system … I had that support system for my basic sustenance, I mainly had a problem getting a job”. She explained that her husband and family told her everything about how life works in Canada like the weather, the language, how to get around, and how to meet people, etc. She added that “you know having a family has made it cake walk in that sense. First of all, had I no one here … had these people not being here hypothetically, it would have been really challenging in terms of your logistical support ($)”.

Additionally, Shilpa's husband was very supportive in making sure that she was comfortable in every way, she stated that he was “providing moral support throughout and making sure that the life was comfortable for me in every sense, in every way possible”. Spousal and familial support in immigration preparation and in establishing a sound financial platform for the newcomer husband or wife appears to be very important in the perspectives of these participants.

Sohail also had a positive adjustment experience. He stated that “she [wife] already had a job when I came here, so I had a peace of mind that we can survive on our own basis, so mentally I had satisfaction that we won’t have money crisis or like that…. So after coming here I can’t say that I faced a very big challenge”. He explained how this allowed him to learn everything about Canada and integrate at his “own pace”. Sohail’s wife also provided financial support and

an established platform for her husband, which gave him peace of mind and eased the adjustment process.

In contrast, Sobia stated that she had high expectations of a beautiful and adventurous life ahead in Canada, but these expectations were not met:

> "I thought/felt that over here everything would be an easy access for me, why would it be difficult. But when I came here, then I realized that life is a bit difficult here. I wanted to do job and my husband did not permit me to do job.... Even if I went to any reception (desk) or something, they didn't treat me well."

She added that "I thought, there will be freedom (in Canada) .... I was an adventurous girl, I thought it would be easy to go out, I would go bicycling, walking, hiking, like I was thinking of my life ahead in an adventurous way.... And all of a sudden, I had negative experience ..... Once I didn't ask permission from my husband to go to neighbor's house and he was angry with me for 3 days, for me it was a very difficult time"

In addition, she described her adjustment process: "In the beginning it was very depressing, my husband did not allow me to do job … When I came here, there wasn't too much of a support from him as well, any kind". She said that when newcomer wives come from back home leaving their family, they want "a friendly environment. So when they come here, it all depends on their life partner", and whether they support them or not. She disclosed that after she arrived, she "started being quite negative" because "my husband [was] the ruler and this home was his possession". Sobia had depression and negative adjustment

experiences because her husband did not behave well with her and his support was lacking in preparing her for and teaching her about the host society, and giving her the opportunity to get out and learn about it.

Additionally, her husband did not provide an established platform for her. This is illustrated in the following quote: “But this I can say that there was no advantage of my husband living here for 11 years because I had to come and start from scratch, and study myself about food, about medicines….”. In addition to missing platform and spousal support, she did not have any familial support either because her husband didn’t not have any family members in Canada except one brother living in another Canadian city.

Like Sobia, Sajid also had high expectations of starting a successful life in Canada, but faced many challenges and experienced difficult adjustment process overall. About his expectations he stated:

> "I heard about Canada that there’s a lot of scope for educated people that you go there and government supports you as well.... Our relatives living in Canada told us that in Alberta there are a lot of jobs, for the new immigrants coming here, they were doing English courses, taking funding and the government was paying for all their family’s expenses .... But when I came here this was not the situation; even finding a job was very difficult".
>
> He further added that "I had thought that I would go there (to Canada) and directly focus on my education because everyone told me to complete your

education there, then you would have good job. Upgrading here was quite difficult for me here because I can't afford it"

Both Sobia and Sajid had high expectations of a successful life in Canada, but these expectations were not met.

Sajid described his adjustment experiences of missing established platform because his wife mostly lived in Pakistan. She was sponsored by her brother to come to Canada 9 years ago and went back home when she obtained Canadian citizenship. After getting married back home, she returned to Canada to file the sponsorship application for Sajid, and went back again to live with her husband. Therefore, she herself was a newcomer when she and Sajid both moved to Canada. Sajid stated “Her English is worse than mine”. They had difficulty getting a house because neither of them had a credit card and thus no credit history, he stated that his wife didn’t have any credit history “because her credit card, she got it after I got my credit card”. Sajid’s wife was not able to provide him with preparation for immigration to Canada or any integration support, as she herself was not established here.

Additionally, familial support was also lacking. Sajid stated that “my brother-in-law was a cab driver and he had his own family (few kids) so he couldn’t really help me in any matter”. Sajid elaborated that “if she [his wife] was born here or could speak fluent English, was well educated, it would be helpful for me - rather it would have been easier for me then”. These quotes illustrate that newcomer husbands or wives often have high expectations of starting a successful life in Canada and need an established support system to facilitate their

adjustment; without the help of their spouse or family members, adjusting to the new society can be significantly difficult especially since sponsored spouses are not provided access to any government support programs and services.

**Spouses and Family Members as Navigation Aids**

When sponsored spouses come to Canada, they are faced with the task of learning how to navigate the new society in terms of transportation systems, health care access, school systems, the justice system etc. The second theme that emerged from this study related to the steps and strategies Canadian spouses and families take to facilitate the integration of their newcomer husbands and wives related to serving as navigation aids for Canadian societal systems. The quotes from participants below highlight the steps Canadian partners/families played in helping with transportation, health, and other system navigation and access. The navigation assistance provided aimed to promote the independence of the sponsored spouses who received it.

Saarah stated that "Shahid used to go out with me for everything in the beginning … to all the appointments for the doctor, wherever I had to go". Additionally, she said he helped her find her way around the city: "he used to guide me that how the ways are". After Saarah got acquainted with the routes and so on, she said "he let me use the ETS a bit, he gave me the freedom to use it, from that I knew how is the bus service, then areas, then houses, like you know, how you find addresses, the way addresses are here and so at least I know now".

Saarah also stated that she got a lot of help from her in-law family; she said "they gave confidence" and a sense of security that "whenever I had any

problem I can call my in-laws, anything happens, I phone, and ask". They shared and taught her about "how to do planning for kids' future … like what they did with their own kids". She added that "I have a lot of support from my sister: there's ETS service, other than that like how you shop outside, here, it's different than in Pakistan". Her sister helped her find a good school to enroll her children in; she said that "I had to look for a specific education system so for that sister helped me a lot". Canadian spouses and family members are key for providing a lot of resourceful information to newcomer spouses.

Shilpa also had the support of her husband and family in navigating the systems of the host society. She said that "he would drive me to a lot of places, to a lot of volunteer things, because at that time I could not even drive". Husbands were guiding their newcomer wives about way finding and driving them so they can learn and move around by themselves. Due to this assistance, Shilpa stated that "I am able to understand the system. I mean also because my husband was here already, so he knew the system. As of my family, my in-laws are in Canada so they also knew the system … I had that support system for my basic sustenance". Her in law family also "supported [her] morally".

In the South Asian culture, boys are allowed to go out and be independent whereas girls often are not allowed to be independent (Ibrahim et al., 1997). With regards to promoting independence among sponsored wives, Saarah stated that "boys are independent, for them to be independent is not difficult, for them to survive is not that difficult, the way it is for girls. Girls who come, they don't know driving, if you're uneducated then how you will learn driving, how you will

learn English, but they should do it. They … usually are stuck to home, it's not necessary for doing job, but for other things this is important that you should know how to drive". Since the husbands were already living in Canada and used to the Canadian nature of independence, those who allowed their sponsored wives to be independent seemed to facilitate rather than hinder their adaptation and integration in Canada.

Saarah stated that "he used to guide me how the ways are now it's like I came to know many things that if Shahid is not there then yeah, I can, I have now become independent, can do it, like if I need something, I know where to go, where is the facility of the hospital, for groceries" and "he made at least this much independent that okay gave me the car". She added that "Today if I think what helped me become independent, is my friend, my sister, and my husband has been very cooperative, he cooperated a lot with me". Sobia's husband also promoted independence in her by letting her try new things. She stated that "when I am doing something, he did not bother me or ask me why you used it or why you call, or why you did this, in this way". These Canadian husbands helped newcomer wives to learn the navigation system so they can move around in the society by themselves and fulfill their household and child care responsibilities, and also eventually find employment.

**"Providing Moral Support Throughout"**

According to sponsored spouses, the third thing their Canadian marriage partner did to facilitate their adjustment and adaptation was providing emotional

support throughout the adaptation process. Sponsored spouses found this type of support to be incredibly helpful to them in adapting to the new society.

With regards to this, Shilpa stated that her husband was "providing moral support throughout" when she was not able to find a job in her own field. And that he was "making sure that the life was comfortable for me in every sense, in every way possible". Saarah also stated that "Shahid never created any problem (laughing), like the snow here is challenging, he knew that I didn't know about this black ice, slippery ice, but he used to say to me, to just walk with me, don't walk alone …. he was very cooperative so, we did everything together, but he didn't put it on me. If I had any problem, Shahid solved it for me". Sajid's wife also provided emotional support and accommodated him during the challenges they both experienced. He stated that "she accommodated with me, she knew that I don't have too much money in my pocket and she has to cooperate with me".

Sobia talked about receiving helpful emotional support from her brother-in-law. She stated that "because of my brother-in-law I used to get quite relaxed [about adapting to Canada] because whenever he (husband) was quite busy with work, so he (brother-in-law) used to tell me about here (stories about Canada) and there and his school time stories - he used to give refreshing talk, was very friendly and was very nice". She explained how his support helped her a great deal in having a positive adaptation process. Within their family and community contexts, foreign marriage partners also took a lot of independent steps to try to adapt to life in Canada. Themes related to these self-initiated strategies are described below.

## Self-Initiated Adaptation and Integration Strategies

### English Immersion

There were 3 participants who were not fluent English speakers when they arrived in Canada (Saarah, Sobia, and Sajid) and who struggled speaking the language. This theme entitled English Immersion describes how all of them took active steps to learn the English language by immersing themselves in it, such as by watching English TV programming, taking English language courses, and practicing communication with English speaking individuals in a social context, as they perceived the acquisition of English to be critical to their successful adaptation.

Participants used TV to immerse themselves in the English language and facilitate their learning. Saarah said that "English, I could understand it, but in speaking I'm not fluent that much … but it became finer to a greater degree with TV because when I used to read, because we also had the option to open the caption so it used to come in written too. So with that I learned some pronunciation because I thought the word is this, but actually it's another word … So TV helped me a lot in learning the language".

Sohail on the other hand is a fluent English speaker, but he suggested that newcomer immigrants should "watch English programs, reading also helps, watch English movies, English serials. Serials I'm saying because in movies there are different, different accents of people … because when he (any new immigrant) works in Canada, he won't get same accent speaking people …. Your

opportunities become fewer if you're English is not good… So this way they can at least prepare themselves [for life in Canada]".

In her interview, Saarah shared that "English I did online; I saw a course online so how much I can do it by myself at home … So I did it online …. I used to do it daily a little bit, with that it got better". To improve her English further she said she "will do courses. Doing courses is necessary". Sajid also prepared himself for English because he said "when I came from Pakistan, I took some language classes there … and they were a bit helpful here".

In addition to utilizing television and courses, participants also used other active learning strategies. Sajid stated that he improved his English "by practicing … whenever you go to any store or wherever, you had to face English, even your manager was English, so with him had to talk in English … sometimes had problems but I just tried to make them understand".

Sobia also stated practicing speaking in an English environment improved her language abilities because for her:

> One was the language problem, the reason was that … after living at home, there was not much interaction, with those whom you talk in English throughout, I feel that my vocabulary has become very less for expressing … when I put my son in a [school] program … one of the social worker there, she said that I'm very happy that you're in the parent group meeting because with people I have difficulty communicating, you're my mediator … if there was an Urdu speaking person, I would explain it to them about what the social worker is saying … And it's really helped me because I got

> a chance to talk in English and I got words that what every word means and how to use it to explain.

Sohail also said that interaction is very important for learning language: "the sooner the better that we can get an opportunity to interact with people …we can learn more quickly [and] try to understand about here, how (Canadian) people are here, in what way you should talk with them". He believed that this was a critical part of social integration in Canadian life, and to access host society systems, like the school system, labor market, health care system, and so on.

Participants stated that as they began being able to speak English better, it also gave them self-confidence, which resulted in further improvement in their language abilities. Sobia explained that:

> By joining the school program [for my son] I gained confidence otherwise I thought that I don't even know how to properly speak English. [The social worker] used to appreciate me that you know it so well that you're helping me in making others understand/explain … I really enjoyed it … it was like an achievement, and another thing was that I gained self-confidence that oh it means I can do it, I can do it and my English is not that bad!

With regards to self-confidence, Saarah stated that "It's easier for communication, your confidence level becomes different, you can communicate easily like you don't talk limited then, then you can go vast and talk - so this thing affects a lot".

**Being Resourceful**

Out of the five participants, three were working at the time of the study (Shilpa, Sajid, and Sohail), whereas the other two female participants were housewives (Saarah and Sobia), and preferred to take care of their children rather than working outside of the home since their children were young. However, they both used to work before marriage and showed an interest in upgrading themselves and working in the future when their kids grow older. Out of the three participants who were working, Sajid and Shilpa initially had problems getting a job, but being resourceful assisted them in eventually finding employment. This theme had two subthemes, involving being open to exploring different options that were not previously considered and utilizing social networks to identify suitable job opportunities.

**"Opening up to other avenues".** Shilpa said "for the longest time I was not able to find a job in the related field … so I was … ok let me give it a best shot, exhaust all options in [her own field] and then make a move into something else … so like you are now opening up to other avenues … I was completely ready to let go of my 5 years of experience, doesn't matter, but start as an intern, not even paid internship".

Sohail on the other hand, found a job in his own field after coming here, but he said that when you can't find a job you should "then start survival job as soon as you can". He further added that if he had not gotten a job in his field then "I was ready for this kind (survival) of job too, I didn't have any issue … to start, anything is okay, even survival jobs".

Additionally, he advised that if newcomers cannot find a job in their related field, then "starting a survival job will get you to meet people as well ... your interaction with people will also increase ... and [at the same time] you will start to understand the city too". It seemed from the disclosures of these participants, that although underemployment is often viewed negatively, it can provide a basis for improving interaction and communication skills and navigation of the host society labour market and city of residence. This would subsequently allow newcomers to make connections, which could eventually lead them to obtain jobs in their fields of education and training.

**Community social networks as job search engines.** It seemed that besides using survival jobs as a springboard to obtain employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications, participants utilized their own ethnic community connections for job search and placement. While exploring other options, Shilpa was actively participating in the South Asian community where "some of the people were helpful in terms of sharing certain job opportunities with me, just letting me know that so and so job opening is there". She said that "I was volunteering at a lot of places so whatever connections I could make there … I was trying to mix up with Indian community … I would say South Asian". Through those connections, she added that "I came to know, the people here, with this organization [currently working with] and then they saw me at a lot of occasions and like speaking in the public so that's how this job came up".

Sajid also utilized his cultural social network to obtain a job. He initially found a job online that interested him, but had no Canadian experience or

reference or no one to obtain more information about how the job would be in Canada. He explained: “I said to one Pakistani person that I need a job, so someone helped me get the job … yeah someone gave reference and then I got the job”.

**Being Active Learners Striving for Independence**

This theme reflects how all the participants expressed the need to become independent in their functioning in Canada and in their navigation of Canadian societal systems, like transportation, food, health care, enrolling children in school, and utilizing the banking system. They learned the Canadian systems by taking active steps themselves along with the help of their Canadian spouses and families they joined. They described actively seeking out the information they needed in person, from their social networks or online, and taking the steps necessary to try out new skills in different contexts.

Saarah said that “for everything I took a step myself that now I should do this, now I should do this thing”. Similarly, Shilpa mentioned: “finding a job in my own field … was the only struggle I would say [and] the kinds of jobs I was looking for, I had to take the initiative myself”. Sobia also disclosed a similar personal initiative: “I had to come and start from scratch and study myself about food, about medicines… so first changed myself from inside and whatever thing was a hurdle, to overcome it, I tried to use it once, tried to go out by myself”. Sajid made a statement about the importance of his independence and personal initiative in adapting to Canada as well: “I have to do everything by self, by self”.

Participants experienced difficulties using the transportation system in their new host society at first, but they utilized the help of their social networks to learn it. With regards to using the public transportation system, Saarah stated that "I got help from friends too. Like [how] you go on the internet and plan the trip for ETS, I did that ... this friends taught me and now I used it".

Sobia stated that: "for me it was easy, because … I met some people and they shared their own experiences, so from that … I prepared myself in advance, learned myself what is this, how to use this service … ok - these are the routes". She added that I "got more help from internet, then book, from internet I found out how to read the book too". Shilpa also said "you look at a map or google maps and be on your own and figure out all the bus routes and stuff like that".

Being able to use the public transportation system resulted in increased self-confidence in moving around the city, leading to obtaining a driver's license and learning how to drive. This also resulted in the feeling of independence that participants so deeply desired. Saarah stated that "I have now become independent, can do it, like if I need something, I know where to go, where is the facility of the hospital, for groceries where I have to go … now I know and drive". Sobia also "learned driving…now I know I can drive, now I know this much that I can go out and can do what I need".

Sajid experienced difficulties using the public transportation system too initially. He said that "for 2 years, I spent quite a tough life on the buses and a lot of time is wasted in that … for car, I got a license too now, now got my own car". Sohail also stated that "I got a job … and after doing some savings a bit, I did it,

wife did it, so the next month we got a car. Then after that got a driving license too". Since driving was seen to be essential for independence for many participants, Sajid advised that newcomer husbands should "verify their license from back home", whereas Sohail indicated that people should come here and the first thing they should do is "take license here first".

**Dealing with Limited Food Choices**

Participants also shared about having difficulties making food choices in Canada upon their arrival here. This was because they only consumed halal meat products. Halal is a term related to meat preparation according to Islamic principles. Since many dairy and wheat products, and children's food contain animal by-products, these participants' food choices became limited and finding appropriate foods that they could consume became critical to their successful adaptation in the new society.

Sajid stated that "we had food problem a lot, halal food to eat, if we wanted to go out and eat, there are only a few restaurants where we used to go". Sobia also had a similar experience because she said that "there were so many things that you … cannot consume easily, so I had to call them first [the company] and had to ask them that does it have any animal by-product or not". She explained that this changed once she got to know more people in Canada: "then I met a lot of people who've been living here for a long time and they relaxed me a lot. They said that when you see products with kosher or D sign on it… we can use it because it doesn't have any animal by-product". She elaborated: "Then met another one and she told me lots of good places where there is halal

food if you want to eat out, especially Arabic food, she said they are halal too". Therefore, these participants eventually obtained the information through their social networks about how to overcome their food challenges.

**Rebuilding Social/Community Capital From the Inside Out**

Social integration into the new host society can be challenging at times especially due to language barriers. This theme describes how due to these barriers, most participants made friendships with people from their own cultural community first, followed by people outside of it. Although this seems counterintuitive in the sense that building an ethnic enclave or socializing exclusively with one's own group at the beginning could hinder cultural and social integration with the rest of Canadian society, the opposite was true for these participants. This strategy seemed to really help facilitate their integration, as people within their community could provide them with linkages outside the community for not only other types of social support, but also for jobs, system navigation assistance, etc., as described in other themes above. Sajid summed up this point by saying that one's social network or "good friends here can be a big support for the individual who is sponsored".

Saarah stated that she did not make friends "with Canadian peoples" initially because her "speaking power was not so good so that's why I hesitated [and] … I didn't make many friends". However, she started building friendships with and socializing with people from her own cultural community. "I talked with my friends and asked them how we can be social and so on".

Similarly, Sajid also made friends in his own community. He stated that "friendship mostly with our own Pakistani brothers … went in own Mosque, for prayer, found some good friends there, got a lot of help from them". Subsequently, Sajid stated: "I tried to make friendship with Canadians…" Sobia also connected with members of her own community with whom she felt a sense of cultural and mental compatibility. She stated that "we have more friendship with just 1 or 2 families because even I fit in well with those families … with whom I have good mind, you know chit chat and stuff like that."

Sohail made friendships with people in his own community as well as Canadians because he had experience working with American clients. He stated that "we used to have friendship so I didn't feel that we're different". When he came to Canada, he was very comfortable with making friendships with Canadians. Having positive relationships within one's own cultural community cushions newcomer husbands and wives because they can lean on them and get emotional support by sharing their experiences. Friendships in the social network are also a big resource to draw from; friends share helpful tips and information about the new system in the host society as described in previous themes.

**Observational Culture Learning**

Learning the new culture of Canada is crucial for adjustment of new sponsored spouses after they arrive here. Participants who were fluent English speakers (Shilpa and Sohail) did not see Canadian culture being too different from their own even though they both were from India. Saarah, Sobia, and Sajid on the other hand, were not fluent in English and all immigrated from Pakistan. They

found Canadian culture to be quite different from the culture of their home country. This theme described how despite these differences, all the participants were able to learn and accept the new culture through direct observational learning strategies focusing on interaction styles, styles of dress, and communication patterns.

Sajid stated that "overall we got a different environment after coming here. We don't have this culture. … One thing I like is that everyone's independent, kids go to school and do part-time job too, work during holidays (summer), they help financially at home, these things I really like. Because in our culture it's not like that … over there 1 person earns and the rest eat". He also liked the independent nature of the Canadian culture by saying that "One thing I like about here is that you have to do your own work and you can't say to anyone that friend please do this for me".

Despite having cultural differences, Sajid stated that not only he liked Canadian culture, but also "I accepted, took that I should follow rules, should follow traffic rules, and don't do anything that you would have to face something in the future, work cooperatively with everyone as a team work". Cultural learning to a great extent comes through interaction with people from the mainstream society as well as observational learning. Sajid added that he "saw a lot of things and learned too".

Saarah also stated that she learned Canadian culture through observation including "observing the TV….learning about the culture, that you don't know by being with your own people (with same culture) so for that my source was TV".

Sohail also suggested to "watch English programs … watch English movies" to learn the culture. For Saarah, she observed people from the host society directly as well as the TV. She explained: "Shahid … used to go to (work), and behind (at home) it was just me, I used to look outside [the window] like how people are here … people used to walk outside and I used to observe them". Sobia also explained how people-watching helped her learn appropriate dress codes in the Canadian culture and society: "I was slowly, slowly going out, I see how people are dressed up and I learned from that".

**"Embrace and Blend in"**

This theme illustrates how through their active learning attempts of the new culture and utilization of both self-initiated strategies, and their family and community support networks, all participants reported a sense of effective integration in Canada even if they initially had faced some challenges in this process. This involved maintaining their own cultural identities as well as interacting with and adopting some of the ways of life of Canadian society.

Shilpa stated that "I have my own way of living, my own style of living and then at the same time I embrace what's good here". Saarah also integrated by changing herself according to the new society's culture. She said "I did change, before I didn't use to wear these clothes (pants), but … now I'm wearing pants, shirts, dresses - so it feels good to wear them according to the culture, it's not that just wearing your own".

In addition to wearing clothes common in the host society, she stated that "you should blend … if you have come here then you should make your mind that

we have to blend in here; appreciate their good things and maintain your good things too". Thus both maintaining their own cultural values as well as adapting Canadian cultural values was very important to these newcomers. With respect to integration, Sobia also stated that "our culture and values are completely different from their culture and values…. So if you see their healthy lifestyle, it's very good for adopting". She added that she really likes the "simplicity" of Canadian culture "so if you see this kind of lifestyle then yeah".

Sajid also stated that "just this that accepted them with patience, the way a country is that's how I became as well". Participants were able to maintain a balance in keeping their own cultural values as well as accepting and adopting the Canadian culture, which is the hallmark of the integration strategy of acculturation and development of a bicultural identity.

**Keeping a Positive Attitude**

When they move to a new country, newcomer sponsored husbands and wives leave their familiar homelands, family, and relatives to start their marital life with their Canadian spouse. Participants stated that being positive and having positive attitude was helpful in overcoming the challenges they faced during the adjustment process.

Saarah stated that "you have to be positive, you have to be optimistic that you are going to live in both things, should live in both things", meaning both cultures. Shilpa added that "as long as you're open to those differences and learning new things, I don't think it will be a big problem for you to settle down".

As already mentioned Sobia did have negative experiences due to a lack of spousal and familial support, but she overcame the challenges by having a positive attitude. She stated that “First of all on a personal level, I changed/modified my thinking because my thinking was taking every hurdle in a negative sense; now I think positively that what is the solution for it - What I can do?” She elaborated: “the insecurities I faced … in Pakistan … because of that my mind was changed quite a bit about Canada … and when I came back here, then right away I took it positively …. It helped me in making it a lot easier in adjusting myself here”. Sajid also stated that “yeah that I faced … I think good at this time, thinking positively, not thinking negatively”. Sajid also experienced difficulties in adjustment because of lack of established platform and familial support, but he also solved those challenges with the help of others and being positive.

## Community Supports for Integration

Besides familial and self-initiated strategies for integration in Canadian society, participants utilized a few types of religious and community organizations and services that they found to be particularly helpful for different aspects of their integration, such as making friends/social support-building, raising their children in Canadian society, and promoting independence or integration into the Canadian labour market. These included the local Mosques or religious centres, family support services or programs in the community, social work personnel, and settlement agencies.

**Religious Participation as Community Building**

Places of worship and religious organizations served as avenues for community integration and social support for some participants. Saarah stated she "like went for Friday prayers, you meet/mingle with the community, there's everything…". Sajid also stated that he "went in my own Mosque, for prayers, found some good friends there, got a lot of help from them .... like there was our own Punjabi person he said that I will give you house for rent". Friendships and social networks resulting from religious organizations also helped with getting jobs for these newcomer sponsored spouses. Sajid stated that "I said to one Pakistani person that I need a job, so someone helped me get the job". The religious centers also provided various services including teaching children how to read the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an. Sobia stated that "I get help from the Mosque because my son has to learn how to read Qur'an".

**Family Resource Centers as Educators and Independence Promoters**

Community centres, programs, and social work personnel were by and large very supportive to newcomer wives especially because they provided helpful information about child development and childrearing in Canadian society, and promoted independence or integration into the new society. Saarah stated that the visitor from the Family Resource Centre "told me a lot about the culture - especially with my son, like what should I look for in the environment, what I should do for him …. What kind of activities you can give him at home, how to take him outside in each kind of weather … she used to tell what product

to use for him." She elaborated that she was also told "if you're free, there's a class for kids like story rhymes, so all about kids. So with regards to kids, she helped me a lot".

Sobia also had a home visitor from the resource centre; she stated that "they have helped me a lot because we are not with our family who can guide us from time to time, so they visit you monthly and tell you that these changes/development should occur in your child in terms of growth". For these newcomer spouses who became mothers for the first time in Canada, the resource centre was seen to be quite helpful in providing information about child development in the Canadian context.

In addition to providing helpful information about childrearing and development, the home visitor or social worker also promoted independence in these new mothers. Saarah stated that "the home visitor motivated me that you should take professional class for driving … you will know how to drive and it will be good for kids too otherwise every time you're dependent on your husband". In addition to family resource centre social work personnel, the social workers at children's schools promoted self-confidence in some participants, for example in Sobia's case. She stated that "I tell you something - by joining the program I gained confidence, otherwise I thought that I don't even know how to properly speak English. She [social worker] used to appreciate me that you know it so well that you're helping me in making others understand … I really enjoyed it, I liked it". In the school program, Sobia got the opportunity to practice her English and gain speaking skills.

**Settlement Agencies as Career Advisors**

Although family-sponsored immigrants do not have any government-facilitated connections to agencies providing immigration and settlement assistance, participants in this study managed to identify local settlement agencies once they learned some English skills or through the assistance of their spouses, and were able to access agency information support. Their disclosures suggested that the settlement agencies they accessed served as career advisors for them by providing tips and helpful information about how to get a job in the Canadian labour market, upgrading their studies, and advancing their careers.

Sajid stated that he went to the settlement agency "with my resume…. he [the settlement worker] sent me to 2, 3 places that try there over there [for job]". Additionally, he stated that newcomers should "get help from NGOs" such as the settlement agencies. Sobia also utilized a settlement agency to get her degree evaluated and the counselor advised her: "you can start from 0 or study … even if you do upgrading, you will still get 0 level, but the thing is you would get chances to move forward from 0 level. In these she guided me quite well". Although Sobia found this information to be helpful, she delayed upgrading herself because she was pregnant at the time. So she followed the advice at a later point and still drew upon it.

From the participants' interview comment, it appeared that religious organizations and community organizations, programs, and personnel served multiple purposes as agents in connecting newcomer husbands and wives with their own community, providing assistance with job finding, developing

friendships, providing resourceful information about childrearing, and promoting independence and integration in the new host society. The next chapter discusses the findings of this study in the context of the existing literature.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative research study was two-fold. First, to explore what practical steps and strategies South Asian Canadian marriage partners and sponsored spouses take to facilitate linguistic, economic, social, and cultural integration in Canadian society. Second, to explore what cultural community, religious associations, and civil society organizations were utilized, and their role in facilitating South Asian sponsored spouses' adaptation process. The study included an ethnically mixed sample of two males and three females from India and Pakistan who had been living in Canada from two to four and a half years.

The guiding research questions were: (a) What practical steps do partners/family members in Canada take to facilitate sponsored spouses' integration in learning English, finding employment, learning how things work in the new country, and rebuilding their social and community capital in Canada? (b) What practical steps do the sponsored spouses take to help themselves in these areas?, and (c) What role do cultural community and religious organizations and other community resources play in the integration process? This chapter discusses the themes that emerged from participant responses within the context of existing literature and presents study implications, the limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

### Spouse/Family-Initiated Adaptation and Integration Strategies

Migrating to a new country, adjusting, and starting a new relationship and life can be very challenging for many newly married South Asian family-sponsored spouses. However, those who received support from their Canadian marriage partners and family members experienced fewer challenges and quicker adjustment into the new host society compared to those who did not receive such support from their spouse.

For three participants who had positive adjustment experiences (Saarah, Shilpa, and Sohail), their Canadian marriage partner prepared them about life in Canada before their arrival. This immigration preparation strategy gave these sponsored spouses peace of mind and comfort that their Canadian partner is well acquainted with the Canadian system and will guide and support them with everything throughout their adjustment process. Participants specifically stated that they would have encountered more difficulties if they had not received such preparatory information from their Canadian spouse.

On the other hand, participants who had not received immigration preparation from their Canadian spouse experienced more difficulties and challenges during their adjustment process. Both Sobia and Sajid had high expectations of starting a successful life in Canada, but lack of immigration preparation by their Canadian marriage partners about the realities of life in Canada led to cognitive dissonance in these participants. Cognitive dissonance "is a mental state characterized by intense psychological discomfort, ambivalence, anxiety, and rumination that triggers an impulse to take some overt or covert

action to resolve the feelings of incongruence" (Avni, 2012, p.44; Festinger 1957, 1964).

Out of all the participants in this study, only Sobia and Sajid had high expectations about life in Canada, this inconsistency in their expectations and realities of Canadian life had not been resolved by their Canadian marriage partner through providing immigration preparation, due to which they experienced greater adjustment challenges compared to others in this study. Past research showed that South Asian sponsored spouses who had no ambivalence about their immigration status and rights in Canada before their arrival had easier adjustment and integrated at a faster rate than those who were not aware of this information (Merali, 2009). Thus immigration preparation information was seen to be very helpful for the participants in this study.

In addition to providing immigration preparation, the sponsors and family members provided an existing established social and financial platform from which the participants could learn, grow, and move further to integrate faster into the new host society. Although Canada's Multicultural Policy's objectives are to assist, promote integration, and full participation of all ethno-cultural groups (Banting, 2010; Ghosh, 1994), this policy does not transfer into practice for Family Class immigrants. There is legislated inequality because family-sponsored immigrants do not receive any government support (Lamba & Wilkinson, 1998). The Government of Canada requires the sponsor to sign an undertaking to provide for the basic needs of the sponsored spouse for a period of three years (CIC,

2011a; Phythian et al., 2009). Thus the sponsor becomes liable to provide an established financial and social platform for their newcomer spouse.

The established platform included Canadian partners' financial security in terms of a permanent job, and existing knowledge of the Canadian system, rules and regulations, weather, culture, established friendships and a social network. In addition to being liable by the government to provide for the basic needs of their sponsored spouse, South Asian families have strong cultural values of family obligations as well as a belief system that a person only marries once in their lifetime and their partner is "fated" for them (Ibrahim et al., 1997) . Thus these sponsors were more likely to invest in their relationship and fulfill the obligations toward the participants.

The sponsors' family members already living in Canada also played an important role in contributing to the established platform for the participants. One reason for such assistance was the South Asian cultural value of interdependence among family members (Ibrahim et al., 1997). Research shows that South Asians transport the value of interdependence among family members, collectivism, and strong family connections to the Canadian context (Berry et al., 2006; Kwak & Berry, 2001). So the family members provided invaluable assistance and resourceful information about Canadian social programs, finding housing, job opportunities, navigation assistance, and emotional support to the participants after they arrived here. This established platform was reported to be very beneficial by the participants, which was key to their successful adjustment and integration.

On the other hand, there were two participants who experienced more challenges and difficulties adjusting to the new host society as a result of the missing platform. Sajid's sponsor was a newcomer herself because she went back to Pakistan after filing the sponsorship application, and was not able to provide him with integration support. For the second participant, her Canadian husband did not allow her to take advantage of his established platform and restricted her access to go out and learn about the host society leading to depression, negative thoughts, loneliness, and difficulty moving around the society. This is consistent with Merali's (2009) findings where Canadian marriage partners who imposed barriers to allowing their female spouses to interact with and learn about the new culture and societal systems had significant difficulties adjusting and adapting to the host society.

In addition to providing a solid social, financial, and emotional base for sponsored persons, the sponsors and family members served as navigation aids for Canadian societal systems for the newcomer husbands and wives. Navigation assistance is needed because societal systems such as transportation, educational, health care, and justice systems operate very differently in South Asia than in Canada. Learning these societal systems was critical in order to integrate socially, resulting in independence of these participants to move around the host society (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2002).

The sponsors and family members then actively assisted newcomer spouses to learn these systems by showing them how everything worked here, how to take the bus, to drive, use the medical/healthcare system and services, go

shopping, and enrol the children in school. The navigation assistance provided aimed to promote independence of the participants so they could move around the host society and fulfill their household and social responsibilities. This is consistent with research showing that sponsored spouses often depended upon and needed assistance of their Canadian marriage partner and family members to learn about various Canadian societal systems that operated very differently from those in their home countries, in order to socially integrate (Akram, 2012; Merali, 2009).

In addition to serving as navigation aids, the sponsors and in-law family members also provided emotional support to these newcomer husbands and wives. This emotional support was seen to be very beneficial for coping with adjustment challenges the participants faced. Akram (2012) also stated that emotional support from Canadian marriage partners and family members is a big resource and a motivating factor for South Asian immigrants, especially when they are experiencing difficulties during the adjustment process. All five participants' sponsors and in-law family members were immigrants themselves and moved to Canada as early as twenty years ago. Since they also had gone through the adjustment and adaptation process, they could identify what newcomer spouses might be experiencing, and therefore were more keen to support the participants in every way possible.

Another reason for sponsors and family members being supportive to the participants in many of the cases was the cultural value of strong family obligations and connections within the family unit (Berry et al., 2006; Ibrahim et

al., 1997; Kwak & Berry, 2001). Overall, sponsors and family members played a vital role in providing support strategies, which was key to sponsored spouses' positive adjustment experiences and integration into the new host society.

## Self-Initiated Adaptation and Integration Strategies

In addition to receiving spousal and familial support, the self was very important in cross-cultural adaptation; all participants took active steps to gain independence they deeply desired in order to integrate and become participating members of the larger society. Learning and communicating in English was seen to be the most important and critical factor for successful adaptation in Canadian society. Since participants were not provided any government language programming, language barriers affected the opportunities they could have available, so they took active steps to learn the language by immersing themselves in it. They watched English TV programming, took English courses, and practiced communication with English speaking individuals in various social contexts.

After moving in the new host society, participants faced the need to interact with various societal systems such as transportation, health care, labour market, going shopping, getting official identification documents, and so on. These societal systems encouraged them to practice communication with English speaking individuals. During these interactions and conversations, they got the opportunity to test their English speaking and listening skills.

Consequently the constructive feedback they received from English speakers allowed them to learn and improve their language skills, understand the English accent, pronunciation, and meaning of words, and improve vocabulary,

fluency, and the ability to express themselves. This type of learning of English through direct exposure and experience has been found to be a very effective second language acquisition strategy in existing research (Hewagodage and O'Neill, 2010). Hewagodage and O'Neill (2010) reported that intensive practice of the second language results in cross-cultural understanding, enhancing the overall integration of newcomers.

Interacting within various social contexts gave participants self-confidence and in turn, motivated them to further learn about the host society. Understanding of English language led to removal of other barriers to integration such as being able to access the labor market, school, transportation, and health care system, apply for government identification documentation, and use the bank. This learning resulted in gaining independence and being able to move around the host society and fulfill their household and social responsibilities. Thus communication and gaining independence was essential to their social integration. Akram (2012) also stated that linguistic and social independence is important for South Asian sponsored individuals' daily functioning and adjustment. Development of a sense of independence becomes particularly important during cross-cultural adjustment (Scholte, 2000).

Additionally, participants were very flexible in terms of their career path choices. This flexibility allowed them to have a positive attitude and value all types of careers during their initial period of adjustment. Despite having higher education and vast work experience from their home countries, they valued even working in survival jobs because it provided them the opportunity to enter the

labour market, get economic stability, and learn about the new societal systems. Many also utilized their social network's support to enter the labour market.

The social network support also played an important role in facilitating economic and social adjustment of the participants. In Canada, the South Asian community is a recent immigrant group where each member has firsthand experience of going through the adjustment and adaptation process. The community is seen as an extended family where each member is expected to contribute and has responsibilities towards it (Ibrahim et al., 1997). So ethnic community members tend to play an important role in facilitating the integration of newcomer South Asians, such as by linking them to new jobs, finding housing and resources, and providing social, cultural, and financial support (Buchignani et al., 1985; Bauder, 2005; Tran et al., 2005). Thus the participants in this study were not only flexible in choosing their career paths, but also utilized their ethnic social network support, allowing them to cope with initial job acquisition and economic challenges.

In addition to gaining financial stability, participants built social capital from inside out - building friendships with people in their own ethnic social network followed by friendships with other fellow Canadians. Building social capital is mediated by language. Participants who experienced language barriers in English hesitated in communicating with members of the host society at first, and in order to gain knowledge about the societal systems, these newcomer spouses started building friendships in their own ethnic communities. The reason for initial affiliation with one’s own ethnic group is that it has been found to

provide "support and a sense of direction" to newcomers (Rawe, 2005, p. 12), and protect them from psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, and low self esteem since they can lean on and share their experiences with members of their own group (Reitz et al., 2009).

After spending some time with their own community members, these sponsored spouses had familiarized themselves with their new host society, and they started practicing and communicating with members of the larger society in various social settings such as workplace, at children's school during parent-teacher meetings, grocery shopping, using the public transportation system, going to the doctor's office and so on. During these conversations they exchanged and made meaning and were provided feedback about their communication by members of the host society (Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010). As the sponsored spouses improved their language abilities in these social contexts and gained self-confidence in their abilities to speak the new language, they started building relationships within the larger society as well. Past research also showed consistent results where immigrants communicated in a wide range of social settings in order to learn the language and build friendships with members of the larger society (Hewagodage & O'Neill, 2010).

Despite having different cultural values of collectivism compared to the individualistic nature of the host society, all five participants cherished that they had now integrated into the new host society; they maintained their own cultural values and embraced and adopted Canadian culture as well. This is consistent with previous research showing that South Asians are a group that prefers

biculturalism through maintenance of their own cultural heritage and traditions, and simultaneous participation in the surrounding Canadian society (Basran, 1993; Statistics Canada, 2001; Tran et al., 2005). Furthermore, although it seems counterintuitive, affiliation with one's own ethnic community can play an important role in facilitating integration of newcomers, if the overall ethnic community is well integrated in Canadian society (Reitz et al., 2009).

In order to adjust and integrate into the new society, participants kept a positive attitude, which was a coping mechanism especially during adjustment challenges. Akram (2012) stated that South Asian immigrants changed their thought processes from negative to positive, which helped them cope with settlement challenges and facilitated their adjustment. Social networking and seeing others going through similar situations has also been found to be a common coping mechanism during cross-cultural settlement and adjustment difficulties (Khan & Watson, 2005).

### Community Supports for Integration

In addition to spousal/familial and self-initiated adaptation strategies, participants also used places of worship and religious organizations for friendship and social network building. These relationships further supported them through the adjustment process. Community programs and organizations promoted independence and provided resourceful information. Previous research also has highlighted religious and community organization's roles in providing support, programming, and integrating new immigrants (Lanphier, 2003; Rawe, 2005). However, existing research included migrants entering Canada under various

immigration categories rather than solely focusing on immigrants from the Family Class.

Wang (2011) conducted research with South Asians in Vancouver and developed an information and resource directory specifically catering the needs of this migratory group, facilitating their settlement. He stated that family-sponsored individuals found community centers and religious organizations as key places to access information. This was true for the participants in this study, who utilized services like family resource centers and school-based programming to obtain information about child development, some settlement programs for career advisement, and religious/cultural organizations for support network building.

## South Asian Identity Development Model

The findings of this study suggest that by drawing on family and community supports and self-initiated integration strategies, the sponsored spouses went through different phases of adjustment and identity formation in Canada that are relatively consistent with the five stages of the South Asian Identity Development Model developed by Ibrahim et al. (1997), that was described in the initial chapters of this thesis. In the first Pre-encounter or Conformity stage, participants were proud of their ethnic identity, and were excited to start their new life with their Canadian spouse in a new country. Sobia, and Sajid specifically stated that they had high expectations when they arrived in Canada; they would get more independence, better job opportunities, and a successful life. As this honeymoon period wore off after some time when

participants saw the realities of life in the new host society, they entered the second, Dissonance stage.

In the Dissonance stage, they realized that there were certain barriers that had restricted their access from getting a house, job, enrolling in English courses, and difficulties navigating in the host society. These barriers included not being able to get a house because of lack of credit history, no available funding from the government for English courses, no references for jobs due to lack of Canadian experience or over qualifications barring the participants from entering even entry-level jobs.

After experiencing these difficulties, the participants moved to the Resistance and Immersion stage where they reverted to and started building friendships and utilizing the support of their own ethnic community. As stated above, ethnic community networks have been shown to provide initial adjustment support (i.e., job linking, housing, and socio-cultural support) to facilitate the integration and active participation of newcomers in Canada (Buchignani et al., 1985; Tran et al., 2005).

After securing relationships and connections within own ethnic group, participants entered the Introspection stage where the established social networks reinforced and secured their ethnic identity. In addition, community relationships also promoted positive elements of the larger society and the participants started to actively participate and adopt new Canadian cultural values. Saarah and Sobia specifically stated that they started to dress-up in pants and shirts rather than traditional female cultural dress while other participants expressed that they

valued punctuality and importance of time management in Canadian culture, and appreciated the facilities and benefits provided by the host society such as free health care, education, financial benefits, and security for themselves and their children. They also stated that Canadian fellows were also very courteous and helpful in general. Thus all participants recognized and appreciated Canadian cultural values and systems, and moved onto the final,Synergistic Articulation and Awareness stage of the South Asian Identity Development Model.

In the Synergistic Articulation and Awareness stage, participants further gained self-esteem by being able to communicate and interact with members of the larger society. They valued host society's multicultural ideology of being able to retain their own cultural heritage at the same time becoming participating members of the larger society. Wong and Tezli (in press) developed an integration index to measure social and cultural integration levels of immigrants in Canada drawing on key categories of information from the Ethnic Diversity Survey. These variables included voting, trusting fellow Canadians, and a sense of belongingness to Canada.

When reaching this last stage of adaptation in the identity development model, the participants in this study expressed having formed relationships with members of the host society and feeling they belonged to and fit into their surroundings, although this is not how they had felt upon their initial arrival in Canada. All participants showed a sense of belongingness to Canada by learning the new culture, changing their ways of life to adopt certain Canadian cultural values, and interacting with members of the larger society. Sajid summed this up

by saying "the way a country is, that's how I became as well". Thus all participants over time became active members of the dominant society, which is a key marker of successful integration.

## Implications

### Implications for Sponsored Spouses

The findings of this study suggest that English language learning played an important role in facilitating integration of sponsored spouses. South Asian sponsored spouses could benefit in their second language acquisition process if they actively immerse themselves in the use of English by consuming Canadian media, getting out into the community and interacting with English speakers, as the participants in this study did. A clear implication for education is that it appears that one of the effective ways of learning the new culture of the society besides just learning English is observational culture learning, so newcomer spouses should be encouraged to venture out to public places where there are people outside of their own cultural communities that they can observe to learn styles of dress, communication and interaction norms, cultural behaviors, lifestyles, and societal rules and regulations.

These areas of information can provide a critical context for both language learning and effective communication, and for overall socio-cultural integration. Participants in this study reported frequently people watching to gauge communication norms, ways of speaking and behaving, etc. This strategy is very congruent with immigrants' desire to move towards independence in the new society, as it involves self-instruction rather than only dependence on direct

language and cultural teachings. Therefore, it can empower newcomers to take responsibility for their own cultural and language learning.

Besides language learning, South Asian sponsored spouses in this study highlighted the importance of being able to drive in their attempt to strive for independence and their attempt to learn to navigate the host society and learn how Canadian societal systems work. Acquisition of driving skills appears to be a facilitating factor in immigrant integration from their disclosures, in the sense that it promotes exploration of the new society. Therefore, obtaining a driver's license should be considered an important step towards integration for newcomers. In addition, since many participants benefited from their social network support, they should be encouraged to go out and develop relationships with members of their own community, as well as build friendships with members of the larger society. These social networks can provide linkage to resources and opportunities, such as job opportunities, child care resources, etc.

**Implications for Canadian Sponsors**

A clear implication for sponsors is that they should promote independence in their husband or wife by teaching them everything about the host society so they can become participating members of the larger society. As stated above, displaying positive behavior and being supportive throughout the adaptation process was very helpful to sponsored spouses. The sponsors should behave positively and provide financial, social, and emotional support such as encouragement, hope, and lend a helping hand to ease adjustment and adaptation challenges. One of the most important findings of this study was that the most

helpful type of support that Canadian spouses can provide is the immigration preparation information that occurs before the foreign spouse even arrives in Canada. This information and education about Canadian ways, local weather, societal systems like health care, schooling, transportation, etc. becomes a critical springboard for the sponsored spouses cultural learning and integration after they come to Canada. Therefore, it should be mandatory for sponsors to provide immigration preparation prior to their spouses arrival in Canada, and the government should outline key areas of expected immigration preparation and information/education to be covered in the undertaking that Canadian spouses sign in the government contract to sponsor their foreign spouse.

**Implications for Government Policy**

Since the government will not provide any settlement agency connections and support systems to facilitate integration of sponsored spouses, they should include an information package along with the immigration documents about sponsored person's rights and obligations, the responsibilities of the sponsors for meeting their basic needs, and helping their integration. Sponsored persons can only receive government resources, programs, and social assistance if the sponsor has become unemployed or is unable to meet the basic needs of the sponsored person. In this case, the sponsor has to pay back the government the amount of financial assistance received by the sponsored person over time.

The government should also state the conditions of sponsorship breakdown so sponsored persons have more awareness of the agreement and undertaking by their sponsor in the information package. The sponsorship breaks

down in cases of abuse or neglect. In this case, the sponsored person is eligible to receive government funding and support as well (Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2011). Past research showed that South Asian sponsored spouses who had knowledge about their rights in Canada through the immigration documents they received felt empowerment because they were protected by the Government of Canada especially during cases of abuse or neglect (Merali, 2009).

In addition, the government should also provide a list of various cultural organizations, community/religious centers in each city with their contact information that sponsored individuals can access, to receive integration support once they arrive in Canada. These types of civil society organizations support Family Class immigrants, who are excluded from other types of government services. However, newcomers who are isolated or whose husbands or wives restrict their integration may not be able to find out about these resources, without having some information in advance of their arrival in the immigration documents provided to them, which should be given in their first languages in the foreign embassies.

As stated above, participants who received immigration preparation from their sponsors had easier adjustment and adaptation. Receiving immigration preparation results in a knowledge base about life in Canada, which reduces ambivalence about the new culture, and directly facilitates adjustment and adaptation. This preparation prior to arrival in Canada is very important for these newcomer sponsored spouses in the absence of governmental support systems

since they solely depend upon their Canadian spouses for adjustment and integration. Sponsored spouse's relationship with their Canadian marriage partner will determine whether or not they well-adjust into the new host society. The government of Canada should include a handbook or some resources or information package in the immigration documents explaining Canadian culture, customs, weather, and life in the new society in immigrants' first languages, in addition to expecting Canadian sponsors to directly provide education in these areas or attend a mandatory sponsor orientation about how to provide this pre-immigration preparation.

Another reason why it is important to include immigration preparation information in the immigration documents is that South Asian family-sponsored spouses are a very large migratory group; constituting 75 percent of the Family Class immigration category, or approximately 42,368 people annually (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012b). This group of sponsored spouses will make up a critical mass of participating citizens of the country, thus their effective integration is crucial. Government disseminated information could make up for any Canadian marriage partners who are not supportive of their sponsored spouses' integration in Canadian society after their arrival here, providing a safety net for these spouses who lack family preparation for immigration.

**Implications for Education**

Since sponsored spouses' adjustment and integration often depends on their Canadian partners and their behaviour, it is important to invest in sponsors by providing them with education, awareness, or workshops about the

responsibilities they have to fulfill and the rights of their newcomer husbands and wives. The Government of Canada should have a mandatory education session or orientation for sponsors to educate them on how to support their spouses' integration by providing advance immigration preparation before the sponsored person arrives in Canada  such as immigration and life in Canada, promoting independence, assisting them with learning the new language, culture, providing navigation assistance, and how Canadian societal systems work.

This education and awareness may result in positive behaviour toward their sponsored spouses. Immigration preparation and orientation sessions geared at educating sponsors about their duties and responsibilities and the rights of their newcomer husbands and wives would further enhance the linguistic, economic, and socio-cultural integration of these newcomers in the absence of governmental support.

**Implications for Civil Society Organizations**

Civil society organizations such as cultural community associations, religious centers such as mosques, and non-governmental organizations should have a list of free services and programs available for sponsored persons and their families. This list should be posted in a highly visible area on information/news boards in those centers in immigrants' first languages.

The cultural organizations should also have various cultural events, get-togethers or celebrations announcements that the sponsored spouses can attend, allowing them to meet other community members, share and learn from each other's experiences, and build relationships. There should also be some orientation

for the sponsored spouses in their first languages, informing them about job opportunities, making resumes, tips for entering the labor market, tips for how to better connect and build relations with other Canadians, etc.

## Study Limitations

This qualitative study was designed to explore the adjustment and adaptation strategies employed by sponsors/family members and South Asian sponsored spouses, and the role cultural community and religious organizations play in facilitating foreign marriage partners' integration and adaption in Canada. The limitation of this study was a small sample size including only five South Asian sponsored spouses. However, the participants were from the top source countries of South Asian immigration to Canada (India and Pakistan), included two of the top 3 religious groups represented within the South Asian community (Muslims and Hindus), and included both male and female foreign marriage partners with varying pre and post-migration experiences, educational backgrounds, and language proficiency levels. The findings generated from their experiences are intended for descriptive purposes rather than generalization as in all qualitative studies, to inform how other sponsored spouses may successfully adjust to the new society they are entering, and to illustrate the types of support they may require to do so from their families and community/religious organizations.

## Directions for Future Research

This study explored the adaptation strategies of sponsored spouses and their sponsors and family members' assistance with their integration into the new host society. Since Canadian marriage partners played a large role in facilitating sponsored spouse's adjustment and adaptation in Canada, future research could further investigate how sponsors assist their newcomer spouses to adjust and adapt to the Canadian society from sponsors' perspectives, and what kinds of information and resources assist them in fulfilling this role as the individuals who brought their husbands or wives to Canada from abroad. This study focused on sponsored spouses or foreign marriage partners' perceptions of how their Canadian marriage partners' helped them and how they helped themselves, rather than Canadian marriage partners' perspectives. Future research could also employ a larger and more culturally variable sample to deepen understanding of culturally-based practical adaptation strategies utilized by Family Class immigrants.

Future research could also explore men and women's experiences separately since their experiences are different and they may use differential practical strategies to adjust to and adapt to the host society. Past research has shown that women are more dependent upon social network support during the adjustment process compared to men (Sigad & Eisikovits, 2009). Exploring men and women's experiences separately may show gender differences in the use of practical adaptation strategies that could have implications for intervention or providing gender appropriate integration support.

Future research could also take an immigration class comparative approach where participants' access and lack of access to government resources and programming may affect their settlement and adaptation experiences and therefore their practical adaptation strategies may be different. This qualitative study was important because it explored how in the absence of governmental support, sponsored spouses use practical adaptation strategies on their own to adjust to their new host society.

## Conclusion

The Family Class category of Canada's immigration system enables citizens and permanent residents to sponsor family members from abroad to join them here, the majority of which are spouses, partners, and children from international unions (75%; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012b). Family-class sponsored spouses do not receive governmental support, consequently, these individuals face greater challenges adapting to the new society compared to other categories of immigrants (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2008).

This qualitative study explored spousal/familial strategies to facilitate adaptation and integration of South Asian sponsored spouses, including preparing newcomer spouses for immigration before their arrival in Canada, providing systems navigation assistance, promoting understanding of Canadian societal systems, and providing financial and emotional support throughout the adjustment process. The self-initiated practical adaptation strategies of South Asian sponsored spouses were also explored, and these included English language immersion, being resourceful by trying new avenues for employment and building

social capital, exploring one's options, observational culture learning, and development of ethnic and non-ethnic social networks to learn and adjust in the host society. Striving for independence and keeping a positive attitude also facilitated their adjustment and adaptation. External resources for integration included community programs and agencies that provided education, promoted independence, and career advice to newcomers. Religious organizations also allowed connections with ethnic social networks and resource information. The findings from this research can be used by various cultural and community organizations to provide information to help South Asians sponsored spouses to adjust to Canadian society. It can also inform the strategies that Canadian spouses and South Asian sponsored spouses employ to facilitate their family member's integration or their own integration, respectively.

## REFERENCES


Ahmad, F., Driver, N., McNally, J. M., Stewart, E. D. (2009). Why doesn't she seek help for partner abuse? An exploratory study with South Asian immigrant women. *Social Science and Medicine, 69,* 613-622.

Akram, S. (2012). *A qualitative study of the process of acculturation and coping for South Asian Muslim immigrants living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto, Toronto.

Avni, E. A. (2012). *Skilled Worker Immigrants' Pre-Migration Occupation Re-Entry Experiences in Canada* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Banting, G. K. (2010). Is there a progressive's dilemma in Canada? Immigration, multiculturalism and the welfare State. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 43*(4), 797-820.

Basran, S. G. (1993). Indo-Canadian families historical constraints and contemporary contradictions. *Journal of Comparative Studies, 24*(3), 339-352.

Bauder, H. (2005). Habitus, rules of the labour market and employment strategies of immigrants in Vancouver. *Social and Cultural Geography, 6*(1), 81-97.

Beck, C. T. (1993). Qualitative research: the evaluation of its credibility, fittingness, and auditability. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 15*, 263-266.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Contexts of acculturation. In D. L. Sam, & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.

Berry, W. J., Phinney, S. J., Sam, L. D., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 55*(3), 303-332.

Bricker, H., & Rosen, N. (2010). What's the difference between refugees and other immigrants, and how are those differences reflected in policy and practice in the U.S.? Retrieved from http://www.immigrantconnect.org/?p=10460

Buchignani, N., Indra, M. D., & Srivastiva, R. (1985). *Continuous journey: A social history of South Asians in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Burgoyne, U., & Hull, O. (2007). *Classroom management strategies to address the needs of Sudanese refugee learners: Advice to teachers- Support document*. Retrieved from http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr5l06s1.pdf

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2010). *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Retrieved from http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2003). Facts and figures 2009 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents. Retrieved from http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2010/cic/Ci1-8-2003-eng.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2007). Annual report to parliament on immigration 2007. Retrieved from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/immigration2007_e.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010). Facts and figures 2009 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2009/permanent/08.asp

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2011a). Sponsoring your family. Retrieved from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/sponsor/index.asp

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011b). Annual report to parliament on immigration 2011. Retrieved from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/annual-report-2011.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012a). Facts and figures 2011 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents. Retrieved June 5, 2013: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2011.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012b). Annual report to parliament on immigration 2012. Retrieved from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/annual-report-2012.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012c). Spouses and partners: Findings from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB). Retrieved on October 23, 2013, from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/imdb/SPF_3.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013a). Determine your eligibility – Federal skilled workers. Retrieved on October 23, 2013 from: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who.asp

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013b). Skilled workers and professionals: Who can apply—Six selection factors and pass mark. http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-factors.asp

Chui, T., Tran, K., & Maheux, H. (2007). *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census.* Retrieved August 15, 2011, from: http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/index-eng.cfm

Corrigan, E. (2006). Refugees in Canada. *ImmQuest, 2*(9), 8-10.

Department of Justice Canada, 2011. Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (S.C. 2001, c. 27). Retrieved from http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/I-2.5/

Espenshade, T. J., & Fu, H. (1997). An analysis of English-language proficiency among US immigrants. *American Sociological Review*, *62*, 288-305.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Festinger, L. (1964). *Conflict, decision, and dissonance.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Furnham, A., & Alibhai, N. (1985). The friendship networks of foreign students: A replication and extension of the functional model. *International Journal of Psychology, 20,* 709-722.

Gee, J. P. (2004). *Situated language and learning: A critique of traditional schooling*. UK: Routledge.

George, U., Ramkissoon, S. (1998). Race, gender, and class: Interlocking oppressions in the lives of South Asian women in Canada**.** *Affilia, 13,* 102-119.

Ghosh, R. (1994). Multicultural policy and social integration: South Asian Canadian women. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 1*(1), 49-68.

Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration. (2011). *Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers* (NIH Publication No. 752510).

Halai, A. (2006). *Ethics in qualitative research: Issues and challenges.* EdQaul Working Paper no. 4. Bristol, UK: EdQual RPC.

Hewagodage, V., & O'Neill, S. (2010). A case study of isolated non English speaking background adult migrant women's experience learning English: A sociocultural approach to decoding household texts. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning, 6*6(1), 23-40.

Hooper, J., & Teresi, D. (1986). *The 3-Pound Universe*. Dell Publishing Co. Retrieved from http://www.human-memory.net/disorders_age.html3

Hou, F., & Beiser, M. (2006). Learning the language of a new country: A ten-year study of English acquisition by South-East Asian refugees in Canada. *International Migration, 44*(1), 135-165.

Husaini, Z. (2001). *Cultural dilemma and a plea for justice: Voices of Canadian ethnic women.* Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Intercultural Action Committee for the Advancement of Women.

Ibrahim, F., Ohnishi, H., Sandhu, D. S. (1997). Asian American identity development: A culture specific model for South Asian Americans. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 25,* 34-50.

Ingram, D. E. (1981). Australian second language proficiency ratings. In J. Read (Ed.), *Directions in language testing*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Johnston, H. (1979). *The voyage of the Komagata Maru. The Sikh challenge to Canada's colour bar.* New Dehli: Oxford University

Kanungo, R. (1992). South Asian contributions to Canadian society: Developing a research strategy. In R. Ghosh, & Rabi K (Eds.), *South Asian Canadians: Current Issues in the Politics of Culture* (pp. 167-75). Calgary/Delhi: Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute.

Khan, S., & Watson, C. J. (2005). The Canadian immigration experiences of Pakistani women: Dreams confront reality. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 18*(4), 307-317.

Knoblauch, H. (2005). Focused ethnography. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 6*(3), 1-14.

Kumar, N., & Srivastava, L. (2005). Immigration and arranged marriages. In G. Das (Ed.), *International arranged marriages* (pp. 82-112). Calgary, AB: Friesen Press.

Kuo, H., & Tsai, Y. (1986). Social networking, hardiness and immigrant's mental health. *Journal of health and Social Behaviour, 27*(2), 133-149.

Kwak, K., & Berry, J.W. (2001). Generational differences in acculturation among Asian families in Canada: A comparison of Vietnamese, Korean, and East-Indian groups. *International Journal of Psychology, 36*(3), 152-162.

Lamba, N. K., & Wilkinson, L. (1998). Legislated inequality: The uneven consequences of immigration policy on the economic and social integration of immigrants in Canada. In A. Richardson (Ed.), *International multiculturalism: Preparing together for the 21st century.* Edmonton, AB: Kanata Learning.

Lanphier, M. (2003). Sponsorship: Organizational, sponsor, and refugee perspectives. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 4*(spring), 237-256.

Larson, M. L. (1984). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Lay, C., & Nguyen, T. (1998). The role of acculturation-related and acculturation non-specific hassles: Vietnamese-Canadian students and psychological distress. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science, 30,* 172–181.

Mays, N. & Pope, C. (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Assessing quality in qualitative research. *BMJ, 320,* 50-52.

McElroy, A. T., Davis, A., Hunt, C., Dadul, J., Stanba, T., & Larson, C. (2011). Navigating a way forward: using focused ethnography and community readiness to study disability issues in Ladakh, India. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 33*(1), 17-27.

Merali, N. (2008). Rights-based education for South Asian sponsored wives in international arranged marriages. *Interchange*, *39*(2), 205-220.

Merali, N. (2009). Experiences of South Asian brides entering Canada after recent changes to family sponsorship policies. *Violence Against Women, 15,* 321-339.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (1st Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mesch, G.S. (2003). Language proficiency among new immigrants: The role of human capital and societal conditions. The case of immigrants from the FSU in Israel. *Sociological Perspectives, 46*(1), 41-58.

Mooney, N. (2006). Aspiration, reunification and gender transformation in Jat Sikh marriages from India to Canada. *Global Networks 6*(4), 389-403.

Murphy, E., Dingwall, R., Greatbatch, D., Parker, S., & Watson, P. (1998). Qualitative research methods in health technology assessment: A review of the literature. *Health and Technology Assessment, 2*(16), 1-274.

Naidoo, C. J. (2003). South Asian Canadian women: A contemporary portrait. *Psychology Developing Societies, 15,* 51-67.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2002). Retrieved from http://www.oecdilibrary.org/docserver/download/fulltext/1003141e.pdf? xpires=1321298331&idaccname=ocid177104&checksum=AF8BC6E00FBC4C3AA3B26BEE2FE76D02

Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 695-705.

Ostrovsky, Y. (2008). *Earnings Inequality and Earnings Instability of Immigrants in Canada.* Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2008309-eng.pdf

Pernice, R. (1994). Methodological issues in research with refugees and immigrants. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 25*(3), 207-213.

Phythian, K., Walters, D., & Anisef, P. (2009). Entry class and the early employment experience of immigrants in Canada. *Canadian Studies in Population, 36*(3-4), 363-382.

Rawe, S. (2005). *The role of subaltern social service agencies in the process of acculturation* (master's thesis). Athabasca University, Athabasca.

Reitz, G. J., Banerjee, R., Phan, M., Thompson, J. (2009). Race, religion, and the social integration of new immigrant minorities in Canada. *International Migration Review, 43*(4), 695–726.

Richards, L., & Morse, M. J. (2007). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. USA: Sage.

Roper, M. J., & Shapira, J. (2000). *Ethnography in nursing research.* USA: Sage.

Schellenberg, G., & Maheux, H. (2008). Immigrants' perspectives on their first four years in Canada: Highlights from three waves of the longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada. Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2007000/9627-eng.htm#4

Scholte, A. (2000). *Globalization: A critical introduction.* New York & London: Palgrave.

Sheel, R. (2005). Marriage, money and gender: A case study of the migrant Indian community in Canada. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies,12* (2-3), 335-356.

Sigad, L., & Eisikovits, R. (2009). Migration, motherhood, marriage: Cross-cultural adaptation of North American immigrant mothers in Israel. *International Migration, 47*(1), 63-99.

Simich, L., Beiser, M., Stewart, M., & Mwakarimba, E. (2005). Providing social support for immigrants and refugees in Canada: Challenges and directions. *Journal of Immigrant Health, 7*(4), 259-268. doi: 10.1007/s10903-005-5123-1

Skelton, T., & Allen, T. (Eds). (1999). *Culture and global change*. London: Routledge.

Somerville, K., & Walsworth, S. (2009). Vulnerabilities of highly-skilled immigrants in Canada and the United States. *American Review of Canadian Studies, 39*(2), 147-161.

Statistics Canada (2001). *The South Asian community of Canada.* Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-621-x/89-621-x2007006-eng.pdf

Statistics Canada (2003). *Ethnic diversity survey: Portrait of a multicultural society.* Retrieved from: http://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/89-593-X/89-593-XIE2003001.pdf

Statistics Canada (2006). *Canada's ethnocultural mosaic.* Retrieved August 15, 2011, from: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/english/census06/analysis/ethnicorigin/pdf/97-562-XIE2006001.pdf

Statistics Canada (2009). *Tables by subject: Population estimates and projections.* Retrieved August 15, 2011, from: http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo24a-eng.htm.

Suarez-Orozco, C. & Suarez-Orozco, M. M. (2002).*Children of immigration.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tiwari, K. S., Wang, J. (2008). Ethnic differences in mental health service use among White, Chinese, South Asian and South East Asian populations living in Canada. *Social Psychiatry* and *Psychiatric Epidemiology, 43,* 866-871.

Tran, K., Kaddatz, J., Allard, P. (2005). South Asians in Canada: Unity through diversity. *Canadian Social Trends, 78,* 20-25. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/kits-trousses/pdf/social/edu04_0128a-eng.pdf

Verbeeten, D. (2007). The past and future of immigration to Canada. *International Migration and Integration, 8,* 1-10.

Wakil, P., Siddique, M. C., & Wakil, A. (1981). Between two cultures: A study in socialization of children of immigrants. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 43* (4),929-940.

Walsh, S. D., & Horenczyk, G. (2001). Gendered patterns of experience in social and cultural transition: the case of English-speaking immigrants in Israel. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, *45*(7), 501–529.

Wang, Y. (2011). *Information and settlement: Developing an information and resources directory for the South Asian immigrant community in Vancouver* (master's thesis). The University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1994). Acculturation strategies, psychological adjustment, and socioculutral competence during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 18*(3), 329-343.

Ward, C., & Styles, I. (2003). Lost and found: Reinvention of the self following migration. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, 5*, 349-367.

Wong, L., & Tezli, A. (in press). Measuring social, cultural, and civic integration in Canada: The creation and application of an index. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*.

Wood, M. J., & Ross-Kerr, J. C. (2011). Focused ethnography. In *Basic steps in planning nursing research from question to proposal* (pp. 310-327). Canada: Jones & Bartlett.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Study Description/Advertisement

STUDY OF FAMILY-SPONSORED IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES ADAPTING TO LIFE IN CANADA


TAOOZ YOUSAF
6-102 EDUCATION NORTH
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
TAOOZ@UALBERTA.CA
(780) 802-4011

DR. NOORFARAH MERALI
6-102 EDUCATION NORTH
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
NOORFARAH.MERALI@UALBERTA.CA
(780) 492-1158


Taooz Yousaf, a Masters student at the University of Alberta working under the supervision of Dr. Noorfarah Merali, wants to study what challenges newcomer husbands or wives from South Asia face when they move to Canada. She wants to know about how they overcome these challenges, and what kind of support systems help them adjust to the new society.

For this study, Taooz is looking for people who got married in South Asia and then were sponsored by their marriage partners to come to Canada.

You can take part in this study if you:

- Are from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka
- Got married in your home country to someone who was already living in Canada
- Your husband or wife sponsored you to come to Canada and you are still married to him or her
- Have lived in Canada from 2 to 5 years

Taking part in the study will only take a few hours of your time. You will meet alone with Taooz and she will ask you about your experience of moving to Canada and the challenges you faced. She will also ask you about what you did to help yourself overcome these challenges, what your husband or wife did to help you, and what role your religious or cultural community played in helping you to integrate here. You can be interviewed in your own language if you want. You will get $30 to take part in this research.

This research will help Taooz to create pamphlets so people can find information about the kinds of resources and tips they can use to help them adjust to life in Canada. The research results will also help community and cultural agencies who work with immigrants, to help them know what to do to make newcomers have a better experience getting settled into Canadian society.

If you would like to take part in this study, please write your name and phone number down, and Taooz will phone you to arrange a time to meet with you.

SIGN-UP SHEET

| Name | Phone Number |
| --- | --- |
| | |

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

STUDY OF FAMILY-SPONSORED IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES
ADAPTING TO LIFE IN CANADA


TAOOZ YOUSAF
6-102 EDUCATION NORTH
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
TAOOZ@UALBERTA.CA
(780) 802-4011

DR. NOORFARAH MERALI
6-102 EDUCATION NORTH
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5
NOORFARAH.MERALI@UALBERTA.CA
(780) 492-1158


South Asians, who get married to a person living in Canada, have to be sponsored by their partner to come to Canada. For her thesis, Taooz Yousaf, a Masters student at the University of Alberta working under the supervision of Dr. Noorfarah Merali, wants to study what challenges newcomer husbands or wives from South Asia face when they move to Canada. She wants to know about how they overcome these challenges, and what kind of support systems help them adjust to the new society.

This research will help Taooz to create pamphlets so people can easily find information about the kinds of resources and tips they can use to help them adjust in Canada. The research results will also help community and cultural agencies that work with immigrants know what to do to make newcomers have a better experience getting settled into Canadian society.

By signing this form, I agree to take part in the study Taooz is doing.

I will talk with Taooz by myself. I can talk to her in English, Urdu, Hindi, or Punjabi.

The meeting will take 1 to 2 hours and will happen at a time and place that is best for me. I will be asked to talk about my expectations before coming to Canada and after landing, and my experience of learning the English language, going to school, looking for work, and learning about Canadian culture and society from the time I got here until now. I will be asked about the challenges I faced, and how I overcame those challenges. I will also be asked about what my husband or wife did to help me deal with the challenges and what role my cultural or religious community played in making life in Canada better for me. I understand that if I have a lot to talk about, we may meet again for the same amount of time whenever it is best for me.

I know that my talks with Taooz will be tape-recorded. My real name will not be used on the tape because she will use a made-up name for me.

I know that after our talk(s), Taooz will type out what we talked about from the tape and will put the made-up name on the typed pages so nobody knows it is what I said. We will meet again for about one to two hours so she can tell me what she understands from our meeting and I can tell her if I see things the same way or differently. The tape of my voice will be put onto Taooz's computer with a password, so no one else can hear the voice file except Taooz. The typed notes from the meeting will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Taooz's office at the University. No one will have the cabinet key except Taooz and no one else will have access to my information throughout the study except Taooz.

After the study is finished, Taooz will put the information together from all the people who took part in this study and make presentations or write articles about what has helped newcomers who have been sponsored by their marriage partners to adjust to life in Canada. Some of my words may be used in these presentations or articles, but nobody will know that the words are mine because she will not use my real name with my words. If after our talks are over, I decide that I don't want my words to be used in the study, I can let Taooz know within a two month period, and she will respect my wishes.

Once the information for all the people in the study is put together and Taooz defends her master's thesis, my voice file from our talks will be destroyed, and only the written notes with a made-up name will be kept for 5 years in accordance with research guidelines.

If talking about my experiences in Canada makes me feel stressed or worried, I know I can get help if I tell Taooz what is happening.

I understand that I will receive $30.00 for being in this study.

I know that it is up to me whether or not I choose to take part in this study. Even if I sign this form, I can still stop taking part in this study at any time without any questions or problems.

What I say to Taooz will not affect my immigration status or stay in Canada because this study is not being done by the government and what I say will not be shared with the government.

I understand that if I have any questions or concerns, or want to know more about this study, I can call Taooz at (780) 802-4011 or send her an email at taooz@ualberta.ca. I can also call her supervisor, Dr. Noorfarah Merali, at University of Alberta at (780) 492-1158.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta that makes sure people taking part in a study are treated properly. If I have any questions about how this study is being done or my rights as a person taking part in it, I can contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-0459.

Name of Person Taking Part (please print)

_____

Signature _____ Date_____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____