NOTE TO USERS

MEANING-MAKING FOR SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA

by

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Abstract

My doctoral dissertation is a study in exploring ways of making LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) curriculum more responsive to the needs of South Asian immigrant women in Canada. As a former LINC teacher, I had found the LINC curriculum deficient because I felt that (a) it did not acknowledge the rich cultural background of the learners and (b) it did not address the emergent needs of the immigrants in the new country. I therefore hypothesized that one of the reasons that South Asian immigrant women dropped out of LINC classes despite the various incentives offered by the government was these women's inability to relate to the curriculum being offered. In my view, a curriculum based on their everyday needs and their cultural demands would prove beneficial for the women settling in Canada and coming to terms with their identity—an identity influenced by the discourses of patriarchy, racism, sexism and stereotypes. In keeping with the humanistic tradition, I locate the origin of knowledge within the learner himself/herself. Dewey believed that "...education in order to accomplish its end both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience—which is always the actual life experience of some individual" (1938, p.113). Hence, my approach to understanding South Asian women's lives was to focus on their immigration experiences and I used narrative inquiry for the purpose.

The stories of Razia, Saima and Rukhsana—my participants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, respectively—epitomized the challenges immigrants face in Canada. They revealed details of their personal and professional life that require a new curriculum forum for helping them become acculturated in the Canadian society. Using Connelly and Clandinin's work (1988) on personal practical knowledge, I suggest the need to initiate self study as a way of enhancing the critical awareness in South Asian immigrant women to overcome the challenges in their lives and question their redundant cultural assumptions. I have proposed a postmodern, multidimensional narrative curriculum to address issues around their identity in Canada by designing a replicable, tentative course outline for a narrative approach to curriculum in LINC.

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I am extremely grateful to Professor Jack Quarter, the Associate Chair of my Department and a member of my committee who supported me unconditionally in my research venture. Not only did he offer me his expert advice on my work as a teacher but was gracious enough to find extra time to explore options with me when I was desperately looking for a direction in my research.

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and whenever I could get an appointment with him. I would always cherish his advice and viewpoints that opened up new vistas for me.

My special thanks to Professor Alister Cummings who I approached out of the blue with queries about his research in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada—a Federal Program). He not only provided me with expert views about LINC but also shared a lot of resources with me, helping me gain a deeper insight into the program.

I am very thankful to my research participants: Razia, Rukhsana and Saima, who despite the vicissitudes in their lives were able to share them with me. I appreciate the new meanings they gave to my ideas and views on life. I have acquired courage through some kind of osmosis by sharing their experiences. I am also very grateful to my counselor friend Pat (a pseudonym) who made the whole process of data collection possible by acting as a liaison between me and the participants. Her congeniality was a cementing bond among us.

I owe immense thanks to the NICs group (Narrative Inquiry Community seminars), presided over by Professor Connelly, because the fruitful discussions clarified most of my concepts about Narrative inquiry.

I feel most gratified to my mother, also a former English teacher, who is the source of most of my family stories in the dissertation and who has been a constant guide and mentor for me throughout my life. I look up to her for her achievements as an academic, a mother, a wife and a grandmother. She was able to accomplish what most women in South Asian cultures cannot. Her life is the saga that inspired this dissertation.

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Introduction

The purpose of my research was to look for themes in the life stories of recent South Asian immigrant women in Canada, which would be incorporated in the current LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) curriculum so that by addressing those themes these women could become more socially and intellectually integrated in the Canadian society.

Immigration is an ongoing process and an integral part of the Canadian socioeconomic milieu. Well over 200,000 people immigrate to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1998) every year for reasons as varied as political/religious persecution and war/famine in their home country, or even to look for better living conditions. Being a recent immigrant myself, I am aware of the fact that immigration is a traumatic experience, to say the least, and more so for the people who have left their countries to settle in a foreign land under difficult circumstances. Upon arrival, highly educated people with years of work experience behind them discover to their disappointment that their chances of getting suitable jobs in their professions are extremely scarce since they do not possess Canadian qualifications and Canadian experience. Talking to some of the women participants in LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) where I taught for a year, I was told that they had joined the programs, despite acute opposition from their in-laws and even their husbands, only because these women saw learning English and subsequently getting a job as the road to financial independence. They talked at length about the difficulty of making ends meet, the high cost of living in Toronto, the dearth of jobs that their husbands were trained for, and the problems in obtaining accreditation.

Women I met as an interpreter of Urdu for abused women in Toronto voiced similar concerns. These women often excused the abusive behaviour of their spouses because of the constrained financial circumstances in Toronto, and frustrations due to difficult job conditions. Some abused women found their way to LINC programs in the hope of acquiring job skills which would allow them to enter the job market and relieve the financial burden of their husbands.

Of the various services provided by the Canadian government for the settlement of recent immigrants in the country, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program is by far the most significant for me as an ESL teacher. LINC is a federally funded language program aimed at making immigrants proficient in the official language.

Having taught at a LINC school for a year, I found that despite every possible incentive offered by the government, for instance, free childcare, transport allowance, free counseling services, and subsidized educational trips, etc., LINC classes were often plagued by a high dropout rate and a consequent closure of classes. The sorry state of affairs not only jeopardized the jobs of recently recruited teachers, who were considered expendable, but also reflected badly on the school administration itself which had to justify its position to the board of directors in order to ensure future funding of the program.

Most South Asian immigrant homemakers in Canada bear a double hardship. Dealing with abusive husbands is one hardship. The second is when, due to their hesitant command of English, the mothers need their children to help with interpretation in everyday affairs, making the children somehow in-charge of the situation, which further

undermines the mothers' self-esteem. This role reversal exacerbates the already oppressed situation of these homemakers.

Despite various difficulties, these women came to attend the LINC classes but soon dropped out. My hypothesis is that one of the reasons (though not the only one) of the high dropout rate in LINC was these women's inability to relate to the curriculum being offered. As a teacher in LINC I felt that the curriculum was very functionally oriented. It presented language structures in artificially contrived Eurocentric contexts while giving the learner formulaic language to use in everyday dealings. The curriculum could not be adequately related to the background of the multicultural student population. In my view, it implicitly treated the students' culture as dysfunctional by not addressing the wealth of culture and experience these women possessed.

Effective pedagogical principles, I believe, can be applied just as effectively to adult education as to the education of children. When teaching, either formally in classroom or informally at home, context should be given precedence over content. Building current knowledge on the learners' previous experience or "touching base" with the learner is considered a basic premise for effective learning to take place (Kennedy & Mitchell, 1980, p. 11). A body of knowledge encompassed in a curriculum unit, when it is not connected to the learner's prior experience or life, tends to stand isolated in the learner's short term memory with no integrated threads to hold it in the learner's conceptual repertoire for future retrieval and cognitive development. Hence, such knowledge is of little use to the learner in real contexts. In my view, the existing LINC curriculum designed by the Catholic District School Board falls short of the requirements of recent immigrants in Canada because:

1. By virtue of its focus on a monolithic Eurocentric culture, it does not take into account the cultural diversity in real life situations and it does not seek to build new knowledge on the previous experience of the learners; and
2. It does not address all the educational needs of the immigrants. The curriculum thus appears rather stilted, artificial, sterile, and isolated.

In other words, the curriculum, while partially dealing with the *cognitive* domain—concepts, generalization and facts, and the domain of *abilities*—incorporating skills of communication and inquiry, completely neglects the *affective* domain within the cultural component (Babin, 1980, p. 59). The immigrant culture and experience in effect become the "null curriculum" (Eisner 1985) in an otherwise explicit, functionally-oriented curriculum whose implicit aim is to Westernize the immigrant psyche.

Immigrant Women as Stakeholders in LINC Curriculum.

Since the entire exercise of educating immigrants in the dominant language is aimed at a potential growth and change in the immigrants' perception conducive to their integration in the Canadian society, it seems reasonable to consider immigrants as the major stakeholders in the curriculum-making process. Michalski (1980, p. 68) states that curriculum decision-making can be divided into four levels:

1. *Theoretical/Ideological:* The suggestions and ideas of researchers and theoreticians in schools of graduate education and proponents of particular philosophies.
2. *Societal:* the decisions made by the ministry of education and reflected in their policies.
3. *Institutional:* the decisions made at the board, school and system level.

4. *Instructional:* the decisions, both short and long term made by the classroom teacher.

The first three levels, according to Michalski, involve an in-depth understanding of education and "a sophisticated level of knowledge." I concur with her stratification and believe that decisions made at the first level eventually perforate to the lower levels. Thus, if I make a plausible case in my research to make immigrants major decision makers in LINC curriculum, there is a possibility that in the long run, societal, institutional and instructional decisions with regards to curriculum design might be affected by my research findings.

In my Master's thesis (Ali, 1993), *Gender and Sexism in Urdu,* I researched the patriarchal linguistic and cultural norms in South Asia used to denigrate women. I did an analysis of Urdu language to show that the morphological inflections at the end of nouns (and verbs) indicated the gender of the things and people, as Urdu is a highly sexist language which accords gender even to inanimate objects. Through the analysis I demonstrated how the feminine inflections were also used to denote (a) abstract nouns (b) diminutives and (c) watered-down versions of the originals, while the words with masculine inflections were used for things that were considered (a) important (b) big in size and (c) concrete or tangible.

For my doctoral research, I am building on my previous research knowledge to emphasize the need for South Asian homemakers in Canada to acquire education and explore options in life. Being a student of Sociolinguistics and Semantics, I am acutely aware of the fact that women are marginalized not only because of their gender, which is the most important factor in their marginalization, but also on account of their culture and

ethnicity. This is to say that South Asian women are oppressed both at the *micro* level by their patriarchal cultural norms and at the *macro* level by the corporate Western world which looks at them as nothing more than cheap labour to be exploited for material gains (Enloe & Chapkis, 1983).

My purpose for exploring new themes for inclusion in the curriculum for immigrant Asian women is to take the ESL curriculum a step further. Connelly and Clandinin (1995) conceive of education in terms of *cultivation, awakening* and *transformation.* While cultivation is the formal and informal learning, it is the awakening and transformation which would be the most relevant outcomes of interviews with the women in my thesis research. According to Connelly and Clandinin, "awakening is found in the romance of becoming aware of the possibility of seeing oneself and the world in new ways: the transformation is found in the process and outcome of falling into living new ways of seeing" (1995, p. 82). The curriculum which would evolve out of their narratives would awaken these women to new possibilities of liberating their mind and spirit from the restrictive patriarchal norms. Transformation would occur when they engage in a practical implementation of the new curriculum in order to live the change. A supplementary curriculum, based on the themes relevant to the lives of South Asian women, would, it is hoped, prove to be beneficial for these women who could revisit their situation and search for means to ameliorate it. While not claiming that education is an emancipatory force in itself, I believe that in the face of adversity, education enables one to view available options more objectively and, if possible, to make educated choices to improve one's situation

While the stories of my research participants are not templates for the experiences of all South Asian women, I intend to explore these women's identity formation in the Canadian context. For Connelly and Clandinin,

> Identity is a storied life composition, a story to live by. Stories to live by are shaped in places, and lived in places. They live in actions, in relationship with others, in language, including silences, in gaps and vacancies, in continuities and discontinuities. (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, pp. 161–162; see also Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988.)

I believe that the cultural baggage that immigrants bring from their home countries impedes their successful integration in Canada since it is at odds with the Western corporate culture. Embedded in the South Asian culture are the discourses of patriarchy and the consequent denial of basic human rights to women. The Western Eurocentric culture, the mainstream culture in North America, experiences a trajectory of patriarchal norms in the shape of the prevalent corporate culture. Both the macro level and the micro level exploitation of women impinges upon their identity formation.

An immigrant woman's identity, in my opinion, is always in the making-- never fixed, being under a multifaceted scrutiny of race, gender, ethnicity, and social class. In my research, I have attempted to explore with these women the important ontological questions which would bear upon the epistemological considerations in the curriculum that evolves out of their narratives. Experiences are narratively constructed and narratively lived, therefore I have used narrative inquiry as my method of research. My stories, as well as those of my research participants, are told as lived on the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

> The metaphor of a three-dimensional space provides a way to attend to the inner emotions, to the aesthetic reactions woven across time, place and events. It is a metaphor that allows us as researchers, to understand… other's life compositions as filled with artistic and aesthetic dimensions. (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, pp. 161 – 162; see also Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

Figuratively speaking, my intention in my research was to explore South Asian women's art of living and negotiating their identities on a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as lived in Canada as well as in their home countries.

My Perception of the Study

I see this research study as reflecting the evolution of my own thinking. Different chapters were written at different times, corresponding to the broadening of my vision with regards to how I saw the situation of immigrant women in Canada. The contextualization of immigrant women as it evolved in the thesis writing process was from their sociolinguistic location in their home country to their positionality in the Canadian context. I look at it as a narrative shifting of boundaries that came into being as I struggled to delineate their generic identities interwoven with my location in Canada as a researcher/a South Asian woman/a teacher/a mother/a daughter/a wife, having lived in different countries of the world, and carrying the same cultural baggage that my research participants in Canada carry. Hence, for me, this research was an exercise in the articulation of my own definitions of identity as perceived through a narrative, sociolinguistic, semantic, and educational lens, influenced by the various looking glasses I have used throughout my life as a student of sociolinguistics, semantics and narrative. The women's sociolinguistic location determined the derogatory semantics attached to

them in their language (Ali, 1993), which, in turn, impinged upon their (subordinate) position in societies pervaded by patriarchy both in their home countries and in Canada.

I also see the thesis writing process as my own mental metamorphosis. All through the four years in the doctoral program, I was living out my thesis as I was writing it. It was, to me, a testimony of how my ideas about the importance of education as a catalyst in the lives of women interacted with my life as I lived it, and how these ideas stood the test of time, how education (if at all) transformed my interpretation of my everyday experiences which, in turn, tended to affect my future decisions. In other words, during my research, I was inadvertently putting to the test my idea of education being an emancipatory force in the lives of women. On a more personal level, the whole experience proved to be an extremely cathartic one for me. Through my stories I was able to confront the ghosts that had haunted me throughout my life. I was also able to gather the strength and will to face my life squarely, cultural considerations notwithstanding. The narrative approach to my dissertation writing thus had a therapeutic effect on me; it purged all my fears of making public what I had considered very private. Presenting my chronicle in class during a Narrative course and receiving very encouraging letters from my classmates accorded a certain validation to my views on life—something, perhaps, that I would never have been able to get, had I not chosen the personal narrative approach to curriculum design.

The thesis seems to have developed an undulating structure; from the larger to the smaller, from the macro to micro, from the general situation of South Asian woman to the specific, from the social to the personal, from the personal to the educational, and then again to the social aspects as influenced by education. At the same time, it is like a

multilayered saga with my stories and flashbacks interwoven with the stories of my research participants. Discursive as it may look, it is nevertheless aimed at being a narrative study, for educational purposes, of the experiences of the South Asian immigrant women in Canada.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1: South Asians in Canada and the Immigrant Experience.

Chapter 1 attempts to capture the situation of South Asian immigrants in Canada; the challenges they face, the frustrations and the difficulties that make up the 'immigrant experience'. Being a recent immigrant, I have located myself among them. Like other South Asian immigrants, I have a family history and culture that I brought with me to Canada and which continues to influence my life experiences here.

This chapter, in particular, cites reasons why South Asian immigrant women in Canada should acquire education and the reasons why I myself sought education. This chapter thus provides a broad-based context for what is to follow in the research study. It gives the reader a sociolinguistic background of South Asian women while emphasizing the importance of this sociolinguistic and cultural baggage in the identity formation and transformation of South Asians in Canada. It also delineates the sociological theories around the identity formation of women and, by the same token, traces my identity formation and transformation as a South Asian woman. In other words, it implicitly deals with the discourses that influenced my upbringing in the 70's as a young South Asian woman living in a foreign land (Africa) and, by resonance, anticipates the discovery of the discourses (or themes) that shape the identity of South Asian women in Canada in the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 2: Methodology.

In *Methodology* I give a rationale for choosing narrative inquiry as my mode of inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) inspired by Dewey (1938) believe that all educational experience must be studied narratively and that by understanding our own narratives we evolve a better understanding of our students' curriculum. Hence, I argue the suitability of narrative inquiry to my research through which I intend to uncover the inner curriculum of South Asian women through their narratives.

The importance of our past experiences for curricular purposes is illustrated by citing the various curricular discourses that legitimate the use of stories in qualitative research. The Methodology chapter also sets forth the basic groundwork for a narrative approach to research based on the work of Connelly and Clandinin.

I have tried to interweave my story and those of the women in my family with those of the immigrants as I discern some common thematic threads running through our lives. For instance, three major themes are:

1. Education as a means of intellectual, social and financial liberation
2. Teaching as a profession
3. Immigration

While I share certain commonalities with these immigrants, I try to look at possible limitations of my work by virtue of belonging to the same cultural background as my research participants. This chapter thus provides an entry point to the research study and leads into the next chapter entitled "The Curricular Foundations of my Research" which provides a theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 3: The Curricular Foundations of My Research.

In this chapter I prepare the groundwork for concluding that self-study and autobiography are viable means for understanding curriculum since the source of knowledge and meaning-making can be located within the learner himself/herself. The need to explore one's "inner curriculum" is emphasized and this notion is later developed in the last chapter to recommend the efficacy of self-reflection to develop critical awareness in South Asian immigrant women so that they can make meaning of their experiences in Canada. The chapter also locates my research study in the various epistemological theories regarding the acquisition of knowledge by women, as well as discussing a few current curricular discourses.

Chapter 4: Contextualizing South Asian Women in Their Home Culture.

As the title suggests, this chapter emphasizes the importance of a context in research as well as in real life. I attempt to root the identities of South Asian women in their sociolinguistic context in their home culture. I present sociolinguistic theories underlying women's position in a South Asian society interwoven with the stories of women in my family.

The theme of abuse and the place of literacy as a means of escape from abuse emerges poignantly in the chapter. My investment in studying the phenomenon of abuse and the subsequent acquisition of literacy to escape abuse is explored through my family stories in "the trilogy of abuse."

Chapter 5: An Old Wine in a New Bottle.

An Old Wine in a New Bottle carries the theme of abuse over to the Canadian context. As with the other South Asian cultural values, the negative aspects also become

transplanted onto the new Canadian soil. The services offered by the LINC agency where I conducted my research, to remedy the abusive situation of immigrant women are enumerated. In order to give a more comprehensive picture, in addition to citing the stories of a few employees in the Centre, the views of the Executive Director of the LINC agency and her suggestions for ways of improving the immigrant women's lot are also presented.

In addition, in this chapter I explore my link to the agency, not only as a former ESL teacher teaching in one of its locations, but also as a South Asian woman identifying with women in difficult situations from the same cultural background and looking for answers to my own questions.

Chapter 6: The Brave Women Who Lived to Tell the Tale.

The Brave Women who Lived to Tell the Tale comprises of the stories of my three participants interwoven with my own flashbacks and thoughts on the subject of women and their identity in South Asian society. The cultural implications of a woman's chastity and her location in South Asian society are explored. South Asian women's escape from the harsh reality of their lives by seeking refuge in religion or in acquiring education is the underlying theme of the chapter.

I consider this chapter to be the heart of this dissertation—the stories of immigrant women which evoke the themes that are relevant for these women's curriculum in LINC classes. While the experiences of Saima, Rukhsana and Razia—my research participants—are not templates for the experiences of all immigrant women, they give us a glimpse of what women with limited language skills and no family support network face in a foreign country.

Chapter 7: A Reconstruction of My Journey Through the Inquiry.

As the title suggests, in this chapter I try to relive my experience of collecting the stories of the three women participants in the research study and relate them to the current literature on education. The themes that emerged as important in the lives of these women are also enumerated with a view to their usefulness in a postmodern narrative curriculum. The chapter explores the implications of a self-reflective education emanating from a narrative curriculum for (a) adult education, (b) LINC classes and (c) education policy makers, through suggestions made by various educators in the field of adult education.

Rooted in narrative inquiry, this chapter serves the purpose of tying up the loose ends and leading to the conclusion of my research study—the recommendation for a narrative curriculum.

Chapter 8: Toward a Narrative Curriculum.

Toward a Narrative Curriculum provides the rationale for the proposed narrative curriculum. Based on the cultural psyche of South Asian women the need for a postmodern, multidimensional, narrative curriculum is emphasized in this chapter. Writing autobiographies and keeping daily journals, among other such exercises, are recommended in a supplementary course outline that I have designed for the purpose of developing critical awareness among South Asians. The tentative course outline for the curriculum is based on Connelly and Clandinin's work. I have also critiqued two modules from the 2002 LINC curriculum which is currently being taught, to show how they could be adapted (1) to make them more inclusive of diversity and (2) to raise critical awareness in immigrant women.

Chapter 1: South Asians in Canada and the Immigrant Experience

Immigration to a new country is a traumatic experience. People migrate in search of better living standards, better job opportunities and better education for their children. Some leave their home country to escape war, famine, religious or political persecution. Whatever the reason, it is not an easy choice to make. Profiling one of her research participants, Shahnaz Khan (2000, p. 70) writes:

> An Arab, Karima was part of a minority in Iran. Her family came to Canada three years ago to escape the harassment in Iran during the Iran/Iraq war. She says that she had a good life in Iran but that the war "messed" everything up. The supermarket attached to their house was bombed, and they had to leave. They moved farther away from the border, but she recalls, "The war kept following us"....Karima and her husband did not know any English when they came to Canada, and they could not find work. At one point they did not go out of the house for six months. Her husband was always nervous and angry, and both of them cried a lot.
>
> Karima: We thought, "Why did we come out to Canada? Now we don't have anything. Back home at least we had the family"...Somebody stole our money, too. We couldn't go back to Iran either...My husband was angry at me...because he had all the problems in life, and the only person who was a punching box was me. He wasn't a person who would beat me up, but like verbally....

This could very well be the profile of any immigrant from Somalia, Sri Lanka or even India and Pakistan. A doctor friend of ours who was running his own flourishing private practice in Karachi came to Canada to escape political persecution. Not able to find a job

in his profession because of all the stringent licensing regulations in Canada, he is working as a security guard. He says it is not only financially degrading for him but also psychologically demoralizing when his children tell their friends that their Dad is a security guard. He has lost the will to start anew and study for six years to get a license, he says.

From personal experience I know that educated people come to Canada only to find that since their qualifications are not Canadian and they do not have Canadian experience, the chances of getting a decent job are slim. With three Master's degrees in English (in Literature, Applied Linguistics, and Linguistics and English Language Teaching), I was not accepted in the tertiary educational system in Canada, much to my disappointment. I was required to do a six-month Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) course to validate my twelve years of college and university teaching experience. My husband, with his Ph.D. in Political Science, fared even worse. He found he could only work as a security guard to keep his family going and that his Ph.D. was seen as irrelevant to the Canadian context. (I talk about this in greater detail in my Education Chronicle later in the chapter.) Employers do not realize that until people are given jobs they cannot gain any Canadian experience, nor can they acquire Canadian qualifications overnight. Frustration and disappointment set in at the very beginning for people when they have to start from scratch. To add insult to injury, the immigrants discover that they are discriminated against if they have a hesitant command of English or if their English is a little accented. Shahnaz Khan (2000, p. 37) writes about another of her research participants, Zubaida, a Pakistani Muslim:

> English is still an issue for her. She says that her accent is different, and therefore she can be identified as different.
>
> Shahnaz: But we are different.
>
> Zubaida: Right, but you are trying to, I think, assimilate.
>
> Shahnaz: Is that what you are doing?
>
> Zubaida: I think I am…And I think I have…I think I feel safer to deny.
>
> Shahnaz: You feel safer to deny what?
>
> Zubaida: Not to feel Pakistani, not look like a Pakistani, and being Muslim is part of it. Also I feel that [being Muslim] has put a lot of restrictions on me personally.

Shahnaz Khan goes on to comment:

> In Canada besides being discriminated against as a woman, Zubaida is also at the nexus of other marginalized locations: the inability to speak English "properly" and being labeled a Pakistani/Muslim. Zubaida connects not being able to speak English with the "proper" accent to being different, or the "other", who is excluded or marginalized. (2000, p. 37)

Being marginalized on account of ethnicity, race and religion is a theme that recurs throughout this dissertation. especially in the stories of my participants in Chapter 6 (The Brave Women Who Lived to Tell the Tale). It is also a theme that I touch upon in my educational chronicle in this chapter because it underlined the development of my personality as a foreign student and, subsequently, as a teacher in post-colonial West Africa. For now, all I will say is that it is a very important issue in Canada since it not only affects the power dynamics between immigrants and Caucasian Canadians but it impinges upon the identity formation and transformation of immigrants in this country.

Zubaida, as the story goes, found respite in denying her ethnic identity and living with a Caucasian Canadian boyfriend.

Despite elaborate policy documents on equity measures and dealing with ethno-cultural diversity, for example, *Changing Perspectives: A Resource Guide for Antiracist and Ethnocultural Equity Education, All Divisions and OAC's* (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1992) and *Interim Policy and Procedure on Racial and Ethnocultural Mistreatment* (Toronto Board of Education, 1994), little is done by the public to deal with immigrants civilly, much less accord equity. As a recent immigrant, looking for a survival job while struggling to get my credentials recognized in Canada, I was turned away from a telemarketing firm because I had the "wrong accent". I felt the rebuff as not only rude but extremely demoralizing. My Master's degrees in English Language and years of teaching experience had apparently done nothing to give me the "right accent" and ensure a survival job for me. Thus immigration is an experience to reckon with at all fronts; physical, psychological, social, and financial. Having left their jobs in their countries and burnt their boats, so to speak, immigrants cannot go back to face the ridicule of family and friends. Facing the odds stoically, they start afresh, rebuilding their careers, going to school, and, their reserve resources depleted, working overtime in menial jobs to keep their families from starving. The immigrants' dilemma of being expected to perform their best while simultaneously trying to overcome the odds is also addressed by the Executive Director of the LINC agency where I conducted my research (see Chapter 5: An Old Wine in a New Bottle: South Asian Culture Transplanted onto the New Canadian Soil).

As in Karima's experiences, cited earlier (Khan, 2000, pp. 70 – 71), it is the wives mostly have to bear the brunt of the frustrating situation. With no peers or family network to restrain them, the men, under economic pressures, resort to verbal and/or physical abuse. Women with no English language skills are, consequently, left alone to face the odds in a foreign country. My experience as an interpreter of Urdu in Toronto confirms this recurrent phenomenon. My assignments required me to interpret, in Court or in a police station, for badly abused women. These women often blame their husband's violent behaviour on the difficult job conditions in Canada. Aware of the racism prevalent among police and afraid that their husbands would be arrested and beaten, the abused South Asian wives tried their utmost to prevent "the father of their children" from being jailed. An instance of this situation is also seen in the story of Razia (see Chapter 6) when she tries to prevent her abusive husband's arrest.

As a LINC teacher, during my frequent informal conversations with my students, I realized that the South Asian immigrant women thought learning English and eventually getting a job would be a sure means of gaining economic independence from their spouses. They believed that learning English in the LINC classes would be a panacea for all their troubles. They clearly articulated that not only were they considered to be an economic burden by their husbands in the new circumstances, (whereas in the home country wives were accepted as "the husband's responsibility"), but also their children stopped respecting them because of their hesitant command of English. Children of immigrants tend to be attracted to the glitter and glamour of Western ways of life and to want to relinquish their culture in the shortest possible time, unless kept on the (cultural) track by the parents. These children quickly come to believe that if mothers cannot speak

English and have to rely on them (children) as their only link to the outside world, that they (the mothers) don't know anything. This role-reversal where children act as interpreters for their mothers in even the simplest of situations, such as talking to a doctor, getting a younger sibling admitted to school, opening a bank account, further undermines the already worsening situation of a disintegrating family system.

In my opinion, therefore, South Asian women must acquire education especially in the new Canadian environment, in order to:

1. Earn the respect of their husbands and their children
2. Know their rights, especially if they want to get out of an abusive situation
3. Participate more fully in the community life of the host country
4. Become economically independent
5. Find fulfillment in an educational environment where they can nurture their talents and potentials
6. Socialize with other women to find out that they are not alone in the predicament
7. Pass on their cultural heritage to their children in order for them to (a) think critically about the positive and negative aspects of the two cultures and (b) preserve their heritage language to assist academic advancement in English. (Cummins, 1996).

Immigrant women, fired up with the zeal to learn English, go to ESL schools and discover that there is nothing much in the curriculum that they can easily relate to. The frame of reference for all ESL syllabi are androcentric, White, middle-class norms. The

wealth of cultural experience that these women bring to class and are eager to share is not even addressed in the curriculum.

> Just as the inclusion of something in the curriculum--- a topic, a body of fact and theory, a perspective---signifies the value placed on it, exclusion of something bespeaks the culture's devaluation of it. In addition the act of exclusion serves to reinforce that assessment. (Gaskell & Willinsky, 1995, p. 170.)

Hence the fact that cultural diversity and women's contributions are not even touched upon in the ESL curriculum only goes to show that they are accorded an inferior position in the overall scheme of things.

Women educators, considering the incorporation of achievements by "women and men of color, white women and the working class and underclass" important in the curriculum have advocated for "developing and teaching an inclusive curriculum" (Flick, 2000). Deborah Flick calls for a phased inclusion of such a program in a regular curriculum. Such an enriched and inclusive curriculum is in the offing but, to my knowledge, nothing tangible has so far been achieved. It would, therefore, be to the advantage of the culturally diverse people of Canada, as well as for the cultural unity of the country, to have not just an 'inclusive' or an 'enriched' curriculum, but a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift would address the educational and the cultural needs of everyone. It would also show the ideal of ethno-cultural equity to be a reality rather than a myth.

Immigrants not only leave their countries for various reasons, they also bring with them their own culture. This should not be overlooked in an educational context. Politics, gender, economic, and cultural issues do not just figure in their lives in Canada but have also influenced immensely their existence in their own countries. Culture is "a

continuing dialogue that revolves around pivotal areas of concern in a given community" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987, p. 153). The issues discussed change with a different context though the cultural lens may remains the same. I believe that while the issues confronting the immigrants in Canada might be different, e.g., racism, adapting to new environment, language, and culture, etc., their interpretation and possible solutions would be tinged with the cultural discourse of that particular language community. The cultural background of the immigrants is therefore a very important variable to consider when talking about the education of immigrant women.

After experiencing the initial culture shock of coming into a foreign culture, immigrants begin to see the positive and the negative aspects of their own culture. In a way, they develop a critical awareness to examine their own culture and weigh it in the light of the mainstream Western culture. Being a woman from the South Asian community, I am also painfully aware of the restricting patriarchal values that always infringe upon women's basic human rights, such as the right to education, the right to make decisions regarding her own life, the right to speak her mind, etc. While the social system in the immigrants' home countries allows the patriarchal value system to thrive by endorsing the oppression of women, it is at odds with the Canadian lifestyle.

The patriarchal culture hinders women's advancement in educational and economic fields. However leaving one's culture and language community altogether means forgoing one's cultural roots and the good aspects of that culture as well. Even so, some South Asian women in Canada have repudiated their cultural affiliations wherever they felt oppressed, at the risk of being ostracized by the community. My research

attempts to explore how South Asian women coming from a patriarchal background negotiate their identities when trying to settle in Canada.

Currently, unable to repudiate their patriarchal culture in its entirety, the South Asian women in Canada have to negotiate their existence in a context that encourages an advanced multicultural society. The contradictions and ambivalence that these women inwardly and outwardly contend with underlies their ontological situation. How they individually struggle to negotiate the contradictions in their lives suggests a need for a platform where the issues of identity formation and transformation are addressed in an informed context. Their children, themselves leading a hybridized existence, are victims of the same unresolved confusion emanating from conflicts between values at home and at school. I say unresolved because most South Asian immigrant parents do not themselves have the requisite conceptual and linguistic repertoire to clarify the ontological issues facing the new generation. The parents, as well as the children, are in a limbo, neither being accepted by the racist dominant culture, nor at ease in the truncated 'home' culture. The youth's hyphenated identity does not ameliorate the frustration that turns into resentment of their parents' decision to immigrate.

Another space or viable forum for discussion, separate from home and school, would be useful in resolving the underlying contradictory notions of racial and ethnic purity which deny hybridity and are based on age-long and often inauthentic linguistic narratives (Goldberg, 1990; Lyotard, 1984). Misleading traditions that hold a particular culture or ethnicity or religion sacrosanct not only result in stereotypes, but also seek to contain the rich complexity of life in simplistic binaries like victim/oppressor, oppressors/oppressed, civilized/primitive. While these binaries help, albeit in limited

ways, to define the "other," they are very restricting and biased. Similarly, my focus on the South Asian immigrants may appear to be restrictive and essentialist. Even though South Asians are a vast and varied population encompassing culturally diverse countries like Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, I have often been asked why I wanted to interview only South Asians and not other immigrants as well. My response to this is that not only do I not feel qualified to comment on the immigration needs of other language communities but also my use of the term South Asian is similar to Chandra Mohanty's use of the term "Third World Women" (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991). Mohanty draws upon Benedict Anderson's (1983) notion of "imagined community" to speak of the Third World Women as an analytical and political category useful in counter-hegemonic struggle.

I also subscribe to Gayatri Spivak's (1990) notion of strategic "essentialism" in situating my idea of South Asian women as part of a strategy to identify and address numerous struggles women go through at the micro level as well as the macro level. South Asian women have to contend with patriarchy in every phase of their existence, they are a man's daughter, sister, wife, or mother but never an individual in their own right. At the macro level of global exploitation she is the cheap labour in the Third World countries, at the mercy of the corporate world in the era of globalization. As an immigrant in Canada, or any Western country for that matter, she struggles against racism, sexism, and economic dependency.

The subjectivities of the women of whom I speak are mediated through their unique national and geographic histories as well as their racial and class location in Canada. Acknowledging the fact that the challenges faced by South Asian women are

numerous, I explored these women's identity formation in Canada and examined how the stereotypes associated with South Asian women interact with their self articulation and self transformation. I envisioned South Asian women moving away from patriarchy and the stereotypes associated with their identity in the North American culture (especially after the September 11th unraveling of the Taliban culture) to a more hybridized culture incorporating the very best of both East and West. A hybridized existence would allow for a re-scripting of their lives with social, educational and political implications. I wanted to explore how South Asian women proposed to negotiate and translate the contradictions they see in their culture 'back home' and the culture they encounter here in order to achieve a smooth confusion-free transition from a culturally isolated lifestyle to a multicultural one in Canada. Homi Bhaba (1994), Gayatri Spivak (1993), Trinh Minh-Ha (1989), Paul Gilroy (1992), Stuart Hall (1996), and R. Radhakrishnan (1996) have argued for an understanding of ethnicity that departs from notions of static, authentic, original culture and pure identity to an idea of hybridized subjectivity which is rooted in the daily struggles of individuals to negotiate the contradictory demands and polarities of their lives.

Bhaba's construct of hybridized states derives from situations in which dialectic polarities demand allegiance at the same time (Khan, 2000, p. 2). Hybridized individuals repudiating "any claims of inherent cultural purity, inhabit the rim of an 'in between reality' marked by shifting psychic, cultural, and territorial boundaries" (Khan, 2000, p. 2). The situation of immigrant women is even more precarious; not only are they not accepted in the mainstream Western culture due to racism, but because of sexism—the by-product of patriarchy—they are not accorded the status of a complete individual in

their home culture either. Gloria Anzaldua (1987) is critical of the oppressive categories which eventually give birth to an "alien consciousness" in the minds of women whose identity is ambiguous—never fixed but always in the making.

I believe that women are always confronted with the insurmountable task of negotiating their identity both at the micro level (their family and community) as well as at the macro level (the broader context of interaction with the Western mainstream culture). The hegemonic discourses prevalent at both the levels prove detrimental to any effort on the women's part at identity formation. An immigrant woman's identity in my opinion, is always in a state of flux---forming and dissipating at the hands of hegemonic structures--- be they the result of patriarchy or colonialism, both of which seem to be interchangeable at times.

Being a teacher with feminist inclinations, I always envisioned an education for immigrant women which challenged hegemonic discourses and institutions. Such an education could provide them with the space to free themselves from the shackles of constraining discourses of patriarchy, racism, and the corporate global culture, and could enable them to develop their person of their own free will.

At this juncture, I would situate myself as a South Asian immigrant in Canada (a Pakistani-Canadian) who, though removed in time and space, was influenced by the discourses of patriarchy, sexism and racism in my childhood in Africa. Through acquiring education, I eventually evolved into a person who could see through these discourses and favoured an education for women generally, conducive to their personality development and in opposition to existing institutions (society, family, culture) underpinned by patriarchy, sexism and racism, which denigrate women.

My Education Chronicle.

My education chronicle spans over four continents: Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. I did my last Master's degree in Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT) in 1993, from Leeds University, England, while my other two Master's degrees, one in English Literature and the other in Applied Linguistics, were from the University of Karachi, in Pakistan, in 1982 and 1989, respectively. My high school and my undergraduate studies were in Nigeria, West Africa, and now I am in North America writing my doctoral dissertation. Each chapter of my life has a different theme and each has taught me a different lesson.

Education, to me, means much more than formal education; it means any situation or event that has an educative quality about it, be it a personal, social or political event. Starting out at the age of four in kindergarten, children are opening up their minds to the world around them, everything looks new and intriguing. I believe that at this tender age the role of informal education is more pronounced than that of formal education in shaping a child's perception.

I was born on the 31st of December, half an hour before the New Year. My mother, however would always celebrate my birthday a day after, on the 1st of January as she says she doesn't want it on the dying of the year. Also she considers me her New Year's gift from God. Having lost my father at the age of one, I was a lonely child, having no brothers and sisters to play with and a mother who was struggling to make a better life after being widowed at the age of thirty-two. My only sister is eighteen years older than me and was married off immediately after my father's death, since my mother wanted to "travel light". The "responsibility of a marriageable girl" is a great burden in South Asian

society which places great importance on the father's status and dowry. The higher the father's status the better the prospects of a good proposal.

Having herself lived an affluent life, my mother wanted me to lack for nothing. She believed that I should have the same kind of life my sister did, traveling widely in the Middle East, Europe and Africa where my father had worked as an engineer, and attending ambassadorial parties. For my mother, a vision of a good life meant starting afresh with her educational endeavors. She therefore, did her undergraduate studies and Master's in English after my father's demise. My earliest recollections, at the age of four, are that of life in a college hostel, where my mom was allocated two rooms by a generous college principal who was impressed by the fact that my mom was working as a full- time librarian and attending evening classes for her undergraduate studies, something that not many women did in those days. Since my mother had a strong case , being a single parent and a woman in need of financial help, it wasn't too difficult have me admitted into the best school in town. St. Mary's, an Irish Catholic Mission school, was by far the best and not many people could afford it. Despite a long waiting list, I was given precedence and my mother was happy to spend the money on my education. The teachers were mostly nuns except for those who taught Arithmetic, Urdu and Islamic Studies.

The first lesson I learned was that some people had more than others. For instance, most children were picked up from school by their fathers or by chauffeurs in long sleek cars. One of my classmates, also named Naghmana, was the daughter of an executive engineer. She was be picked up by a driver in a company car, and since her mother was a lecturer in the same college where my mom worked as a librarian, he would

sometimes drop me off at the college while he waited for Naghmana's mom to leave for home.

During the ride, Naghmana would ask me all sorts of hurtful questions, like "Why doesn't your driver come to pick you up? Do you have a car? Do you have a refrigerator?" I did not have answers to these questions. I knew we had a car for sure, for I would look at our family pictures in Africa, and there I would be, a toddler with my favorite doll which was about the same size as me, sitting on a car bonnet. My father a tall, dark, lean man with an air of arrogance about him and a pipe in his mouth would be standing beside me as if showing off his station wagon or his baby daughter, I don't know which. In the blistering heat of Sukkur, when the burning sand went through my white socks, walking back from school sometimes, I would ask my mom "So why don't we have a car?" She would always reply, with a veracity based on the family photos, that "We do have a car in Africa but since your father is working there he needs it more. Soon we will go and join him". It was not until I was almost eight that I learned that my father had died of a heart attack in Kuwait, on his way back to Pakistan from Nigeria. My mom, my sister and I and my father were going home for holidays when he passed away. This had been his third heart attack. The first attack had come when my mom was expecting me. She now tells me she prayed hard for his life, otherwise people would have thought the baby on the way was unlucky. He survived the first and also the second heart attack. With the third attack, no prayers could save him. He was twenty-seven years older than my mom.

This was in 1964. Thereafter, my mother a young widow of thirty-two, channeled all her energies to realizing a dream of a good life on her own. She turned down marriage

proposals and solicitations from elders that she should remarry immediately, that it would be impossible to live without a man in the house especially with a beautiful nineteen-year-old daughter (meaning my sister). But my mom wanted to realize her long lost dream of getting an education and becoming an English teacher. Although she had been a brilliant student in grade seven, coming from an orthodox Muslim family of Afghan origin in undivided India, (now Pakistan, India and Bangladesh), she was married at the age of twelve to a man twenty-seven years her senior. Although he was divorced, he was deemed by my grandmother to be the best match for her beautiful daughter because he was an engineer, the second richest man in the state after the Nawab (the governor), had a convertible, and was well versed in Western ways, having started his life at the age of eighteen in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) with the British. Though my mother almost never lacked money, she still led a very unhappy life of servitude and abuse with a man old enough to be her father. Now, after his death, God had given her a second chance to start afresh and she was going to make the best of it. She took up a job as a librarian, and started her studies.

In 1965, when I was three, it was a time of war with India. A total blackout was ordered throughout the country. I remember the smell of the Kerosene oil lantern, the long scary shadows of the bedroom cum living room furniture, a cloth that my Mom would throw over the lantern to camouflage the light so that the watchman wouldn't know that we had a light in the room, and my Mom studying for her exams. An uncanny sense of impending danger, intensified by the roaring sounds of airplanes either Pakistani or Indian, loomed over us. I would clutch my mother's shirt tightly and sleep on the

carpet where she was reading her books, huddled close to her, too scared to sleep by myself in the bed. Pakistan won and we moved on with our lives.

Crests and troughs marked my life in St. Mary's. I was considered a bright child mainly because, in retrospect, my mom made sure that I did my homework, perfected my spelling, and that I always raised my hand if I knew the answer to a question. She would ask me about each and every thing that went on in the school and I would proudly tell her how many questions I answered in class. That was the high point in my life. The low point came when girls would make fun of me for playing with boys and not listening to their stories of, perhaps a doll wedding that they had arranged, or a picnic they had gone to, or even bangles that matched their clothes. Boys were always more fun; they were more action and fewer words. But sometimes I felt I belonged neither with the girls nor the boys. I often found myself sitting alone, feeling dejected and lonely, with no playmate.

One morning, when I was in Grade 3, I realized to my horror that I had left my homework exercise book at home. My Arithmetic teacher, Mrs. Chambers, was not a forgiving soul. When she asked me for my homework, my statement that I had done the homework but forgot my copy at home did not ring true to her. It was just another excuse that children made when they had not done their homework. I was caned on my bare hands and legs until I was red, not only from embarrassment but also from the excruciating pain of a bamboo cane on a winter morning. To this day, I wonder if my morbid dread of numbers and my tendency to go completely blank when confronted with a mathematical equation, was not somehow connected to that painful event. My mother took the matter up with the headmaster, Father John. She now recollects that he was very

concerned and that he had a warning issued to the teacher. However, I am not sure if Mrs. Chambers ever desisted in her practice of caning children and not trusting them. As for me, she left an indelible mark on my mind. I still remember her stern face. Father John, on the other hand, was a very benign person. With his towering height, a white robe and smiling blue eyes, he was, I always thought, the epitome of perfection. He was also the first Caucasian I had ever seen.

One hot summer passed after another and my mom, having completed her Master's in English, got a job in a government college as a lecturer in English. Unfortunately for me, she was posted to a remote town called Khairpur in Sindh province in Pakistan. The heat there was even more intense and the school even less friendly. Now when I look back, I cannot decide if the school was unfriendly or if I had problems making new friends because I was extremely shy. Whichever was the case, I missed my former school because just when I had carved a niche for myself in the popular circles by participating in the school band and recitation, we moved to Khairpur. The newly established school in Khairpur was not a convent school which meant that the educational standards were not the best, but it had some interesting swings in the playground. Playing with one of the heavier boys on a see-saw which had no handle, I slipped and broke my collarbone. Seeing my mother helplessly running about here and there in the hospital made me feel for the first time that we might perhaps have been more comfortable with a brother or a father to take care of us.

In 1970, my mom applied for a job as an English teacher in Nigeria and in 1971 we travelled to a town called Katsina. It was a totally different world. A tropical paradise with red soil, dark green trees, and beautiful birds. The lifestyle of the people was quite

different from ours. The norms of interaction in the primary school were very confusing to me. Girls, I observed, were not very different in their behavior from boys, whereas I came from an almost segregated milieu in Pakistani school. Being the only expatriate and always feeling unsure if someone might take offence to something totally innocent on my part, I kept to myself.

Having been uprooted from the familiar subject matter, I was not in a comfortable state academically either. The choral drills for everything we learned gave me a headache. I was totally unfamiliar with the history and geography of the country, and teachers automatically assumed that since I was in Grade 6, I knew everything I was supposed to know at that stage. Only the teacher who taught Islamic Religious Knowledge was patient enough to understand that I came from a different country and that there could be some differences in the culture and religious practices. He was very accommodating and by nature very mild. Often, during recess, we would talk about how, even though we were both Muslims, we did religious things differently. He taught me the meaning of 'the virtue of patience' as he would call it, of understanding difference and appreciating similarity. This too was a lesson I learned informally. Mr. Mohammadu was the only redeeming feature in a four- room school with broken furniture, bare feet, casually dressed children, and the dusty red road that linked my house to the school.

The government house allocated to my mother and me was very interesting. The two bedroom, sturdy-looking stone house was a remnant of the British colonial era. I wouldn't have been surprised if the ghost of an English lady had appeared from behind one of the pillars, as numerous such stories circulated in the community. I often felt that it was haunted, especially at night when the monsoon wind howled through mango trees

and made our doors creak. Our backyard was another story altogether. Peanuts and mangoes grew naturally in our backyard and, during the rainy season, the whole place would be white with mushrooms. The beautiful birds chirruping in the thick, heavily laden mango trees, the low rumble of clouds, and the sweet scent of red soil wet with rain gave me a sense of calm that I had never experienced in Pakistan. I remember sitting for hours in my veranda with my cats, just listening to the sounds of monsoon. I felt one with nature and imagined that when I go to heaven it would it be something like this.

After a year, in 1972, my mom was transferred to a boys high school in Zaria. Zaria was a more modern city, compared to Katsina, but like Katsina, it did not have a high school for girls. My mom was genuinely worried and considered resigning from her job and going back to Pakistan, if her new position was going to mean the lack of proper for me. However, the Minister of Education was gracious enough to allow me to be admitted to the same school where my mom was teaching. The population of the school, which was from Grade 7 to Grade 10, was almost 1,200 students. Each class section had about fifty students, all jam packed like sardines. I was the only girl in the whole school. I felt like a zoo animal when boys from other classes would come just to ogle at me. Most senior boys made passes at me and I became unduly conscious of my girlhood. I lost my confidence, became an introvert and kept as much to myself as I could. Once, a boy even slapped me when I refused to move from my seat, a seat he had suddenly taken a fancy to. The whole situation was beyond my comprehension, I was totally stunned and later embarrassed. The fact that, following the incident, the boy was given corporal punishment by the principal, did not ease my pain. Corporal punishment meant being lashed with a five-foot-long *Bulala*, i.e., a leather strap.

Being a Science student, I was required to study Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics, in addition to English, Islamic Religious Knowledge, History, and Geography, which were the core subjects. Like most girls in my family, I wanted to become a doctor when I grew up but soon I learned that I could not bring myself to capture cockroaches or frogs and later dissect them. I asked my house boy to bring me a cockroach in a small plastic container, he collected four instead and they were all scurrying about in the container. I got so unnerved that I carried the container all the way to school on a textbook, much to the amusement of Nigerian boys who thought girls should be as tough as the boys. Chemistry was fun but Mathematics again posed a threat to my future in science. After trudging through Mathematics for five years, I failed it in my final board exams. I received very respectable grades in all my other subjects. I even got distinctions in English and Islamic Religious Knowledge. But failing Mathematics prevented me from being accepted into a pre-engineering or a pre-medical department in any college. As a result, I switched to Arts, and took up English literature, Economics and Islamic Religious knowledge.

In 1973, there was a military coup in Nigeria and we were all given double promotion to make up for the time the schools were shut down. So, when I wrote my O-levels[1] I was only fourteen. I took my A-levels through the British Council, in Kaduna in North Central State. By now, my mom was the principal of the Woman Teachers' College, Kaduna in Nigeria. She would not let me apply for admission to a Nigerian University because, compared to South Asians, the younger generation of the 70's was quite Westernized. Simply put, she didn't want me to date. I had applied for and been

[1] British General Certificate of Education Ordinary level examinations (O-levels) and Advanced level examinations (A-levels) taken at the end of the equivalent of Grade 11 and Grade 13, respectively.

admitted to St. Andrew's University in Scotland but, as usual, my mom was adamant in her refusal to let me go on my own, for fear I would adopt a Western lifestyle. I was quite attracted to the hippie culture of the 70's and took great pains to appear trendy in flappers, bellbottoms and platform shoes. Nevertheless, I was not allowed to go to a teenager's club where all my other Pakistani friends went to dance and enjoy themselves. They didn't get into trouble with their parents because they had their brothers with them. I felt it wasn't fair that I didn't have a brother.

About this time, my mother married an old friend of my late father. I was totally devastated. I felt I was robbed of the only parent I had. I gave them both a tough time, as perhaps any rebellious teenager might, confronted with an exacting parent and a critical stepparent who thought I was a spoiled brat. My stepfather already had a wife[2] and three daughters about my age and he kept comparing and contrasting me with them. I was always the bad one. I believe my mother wanted to make up for my loss and so, every year, during the two-month summer holidays, my mom, stepfather and I would go on vacations to Europe or the U.S. We even came to Toronto for a month in 1975 and went to see the Canadian side of Niagara Falls.

Looking back, I now feel that my mom had every right to remarry, especially after the life she had led with my father. Later I often justified my teenage anger with the argument that she shouldn't have married a married man; something I still feel strongly about. After twelve years, he went back to his first wife and then I felt worse because my mom was alone again; something she had dreaded all along. She said she had never wanted to be alone in her old age when both her daughters were married off and that was why she had remarried after all those years. I have learned since never to judge people.

There is always a chance that I may be wrong in my reasoning and people might have their own reasons for the things they do. The hurt I experienced, first at my mother's remarriage and then at his leaving her was hard to endure.

My teenage years were full of turmoil. I was angry, resentful, in and out of crushes, reading Barbara Cartland novels, and spending money recklessly on clothes and shoes. I put up large posters of Donny Osmond in my room (they were my most prized possessions), watched Elvis Presley movies, and listened to Don Williams songs. One evening when I told my mom that *The Great Gatsby* was an important novel in my literature course and that they were showing the film in the club, she let me go for the first and only time. It was the most magical evening of my life. Being a first time visitor to the club, I got extra attention from the boys who were also my friends' brothers. I saw the movie and fell immediately in love with Robert Redford.

In 1979, I prepared for and passed my Bachelor of Arts exams as a private candidate from Nigeria. My mom tutored me in all the subjects: English Literature, Economics, Islamic Studies and Urdu. In 1980, I was admitted to the Master's program in the English Department at Karachi University. This time my mom had to let me go. I got a room at the girls' hostel. On my own for the first time, I felt very vulnerable. Not only was I often a victim of ragging but being from "the jungles of Africa" as my fellow students put it, I was considered to be very naïve in the ways of the world. I missed my over-protective mom very much. I learned in my university days to keep away from boys and never to trust them if I wanted to keep my reputation intact. Unlike the Pakistani teenagers I knew in Nigeria, the university boys in Pakistan were just no fun. I learned never to speak my mind, always be diplomatic and polite, and never to be very friendly

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[2] The Muslim religion permits a man to have four wives.

with anyone. Overwhelmed by a long list of do's and don'ts in the university culture, I chose once more to move on with my life alone. I did extremely well in my studies and since I genuinely enjoyed English Literature, I almost always received the highest grades. The four professors who taught Drama, Poetry, Fiction, Practical Criticism, and Language, were unanimous in their praise for me. I felt really proud of myself and thought that at least I was good in my studies even if I was a total failure in the domain of human relationships. I know one reason for my failure in this area was my incorrigible shyness.

However, I did take part in student politics in the university which was a microcosm of the country's political climate. Bullets went flying past us as we stood our ground on issues deemed important then. I was inducted into an ethnic political party whose followers thought they had been wronged by the majority population in Pakistan from the day of Pakistan's partition from India in 1947. Despite the great sacrifices they had made at its inception and their mass migration from India, and despite being highly educated, these new immigrants from India were discriminated against in the field of employment. Their sense of injustice at not being accepted by the sons of the soil made this students political party a most volatile one. It had the greatest appeal among the wronged, educated, middle class of immigrants. As a result, this political party held the entire city of Karachi under its sway.

The greatest lesson I have learned after working with this student political party is that all politics is a game of chess. Political parties sacrifice the lives of innocent people for their ulterior motives and then make secret alliances on exactly the same issues for which so many young graduates had laid down their lives. After some bloodshed among

the students, the government imposed a ban on any political activity in the university. No one was allowed to carry firearms and army rangers did a body search before anyone entered the university. Even today, army rangers guard the university gates.

The university was a training ground for me, my first contact with the outside world. In Nigeria I had led a cocooned life with an over-protective mother. It was a cocooned life not only at home but also outside home. We South Asians were conveniently demarcated in Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, each with our own prejudices which had their roots in the political events back home. Pakistanis would never mingle with the Indians and vice versa, while fuming with fury at the Bangladeshis who would rather associate with Indians than with Pakistanis. Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, had separated from Pakistan after the bloody war of 1971 when Pakistan had surrendered to India which had openly helped East Pakistanis slaughter West Pakistani army. Each community had its own prejudices based on the ethnic differences and history. The communities thrived on all the juicy gossip that went around on national and religious occasions which were celebrated with great fervor in a foreign country. For us girls, they were occasions to show off our dresses and flirt with boys.

The host Nigerian community did not figure at all in the scheme of things. It would have been preposterous for anyone to think of marrying or even carrying on an affair with the locals. Our whole discourse now, when I think back, smacked of racism, even though there was talk, on religious occasions, of precedents of interracial marriages in Islam and the favourite idea of equality of all races and economic groups. It was all right for the Arabs to accept interracial marriages but the South Asians wouldn't hear of it. A wave of fear went through the entire South Asian community in Nigeria when they

heard that Ugandans were openly trying to abduct Indian girls or had demanded to marry them after President Idi Amin had ordered the Indian business people to assimilate or leave Uganda. Our parents were relieved that nothing of this sort happened in Nigeria, although Nigerians would often approach parents with marriage proposals for their daughters.

In 1982, after completing my Master's in English literature in First Division, I left for Nigeria, where my mother was a principal. My stepfather, a director of education, immediately got me a temporary job as an English teacher, thus launching my career. The teaching methodology was still the audio-lingual approach and teachers were still required to orchestrate choral drills from pre-formulated substitution tables. Repetition was aimed at correct habit formation. Monotonous and dull as the drills were, they kept the tempo of the class going and we teachers felt a sense of accomplishment when students progressed from one unit to the next. I sometimes wondered, though, if the students got the same kind of headache I used to get in my school days from such drills.

During this time, I became a popular teacher. From my own bad experience with strict teachers I inferred that students direct their dislike to the respective subjects and eventually develop a lifelong aversion to it. I also learned to trust students; if they gave me an excuse for not having done their homework, I took their word for it. My own experiences of student life had a profound influence on the conscious development of my personality as a teacher. I also knew from my own experience that students were the best judge of a good teacher, they knew exactly which teacher had the best command over his or her subject. During these two years I sifted as much from my own experience as I could in order to strive towards becoming a really good teacher.

In 1984, the general climate in Nigeria turned against expatriates and the country's political turmoil, due to a succession of coups, resulted in a recession with a consequent curtailment of expatriates' home remittance to a mere 25% of their salary. My parents decided to return to Pakistan. By now, Nigeria had an adequate number of their own graduates to replace foreign teachers, engineers and doctors. They now barely tolerated expatriates. The law and order infrastructure completely collapsed and the incidence of burglaries shot up. We often heard of armed burglars breaking and entering in the middle of the night and if the inmates of the house woke up, the burglars were totally unafraid; they would still load things on a truck and leave. The police came in the morning only to do the paper work.

Returning to Pakistan, my stepfather went back to his first wife and his three daughters, who lived in the north. My mother and I busied ourselves with renovating our house in Karachi. Prospective in-laws also look at the décor of a girl's house when they are searching for their future daughter-in-law, in order to determine the economic status of the girl's parents as well as to see if the girl can keep a good house. Since I was now of a marriageable age it was expected that interested families would visit us. Meanwhile, in a countrywide Public Service Commission Board selection procedure for Cantonment and Garrisons, I was selected to serve as an English teacher in an army college at Wah Cant. This was the place where my stepfather lived with his family. He welcomed us in his house but soon conflict arose between his two wives and their daughters. Immediately on my arrival in the Federal Government Girls' College, I was assigned to teach the B.A. English Literature course. I used to stay up late preparing my lectures on Browning and T.S. Elliot. The high level of teaching required was a new challenge for

me to cope with and I worked extremely hard, and successfully, to stay on top of things. But the conflict-ridden atmosphere at home was beyond my control. While I became very popular with my colleagues and my students, the situation at home depressed me so much that I offered to resign from my job and go back to Karachi.

The principal, who was aware of my situation through my stepsister who was an ex-student of the college, was kind enough to show me a job posting in a Karachi newspaper. Even though she said she did not want to let me go, as an experienced principal she knew that if I was unhappy I wouldn't be able to concentrate on my work. I was overjoyed and went for my summer holidays to Karachi where I appeared for an interview and got the job.

I was very happy to be back in my city which was bustling with life as usual and was still known as "the City of Lights". Though I had only been away for a year, it seemed like ages. Wah Cant, which housed an ordinance factory, was mainly a retired military officers' colony. Although I was advancing my teaching career, I was also scared of ending up a spinster if I stayed for too long in that sleepy town where boys were conspicuous by their absence. I was told by my colleagues that they all went to study and work in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, and came only occasionally to visit their retired parents in Wah. Wah is endowed with a lot of natural beauty and, together with surrounding towns, is considered to be a gateway for the holiday resorts in Northern Pakistan. Despite all the college picnics and trips we went on, the absolute dearth of boys in the town scared me no end. When I got back to Karachi, I felt I was home.

In 1985, while working in Urdu Arts College, I met Ali, a handsome young man wearing a perpetual smile on his face, but he had a broken heart to match a broken car.

A part time Economics teacher in the evening shift, he would often ask me for a ride home. Since he did not live very far from my house, I didn't refuse. He was a full time deputy director in the Students' Guidance, Counseling and Placement Bureau in the University of Karachi. Though a few years ahead of me in the University of Karachi, he was my contemporary and had been very active in the opposing student political party. I remembered the day when I, the Counselor of English Department for my party, stood clapping when Ali and his comrades were being arrested by the police after a students' riot in which we did not participate. Now, after almost four years, both teachers and presumably both mature, we had some good laughs about our past enmity. He came to my house a couple of times, and my mother liked him more than I did. Rejecting the other options I had, she strongly advised me to accept Ali's proposal. My sister was all for him too. We were married in 1987 and as a very happy bride, I set up my new home in the university campus staff housing. I loved my two-storey residence and spent my spare time decorating it.

Since I had not become pregnant yet, and I already had a 1st division Master's in English literature, which was a pre-requisite for a Master's in Applied Linguistics, Ali suggested that I go for it. I enrolled and thoroughly enjoyed exploring the new domains of Semantics, Sociolinguistics, TESL, and Grammar. The teachers however, were another story altogether. They were the former students of the department who had obtained British Council scholarships to do Master's and Ph.D.s from England. Their arrogance knew no limits; they thought that with their freshly acquired knowledge, which was the newest teaching methodology, they knew everything under the sun. They looked down upon their former teachers, who were also the professors of the Literature Department.

Ours was the only department in the university running two Master's programs; one in Literature and the other in Linguistics. I, however respected only my Literature teachers. They were extremely dependable, courteous, humble and went out of the way to help their students. By the time I started writing my Master's thesis, I was expecting my son and was working in the evening shift in Urdu Arts College at the same time. I was prescribed bed rest by my doctor, which didn't go too well with my Linguistics teachers. I was eventually able to finish my dissertation and received 1st division again. I could almost visualize my Linguistics teachers giving me the top grade grudgingly.

Working with the modern teaching methodology, called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), we, the new inductees, thought it was *the* best method for teaching English. Confronted with reality, however, we found out that it went against the established teaching norms in the colleges. Large, crammed classes, fixed furniture and a dearth of language teachers trained in modern methods, not to mention the paucity of government funds, presented insurmountable hurdles in the implementation of such programs. Despite our enthusiasm for CLT, we sensed a complete incongruence between the existing educational scenario of Pakistan, a poor, densely-populated, Third World country, and the elitist methodology imported from the Western English-speaking nations which specified a maximum of twenty-five students in a class. Any attempt at the implementation of CLT entailed the establishment of an elaborate infrastructure, spending an astronomical amount of money on salaries and acquiring physical premises. We also encountered an active resistance from veteran teachers who felt insecure in the presence of the young trained upstarts who, the veterans thought, were there to oust them from their jobs. I conducted interviews with senior teachers in the colleges and wrote my

Master's dissertation on "Resistance to Change and In-service Teacher Training Courses".

By the time my son was born, I had a job as a temporary teacher in the University of Karachi and soon was nominated to attend a Diploma course in the Teaching of English as an International Language (Dip. TEIL). It was a nine-month course and Ali had to take leave from work to baby-sit our four-month-old Faraz. Since I had already done my Master's in Applied Linguistics, the Dip. TEIL seemed like an intensive refresher course. We had tests every week and, since I was weaning my son, he would keep me up the whole night screaming at the top of his lungs, and then I would write my tests in the morning. We were thirty-two teachers from all over Pakistan, half of whom were women, some married with children in their home town, some not. I was the only one who had brought my husband along to take care of the baby. It was a very friendly, small community of teachers. We had a lot of fun going on trips and picnics in the northern areas. Since Ali is a good singer, he quickly became popular among the teachers.

I secured a position in the Dip. TEIL program and the British Council offered me a scholarship to go for yet another Master's degree. This was to be my third Master's but the prospect of going abroad again made us think of it more as a vacation. I was admitted into the Department of Linguistics and Phonetics of Leeds University, England, for the Master's program in Linguistics and English Language Teaching. In September 1992, the three of us boarded the plane to London. Again, Ali took a year off from work to take care of two-year-old Faraz. The courses in Linguistics and ELT were almost the same as those in my Master's in Applied Linguistics in Pakistan, but here the responsibility of

reading was entirely on the students. Teachers seldom lectured. I felt completely overwhelmed with loads and loads of reading as well as a house and a baby to take care of. I thought that we, in Pakistan, worked very hard for our students, planning lectures and spending the entire teaching hour spoon-feeding students. I didn't know which method was better at the Master's level. Most weekends I was in tears, unable to cope with the work load which was an endless sequence of assignments and seminars. The University organized tours to different parts of the country and I took time out to go with Ali and Faraz on these tours, more for their sakes than for mine, I thought.

My thesis supervisor, Mr. T.T.L. Davidson fit the stereotype of a prim and proper Britisher with a stiff neck, deep blue eyes and a blond moustache. He reminded me of a knight from King Arthur's days. He was an excellent supervisor, not only did he teach me everything I know about computers, but he spent a lot of time with me exploring different ideas for my thesis. The fact that a computer novice like myself succeeded in passing his computer course and later conducted computer research using International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) for my dissertation, attests to the outstanding support that he provided. Whenever he talked about his wife, his otherwise stern face always softened and one could see a twinkle in his eyes. I took a Psycholinguistics course just to meet Professor Peter Roach who had authored my favourite book on Phonetics. He was, indeed, the most knowledgeable teacher I ever met. Back home in the English Department of the University of Karachi, I was the envy of colleagues who had also done their Master's in England but at different universities and so had never had the occasion of taking a course with Professor Roach. Compared to the other two Master's degrees from Pakistan, I received the highest grades in my third and last Master's degree from

Leeds. The year in England passed like a whirlwind, and we were soon on our way back to Pakistan. Ali still misses Leeds because of its year-round rainfall, though I have grown to love Toronto more.

In 1996, that is, three years after doing my Master's in Linguistics and ELT, I was promoted to the position of an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, at the University of Karachi. Having done two Master's in Linguistics, so to speak, I was automatically inducted into the Linguistics Department and so I inadvertently became part of the politics that my former teachers, now colleagues in the Linguistics Department, played against our Literature professors. My respect for my Literature teachers remained unabated. They were, after all, the people who had started us on our academic journeys and had given us the nurturance, care and patience that one gives to a young plant. For me, human values have always been more important than any measure of knowledge that one might acquire.

Becoming an Assistant Professor opened doors for me. I began teaching in two private Universities in addition to Karachi University (which is a government university). I taught business English to MBAs at Hamdard University and Technical English to first year Engineering students at Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology, and I was making a lot of money. Although we had applied for immigration to Canada, we were in no hurry to come. However, eventually, we decided that we had to leave Pakistan, no matter what. The law and order situation in Karachi had been deteriorating for the past ten years but, until it affected us directly, we did not fully realize the gravity of the situation. One evening, we were going to a wedding and my mother, sister and I were all decked out in a lot of gold, as is the custom. When my son opened the gate so

that his father could drive the car out, four tall, hefty men with Kalashnikovs entered our house and put a gun at my seven-year-old Faraz. It was a nightmare — my only child at their mercy! They told us not to utter a sound or they would shoot Faraz. Only Ali had his wits about him. Just when they had rounded up all our tenants and our family and ordered us to take off our jewelry, one of the dacoits accidentally fired his gun. My sister fell down grazed by a bullet. They thought they had killed her and they all fled. We called for help and soon our house was crowded with neighbours. The police arrived shortly afterwards but that was the moment we decided we had to leave Pakistan. Later, of course, our friends agreed that it was a traumatic situation for a child as young as seven and since a similar incident had happened before involving Faraz, it was best to go someplace safe, we couldn't afford another situation like that again.

Coming to Canada was a difficult decision. The irony of the situation was that three Master's and a diploma in teaching English wasn't enough. The Teachers' College in Toronto wanted me to complete a certificate course in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) before I could be issued a teaching certificate. It seemed to me as if everything I had studied so far and my almost 12 years of university and college teaching experience was worth nothing. The whole situation was frustrating, to say the least. I got a job at a telemarketing firm at $7 an hour, after having been turned down by another company because the person hiring thought I had "a wrong accent." Ali, who was a deputy registrar in the University of Karachi, was not very fluent in English and could only find work as a security guard. After applying to almost thirty different places, an Immigrant Women's Centre (name withheld) hired me as an English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructor in one of its locations. Had I been hired through the Toronto

District School Board (TDSB), I would have received a higher salary, but since I didn't have a Canadian TESL Certificate, that was not possible. Although it took me an hour and a half to commute (changing buses three times on the way), I was happy that I was finally teaching again. Soon, however, the basic level of language teaching and the lifeless nature of the LINC curriculum sapped my energy and my enthusiasm.

I took an intensive four-month course as an interpreter of Urdu. The assignments required me to interpret for battered women who were either going through court proceedings for divorce or had been beaten up so badly by their husbands that the neighbours had called the police, and they had to explain the whole situation to the police. What I learned was that most of these women, although they were not adequately educated to get jobs here in Canada, wanted to become financially independent. Some blamed their husband's abusive behaviour on the frustrating job situation in Canada where even highly educated people couldn't get jobs because they did not have Canadian experience and Canadian qualifications. Seeing a large number of abused women, I also learned that while education may give a person options, it does not prevent a woman from being abused. A woman, no matter how highly educated she may be, still occupies a subordinate position in a patriarchal culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to provide a theoretical background for the situation of South Asian immigrant women in Canada and their negotiation of identity after immigration, which is the main theme of my research. I have also tried to situate myself in the Canadian context through my educational history and autobiography. I discuss the major discourses that influenced my identity formation and transformation

through the years, as a woman, a student, and a teacher. Important variables that influenced my life, such as race, a patriarchal cultural background, education, jobs, and settling in a new country, also influence the lives of other immigrants in Canada. There are many narrative commonalities between my autobiography and the life stories of South Asian immigrants in this country, which will be seen through the stories told by my research participants in the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Being interested in the experiences of recent South Asian immigrant women in Canada, I explored with my participants themes which, if incorporated in the existing LINC curriculum, might prove beneficial to their individual, social and educational advancement in Canada. I bring to this research a multifaceted personal investment: I was a recent immigrant myself at the time I started my research, I am a South Asian woman cognizant of the implications of a repressive patriarchal culture, and an ESL teacher who has taught LINC curriculum for almost a year and found it deficient.

As an educator, I was interested in the life experiences of immigrant women. Borrowing John Dewey's metaphor, that life *is* education, I was concerned with the education of these immigrant women:

> For Dewey (1938) education, experience and life are inextricably intertwined. When on asks what it means to study education, the answer—in its most general sense—is to study experience. Following Dewey, the study of education is the study of life. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. xxiii – xxiv.)

I wanted to look into how the South Asian women negotiate their identities in Canada and how their identities interacted with life and education in Canada. Above all, I needed to find out how their immigrant experience influenced their perspective on life. In other words, I intended to look at a curriculum for these women from their own perspective. My research participants were homemakers or semi-skilled women who came to LINC classes to learn English, and possibly to get a job to keep up with the increasingly high demands of life in the host country (Canada).

The Mode of Inquiry

I intended to use the stories of South Asian immigrant women to evoke viable themes relevant for their curriculum. Narrative inquiry, to my mind was the most suitable methodology for this research venture. The importance of stories was immense in my research. Connelly and Clandinin (1995) believe that "Thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been and where we are going." In the context of teachers as curriculum planners, they write:

> The more we understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do, and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be. The process of making sense and meaning of our curriculum, that is, of the narratives of our experience is both difficult and rewarding. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 11)

I see in this statement a consonance between life experiences and the curriculum we choose to design for ourselves by choosing to live the life we do. Being rational beings, we think while living, that is to say, life is an education in itself. I have always felt that I have learned more from my life experiences than from reading course-books aimed at passing exams. My idea of life as an educative experience resonates with John Dewey's notion that thinking is inquiry, inquiry is life and life is education (1938). This notion of life experiences being more educative than formal education is echoed by Connelly and Clandinin when they say that important educational experiences like births, deaths, marriages, etc., occur outside of school but are most educative in themselves and so "education in this view, is a narrative of experience that grows and strengthens a person's capabilities to cope with life" (1988, p. 27).

Numerous studies in curriculum (e.g., Pinar, 1975; Larsson, 1984; Munby, 1983; Olson, 1981; Lampert, 1985; Elbaz, 1983, etc.) have sought to place life experiences on a temporal continuum of situations with varying emphases on past present and future, which differentiate each notion of curriculum from the other. My notion of present curriculum coloured by past experiences comes the closest to Pinar's concept of "Currere," which

> emphasizes a person's experiential history both in and out of schools... [and the idea that] the curriculum a person has experienced is found in that person's overall past record of experiences in private life as well as in professional life. (Connelly & Clandinin 1988, p. 20.)

While this statement probably speaks to teachers, I am of the opinion that it holds equally true for learners—in this case, the South Asian immigrant women—who are important stakeholders in their curriculum.

I have woven into the stories of my mother, my grandmother, and myself, the stories of the immigrant women because there are many similar macro themes running through our lives which I feel are parallel to those of the immigrants in Canada. My mother was an immigrant. She immigrated to Pakistan in 1947 when India was partitioned. She experienced most of the challenges that South Asian immigrants face in Canada. My maternal grandfather was an immigrant from Afghanistan, who wandered south to India in search of religious education. I am an immigrant to Canada who worked as a teacher for a time and who is now a full-time doctoral student. Education figured largely in the lives of my mother and grandmother as a means of emancipation — mental liberation in the case of my grandmother, and mental, social and financial emancipation

for my mother. For me, education was meant to be a means of achieving financial and intellectual liberation from the societal norms. Finally, my grandmother was a teacher, so was my mother (retired now) and I am a teacher as well. My grandfather was a religious teacher.

Hence the macro themes of *immigration*, *education* and *teaching* run through our generations, as I assume they do, as well, in the lives of South Asian immigrants in Canada. As I share the same cultural background with my research participants, I am sure there may be many other micro themes as well that I might discover to be similar to mine in their stories.

Thematic threads, like the ones mentioned above, interweave to give the fabric of life a colorful pattern which can be discerned through the telling of personal stories.

> Personal stories have three components: experience, concepts and themes. According to Smith (1989) Experiences are the 'facts' that happen to us. They are people, places and events that become part of our history.....Concepts are beliefs or ideas we have about ourselves and others that we use to screen and interpret experiences and to guide our behaviour.....Themes are general, abstract principles that summarize and consolidate experiences and concepts. Themes give unity to personal stories. They are like templates that organize the concepts of a personal story into a coherent meaningful whole." (Jalongo, Eisenberg, & Gerbracht, 1995, pp. 8 – 9)

In narrative inquiry, researchers collect and write stories of experience, not only of themselves (autobiography) but of others too (biography). Stories are used as "the

mode of knowing" (Carter 1993) for connecting experiences of South Asian women to evoke themes which will subsequently be incorporated in the LINC curriculum.

Storytelling and retelling, as an ancient mode of knowing, as Carter points out "captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances of meaning in human affairs" (Carter 1993). I have collected the stories of my participants through detailed interviews, with the goal of collaboratively make meaning from them. I concur with Connelly and Clandinin when they say that "for the person in a curriculum situation 'narrative' is an idea that permits us to think of the whole. A narrative is a kind of life story, larger and more sweeping than the short stories that compose it" (1988, p. 24). Thus narrative helps us recognize the meaning of individual experiences by understanding the whole through its parts. Human beings come to know the world around them by attributing meaning to individual actions and experiences, and then relating these parts to the whole. Describing narrative, Connelly and Clandinin state that it "is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (1988, p. 24).

I believe that by telling and retelling their stories, my participants will be able to make meaning of their experiences. The emergent life themes would be relevant to them in Canada, if and when addressed in LINC classroom through its curriculum.

Defining narrative inquiry and its applicability to my work.

According to Connelly and Clandinin, narrative inquiry is the method used by many researchers in their studies of experiences pertaining to education. "Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore educational experience should be studied narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.

19). My research being about the experiences of immigrants with the purpose of exploring their educational needs, aptly suits this method of inquiry. Narrative inquirers believe that people live storied lives. Human experience is basically storied experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1992). Through the personal experience method (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991), narrative as a phenomenon (lived stories) and narrative as a method (story telling) is utilized to link immigrants' and my own personal and professional experiences in our educational and personal landscapes. Narrative is the most appropriate approach for my inquiry because of its epistemological, autobiographical, and biographical qualities.

As stated earlier, I undertook this research both as a South Asian immigrant woman and as a teacher. Even though Connelly and Clandinin describe their concept of "personal practical knowledge" as being applicable to a "teacher's knowing of a classroom" (1988, p. 25) when individual teachers are able to understand local, everyday events and make decisions in their classroom as part of their narratives, I feel it has wider implications as well. It pertains to the whole life of a person — any person, be it a teacher or a student — when they define personal practical knowledge as "a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). In my research, it is the immigrants' past experiences and their vision of the future that is going to determine their present curriculum, since it is a "study of the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). It gives centrality to the immigrant women's stories and recognizes the importance of the social, historical and political context in which knowledge is constructed.

According to Connelly and Clandinin, the best way to approach one's students' curriculum is to try and understand our own narrative. That way we would be thinking of our curriculum in narrative terms:

> When we say that understanding our own narrative is a metaphor for understanding the curriculum of our students, we are saying that if you understand what makes up the curriculum of the person most important to you, namely yourself, you will better understand the difficulties, whys, and wherefores of the curriculum of your students. There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves. (1988, p. 31)

The retelling of stories in the narrative inquiry mode helped me and my participants "reconstruct" meaning from our past experiences for curricular purposes. I believe that the reconstruction of meaning is an empowering educative experience, in itself, for the participants, even before the emergent themes are included in the LINC curriculum. John Dewey asserts "there is no intellectual growth without some reconstruction, some remaking, of impulses and desires in the form in which they first show themselves" (1938, p. 64).

As a researcher, I tell my stories, told and reconstructed with the stories of the participants, of the immigrant experience, and of the importance of education and career, in liberating mind (and spirit) and in gaining social ascendancy. In retelling our stories, we were moving inward and outward, backward and forward. Connelly and Clandinin explain this subjective movement as "By inward we meant towards the internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions, and so on. By outward

we meant towards the existential conditions, that is, environment. By backward and forward we referred to temporality, past present and future" (2000, p. 50).

For Connelly and Clandinin, narrative inquiry is a three-dimensional research method; the dimensions are: 'personal' and 'social' (interaction), 'past', 'present' and 'future' (continuity), combined with a notion of 'place' (situation).

> This set of terms creates a three dimensional narrative inquiry space with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along the third. Using this set of terms any particular inquiry is defined by this three dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; focus on the personal and social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and occur in specific places or sequence of places. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

In the case of my participants, although the 'situation' may have changed when they immigrated to a foreign land, the personal and the social dimensions that comprise the interaction are tinged by their past experiences, their present socioeconomic situation and their future aspirations.

Why narrative inquiry?

Connelly and Clandinin point out that: "narrative has a story quality.... stories are interesting in themselves in the same sense that a fictional story is interesting.... They have an 'invitational quality' and are compelling for both academics and practitioners'' (1990, p. 441).

I find that people are attracted to stories more than to anything else. A world inundated by fictional movies and books attests to the popularity of stories. Stories

acquire an immortality when they are true and about real people. I intend to make the experiences of immigrant women immortal by giving them the space and venue to bring forth ontological issues to discuss and explore. While not disparaging the enormous data that has been compiled about immigrants in Canada, I believe that listening to their stories of experiences in their own voices will help to understand their realities better than working with "endless charts and statistics" (Aitken, 1987). Listening to immigrants' stories and their ideas about what is important for them to learn in Canada is more meaningful than going through a prescriptively designed curriculum which outlines what immigrants need to learn in Canada in order to integrate successfully into the mainstream culture while maintaining their own culture, so as to keep the semblance of a vertical mosaic.

The present curriculum is, in my view, the Catholic District School Board's (not the immigrants') notion of what immigrants ought to learn in Canada. The curriculum designing body, does not, in my opinion, take into consideration the cultural diversity and the unique experiences of the immigrants. It assumes the immigrants to be a homogeneous group of people with similar needs. I concur with Clandinin and Connelly, who state that "Student achievement on a test does not in and of itself tell the tester or the teacher much of anything until the narrative of the student's learning history is brought to bear on the performance" (2000, p. 31). For the prescriptive LINC curriculum currently being taught,

> An action is taken as directly evidential. There is an equation connecting action and meaning, connecting performance and cognitive level. In narrative thinking

> however, there is an interpretive pathway between action and meaning mapped out in terms of narrative histories. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 31)

I used the narrative approach, telling and retelling the stories of experiences of my participants, keeping in mind that people are storytellers and are characters in their own…stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). They may, in this way, be better able to understand themselves by reading the stories of fellow immigrants. Narrative enjoys a special niche in the field of education because it brings "theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear upon educational experience as lived" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 442). My participants' stories in this context are used to interpret various theoretical ideas. According to Dewey, experience is both personal and social, and so even though people are individuals and should be understood as such, their experiences can best be understood in their social context.

The Possible Limitations of my Work.

Proceeding with my interviews, I was conscious of a few possible limitations in my research. First of all, I thought there might be some ethical issues surrounding the research that may prevent me from capturing the essence of each story to its fullest extent. Working within the parameters allowed by the ethical review committee, for the first time, I felt the stories may not be explored in their entirety.

Secondly, being from the same cultural background as that of my participants, I might have overlooked, or taken for granted, some important aspect of the culture that may have appeared intriguing to a foreign researcher, just as we tend not to notice the quality of the air we are accustomed to breathing. I was aware of my multiple roles in the research. I was a researcher, a participant from the same community, a teacher aware of

educational inequalities, and a woman cognizant of the discriminatory power dynamics and the cultural stereotypes—both inter-cultural and intra-cultural—that go with it. Clandinin and Connelly echo my thoughts when they say that as inquirers we should know that

> we did live out what we now call cultural stereotypes. This telling of ourselves, this meeting of ourselves in the past through inquiry, makes clear that as inquirers we too are part of the parade. We have helped make the world in which we find ourselves. We are not merely objective inquirers, people on the high road, who study a world lesser in quality than our moral temperament would have it, people who study a world we did not help create...Being in this world we need to make ourselves as well as offer up research understandings that could lead to a better world. (2000, p. 61)

While defining for us the role of narrative inquirers, the above statement, to me, also points out the complexities of being an intimate part of the research as well as being detached enough to report the research to the world to bring about a change. I do not know to what extent my multi-faceted role in the research affected my work when I was in the midst of the ever-changing narrative boundaries. I was always consciously striving not to lose sight of the purpose of my research, acknowledging the fact that in the midst of the messiness of life "narrative inquiry always has a purpose, though purpose may shift, and always has a focus, though focus may blur and move" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 115). Sometimes freedom in research borders on serendipity and can become, in itself, a limitation, in the absence of a definite framework.

Furthermore, by virtue of belonging to the same culture, I was an insider, but because I was researching the participants' experiences, I was considered an outsider too. Either way, I stood in the danger of interpreting the field notes according to my own predilections: excessive sympathy for women's lot, an unduly harsh interpretation of men's viewpoints and, generally, a sense of justice more inclined towards women. I was therefore, always conscious of not imposing my own interpretation of the stories because that could obscure the participants' voices and muddy their truths. It was also important to resist the temptation to change stories for audience appeal thereby falsifying the real story. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) warn about the dangers of indulging in a narrative ending — "the Hollywood plot." I knew that if I was not careful with the interpretation of stories, I might (a) impose my personal and cultural bias, (b) manipulate the data for my benefit, and (c) generalize from a particular exemplar to all situations. It was difficult for me to step back from my own experiences and obtain observer-independent accounts from my participants. On the other hand, I was aware that if I sought to remain too unobtrusive in the writing process, I might end up being invisible in the research which would, in turn, bring up issues of 'signature' and 'voice' of the researcher.

Lastly, questions regarding validity, reliability and generalizability of narrative research opens up a Pandora's box of issues for researchers who are new to the field of inquiry. We are confronted with the problem of how to defend our research to skeptics. However a clear understanding of the meaning of verisimilitude in narrative inquiry would make it possible for me to argue or defend the value of this research. Jalongo et al. talk about the critics of the narrative method.

> Our toughest critics will no doubt be those with a technological mentality about teaching, readers who aspire to break teaching down into its component parts and reduce it to a set of methods and procedures. They may be inclined to disparage the narrative mode as soft and subjective. Yet before they abandon teachers' stories in favor of hard-headed objectivity and facts we remind them that while numbers provide a useful way to summarize, they are also a way of depersonalizing our decisions. Educators gird themselves with statistics as warriors do with armor; statistics are frequently used by educators to protect themselves from slings and arrows of the public. Then they are off the hook; it wasn't their considered professional opinion that a child needed remediation in reading it was the test score that decided.... A teacher's narrative puts a face back on the statistics. Just as real reading ceases when comprehension is lost, we submit that real teaching is sacrificed when we become disinterested in or incapable of understanding individual cases, thinking only in collective terms. (1995, p. xxii)

By demonstrating a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of my work, I hope to integrate the existing epistemological theories with my research experience in the personal and professional knowledge landscape.

Research Design

Narrative inquirers divide their research design into *field texts* (also called the data by quantitative researchers) and *research texts*, which emerge out of the interpretation and analysis of the field texts. Narrative inquirers can employ a variety of methods for collecting and composing field texts. For example, oral history involves asking a person

to tell his/her stories in their own way; collecting or composing stories involves telling, retelling and writing stories, family stories, life experiences, annals (a simple dated history of significant moments or events for an individual or an institution) and chronicles (a more thematic representation of annals). Field texts can also include photographs, memory boxes and other personal/institutional artifacts, research interviews, journals, autobiographical and biographical writings, letters, conversations, field notes, stories from the field, and document analysis.

Integral to the process of compiling field texts is the importance of the relationship between the research participants and the researcher. "Researcher relationships to ongoing participant stories shape the nature of field texts and establish the epistemological status of them" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94). Explaining field texts, Clandinin and Connelly go on to say, "All field texts are selective reconstructions of field experience and thereby embody an interpretive process" (2000, p. 94).

The interpretation clearly depends on what stories are told by the participants and how they are told, which is implicitly dependent upon the depth of relationship between the researcher and the participant. Field texts are imperative in narrative inquiry because they "allow inquirers to move between intimacy with field participants and a reflective stance: [thus] field texts need to be routinely and rigorously kept... [and since they] fill in the spaces created by memory accounts of events: field texts need to be richly detailed" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 95). Field texts in a narrative inquiry are "richly detailed" not only by virtue of being about the "existential conditions" but also because they script the "individual's internal responses" as well. Thus, according to Connelly and Clandinin "field texts allow for growth and change." In the three-dimensional inquiry

space, researchers are always conscious of their own as well as their participants' position *vis a vis* the ever changing temporal, spatial and interactional landscape.

Clandinin and Connelly state that "for narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (2000, p.122). My research is biographical and autobiographical in nature, keeping in view my major concern: the significance of education in the lives of South Asian women in Canada. My autobiography is interwoven with the biographies of my participants in order to explore the uniqueness, as well as the commonalities, of human experience with regard to life and its vicissitudes. Molloy (1991), states that "autobiography is always a re-presentation, that is, a re-telling, because the life to which it supposedly refers is already a kind of narrative construct. Life is always, necessarily, a tale." Thus, my autobiography is my interpretation of life experiences, and their significance to my present and future life. Connelly and Clandinin argue that "an autobiography is a particular reconstruction of an individual's narrative, and there could be other re-constructions" (1988, p. 39), that is, the same experiences could be interpreted differently by different people and they may, in turn, constitute a different story. To me, a way of understanding oneself better is to reflect on one's actions after reading or listening to others' biographies. Collecting participants' stories was an educating experience for me as well as for my participants, since it helped me understand my own perspective on life.

My way of collecting stories was primarily through detailed conversations and semi-structured interviews. There are various forms of interviews. I conducted in-depth interviews about immigrant women's experiences in Canada and their identity formation

in the new country. Taylor and Bodgan (1984) describe the in-depth interview as "repeated face to face encounters between the researcher and informants directed towards understanding informants' perspective on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words" (p. 77). Most of my interviews were intended to be semi-structured interviews, defined by Kvale as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon" (1996, p. 5). My interviews were quite flexible with regard to the storied lives of my participants as I intended to leave a lot of room for serendipity. Initially, perhaps because I was apprehensive about losing sight of the purpose of my research in the colorful patterns of life stories being told, I sought to subscribe to this definition of semi-structured interviews.

The transition from field text to research text is difficult. A narrative inquirer engages in a multi-layered analysis of the field texts which deals with matters like character, place, scene, plot, tension, narrator, context, tone, etc. Eventually, in the analysis, the research can present the socially significant meaning of the inquiry. Summarizing the difference between field texts and research texts, Clandinin and Connelly point out

> It is responses to the questions of meaning and social significance that ultimately shape field texts into research texts.... In general, field texts are not constructed with a reflective intent. Rather they are close to experience, tend to be descriptive, and are shaped around particular events. Field texts have a recording quality to them, whether auditory or visual. Research texts are at a distance from

field texts and grow out of the repeated asking of questions concerning meaning and social significance. (2000, p. 131)

My field text, I found, mostly consisted of my first impressions about the research participants, my concerns about negotiating my entry into the research field, and day to day challenges that I encountered while I sought to keep the conversation going between my participants and me. They were also fragmented accounts of my struggles with scheduling appointments and then having to cancel them due to some unforeseen incident in the lives of my participants, which would then change the whole climate of the research. Some examples of such incidents include a threatening phone call from an estranged husband (in the case of Razia) or a bout of depression that my counselor friend informed me, Saima was going through. I also recorded my periodic insecurity about losing my participants because of a change of heart or an unknown fear. Owing to the sensitive nature of my research, I was never sure of its continuation. Days would go by and I wouldn't hear from my participants, although Pat (a pseudonym), my counselor friend, was always very reassuring. Thus my field texts were a reflection of the rewarding as well as of the frustrating moments in my research experience.

Sifting the relevant details was a daunting task in itself. In their research text, narrative inquirers seek to position their work with respect to other research, and ideologies. This positioning of narrative inquiry work seems imperative if the research is to contribute to questions of social significance. Keeping aside my biases and my sense of injustice in these women's lives, I attempt to portray the social and educational significance of my participants' experience in my research text.

Interviewing.

Culture had an important part to play in my research, as I was essentially looking at my participants' interpretation of their life events or their own perspective on life. Culture has been defined as "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (Spradley, 1979, p. 5). Interpretation refers to the meaning people accord to their experiences. The system of meaningful concepts or symbols within each culture helps that particular speech community give a certain unique interpretation to each life event.

The notion of culture as a system of meaningful symbols is consonant with the theory of symbolic interactionism which explains human behavior in terms of meanings. Blumer has identified three premises of symbolic interactionism:

> 1st premise: "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them".
>
> 2nd premise: "[The] meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows"
>
> 3rd premise: "Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters. (1969, p. 2)

While these premises are self-explanatory, they highlight the idea of culture being a shared system of meanings tied to a context in which people interact. Culture also consists of 'tacit knowledge' shared by the community members. Spradley (1979, p. 7) refers to culture as "a cognitive map" which "serves as a guide for acting and for interpreting our experience" by providing us with broad principles for interpretation and response. The lives, utterances and attitudes of my research participants reflected their

culture completely. Since I do not conform to some of their cultural assumptions, I felt somewhat like a rebel. The process of writing my research text prompted many soul-searching moments. Thus, it was an educating experience for me as well.

New members in a community learn their culture by observing other people, listening to them and making inferences. Researchers doing fieldwork make cultural inferences from (a) what people say, (b) the way people act, and (c) the artifacts people in that language community use. In view of the cultural relativity of research participants, one criticism of some questionable research studies is that they impose Western concepts onto non-Western cultures. Good ethnographic research requires the researcher to completely immerse himself/herself in the culture being studied. I see two aspects emerging that have to be considered for interviewing research participants; the *macro* aspect which consists of the ethical principles adopted to safeguard the rights of the interviewees and prevent their undue exploitation by the researchers, and the *micro* aspect that deals with the psychological aspects that determine the relationship between the researcher and the informant, and which subsequently contribute to making a research venture a successful one. I had the advantage of belonging to the same subcontinent as my participants. Our core culture was essentially the same while the peripheral differences accounted for the individual uniqueness in our experiences. I felt that we somehow shared a psychological bond due to our common cultural background and cultural assumptions. The ethical principles discussed below cemented our relationship further as we were all aware of our boundaries and respected each other's rights with regards to anonymity and privacy.

Ethical principles.

The Council of the American Anthropological Association adopted a set of principles in 1971 to act as a guide for researchers. They are paraphrased briefly as follows:

1. *Consider informants first*: In a situation where a conflict of interest occurs, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the interviewees come first; that their social and psychological welfare as well as their dignity and privacy are honored.
2. *Safeguard informants' rights, interests and sensitivities*: This injunction implies that informants should have the right to delete information or disclosures that they consider to be potentially injurious to their interests.
3. *Communicate research objectives*: The informants have the right to know the researcher's aim in conducting the study. Though it may not be a comprehensive statement of the whole research, a gradual unfolding as the study proceeds may be more appropriate.
4. *Protect the privacy of informants*: The research participants have the right to maintain anonymity for purposes of preserving their welfare, dignity and privacy. Researchers thus use pseudonyms which also help them get around problematic ethical issues, should they arise.
5. *Do not exploit informants:* Research participants should not be exploited for personal gain and they should be given their due return for the services rendered.
6. *Make reports available to informants*: The informants have the right to go through all the material that is made available to the research sponsors and the

general public because it is essentially their own information. Nothing should be kept from them.

The interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Since life stories are always rooted in a social context, change is inevitable, not only in the research participants as a result of the research, but also in the society. I believe the genesis of change occurs in the interviewing process itself when, by telling and retelling their stories, the research participants are able to interpret their past experiences and perhaps cast a new light on them which may bring about future change. As the lives of my participants unfolded in the new country, their ideas regarding their position in society were also undergoing change. I believe the information we shared—I, from the perspective of an interpreter of Urdu for abused women who was professionally trained to know their rights, and they, from the viewpoint of abused women looking for the means to take control of their lives— contributed to their growth as it did to mine. I felt a symbiotic relation evolving between me and my participants, despite the difference in our roles and situations.

Alfred Benjamin (1987) argues that a lot depends on the evolving relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. He believes that if the researcher evokes an air of "unconditional positive regard" and confidence in the interviewees' ability to be responsible for himself and his actions, the researcher can help the interviewee "become more aware of himself, his life space, his own frame of reference. We want to help him learn that change is possible but that it is up to him to decide if and when and how to change" (1987, p. 35). For my participants who, like me, are South Asian immigrant women from a patriarchal culture, a confidence-evoking atmosphere resulted from our

initial sharing of stories. How does the interviewer inspire confidence and trust in the participants? Benjamin states that

> He contributes of himself and his professional knowledge to help the interviewee not simply to display his wisdom or his splendid personal qualities. He wields his authority in such a way that the interviewee may come to trust himself in finding his own way and his own direction. (1987, p. 36)

Explaining the source of authority that the interviewer possesses Benjamin says

> Essentially we bring our knowledge, experience, professional skills, the information we possess and the resources at our command. Beyond this we bring ourselves: our desire to be of use, our liking and warm regard for our fellow human beings, our background, our prejudices and shortcomings, our own life space and our own internal frame of reference. (Benjamin, 1987, p. 37)

Benjamin goes on to discuss some of the other key elements that go into making an interview successful, for instance, *according respect* to the ideas and the opinions of the informant, *achieving empathy* with the interviewee and sometimes forgoing one's own frame of reference in order to understand the viewpoint of the interviewee. Finally, he argues that *humanness* is of essence. The interviewer must demolish every barrier, every technological or behavioral obstacle that might prevent the interviewee from revealing his/her true, genuine self. The interviewee must feel at home with the interviewer so that he/she can express his/her ideas freely. One of my participants was not initially comfortable with the use of a tape-recorder and I had to postpone using it until she felt at home with it.

I have tried to situate my research in the methodology that I feel is best suited to my purpose—narrative inquiry. The object of study for narrative inquiry is experience. I intended to study the educational needs of immigrant women in Canada, through their life experiences. Narrative inquirers proceed by telling and listening to stories to get to experience.

> In effect, stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history.... Experience, in this view, is the stories people live. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, pp. 154 – 155)

The task of narrative researchers is to collect and tell stories and thus write narratives of experience. For Clandinin and Connelly, experience is the starting point for all social science inquiry. "Personal experience method [is] a way to permit researchers to enter into and participate with the social world in ways that allow the possibility of transformations and growth" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 176).

I have tried to use narrative as a method in my research to elicit the stories of immigrant women. Themes of love, loyalty, family values, and culture flow through these stories. Narrative, as I see it, recovers the values that modernism and the corporate culture have eradicated from human society. Research and education have not escaped modernist influences, confined to ivory towers, devoid of human considerations, education and research have tended to be geared to elitist, profit-oriented, corporate goals. Such achievement-oriented education with predetermined objectives, in my view, divides the population into "haves" and "have-nots." Narrative, on the other hand, seeks to democratize education and connect to lives that may not be universal but are

poignantly familiar, thus giving a human face to education and research. Narrative inquiry provides accessibility to unique life experiences across time and space, making education responsive to human needs, as opposed to making humans responsive to profit-oriented global, corporate interests.

Conclusion

While this chapter provides the theoretical grounding for my methodology, the listening to and telling of stories was an informal experience. I and my research participants were totally engrossed in our stories and there was often no difference between my role as a researcher and their role as participants. My questions were spontaneous, inspired by their situation rather than following a prescribed format for interviewing. For the three months that I was engaged in the process of collecting field texts, the lives of my participants became an important part of my own. It felt almost as if I lived their lives with them. Two of my participants were abused and that fact alone had a special significance for me due to my own stake in the issue of abuse. I laughed and cried with these two women. Their stories struck a familiar chord in me and I could relate to their situation, as one of them. Sharing the same cultural and religious background with these women, I felt, was a great asset for me. We often shared an understanding look and they knew I empathized with what they were going through.

During the experience of collecting my participants' stories, I realized that no matter how many books on interviewing a novice researcher may read, she is always faced with novel situations and has to ask unanticipated questions to clarify that situation. Being involved intimately in the lives of my participants permitted me to ask questions which might otherwise have been considered intrusive. Since my participants had

learned to trust me and knew that not everything would appear in print, they could tell me things "off the record." This level of trust entails a huge responsibility and requires great discretion on the part of the researcher who is circumscribed by boundaries. It has been an enormously educating process for me.

Chapter 3: The Curricular Foundations of My Research

I believe the current educational systems, when they are geared towards teaching students specific skills for functioning in a technocratic environment, are deeply influenced by a means-end mentality promoted by a market-oriented approach, . Eisner argues that in today's corporate world "The aim of schools for students become converted from the expansion of consciousness and the exploration of the possibilities of the imagination to successful adaptation to a technocratic routine" (Eisner, 1992, p. 317). What is needed, in Eisner's opinion (and my own) is

> ...a deep respect for personal purpose, lived experience, the life of imagination, and those forms of understanding that resist dissection and measurement. What is wrong with schools, among other things, is their industrialized format, their mechanistic attitudes towards students, their indifference to personal experience, and their emphasis on the instrumental and the out of reach. (Eisner, 1992, p. 316)

To this end, students should be encouraged to unearth their own potential in a conducive environment. A conducive classroom environment, to my mind, is one where the learners' culture is duly recognized. The current Eurocentric LINC curriculum, I believe, is not sufficiently inclusive to accommodate the diversity in student population. The importance, for socio-psychological reasons, of a balanced Asian Canadian culture has been emphasized earlier. However, deciding what aspects of a culture to address in a curriculum is very difficult, as culture

> is not a systematic set of logically interrelated propositions about values, norms, and the nature of the empirical world...[but]...a broad, diffuse, and potentially

> contradictory body of shared understanding about both what is and what ought to be. (Mary H. Metz, 1988, p.54, as quoted by Peshkin, 1992, p. 249)

"What ought to be" emerges when the students develop the requisite awareness to analyze their situation. In the current LINC curriculum the immigrants' rich life experiences have largely been ignored. Reynolds and Skillbeck (quoted by Peshkin, 1992, p. 250) conceive of a viable curriculum as being "a mediation or a bridge between a learner's experiences and the processes, forms and substances of contemporary culture" (1976, p. 100). An education which is merely 'associative' and 'replicative' of the host culture, one which cannot be 'interpretive' and 'applicative' to borrow Brady's (1988) terms quoted in Peshkin (1992, p. 255) is of little significance for people who are intellectually mature enough to look beyond the mere transmission of knowledge to exploring more controversial issues, sharing opinions and appreciating alternatives. A viable curriculum should thus be process-oriented since it would help immigrants develop the awareness to be able to apply their reflective capabilities to ameliorate their own situations.

There have been various approaches to curriculum research and design ranging from totally empirical and experimental models to wholly psychoanalytical and post-critical inquiries. The traditional methods of curriculum research, in my opinion, correspond roughly to positivistic research where objectives or variables were predefined and controlled experimentally. The more psycho-socially based research is qualitative in nature. While there is no clearly demarcated classification, curriculum research methods have been classed as:

1. Analytic: an experiment based research.
2. Intentional: where gaps are identified between intentions and outcomes, impediments highlighted and solutions sought.
3. Portrait: adopts a holistic view of schooling with a characteristic ethos. A research in curriculum merely reveals its major features.
4. A Structural approach centers around the structures and functions of the curriculum that constitutes the whole.
5. A Societal perspective to curriculum research reveals schooling to be a reflection of the society with its political and economic underpinnings, thus such research is considered to be Marxist. It is also called critical theory or critical pedagogy, and is another form of 're-conceptualism'.
6. A Narrative approach views education as emerging from social and personal history, hence autobiographical, narrative and phenomenological methods of inquiry are the mainstays of this perspective. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1992)

Having highlighted the importance of a strong cultural component in the LINC curriculum, I must re-emphasize that it is the learner himself/herself who is ultimately the source of knowledge. Hence, to my mind, a narrative approach to curriculum is the most appropriate one for South Asian immigrant women, in view of the untapped wealth of cultural resources they possess to interpret and make meaning of their experiences. Narrative has been defined as "the making of meaning from personal experience via a process of reflection in which storytelling is the key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 16).

Students' cultural knowledge for the purposes of meaning making could effectively be utilized in an ESL class through the medium of reflection and autobiography. Understanding curriculum as autobiography has recently emerged as a major contemporary discourse. Three streams of scholarship can be discerned in the field.

1. ***Autobiographical theory and practice*** in which *currere,* collaboration, voice, dialogue journals, place, poststructuralist portraits of self and experience, and myth, dreams and imagination emerge as major themes.
2. ***Feminist autobiography*** which is characterized by concepts like community, the middle passage, and reclaiming the self.
3. ***Understanding teachers biographically and autobiographically.*** This school includes collaborative biography and autobiographical praxis, the "personal practical knowledge" of teachers, teacher lore, and biographical studies of teachers' lives (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 516).

I subscribe to the third strand of research in curricular studies which locates teachers' knowledge within themselves as seen through their personal practical knowledge. I envision the application of the notion of personal practical knowledge to learners as well, which I have explained in the last chapter. I strongly subscribe to the notion of locating the genesis of knowledge within the learner—a notion that has its roots in the humanistic tradition. Reese, in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* explains humanism in detail:

> In the Renaissance.... the term [humanism] signified a return to the Greek sources and individual criticism and interpretation in contrast to the tradition of .....religious authority. [But] in more recent centuries the term has often been

used in contrast to theism, locating in man the source of goodness and creativity. (Reese, 1980, p. 235)

Reese goes on to say "Humanism is taken as the view which stands in contrast to philosophical absolutism.... [And] the stress is, hence, upon an open universe, pluralism, and human freedom."

The Feminist Orientations of my Research.

Of all the humanistic traditions, feminist theory has been the most radically dedicated to the cause of women. Feminists have made tremendous strides in delineating the atrocious effects of patriarchal oppression on women's social, psychological and intellectual lives. Such feminist researches have had important ramifications for curriculum studies. Feminism has also embraced in its field ecological concerns, peace movements, disparity between sexes, class struggles and racism. In fact, it has always championed the cause of all who are marginalized by Western androcentric scientific research. Feminist studies treasure human experiences, the symbiotic and nurturing bond between man and nature, as well as the ethical issues pertaining to the sexism.

Feminists have adopted a three-dimensional approach to addressing the disparities in the socioeconomic hierarchy that disadvantage women. The three dimensions are explicated by Yvonna Lincoln (1992, p. 93) as follows:

1. The structural analysis of sexist curricula, pedagogies and practices that accord women a lower status as compared to men.
2. Resistance to established norms regarding women and their role in society especially where they conflict with subjective experience. Lincoln explains:

> Resistance is a form of consciousness-raising within individuals, defiance of stereotyping, a stubborn refusal to accept social definitions of one's meanings and experiences when social experiences do not match one's own subjective inner experiences. Resistance implies the struggle for a definition of the self that is rooted in the unique subjectivity of individuals without regard to gender. (Lincoln, 1992, p. 93)

3. Development of a theoretical framework for curricular and pedagogical efforts which incorporates women's experiences in order to create a more viable curriculum. Through fostering dialogic relationships, the curriculum would aim at a more meaningful relationship between the sexes. This research method is based on the premise that women experience the world differently from men and so their experiences are very important in training people to be better human beings. This phenomenologically oriented approach is a radical departure from the traditional, patriarchal, so-called objectivity of the existing disciplines.

I see this third approach as most closely approximating my orientation to my research since the themes which evolve out of the experiences of South Asian immigrant women would constitute their curriculum. Restorying the LINC curriculum from a more women-centered perspective would place my research in the feminist fold with a narrative character, since the curriculum would aim at enhancing women's awareness of their situation especially in a patriarchal cultural context.

The curricular implications of questioning hegemonic discourses.

Contemporary curriculum research is qualitative in nature in that it looks for meaning rather than the establishment of concrete objectives or absolute truths. "The field today is preoccupied with *understanding*.... [It] is necessary to understand the contemporary field as discourse, as text, and most simply but profoundly as words and ideas (Pinar et al., 1995, pp. 6, 7). Perceiving curriculum as understanding allows researchers and educators to "inquire into the embedded metaphors, assumptions and visions within curriculum and to comprehensively critique their assumptions and practice and theoretical and instructional premises and goals" (Joseph, Bravmann, Windschitl, Mikel, & Green, 1999, p. 3).

Pinar et al. (1995) portray curriculum as a multitude of discourses: historical, political, racial, gender, poststructuralist/deconstructed/postmodern, autobiographical, biographical, aesthetic, theological and institutional. Each discourse has its own assortment of concepts, theory and foci, and each provides the researcher with a different lens to view curriculum.

Another way of looking at and perhaps evaluating a curriculum is to subscribe to Joseph Schwab's "five bodies of experiences" (1973, p. 502) or commonplaces, namely, subject matter, learners, milieus, teachers and curriculum making. An in depth knowledge of all five is imperative to be able to revise an existing curriculum. Clearly, Schwab's commonplaces seek to provide a framework for analyzing curriculum and integrating meaning from the vantage point of all stakeholders: teachers, learners, community, and parents. Connelly and Clandinin (1988), using these commonplaces, see curriculum planning as a fluid narrative (as opposed to a regimented scientific curriculum designed

by experts), usually emanating from a teacher's sense of identity in the teaching context. These commonplaces provide me with a useful place to hang my idea of learners being prominent stakeholders in the curriculum making process, —hence the importance of their narrative.

Collecting the themes that constitute the polities making up the identities and experiences of all immigrant women are crucial to their viable integration in Canada. Thus in talking about the education of women various ontological and epistemological questions could be considered, such as: What is truth? What is authority? To whom do we listen? What counts for us as evidence? How do we know what we know? Such questions affect our very definition of ourselves, that is, they define our identity and determine how we view our life—public and private, how we perceive our life events and how we interpret our roles in life. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, in their book *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986), conducted interviews with women to look into how they view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority. They discovered that:

1. Women's self concepts and ways of knowing are intertwined (hence the need to hear women's stories)
2. How women struggle to claim the power of their own mind
3. How the two institutions primarily devoted to human development—the family and the school—both promote and hinder women's development
4. All women grow up having to deal with historically and culturally engrained definitions of femininity and womanhood

5. Even though women studies programs burgeoned in the 1970s and attracted quite a few female students and faculty, they were still accorded a marginal status in the academy and their contributions have had little impact on the mainstream curriculum. The focus of academic planning has been on studying the intellectual capacities most often cultivated by men rather than exploring aspects of intelligence and modes of thought that might be more common and highly developed in women.

In his book *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years* (1970), William Perry explains the gradual progression in the intellectual development of learners as they start out on their epistemological journey through life. He argues that initially the learners view the world in terms of polarities of *right/wrong*, *black/white*, *we/they* and *good/bad.* These he calls "*basic dualism.*" The knowledge bound by absolutes and binaries is handed down to the passive learner by the all knowledgeable teacher in a traditional pedagogical format of "banking" (Freire, 1973).

Subsequently, as the learner acquires more knowledge and gains insight into the workings of life, he/she becomes aware of the diversity of viewpoints and the *multiplicity* of opinions that others hold. Thus "dualism" is replaced by "multiplicity" when the student realizes that there is no absolute answer to a question.

Multiplicity is followed by *relativism subordinate* when a teacher asks the student to substantiate his/her opinions by providing evidence, thus adopting an analytical evaluative approach to acquiring knowledge, at least, even if not to life's experiences.

The last stage in Perry's schema is the progression to full *relativism* where the student totally understands the truth to be relative by virtue of its being dependent upon

(1) the context and (2) the interpretation that the knower accords to it. It is at this level of intellectual development that the students understand that knowledge is constructed not given, contextual not absolute, mutable not fixed. According to Perry it is at this stage of relativism that the affirmation of personal identity and commitment evolves.

To me, the last stage postulated by Perry seems congruent with Dewey's concept of experience. For Dewey (1938) the criteria of experience are continuity in temporal terms and interaction, where the interaction between the objective (physical) conditions and internal conditions (feelings and emotions of people) constitute the interpretation of the experience. Also the interaction between the internal conditions and the objective conditions are encompassed in the situation or the context on which the interpretation of the experience depends.

The aim of my research was therefore to explore the life stories of immigrant women for a changing concept of the self and relationship with others as a consequence of immigration. The themes that emerged from the stories would constitute the curriculum which would hopefully address the challenges faced by them in the new country. In other words, my research study is focused on what is important about life and learning from these women's point of view *not* what others think is important for them to learn as a prerequisite for integrating in the Canadian society.

The highlights in my conversations with the immigrant women were their self-image, relationships of importance, education and learning, real-life decision-making and moral dilemmas, accounts of personal change and possible growth, and visions of the future. Implicit in these flexible, semi-structured interviews were questions regarding these women's life conditions after immigration to Canada which proved to be catalyst

for change in their self-images and their lifestyles. I hoped that the ideas expressed in response to these ontological questions, would present them with a vision of an improved future. The telling and retelling of one's story is, to a certain extent, in itself, empowering. Further growth and transformation would ensue by living their own curriculum in class.

The analysis provided by Belenky et al., derived from Perry's (1970) scheme, is very useful in interpreting women's perspectives through the five epistemological categories: (1) *silence*, a position in which women experience themselves mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority; (2) *received knowledge*, a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities, but not capable of creating knowledge on their own; (3) *subjective knowledge*, a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private and subjectively known or intuited; (4) *procedural knowledge*, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge; and (5) *constructed knowledge*, a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 15).

Such classification is often very useful in tracing the epistemological and intellectual development of women. Though these abstract categories are by no means infallible, the researchers were able to see that the women they interviewed were at different stages of progression towards a realization of self. The women used a metaphor of acquiring "voice" and living in "silence" when talking about their intellectual

development. Their sense of self-worth was inextricably intertwined with developing epistemological orientations. I think of women's empowerment through education as a phenomenon whereby they acquire "voice" as opposed to their "silenced" existence in a patriarchal culture.

> Because the (silent) women have relatively underdeveloped representational thought, the ways of knowing available to them are limited to the present (not the past or the future); to the actual (not the imaginary or the metaphorical); to the concrete (not the deduced or the induced); to the specific (not the generalized or the contextualized) and to behaviours actually enacted (not values and motives entertained). (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 27.)

Limited in their conceptual repertoire, they see authority, especially male authority in patriarchal societies, as being absolute. In fact, silent women blindly obey male authority and submit to it completely in order to ensure their survival. Men, on the other hand, knowing that they are in control, consider uneducated women in particular, and women in general, to be imbeciles, immature and impulsive. The sex-role stereotypes in a patriarchal society further endorse the silent women's passivity, compliance and powerlessness. Women, especially homemakers, tend to see themselves through the eyes of their men — the father, the husband and/or the brother — as if the source of self knowledge is lodged in others, not in the self. This theme is touched upon again in the ensuing chapters.

My argument for curriculum development based on creative imagination and self expression is based on the premise that personal growth and professional development are mutually interdependent. A strong element of subjectivity coupled with a sensitive

awareness of human capabilities can provide a viable vision of learning. A facilitator, backed by a strong narrative background, an extensive teaching experience and an in-depth understanding of human nature is always cognizant of the need to bring out his/her students' inner curriculum through the outer curriculum. Brubaker states that inner curriculum is "one's sense of where he or she has been, is and wants to be in the future" (1994, p. xii). The aim of my research was to evoke the inner curriculum of South Asian immigrant women in Canada. By listening to their life experiences I tried to identify the themes that are relevant to their future personal and, if possible, professional growth.

The outer curriculum—the general course outline—must therefore be based on the themes that are important in the inner curriculum so that by working in tandem with the inner, the outer curriculum would help raise these women's awareness to ameliorate their oppressed situation in the Diaspora. The inner curriculum surfaces when the outer curriculum inspires a person to transform, not when it wants a person to conform to a certain ideology. It is, thus, a departure from the mimetic tradition to a transformative one (Jackson, 1986, pp. 120–121). The seed of transformation is embedded within a person's search for liberation and Jackson believes that it is during this search that the essence of the person undergoes a change.

I am of the opinion that a postmodern curriculum which originates from within a person is definitely more conducive to transformation than a modern, market-oriented one which specifies certain aims beforehand and which measures the success of the curriculum by the degree to which those objectives have been fulfilled. The difference between the two is that the postmodern curriculum corresponds mainly to the inner curriculum of a person while the controlled and planned outer curriculum, handed down

by the policy makers, is nothing more than the fulfillment of predetermined aims. The existing modern curriculum has a masculine quality because of boundaries, limits and control. The inner postmodern curriculum, on the other hand, also incorporates "the feminine intuitive artistic role" (Brubaker, 1994, p. 21). I believe that if themes that originate from the inner self of a person are used for devising a curriculum, the outer curriculum would become almost the same as the inner and would work in consonance with the inner to evoke women's potential.

Although any curriculum might require a certain structure to it for reasons of credibility and a sense of purpose, control would not have a predominant role if the postmodern curriculum were to be considered an inner curriculum. People live the inner curriculum whereas they only work on outer curriculum for purposes other than self development and liberation. Those who have the will and the ability to live the inner curriculum do not feel constrained by external pressures and obstacles. The long term aim of my research is to make South Asian women alive to their inner curriculum by exploring new vistas of possibilities for their lives. Those who live the inner curriculum commit themselves to navigating the uncharted realms of possibility. Brubaker explains that "contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas are grist for the inner curriculum persons' inquiry. Single causation is replaced by multiple causation and at times, no causation. Mystery can play an important heuristic role" (1994, p. 21). Once they have learned to use the peripheral outer curriculum to explore their inner curriculum, the South Asian women would not feel so oppressed by their patriarchal culture or their oppressive environment. Even the best of outer curricula are merely springboards for people to live their life experiences better. The transformation from the position of a victim to that of a

non-victim, which is the purpose of a viable curriculum, is best exemplified in the following table adapted from Brubaker (p. 34).

Table 1:

Victim and Non-Victim Psyche

Victim	Non-victim
"I can't do anything while this person is the boss."	"I can't do everything I want to do while this person is the boss but I can do some things that are important to me."
"Nothing I do will make a difference.	"I can make a difference."
"What's the use?"	"What I do is important."

A suitable curriculum generated by the themes arising out of their own stories would certainly help these women view themselves as decision-makers—something they have never been under patriarchal hegemony. Of course, they have to have the will and the intention to accomplish the task.

Important incidents in life can form significant landmarks that might induce people to look desperately for change. The autobiographical element in curriculum design is very important. People have different perspectives on situations because everyone has a different personal history, but "as we participate in the process of sharing autobiographies, we begin to attain *a reciprocity of perspectives*. Out of our subjective perspectives emerge rationality and meaning, for perspectives blend and perceptions confirm each other" (Brubaker 1994, p. 38).

This, I believe, is the crux of curriculum design. When perspectives blend, themes emerge and these themes form the curricular infrastructure. Although Brubaker mainly talks about doing professional autobiographies for purposes of creative curriculum design, I believe the same approach can be applied to South Asian women, whereby

sharing of their life stories could engender a community feeling in them, allowing them to see that they are not alone in their predicament. While sharing their autobiographies, their inherent talents would emerge and they would have a sense of purpose in their future pursuits.

The epistemological implications.

I believe an educational environment, such as an ESL classroom, is the place where educated reflection and debate can be brought to bear upon the existing social, political and economic conditions, with a view to envisioning a transformation of society. Theorists believe that confronting the dominant order is precipitated by the inequity of power privilege in the social, political and economic dynamics. "Obstacles to freedom, liberty and empowerment stem from unequal access to knowledge, resources and opportunity—much of this connected to racism and other forms of discrimination" (Joseph et al., 1999, p. 140). Traditional education perpetuates the unequal power relationships in society in which capital

> is denied to most when it is concentrated in the hands of the few. Endorsing the lop-sided status quo is the hegemony of cultural influences which includes media, popular culture, government, business and science. They convince the oppressed populace that their stratified social status is normal and so does not need challenging. (Giroux, 1997, p. 12.)

The existing LINC curriculum, like any other curriculum, while reinforcing the existing disparities in power allocation—based on gender, race, ethnicity and social status—does not provide the learner with an opportunity to challenge the cultural dialogue and bring about a change. Students are evaluated for internalizing the

stereotyped 'facts' put forward by the dominant culture, not for contributing their own perspective to the course.

Curricula that do not recognize diversity of culture and multiculturalism are based on institutionalism, classicism and sexism derived from "essentialism" which inadvertently engenders stereotypes by sorting people's potentialities according to their racial, sexual and social origins. People, especially those from minority groups, studying this dogma acquire a very restricted and inferior notion of their identities and capabilities. Through years of training at educational institutions, minority groups internalize limited self-definition and a nonchalant, fatalistic attitude in the face of domination. This trait is often misconstrued as docility and lack of awareness. Educators believe

> Education can (and must) be redirected toward individual transformation and social action that changes the status quo. Transformation takes place as students learn to use their own intelligence to take control of their lives. It begins with understanding of the identity of self and recognition that individuals are shaped by their experiences with class, race, gender or other socially defined identities; these realizations begin the process of empowerment. (Joseph et al., 1999, p. 141.)

Giroux (1993, p. 10) believes that the society directly benefits from an individual's educational achievement. Thus individual transformation leads to social transformation. Education provides students with the "knowledge, character and moral vision that builds civic courage" (Giroux, 1993, p. 18).

I find that postmodernism also challenges the established norms of education which are orderly, controllable and scientific. Postmodernism, on the other hand, promotes the notion of social construction of knowledge and individual interpretation of

experience based on one's positionality—social class, gender, race and generally the messiness of experience (Slattery, 1995). I believe that an adult learning classroom should favour a pedagogy where

> learners are considered individuals with unique personal histories that are dynamic, rich with respective influences of family life, peer relationships and popular culture. These histories do not simply influence knowledge, dispositions and interests—they form the interpretive lens through which students view the world. Learners bring with them into the classroom their cultural expectations, experiences of social discrimination or of privilege, life's pressures, and the strengths in surviving. (Wallerstein, 1987, p. 33.)

I am of the opinion that an adult classroom provides the learners with a space where they might negotiate their identities—which are multifaceted, contradictory and always in the making (Weedon, 1987) and explore how their identities interact with the prevalent pedagogy. My impression is that a pedagogy that encourages dialectical learning provides a space which respects alternative ways of viewing the world, the role of emotions, feelings and human relationships, as opposed to the straight, scientific, andocentric and Eurocentric culture being taught in the LINC classrooms. In short, this pedagogy regards knowledge as value-laden, social construction, not a body of facts or language structures to be passed on to the learners to be internalized.

By using the narrative approach, I listened to my participants' stories which related the good and the bad experiences linked to their immigration to Canada, as well as the current hardships they were facing in the new country. Out of their stories, the themes emerged which are important for inclusion in the LINC curriculum. I consider such a

curriculum organic because it continually evolves out of the learners' issues. As a result of such a curriculum, teachers cannot measure achievement as they might in a traditional pedagogy. Student evaluation would consist of broad-based assessment of skills acquired by learners during in the course of generating ideas, articulating issues, understanding problems and offering their own culture-based interpretations.

I started my research study with the premise that South Asian immigrant women in Canada needed much more than merely learning the structure of English in artificial contexts. They needed an education to give them the skills to cope successfully with the challenges in a new country. I am of the opinion that the current LINC curriculum with its decontextualized language teaching is an insult to the intelligence of adult learners. It does not take into account the fact that most new immigrants come to school to find solutions to their problems, to obtain a lot of information in the smallest possible amount of time, and to further their careers. Merely learning a few formulaic dialogues is of minimal value to them. I believe that the LINC curriculum could capitalize on the rich cultural background of the participants to give them a holistic curriculum which would not only help them develop themselves as people but also assist them in passing on a balanced, integrated culture to their children.

One of the major reasons for suggesting an alternative education for South Asian immigrant women, which would be intellectually, emotionally, culturally, and vocationally useful for them, is also to effect a cultural integration. As first generation mothers, the immigrant women have the daunting task of passing on a well balanced culture to their children who could be taught to internalize the best of both cultures while rejecting each culture's negative aspects. But if the mothers are themselves not well

assimilated in the new Canadian environment and have to deal with issues of racial and sexual discrimination on a daily basis, they would not be able to teach their children the value of tolerance towards diverse cultures which is imperative for the children to be good Canadian citizens. In *Racism in the Lives of Women,* Adleman and Enguidanos (1995) describe the experiences of non-white women; the alienation, humiliation and loneliness they felt at being considered inferior to white women. These women went through stages of denial, resistance and, finally, acceptance becoming accustomed to the exclusionary treatment they experienced.

Racism, because it has patriarchal and colonial undertones, is also characterized by a relationship of domination/subordination. Being a woman and belonging to a racial minority thus has a double impact; not only does she have to deal with the marginality of her sex but that of her race too. Her attempts to rid herself of the stigma of marginality are thwarted by those who wish to maintain privileges for the majority. A woman of color therefore develops a defeatist attitude towards life, she feels rejected because her values are rejected, she feels isolated and rootless because she is treated as an outsider (Adleman & Enguidanos, 1995).

Owing to the inordinate emphasis on Canadian qualifications and Canadian experience in the career market and an equally enormous stress on assimilation into the global Western culture, immigrants are left with a sense of insecurity and inferiority. A feeling exists among immigrants that their culture has been invaded by the dominant Western corporate culture. Immigrants jealously guard their own cultural values in a desperate attempt to preserve them and, as a result, the negative aspects of South Asian culture (for instance, patriarchy) are retained as well. The result is a disgruntled younger

generation which is caught between two conflicting cultures –one at home and the other at school. This cultural dichotomy can affect not only children's psychology but also their social behaviour, perhaps encouraging them to become intolerant of other cultures. Mothers can encourage a balanced outlook towards both the cultures only if they themselves have the awareness to select the positive aspects of the two cultures and discard the negative.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the various sources that furnished the foundation for my thoughts on a liberatory curriculum for South Asian immigrant women in Canada. Such a curriculum would presumably help them integrate successfully in Canada and become intellectually, economically and socially self-reliant. In this chapter, I also set forth my rationale for choosing a narrative approach to curriculum building through autobiography, namely, "the re-storying quality of narrative" which Connelly and Clandinin describe as "the task of conveying a sense that the narrative is unfinished and that stories will be retold and lives lived in new ways" (1991, p. 139). To me, it is like a ray of hope for a new life in a new country.

Chapter 4: Contextualizing South Asian Women in Their Home Culture

The importance of context in any human inquiry cannot be denied. Context occupies a crucial position in qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research which seeks to conduct a decontextualized research in order to legitimize it. Lightfoot and Davis in their book *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997) view context as a physical, geographical, temporal, historical, cultural, and aesthetic setting in which people and action are situated and which helps in the interpretation of human experience. "We have no idea how to decipher or decode an action, a gesture, a conversation or an exclamation unless we see it embedded in context" (p. 41). The authors discuss three types of contexts:

1. *Internal Context: The physical setting*, which delineates the ecological aspects so that the reader feels a part of the scenery. The descriptive movement is from the "macro to micro, large to small, backdrop to foreground, general to specific, public to private" (p. 45). Sometimes the physical description also defines the emotional landscape of the participants.
2. *Personal Context: The Researcher's Perch and Perspective*. The personal context locates the researcher in the physical setting so that the reader gets a clear idea of the researcher's ideological orientations.
3. *Historical Context: Journey, Culture, Ideology*, which signifies the merging of the physical with the ideological, historical and cultural elements to give a fuller frame of reference for the interpretation of a phenomenon which incorporates within itself people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

People draw their identity from their ethno-cultural context. Hence, cultural and linguistic assumptions determine a person's social status. After discussing the enormous importance of context, I endeavor to provide a cultural, linguistic and a psychological context for the women who participated in my research and, by virtue of being a part of that culture, locate myself as a researcher in that context.

The Sociolinguistic Aspect of South Asian Culture

"Heaven lies under the feet of a mother." (Religious saying)

Followers who blatantly defy its injunctions belie a religion that advocates a high status for women. I am a woman who belongs to a culture which slights a woman not only through its cultural assumptions but also through its language, so that women are muted for life if they want to be "respected" by that society (Ali, 1993). Being a South Asian woman myself, I know from personal experience that modern South Asian women participate actively in the economic and social spheres and work outside the home, like men. When they return home, however, their roles remain prescribed and segregated. At home, they aspire to live up to the expectations of their husbands and in-laws. South Asian cultural and linguistic connotations convey that a matriarchal family system is inevitably chaotic (Ali, 1993).

In the Western world, the growth of women's consciousness of being disadvantaged has resulted in numerous feminist movements striving to help women break free of male dominance. In most Asian countries, women accept their oppressed position as being natural. Henri Tajfel, a social psychologist, presented a theory of inter-group relations and social groups in which he investigated the psychology of members of inferior groups who had poor self-image because they were negatively defined by the

dominant group. Tajfel believes that members of a minority group (or an inferior social group) either accept or reject their inferior position in the social system:

> If they accept [it], they will try to achieve self-esteem and a positive self-image by operating as individuals, not as a group. There are two possible strategies for such people: firstly they can measure themselves against the members of their own group, not members of the superior group, secondly they can try individually to join the superior group. (Tajfel, cited in Coates, 1986, p. 8.)

This situation prevails in Pakistan where women, who are mostly housewives, compete with each other in social status or wealth which obtains indirectly from their husbands' social and economic position. Alternatively, the educated women work with members of the superior group – the men— in order to become more self-reliant and distinguished in their own right. Since this strategy does nothing for the betterment of women's lot in general, it has been called 'tokenism' by Tajfel.

An almost opposite situation transpires in the West, which is described in feminist research (Miles, 1982; Acker, Berry, & Esseveld, 1983). Here, while rejecting the inferior position accorded to them by men, feminists aim at the emancipation of women and, according to Tajfel, adopt a three-phased strategy to attain the creation of a just world. Firstly they will try to assimilate with the dominant group by adopting their values, secondly, they would try to redefine the previously negative values in a positive way so that their femininity is redeemed, and thirdly, "they will try to create new dimensions for comparison with the superior group, so that they are defining for themselves what has positive value and thereby creating a positive and a distinct image for themselves" (Tajfel, cited in Coates 1986, p. 8). The following diagram summarizes Tajfel's theory.

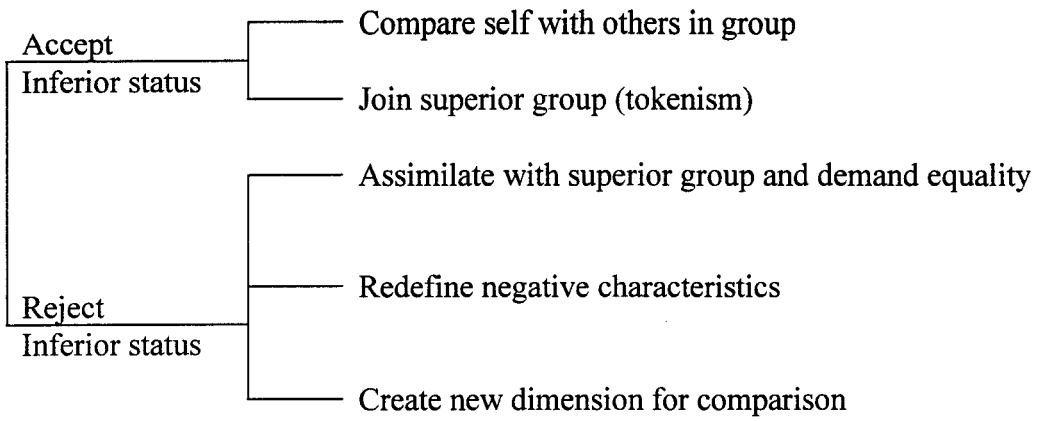

Figure 1. **Tajfel's theory of inter-group relations and social change.**
(in Coates, 1986, p. 10)

Extensive research has proved that there are linguistic as well as stylistic differences between the language of men and of women the world over. Corresponding to the different worldviews and different cultures, sociolinguists have analyzed the differences using either of the two following approaches:

> *The difference approach* investigates the language of men and women as that of two segments of a culture who are presumably equal in status but otherwise have a different mode of expression. They are thus the proponent of two separate subcultures.
>
> *The dominance approach* looks at women as a subordinate group, with men dominating the society and language. Women are looked at from the viewpoint of the norms established by men. (Coates, 1986, p. 12)

It is the second approach that best fits South Asian women's status as a 'muted' segment of the population in a patriarchal society, and Urdu as a 'man-made language'. Women in our culture not only use the language given to them by men in order to express

their meanings but look at themselves though men's eyes, because the social norms are such that women are always defined as somebody's wives, mothers, sisters or daughters but seldom as individuals in their own right. The segregated roles of men and women in an Asian society are analogous to the Greek mythological distinction between the two worlds of men and women. The two spheres were clearly demarcated into the public and the private. The public world, called "Hermean" after the Greek god of communication, Hermes, was visible and masculine, whereas the private world, known as "Hestian" after Hestia, the Greek goddess of hearth and home, was invisible and feminine. The Hermean world was also conceived of as concrete and manifest, as opposed to the Hestian one which was immanent, latent and in a state of flux. These two worlds of Hermes and Hestia, though complementary and interdependent, were accorded a high status (where men ruled) and a low status (where women lived) (Stone, 1994, pp. 186–187).

South Asian women in relation to their language and emotions.

The South Asian society does not permit free expression of emotion to women. To express love or anger openly is considered too masculine for a woman. An ideal woman is conceived of as one who is emotionally passive and at the same time has the internal strength of character to put up with the vagaries of man's nature. Both Urdu *language* and *culture* are patriarchal prerogatives. Women were historically, excluded from the language-making and culture-making processes. Consequently, to this day, they have no way of expressing their meanings unless they conform to the man-made norms of language use. Ardener (1975) classifies men and women as 'the Dominant' and 'the Muted' precisely for such reasons.

It might be interesting to look at an instance of Urdu poetry, written by a woman poet, where the muted position of women in society is exemplified. The extensive use of male-defined rules in poetry by women poets has had the effect of a certain lack of exuberance and ardor in diction; they are hesitant to speak out their emotions. Even an established poet like Perveen Shakir says:

Kese kehdun ke mudzhe chore diya hai usne

(How shall I say that he has left me?)

Baat to such hai magar baat hai ruswai ki

(It is the truth but it is a matter of being defamed.)

She finds it difficult even to tell the world that her lover has deserted her for fear of being defamed by the society, which is of course male-dominated. Elsewhere, the same poet is willing to put up with her lover's infidelity (whereas a man would never tolerate his beloved going off with somebody else) because she cannot say anything to him about it.

Vo kahin bi gaya lota to mere paas aya

(where ever he went he came back to me)

Bus yehi baat hai ache mere harjaee ki

(only this thing is good about my unfaithful lover)

(Shakir, cited in Siddiqui, 1980, pp. 41–43)

It is the women's inability to articulate their feelings that makes them a subordinate group. Dale Spender sums up the predicament of women:

> It could be that there are barriers to women's language use—at both the deep (semantic) and the surface (register) level, and that there is an additional process

that women must engage in. Edwin Ardener hypothesizes the existence of an 'extra' stage: Shirley Ardener refers to it as 'a necessary indirectness rather than spontaneity'. Tillie Olsen refers to it as telling it slant. (1980, p. 83)

The following diagram from Spender (1980, p. 84) further explains it.

	Deep Structure		Surface Structure
Men:	Generation of meaning		expression in male-defined register
Women:	Generation of meaning	Transformation	expression in male-defined register

Figure 2. **Difference between men and women in generation of meaning.**

A sexist language and an androcentric culture combine to oppress women in South Asia. This is sometimes further exacerbated by the existence of abuse. A similar concept is presented by Brookes when she found it difficult to confront her abused life. From her story of abuse, one can easily see that the stages of denial that women go through and their inability to express themselves are universal. She states "Through fear I learned to deny my key words and my key experiences. I think any woman or girl taught to translate her experience is in fact learning to work from a damaged inner vision" (1992, p. 83).

There is no denying the enormous power of language. It is an essential instrument of expression and women feel alienated when they cannot express their meanings using their own repertoire. Meaning "derives from something we might call experience as well as from immediate context" (Cameron, 1985, p. 169). Having a separate subculture, women have their own meanings to express but feel handicapped by not having recourse to the requisite language. This discontent is expressed only by a fraction of the educated,

intellectual female population of South Asia. The great majority of Asian women generally accept their subordinate and abused status in society with resignation. In Western literature, one comes across the same notion of the inability of women generally, and oppressed women in particular, to express themselves because their knowledge of self and the world is not acknowledged as being of any consequence in the male-oriented language and culture. Women are somehow subliminally trained to accept their own obscurity. Brookes argues

> Having been taught that our ordinary, everyday experiences are unimportant, we learn to dismiss the validity of these experiences. Often our language does not provide the words to describe our experiences as women. This is because we live in a male-organized society in which language best describes the experiences of men. Thus without the words and concepts to analyze abuse, it is understandable that we do not know we are abused. In fact, not knowing is viewed as natural and normal. (1992, p. 64)

It is a passivity borne of maintaining the status quo and of leading a comfortable and peaceful life of servitude. On the other hand, this servile passivity results in making their part of language vacuous — empty of meaning. Trevor Pateman (cited in Cameron, 1985, p. 172) calls this kind of language "idle discourse." Cameron amplifies the term: "Idle discourse dodges meaning and... treats definitions as closed, not possible subjects for rational dispute. In other words it is a meta-linguistically impoverished language in which meanings are static and taken for granted" (1985, p. 172).

There might be a stage later in the future of Asia when women will break the shackles of male bondage and question the way the society and language operates, but

that will not happen until discontented, educated women engage in an emancipatory effort together. This awakening will then call for a 'radical discourse' (Cameron, 1985, p. 173) which might serve to shake the existing social relations out of the state of inertia and stagnation which presently prevails. Questioning the androcentric status quo is a daunting task even for the educated Western woman. It calls for a multi-layered analysis of the social ideologies and practices which perpetuate male domination as well as an analysis of self. Brookes argues:

> I was taught to live in and defer to the practices and authority of a society organized to benefit masculine interests.... Thus to ask questions which reflect my perspective as a woman means that I must first break through and understand, at one level, my experiences of abuse. At another level, I must break through and understand the social illusions, practices and ideologies created by social relations largely organized to legitimate men's interests. In such a context, it is difficult for me to unlearn sexual and social deference to male authorities, and then to work from an authority located in a conscious recognition of my own needs. (1992, p. 11.)

Such an educated analysis requires women to be not only literate but also to have an awareness of the social and linguistic workings of their cultural milieu. It is an accepted reality, especially in South Asian societies, that men's domination thrives on the ignorance of women and that if enlightened women venture to question the status quo, they run the risk of breaking up the family unit where a man is always the head of the family. Only those families in which the women are willing to live a life of ignorant bliss survive. Ours was such a family where women either looked to change the social

relations or, when defeated, sought refuge in literary pursuits as a means of escape from reality. To me, the story of my grandmother, told by my mother (who is the source of most of our family stories and who is currently living with me in Toronto) seems to epitomize the lot of the majority of women in South Asia.

The women that we are.

My grandmother, Batool, a quiet slim young woman was of a literary disposition; she wrote articles of social significance as well as love stories in a local women's magazine called *Asmat* (Chastity). She was the most educated woman in her family at that time, and she had acquired education through her own initiative since she had a passion for English, Farsi, and Arabic, though her own language was Urdu. While her two sisters married comfortably and started producing their multitude of children, my grandmother kept up her literary pursuits until her life was interrupted by her marriage to an extremely handsome Afghan, old enough to be her father, who was himself a close friend of her exacting father.

Her husband did not see eye to eye with her interests. With the complete lack of communication and years of cold war between them, their marriage was nothing but a farce, as such mismatched marriages are destined to be. My mother, recalling her own experience with my father (who was twenty-seven years older than her), believes that when there is a considerable difference between two people's mental caliber, co-existence becomes a drudgery, a mere compromise. Not only were my grandmother and my grandfather markedly different in their appearance, they also had different interests and different expectations from life. Maqbool Ahmed was a traditional man with degrees in religious studies and a large following of disciples. Batool, being the quiet, intellectual

type, wanted to engage in literary discussions with her husband, and looked for the story-book romance in her life. Her husband, on the other hand, was a cleric and a popular public figure with a charm and a zest for life that did not go unnoticed. Batool felt that she was short-changed in her marriage.

Batool's ideal and the hero of the love stories she wrote was a tall, dark, and handsome Indian who spoke English fluently, was immaculately dressed in a Western suit (not the traditional attire that her husband wore), and drove his family to private picnics and lunches in his beautiful car. The ideal was very much like her cousin Ismail (who later became my father). Though she subsequently became thoroughly disillusioned with her Westernized and decadent cousin (and eventual son-in-law), people often wondered if she had married her daughter to Ismail, despite their 27-year age difference, because she, herself, had longed for a life-partner like Ismail. After fathering four children with my grandmother, her traditional, blue-eyed, fair-complexioned husband married another woman clandestinely. My grandmother eventually found out, much to her grief and agony.

Although my grandfather gave all the deeds to his lands to my grandmother so that she might live from the revenue as the feudal system would allow, she took up a job as a teacher in order to give her children 'a decent life' as she termed it, without "feeding off the poor." My grandfather had been an itinerant cleric and he resumed that lifestyle when he left his wife to fend for herself and her four children. She could not prevail upon him to stay. So she gathered all her children under her wings and became both father and mother to them.

I look at my grandmother as a prototype of most women in my family and even South Asian women generally. South Asian women who are more educated than their husbands feel that they are short-changed in their marriage because they have to adjust not only to the norms of the husband's family (as they are often extended families) but also to the vicissitudes of the husband's moods. It is assumed in the patriarchal South Asian society that if a woman is more educated than her husband, she will tend to be very dominating towards him. Therefore, educated women consciously assume a low profile so as to avoid any undue criticism of their behaviour which would inevitably be construed to result from their being more educated than their husbands. We women are thus not only responsible for the upbringing and training of our children, but also for keeping the family unit together, so much so that we wait patiently for wayward husbands to return if they go astray. Of course, women themselves are never expected to stray. For those who dare, divorce with its stigma, is the penalty. Infidelity is only the man's prerogative. Women not only care and nurture their children but also their husbands who have the luxury of being in the wrong and still retaining their status as head of the family, a title bestowed upon them solely by virtue of being a male.

Ours are the women who persevere through the many untold hardships and sacrifices just to attain the approbation of being culturally acceptable models of mothers, wives, daughters and sisters-in-law. They are initially under the tutelage of the father figure, then the brother(s), followed by the husband, and later the sons. All their hardships go unacknowledged because of adages like "the other name of woman is sacrifice" or "heaven lies under the feet of a mother." The first saying takes it as given that a woman's duty is to sacrifice herself at the altar of family values and traditions. The

second saying, which is a religious one, implies that motherhood is revered because of all the hardships that a mother undergoes. Therefore, children are enjoined to respect and care for their mothers if they want to go to heaven. Thus women in my part of the world make all the sacrifices and are still left with nothing much to call their own except their womanhood which, again, demands more of them.

Who Am I as a Researcher?

Locating oneself in one's research is a subjective stance. Subjectivity which was once considered something that taints or mars good (quantitative) research is now believed to be a strong binding force throughout the (qualitative) research process, if it is duly monitored for an educated interpretation. Glesne states that "Part of being attuned to your subjective lenses is being attuned to your emotions. Your emotions help you to identify when your subjectivity is being engaged. Instead of trying to suppress your feelings, you use them to inquire into perspectives and interpretations and to shape new questions through re-examining your assumptions" (1999, p. 105). I locate myself in my inquiry in the following ways:

1. As a woman, I cannot help but be subjective about exploring ways and means of liberating women from the shackles of androcentric linguistic and cultural norms.
2. As a recent immigrant to Canada (now a citizen), I am very cognizant of 'the immigrant experience'—the enormous challenges faced by new immigrants settling in this country.

3. As a woman of South Asian background, I can easily resonate with the underlying cultural and linguistic assumptions with regards to the women in my study.
4. During my assignments as a trained interpreter of Urdu, I have had occasion to meet innumerable abused women who felt that "if only" their economic conditions were better (in Canada), their husbands would not have abused them. I felt empathy for their sense of being lost in a new country, with no family support, an estranged husband, and surrounded by people asking them questions in a language in which they were not conversant. It might be pertinent to point out here, that I have focused mostly (though not entirely) on women who do not belong to the affluent business class of South Asians in Canada. My participants are women who are not very well educated and, therefore, not economically self-reliant.
5. I am a student of Sociolinguistics and, having researched the sexist morphological inflections in Urdu language, am acutely aware of the oppressive patriarchal culture of Asian societies.
6. Most importantly, I am a woman who comes from a long tradition of abused women. Leaving out the accounts of abused grandmothers and aunts, I can only talk about my mother. Having endured abuse for more than half her life, my mother thought that the only way a woman could achieve emancipation was to become educated and, thereby, financially independent. Initially, she could not escape the abusive situation because, firstly, she was not educated at that time, although, after my father's death, she did her Master's in English

> Literature and went to Africa to work as an English teacher for almost fifteen years. Secondly, she did not want to lose her two daughters—me and my sister who is eighteen years older than me—to my father. Thirdly, my father was very influential because of his wealthy background and his education.

Having learned her lesson, so to speak, she had me educated in a convent school, so that I would have the best schooling. Then she insisted that I do a Master's degree in English "If I didn't want any man to abuse me." Since teaching is about the only profession considered respectable for women in my part of the world, I was destined to become an English teacher. My mother even allowed me to choose my life partner, something which is not a right but a privilege in my culture, and something she, herself, was not allowed to do "because it was not right in those days." Now with three Master's degrees and years of teaching experience behind me, I am the most educated woman in my entire clan. And though this sounds like a happy ending to a tragic family history, I still feel I cannot return to my mother the youth that was wasted in an abusive marriage.

I am extremely aware of my emotional investment in the issue of abused women's intellectual and financial emancipation. I have a stake in this research; I want to accomplish on a wider scale what my mother achieved through making me mentally, educationally and financially independent. I view my research (adapting Glesne's lenses, 1999, p.108) through (a) the personal lens, since my mother's life history has had a profound impact on me; (b) the justice lens, as I am painfully aware of the injustice experienced by women in my culture, in inheritance laws, marriage, custody of children, educational rights; and (c) the caring lens, because I empathize with women who invest so much in married life and receive nothing but abuse in the end. These lenses would be

in keeping with one of the most prominent assumptions underlying qualitative research process, namely, that a researcher's life experiences, beliefs and values, influence every facet of the inquiry. I am fully aware of the fact that feminist literature is replete with the all too familiar tales of women's exploitation by men, whether linguistic or cultural. However, I still wish to contribute my little drop to the ocean.

Trilogy of Abuse and Literacy as a Beacon of Emancipation

In order to portray the life experiences of South Asian women, in this section I intend to share the story of abuse that has characterized a particular household through three generations of women. The main theme of the stories is how these abused women sought refuge in literary pursuits and how they tried to escape the unbearable realities of life by reading and writing. This is a theme that runs prominently in the discourse of my mother who is the source of her own story, as well as the stories of my grandmother and my sister (who lives in Pakistan). Their stories should thus be interpreted as my mother's experiences, as told by her. My mother has always been a firm believer in the power of literacy as a means of mental escape, especially for abused women. She still often advises me to believe in and act on the idea of escape through reading.

My mother and my grandmother.

My mother, Jamila, second in line of four siblings, was a young girl of twelve and a half years and a brilliant student in Grade 7, when she was told, one evening, in a matter-of-fact voice by her mother that she was to be married in a few days time. A brief smile had come over her mother's care-worn face. My mother knew that she was considered beautiful by the standards set in India, as were her other two sisters and her only brother aged five. Born of an Afghan father, the four children, with their rosy

cheeks, auburn hair, blue eyes (my uncle) and a big-boned body structure, stood out among the sun-baked, black-haired, mostly diminutive people in the Indian state of Rajistan. My grandmother was, of course, a pure Indian and people were often very surprised to see such fair-complexioned children in the lap of a dark woman.

My mother was very excited. And there were many reasons for that. Ismail Khan, the person she was going to marry was a tall, dark, handsome man of thirty-nine years, who owned a car! He was actually one of the two people in the whole state, the other being the Nawab (the governor), to own a convertible. It was a symbol of the enormous wealth people said he possessed. For the eldest son of a printing press owner and a person who had started his life with the British in Tanganyika (Tanzania) at the age of eighteen, this wasn't surprising. He was always dressed immaculately in a suit, never the traditional attire, spoke impeccable English, smoked a pipe like "the English," and was very generous with his relatives. He would take the women and children, including my Mom, to picnics and expensive restaurants which was a novelty in those days. Easily an ideal of every woman in town, he did have a reputation of being a Casanova, but it was condoned in a man having so many other qualities. What people didn't know was that he also drank heavily and was abusive with the women he befriended.

All my mother could think of was how lucky she was to be getting married so soon, before all the other girls in her class. Her thoughts centered on the beautiful trousseau she would have, the wonderful places in the world that she would travel get to see. Already Ismail had told everybody of his plans to take his young bride to Jaipur, the pink city of India, for their honeymoon. It was all going to be very exciting! She did, however, wonder why, amid the laughter, the festivity and the general atmosphere of

jubilation, her headmistress was very concerned. The headmistress spoke to the young bride's mother about how catastrophic marrying off a young girl to an older man could be, when the girl should be studying. She could voice her concerns to the mother of the bride because my grandmother was a teacher in her school. But my grandmother was convinced she had made the right decision for her daughter. Jamila deserved a good life, as did the other three children, especially when it was difficult to make ends meet since their father, Maqbool Ahmed, had returned to the life of a travelling cleric. My grandfather had felt he was absolved of any financial responsibility towards his family when he handed over the deeds to his lands in the distant parts of Rajistan to his wife and instructed her to go and collect the revenues every month. My grandmother, on the other hand, being a woman of Western education and ideals thought it unfair to claim the proceeds from lands worked by poor farmers, just because she was the wife of the landlord, when most of the land was gifted to Maqbool Ahmed by his followers.

Maqbool Ahmed, a rich, six-foot, hefty, blue-eyed Afghan, had come wandering south to India in search a religious degree that would make him a Mufti (a religious leader who has the authority to arbitrate in the light of the Quran and Sunnah — the life and sayings of Prophet Mohammed). His Indian classmate Khalil ur Rahman was so impressed by the handsome, suave, rich, black-clad man that he gave his best daughter (my grandmother) in marriage to him. Batool, the second child of seven, was a slender, wheat-complexioned girl, whose only passion in life was reading English and Farsi books. Using a pseudonym, she wrote articles and love stories in a local women's magazine called *Asmat* (Chastity). Her hero in the stories was always a Westernized, handsome Indian, not unlike the cousin Ismail to whom she later married her daughter,

Jamila (my mother). Batool's hero was never a religious Mullah, whose religious following took precedence over his family, and who hadn't an inkling of what romance was. But this proved to be precisely the man to whom she was married.

There was a huge chasm between their world views and ideals, not to mention the almost 26-year age difference. It wasn't difficult to see that there was absolutely no understanding between them. Four children later, and after years of cold war with his spouse, my grandfather decided once again to adopt a wandering life. Saddled with four children, my grandmother decided to take up school teaching so as to make "a decent living', rather than "eat off the poor" as she referred to the feudal arrangement to which my grandfather was accustomed. Though my grandfather was not physically abusive, he was known to be quite popular with ladies. Soon enough he surreptitiously married another woman and fathered another daughter. My grandmother found out and was unhappy ever after. She was known to have often said that "flames of jealousy sweep over me whenever I think of his infidelity." He, on the other hand, felt he had done no wrong since the religion allowed him to keep four wives. My grandmother, thereafter, sought lifelong escape in reading and writing academic articles that had social relevance, articles that highlighted the empowerment that education gave women. This was in the mid 1930s.

Now fate had presented her with an opportunity to give her daughter Jamila a lifestyle she herself had always longed for. Her daughter would travel around the world, have servants to care for her and would, in general, want for nothing. Although divorced (and her cousin), to her, her son-in law seemed the best person for her daughter. No words of caution could dissuade her from this marriage proposal. So my grandmother

married my mother off when she had not even reached puberty. My mother used to go to school with a boy a year and a half older than her who was the son of a good friend of my grandmother. She didn't know that soon she would become his stepmother.

The honeymoon was perfect and soon the couple settled in Bombay. At the age of fourteen, my mother gave birth to her first daughter, Saleha. She was said to be the most beautiful baby in the history of the Bombay hospital. With the miracle of Mendl's genetic laws, she had the blond looks and the bluish-green eyes of her maternal grandfather, the Afghan. My father's tendency to get drunk and beat up my mother surfaced soon after the honeymoon. He always kept a mistress, who was often a live-in mistress, much to my mother's agony, but she would cook for the woman and give her own clothes to her at her husband's bidding. When my mother's grandmother, a very strong and influential woman of the family and the daughter of the finance minister of the Nawab (the governor) found out about the abuse, she asked my mother to leave my father for good and get married to someone else. As part of the plan, my mother stayed over at my grandmother's house and when my father came to pick her up, my great grandmother refused to let her go. He wrenched his new born daughter from her mother's bosom (my mother was feeding her at the time) and left, saying that the baby was his and no one had the right to keep her except him, and if his wife wanted a divorce she could get it. My mother, who was ill and weak at the time, could hear her daughter crying down the street, and ran after him imploring him to take her with him. She says now that she went back to her husband because she knew he would give his daughter to one of his mistresses to bring up, and since my mother belonged to a very conservative, respectable and religious family, this was totally unacceptable to her. My grandmother died soon after, at the age of thirty-two

having contracted tuberculosis. People say she had stopped eating altogether and kept blaming herself for her daughter's misfortune.

The abuse knew no bounds. Though my parents traveled widely, first to Iran during the Second World War, then to Iraq in the 1950s, the physical and emotional abuse continued. Since my father was an engineer, he always occupied an important position in the governments of the newly developing countries. There was a big contrast between the life that my mother led in the house and the high life she lived attending ambassadorial parties and Rotary Club meetings outside home. They went on cruises and picnics with friends but it was the same when they returned home; drinking, womanizing and battery. My parents even saw a spell of financial decline during 1947 when Pakistan was carved out of the North West corner of India. Curfew was imposed on the Indian streets and Hindus were killing Muslims and vice versa. My father lost his job and with great difficulty they crossed over to Pakistan on a ship. He had to start afresh as any immigrant would, after leaving his home country for good with no tangible assets to speak of.

All through the difficult times, my mother kept up her reading habit. She also became very religious–minded. She says the reading took her mind off the adversity of her life, and the prayers were to implore Allah to make her life better. She says both her strategies paid off. To what extent, I, as a daughter who feels that my mother has known very little happiness, will perhaps never be able to understand.

When my sister was taking her O-level exams, my mother started studying with her. She wanted to take up her education where she had left off when she had gotten married. My father was totally against her acquiring education as he believed that after

marriage the duty of a woman lies with her husband and her children. My mother's passion for education was such that she would lock herself up in the store room to study the whole day and would hide away her books when it was time for him to return from work. She would solve Mathematics problems and leave the exercise book under the pillow of one of my father's cousins who lived with them (the customary extended family living situation in Pakistan). The cousins, who were also engineers, corrected her work and left it there to be picked up by my Mom when she went in to clean their room. This is how she learned English too. My uncle, who was a magistrate in Karachi and could write excellent academic English, corrected her English written work. When she was finally prepared for the exam, she asked my father's permission, through the intervention of his sister, to be allowed to take the exam so that later she might be able to help her daughter with homework. She passed the exam.

My mother says that education was always a means of escape for her from her unbearable life, and that it gave her the means to dream of a better life ahead. Once, she met a cousin of Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. She was a beautiful lady with a presence and my mother remembers envying her education and good looks. The fluency with which the lady talked about politics in English fascinated my mother and she thought maybe some day she would also be educated and people would respect her, too, for her educated opinions.

After my father's death in 1963, my mother realized she had to fend for herself and her two daughters. I was almost a year and a half old and my sister, nineteen. My uncle, the magistrate, died soon after his elder brother, also from a heart attack. The easy way out for a woman is to remarry, but my mother did not want to lead a life of servitude

again. My grandmother had always told my mother "you only live once, make the best of it." She therefore turned down all her marriage proposals and, instead, concentrated on getting my sister married.

My sister's story.

This story is wholly reconstructed from my Mother's memory. I was only about two years old when my sister married. My Mom recalls that while in the hospital for his angina, my uncle became friends with another judge, Justice Sallahuddin, who later became a celebrity because he had Zulfikar Ali Bhutto sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. At that time, however, he was only another angina patient like my uncle, Yusuf Khan. Justice Sallahuddin's young nephew, Omar, while visiting his uncle, fell in love at first sight with my sister, a quiet, shy girl who was nursing her uncle. He brought his sister and his mother to see the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. They approved immediately and insisted upon marriage. My uncle passed away, and after a respectable time, my sister Saleha and Omar, who came from a rich Bengali family in Calcutta (India) and earned a handsome four-figure salary in Burma Shell oil company in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), were married.

There was a huge difference between the lifestyle and the economic status of our family and theirs. We had become conservative after the demise of my father, whereas they were quite progressive. Differences arose between the newlyweds, for example, when my sister refused to dance with my brother-in-law's American boss at a party in Chittagong. Omar was an extremely popular figure in the elite class of East Pakistan. He had a multitude of ultra-modern Bengali girls wanting to marry him. Instead he chose a shy, conservative girl with blond looks from West Pakistan. Later, it became known that

he had exactly the same problems my father did; drinking, womanizing and battery, if to a somewhat lesser degree. It was the same pattern of a high, fun-filled life outside home and abuse at home.

My sister couldn't get divorced and come back to live with my mother as my mother was struggling to make a better life for me. She had a job as a librarian, undergraduate studies in an evening college, and a three-year-old to bring up, on her list of priorities. My sister started studying after the birth of her second son so that she might escape her stifling life and find refuge in a career of teaching. However, in the early days of her marriage , she had attempted suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills and, in the course of treatment, had had to undergo elaborate tests on her spinal chord. As a result, she had developed frequent headaches. Whenever, she started reading, she got a migraine. Ultimately, she couldn't continue her studies, despite repeated attempts. Her husband stopped beating her up after the birth of their third son. They have three in all.

However, the verbal abuse still occurs, although my brother-in-law is now retired after a successful career as an area manager for Pakistan International Airlines in Greece, Holland, England and Senegal. My sister still looks for respite from her abused life by reading magazines, and watching television. She has become an insomniac and through the night she reads incessantly. Her three sons, all engineers employed in multinational companies in Pakistan and in the Silicon Valley, California, do not seem to recognize my sister's sacrifices in bringing them up to be religious-minded boys. They mostly side with their father. I sometimes wonder if the abuse ever ends.

My story.

From childhood, my mother instilled in my mind the notion that if I didn't want any man to abuse me, I had to study hard, get a job and be economically independent. As a teenager, I saw my brother-in-law ridiculing my sister, even in our presence, and I would cry for hours saying I never wanted to marry. However, when I grew up I figured that not all men tend to be abusive and there were a lot of men who were good with their wives. It was heartening to see some successful marriages too.

I married Ali in 1987. It was a well thought out decision, having to do more with the mind than the heart. I had other offers as well, but somehow my mother seemed to find a fault or two in each suitor; their religious sect was very different from ours, or the family background was not at par with ours, or the boy wasn't sufficiently educated, etc. When I met Ali and he paid us a couple of visits, everything looked just right to my mother and sister. They said "It is okay if he doesn't have much money; he is educated (he had a double Master's, one in Economics and the other in Political Science) and he belongs to a respectable family." We liked his parents and his brothers and sisters. What I liked about him was that he was very soft-spoken, handsome and easy-going. People envied our happy-go-lucky attitude towards life. Things went pretty smoothly for some years, at least I thought they did. A day before coming to Canada, on the 17th of August, 1998, when my best friend and cousin invited me to a farewell dinner, she disclosed that she and my husband had been having an affair for the past three years. She wanted to tell me this because now that we were going to Canada, I should keep an eye on him because he wasn't trustworthy. My whole world crumbled. The person I had trusted more than myself wasn't trustworthy? I became hysterical but, at the same time, tried to keep it a

secret from my eight-year-old son. I didn't know what to do. All I could think of was that I didn't want to go to Canada where I would not have my support network. Ali promised me on the Holy Quran that he would have nothing to do with any other women in the future. He convinced me to come to Canada and start afresh. But just as I was starting to rebuild my life from ruins, he met a married Hindu woman in his computer classes. I didn't know at the time that it was the start of a fresh affair for him, and we all became friends.

In September 2000, I accidentally found myself in his e-mail account, an account I didn't know existed. The entire list of e-mail was from her, about thirty letters, and when I started reading, they were all love letters. I again became hysterical and my son, who was the only one there besides me, shut down the Internet fearing that I would faint. When Ali came back from the grocery store, I cried and yelled, in a state of shock and denial. I couldn't understand what he saw in her; she isn't educated at all, she is dark, average looking woman with an extremely handsome husband who is a CPA.

The neighbours called the police and the policewoman plainly said "Kick him out," but my son's response was heart rending. He said "Everybody will say I don't have a father." I just couldn't bear that. I called up my mom in Pakistan and she told me not to make any decision until she came to Canada. She was finally able to come in December. It has been more than two years since I have been crying but that hasn't had any effect on my husband, he still goes to meet her for hours. When my mom called up the woman's husband she was cut off in the middle by the woman picking up the extension. The husband is, I guess, too scared to do anything about the affair as she is such a dominating woman. As for Ali, he left the house for good, but then my mom called him back begging

him to stay because she couldn't see her grandson without a father. I feel that despite my education and family background he still had to fall for another woman. He has confessed to a friend who told me that Ali thinks very highly of me. He says "My wife is good looking, she is an excellent cook and she has all the qualities that one wants in a wife, only I don't have any understanding with her." He also says it is a built-in fault in him, he has to have thrills in his life, so he always keeps a girlfriend.

It doesn't matter to me anymore what he thinks about me. I tried my best to bring him back, and I failed. All I can think of now is to finish my Ph.D. and get a job as soon as I can. Since I live with a man who is ready to leave the house at the drop of a hat, I should be prepared for the worst. There is no trust and love in this marriage. I go on living with him because my son is very much attached to him, or maybe I am scared of being alone, or maybe I don't want to remarry because I don't want my son go through what I have been through, living with a stepfather. Or maybe these are all excuses and someday I'll find the courage to leave him. At least education has given me options and I don't feel as suffocated as my mother did or my sister still does. But the suffocation is still there and often I feel the walls closing up on me. My mother, who is now living with me in Toronto and who is my greatest source of moral support, reminds me that I have to live for my son and that my feelings don't matter so much, it is his life we should be more concerned about. I should think not of my ruined life but about giving my son a stable home environment with both parents. I don't know the answer to these dilemmas, but I seek refuge from the sordid reality in my studies.

Conclusion

This chapter is an attempt to provide a Sociolinguistic and cultural background of South Asian immigrant women. In the backdrop of the research cited, I have interwoven the stories of the women in my family including myself. My purpose here is to delineate how, embedded in the patriarchal culture is a perpetual denigration and abuse of women. The only possible mental escape for some like my mother and my grandmother has been through literacy. In my opinion, education for most women does not provide them with a tangible means of liberating themselves from the situation but it affords them the opportunity to reclaim their personhood, at least intellectually. The theme of education as a means of surviving trauma and abuse runs strongly throughout my thesis.

Chapter 5: An Old Wine in a New Bottle: South Asian Culture Transplanted Onto the New Canadian Soil

> Experienced teachers, as a source of knowledge about practice, are rarely utilized in imaginative and productive ways. Frequently thrown into in-service education with other teachers, regardless of the length and quality of their years of service, they are neglected as resources in themselves for their own and other teachers' professional development. (Yonemura, 1982, p. 234)

The above comment by Yonemura, although said in a different context, if interpreted on a macro-level, is reminiscent of every immigrant's ordeal upon coming to Canada. Faced with the not very reasonable demand to producing evidence of "Canadian experience" and "Canadian qualifications" as a pre-requisite to being able to work in one's field, highly educated immigrants with years of work experience from their home country are forced to take up survival jobs in order to keep their families from starving in a foreign country, or else be considered free-loaders at the expense of the Canadian taxpayers. Thus the immigrants' enormous wealth of experience and education are wasted when they are told to start from scratch as if they had no prior education or training. The millions spent on re-training immigrants, not to mention the frustration that disgruntled immigrants feel, could very well be spared if their skills could be utilized more resourcefully. As one such immigrant, whose three Master's degrees, a Diploma in the Teaching of English as an International Language, and twelve years of teaching experience were totally disregarded, I found myself between jobs as a security guard and then as a telemarketing salesperson. I was indeed lucky when I was directly hired by the

Immigrant Women's Center as an ESL Instructor. My pay was low and there was no job satisfaction but at least I was teaching.

Getting off the bus and heading towards the LINC agency, (the name of the agency is not disclosed for purposes of anonymity) took me back almost three years to when I had first come to this Centre for an interview. In fact, this was the only Centre which had considered me worthy enough to call me for an interview. Upon arrival to Canada and having sent my resume to more than twenty educational institutions, I had been extremely hopeful that I would be offered a teaching job at least in a college if not in a University. With more than seven years of teaching experience in the University of Karachi, three years in Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology and almost the same number of years in Hamdard University where I taught business English to MBAs, as a visiting faculty, and with three Master's degrees in English Literature, Applied Linguistics, and Linguistics and ELT (English Language Teaching), respectively, and a Diploma in the teaching of English as an International Language, this was the least I expected.

However, I was in for a rude awakening. I was told that not only did I not have Canadian experience in teaching but I would have to do a nine-month course in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in order to teach in a school. I was flabbergasted. I had no school teaching experience, having always taught in colleges and universities in Pakistan throughout my teaching career. Furthermore, I was apprehensive about Western schools of which I had heard many frightening tales from my university colleagues in Pakistan who had had unfortunate experiences teaching in British schools. I was told that White high school students do not respect teachers (they address their teachers by their

first names!), least of all those teachers whose first language is not English. And if you are non-White, they would look down on you. I wasn't willing to go through that just to be able to get a job in a school. I decided I would be better off applying to LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) schools.

While waiting for responses from the various agencies (mostly regrets because, they said, I had to apply through TDSB, which, in turn, required a TESL certificate), I had taken up a telemarketing job, after having also been spurned by a couple of telemarketing firms because I had "the wrong accent." When I got a call for an interview from this agency, I felt a mixture of nervousness and excitement. My first real teaching job interview in Canada, at last!

The street where the agency is located is about the only place in Toronto which is like home, not only because of the numerous Pakistani and Indian restaurants that punctuate the rows of stores and offices but also because of the people walking on the street wearing traditional attire. *Sari-* and *shalwar kameez*-clad mannequins in the display windows remind the new immigrants of the things they left behind. As if to heighten one's sense of nostalgia, one of the restaurants displays an actual *rickshaw* outside its door (a common mode of transport for three in Pakistan, but a novelty here). Down to the last detail, the general aura of the street is that of mini South Asia. The incense permeating Indian stores selling traditional musical instruments and knick knacks for Hindu prayers, the Pakistani culture counterparts such as *Halal* meat shops, restaurants selling *Kashmiri Chai* and Islamic bookstores, mitigate, to however small a degree, the feelings of loss, regret, frustration, and nostalgia that immigrants experience.

Sandwiched between a coin laundry and a community center, the Centre was not what I had expected. On the second floor, a row of offices overlooked a day care center on the ground floor where children were either playing noisily or chanting. The entire place seemed to be populated by busy women and children, sans men. Later, when I was asked to do a demonstration lesson as part of my interview, I discovered there were indeed a couple of men in the classrooms.

After a grueling interview lasting about forty-five minutes and the demonstration lesson which lasted half an hour, I was told that I had got the job. At first I couldn't believe my ears. The interview had not been particularly friendly; one of the ladies repeatedly implied that Canada wasn't a (good) place to be for coloured people like me, even though she herself was from a mixed ethnic background. She was perhaps talking from her own experience.

After my initial surprise, more shock, actually, it gradually sank in that I was finally going to teach somewhere. My husband, my eight-year-old son, and I celebrated by having a sumptuous lunch in a Pakistani restaurant just across from the Centre. I taught at one of the four locations of the agency. I was happy for a time, although I had to change buses three time to commute to the school. Soon, however, monotony set in. I was teaching "Level 3" which was very basic. I felt my life was being wasted and that I would eventually forget whatever I taught my Master's degree students in Karachi. I longed to go back to the abstractions of Semantics and Chomskyan Linguistics. This led me to seek admission to OISE/UT and I was fortunate enough to be accepted into a Ph.D. program.

A year into the Ph.D. program, I had to do an assignment on interviewing. I thought the best place to find participants would be the main office of the agency where I worked, It was at this Centre that I had made the acquaintance of Riffat, a Pakistani woman. Riffat had been a lecturer in International Relations in a local college in Punjab but, like other immigrant, was unable to get a teaching job in Toronto. Riffat worked as a secretary of sorts, handling accounts and leave applications of teachers. She was a cheerful woman, always willing to help people like me who knew nothing about numbers. She told me she could also help me go through the LINC curriculum as she dealt with these matters too.

I asked Riffat to arrange for me to interview some of the students there. I talked individually to three LINC participants, one from India and two from Pakistan, about their background before coming to Canada, and if they thought the LINC curriculum being offered addressed their needs adequately. I broached the subject of abuse and asked if they were aware of the free services being offered at the Centre for abused women. All three said they didn't know much about these services and each was persistent in assuring me that since she was not abused by her spouse, "Thank God", she didn't have any need of such services anyway. Given the sensitivity of the subject, I had enough sense to not even attempt to ask these women directly about abuse. Even though I was interviewing them separately, the women did their best to evade the subject and disavow any knowledge of such programs. It was a case of "the lady doth protest too much". I took my speculations to Riffat who, as a colleague, I thought, might give me an insight into the strong denials. In confidence, she disclosed that two out of the three women I had been talking to, were quite badly abused by their husbands and the Centre was helping

them cope with the situation. Although, for reasons of confidentiality, she didn't disclose which two, I could empathize with the women's attempts to preserve their privacy. Coming from a culture where it is a taboo to talk about an abusive husband for fear of defaming him, women mostly endure abuse as a matter of course..

Discussing the workings of the Centre, Riffat suddenly said "The Centre was the reason that I found the courage to get out of my (abusive) situation". As someone who shares her reserved South Asian culture, this disclosure took me by surprise. I was all the more impressed by her open nature, her trust in me and her willingness to share her story with me, compared to the three participants I had spoken to earlier. She proceeded to tell me her story over lunch in a Pakistani restaurant across the street from the Centre. (The excerpts which follow are from my field notes and my conversation with Riffat, October 18, 2000.)

An educated career woman in her own country, Riffat was subjected to physical, emotional and financial abuse by her husband. She wanted out but decided not to file for divorce after reading the law books of her home country. By law, a woman is forced to relinquish her children to the custody of their father in the event of a divorce. She was not prepared to give up her children to the abusive husband, and to live alone for the rest of her life. A second marriage was an option but not at the cost of losing her children. Things looked pretty bleak until the family immigrated to Canada. The country offered an unpredictable future to the couple but also held a promise of a better life for her. The husband, an engineer in Pakistan, was unable to get a job in Toronto. He went to the United States to try his luck, leaving his wife and two sons, one five and the other thirteen, behind. For three years, the husband stayed with his sisters and brothers in

Washington, while his wife struggled to make ends meet. He finally returned to Toronto and to the physical abuse of his wife and sons.

Riffat found out about this agency through a friend and contacted the Centre. A wife assault counsellor kept in touch with her on a regular basis and, according to Riffat, assured her that she was just a phone call away. The Centre offered workshops which helped Riffat dispel some of the cultural myths that, she believed, tend to be an integral part of an abused woman's psyche, for instance, the belief that if she improved herself or did things differently, her husband would stop abusing her, or that it was mostly her fault that he abused her, or thinking he was abusive only because he was unemployed and that things would improve once he got a job, or that the children would feel helpless without a father figure and their intellectual and social development would be impaired if they did not have a father, albeit an abusive one, in the home, etc.

The workshops not only gave her moral, psychological and emotional support, they allowed her to view her situation objectively. She saw that there were other women out there who were going through the same predicament and who were also willing to discuss it openly. In the home culture, women seldom disclose to others that they are being abused by their spouse for fear of defaming the husband, starting a grapevine of gossip, and aggravating the situation which might culminate in divorce with its own ramifications of losing their children to the father and having a social stigma attached to oneself for life.

The workshops for abused women not only demolished cultural myths but also gave the victims useful information about shelters, help lines, distress centres and victim assistance programs offered by various agencies. Riffat told me that they also have a

cathartic effect on women who are encouraged to voice their opinion on matters regarding their life, something women are not usually permitted to do by their abusive spouse.

Riffat was admitted to Seneca College for computer courses, as her level of English language proficiency was adequate enough to get her a survival job in Canada. She approached the Centre for any job opportunities so that she would not be forced by the circumstances in her life to go on welfare. One evening, when her husband was, as usual, demanding his marital rights forcefully, Riffat decided she had had enough. The next day, after work, she went to a legal aid office and got an emergency order compelling her husband to leave the house. He had to pack up and go in the presence of the police. The children were with friends. He was in tears and said he didn't know where to go. She made it very clear that she didn't want him near her house.

She was graciously offered a position as soon as she had filed for a divorce. Now, with a stable job at the Centre, she believed she was a much happier person, leading an independent and respectable life with her children. She said that she and her children now shared the love that was so often marred by the abusive husband. She has custody of her children but the younger son visits his Dad every Saturday in accordance with the court orders. Riffat said she didn't mind the visits, as she had given so much love to her children that she was in no danger of losing them to her ex-husband. He has not remarried because she had purposely not pursued divorce, so that when the boy went to visit his father he would not have to deal with a stepmother.

Even though she was an educated woman, she could not get out of her abused life. This state of affairs confirms, to a large degree, my belief that merely being educated

does not prove to be emancipatory for women. The social, economic and legal contexts are important factors in the realization of any liberatory potential that women might have. Had she been living in Pakistan, Riffat would not have been successful in getting legal separation from her husband. Appropriate or relevant education does, however, demolish some cultural misconceptions and myths that deter a woman from extricating herself from the abusive situation. In fact, research described in *Like a Wingless Bird* (MacLeod, 1994) reveals that women tend to stay with their abusive partners for a whole array of reasons:

- A widely held belief that the woman should make sacrifices and keep the family together. A woman is a custodian of the culture so it is her job to ensure that her children get acquainted with cultural values, history and traditions of the home country.
- Talking about abuse is not only embarrassing but a taboo in most cultures, so women mostly suffer in silence.
- The husband might be defamed.
- From a religious and cultural point of view women think it is their destiny to suffer; men will not change so they resign themselves to their destiny.
- Fear of revenge from their husband.
- Most women are afraid to be alone or afraid to fend for themselves in a man's world
- If they leave their husbands there will be no place for them in the community. Far from being of any help, language communities not wanting to get involved, tend to blame the victim and ostracize the abused women. If a man

> intervenes and tries to prevent the abuse, he is construed to be the abused woman's lover (MacLeod, 1994, p. 30).

I asked Riffat if her friends didn't help her through the ordeal. She said on the contrary, they tried to convince her not to seek divorce, recounting the enormous problems she would face in life without a man. Riffat was unconvinced and so her friends deserted her for good. She said she was often conscious of being held at bay by her friends who exhibited open hostility towards her after her separation from her husband. She told me "It is better not to have friends at all than to have those who think of you as a competition." The only social life she has now is that offered by the Centre, otherwise she has no friends to visit or places to go.

When she asked me if I was happily married and if I had children, I couldn't contain myself, I just had to tell her my story. I recounted how my husband has been having affairs in succession and how my Mom called him back when he had left me and my son for good. She was indignant. Even more so when I told her that sometimes I take my frustration out on my eleven-year-old son. Riffat was full of advice, like an elder sister (she is about six years older than me). She told me to give all my love and care to my son as he deserved the best just as she knew her sons did. "Don't make your husband the focus of your life, he doesn't deserve that anymore, he failed you," she advised me. I told her how even after all this time I still cry and become hysterical when I learn that he has gone to visit his girlfriend. She said

> You have to rise above the feelings of love and hate. At the moment you are in a love-hate relationship with Ali. He doesn't deserve your love just as he doesn't deserve your hate. You can't love him, for obvious reasons, but you shouldn't

hate him either because he is a creation of God and he deserves the right to lead life as he pleases. I, myself, have been able to find peace by numbing all feelings of hate for my husband and love for my parents. You know I don't hate Massoud anymore. I pity him, he is sick in his mind. That is why he is abusive.

Many questions sprang up in my mind about her relationship with her parents. As far as I was concerned she had opened up a Pandora's box. I asked "Did your parents ever confront Massoud about his treatment of you? Did they support you in your decision to separate from him? What was their take on the whole situation?"

She said quite patiently:

I remember I had gone [home] to my parents for the birth of my second son and I told them I didn't want to go back to my husband. All that my father said was "Whatever decision you take, do so when you get back to Karachi." (My parents lived in Lahore). Well, that clearly meant that I didn't have his support and that if I wanted divorce, I was on my own. My mother, on the other hand, believed that I should swim with the tide not against it, in other words. stay with Massoud and tolerate his abuse.

I was confused "But why didn't your parents support you in your difficult situation? Were they financially challenged?"

She retorted:

No, my father is one of the top importers of foreign machinery even today at the age of eighty two. It was just that no one had taken such a decision in my family and they thought I was wanting to go through divorce because I was educated and could support my children. Otherwise I would have endured abuse. Now I don't

> feel any overwhelming love for them, I know I have my brothers to take care of them in Pakistan so I have not gone to visit them since I came to Canada six years ago. We do exchange e-mail almost every day, though, and my elder son went this last summer to see his grandparents.

I asked her the question that had been surfacing in my mind time and again during the course of her story: "Don't you feel the need for a man in your life — someone to share your life with?"

She was quite open about it "Do you mean sexually or otherwise?" I felt almost ashamed of my question. "Was it called for?" I wondered. All I said was "Otherwise", leaving it open for her to answer as she chose best.

> Oh! Of course I do, every step of the way. Do you see the beautiful colors of fall, I would love to go see the suburbs of Toronto, travel to other cities and generally go places, but I have no one to go with. I can make friends but then they will have their own demands, they will want to go to movies with me and want me to cook for them. Any man would want that. If I do all that, I would have no time to spend with my sons. My younger one. Sherry, knows that I am home by six. He waits for me and we eat together. He comes back from school and doesn't eat until I am home. Can you beat that? He asks if I have a headache and gives me a tablet. He knows that I have that time reserved for him only and no one else. We do his homework together. His elder brother is also there all the time for him, and that is why he doesn't want to go visit his Dad on Saturdays. We actually have to convince him to go. I wouldn't trade all this love and care for any man in my life

> even though I was genuinely surprised at myself when I discovered that I do have sexual needs. (Field notes from conversation with Riffat, October 18, 2000)

She was also full of advice for me regarding the upbringing of my son, Faraz, who is the same age as her younger son — how I should devote all my energy and time to him and walk him through this difficult time in his life, just as she was striving to do with her sons. She said

> My parents gave me the best of life when I was with them; the first twenty-five years of my life, before they married me off to Massoud. I never had to work for anything, I got the best of education, and it wasn't their fault that my fate was such. I now feel that I owe my sons at least the life that my parents gave me. Who knows what is in store for them in future?

Riffat felt very proud that her elder son Shaun had been admitted to the Engineering Department in the University of Toronto. "He has started school this September and I feel I have accomplished something very important in my life. It is like a crown I wear."

Riffat's story is very important to me as it proved to be more therapeutic for me than anything else. Now when I reflect on it, I feel that I asked her all those questions because I wanted some reassurance from her that it would turn out fine for me, too, if I sought a divorce. In her, I somehow saw my future. A self-contained, peaceful and cheerful woman who had successfully weathered all the storms in her life and was content to lead a quiet and independent life with her children. I, on the other hand, am quite the opposite, forever worrying about the future, emotionally stressed out (a stress that resulted in two successive miscarriages last year) and, not yet having come to terms

with my husband's perpetual infidelity, I feel I have much growing up to do. This was the first time in my life that I had talked to someone from my community who had gone through the mill and had lived to tell the tale, a tale of hope. I felt a lot more confident in myself after this conversation, almost like a new person. Riffat's story is extremely important to me, not only because it has given me the courage to go on in life, and to know that there is life after divorce (if I choose that option), but also because I look up to her as my mentor in matters of human relationships. We parted for the day, very good friends, with a promise to keep in touch regularly.

I have named this real life story "an old wine in a new bottle" because we immigrants come to Canada, a new country (or a new bottle), with our cultural baggage which is the old wine. The aroma remains the same, in the shape of age-old beliefs around the dreaded consequences of separating from one's spouse, the stigma attached to divorce and the ostracization from the community. Riffat was only able to find salvation in a new country. Likewise, I also feel that if I am not able to bear it any longer, I do have the option of divorcing my husband while keeping custody of my son. There is thus this ray of hope for me.

Connelly and Clandinin believe that "life is central to education" (1995, p. 79). Life had taught Riffat that nothing lasts forever (namely, love and marriage) and one should not expect anything from anyone but must keep on giving. (She in fact quoted a verse from the Quran to this effect.) She says she knows that her children might never return her love or might not even appreciate the sacrifices she made for them but her job as a mother was to keep giving them love and care. Life experiences can be profoundly educative. Just as the death of a parent constitutes education (Clandinin & Connelly,

1994) so does a life with an abusive husband. Riffat had come to terms with the internal and the existential conditions in her experiential situation (Dewey, 1938). I also see her life as education which is conceived of as "cultivation, awakening and transformation" by Connelly and Clandinin where

> Cultivation is mainly found in the intentional hard work of schooling and the unintentional lessons of play and other forms of daily life: awakening is found in the romance of becoming aware of the possibility of seeing oneself and the world in new ways: and transformation is found in the process and the outcome of falling into new ways of seeing. (1995, p. 82)

I think that for Riffat, awakening (the possibility of seeing herself independent of her husband) had come earlier (in Pakistan) than cultivation, which was the intentional act of making herself ready for a life without her husband (in Canada). For her, cultivation entailed attending workshops for abused women at the Centre and classes in Seneca College in order to acquire proficiency in computer skills, as well as getting legal information and aid in her situation. She looked back at her life in Pakistan and said she had done a good thing for herself and her sons. Riffat advised me not to waste my life in regrets of marrying the wrong person or of failing to bring him back. Life was precious, she said, and I should enjoy what I have, namely, my mother and my son, and forget about what I don't have—a loving, faithful husband. No one gets everything in life, no one is perfectly happy. We should be thankful for what we have.

Revisiting the Centre and Reviving my Old Links

Coming back to the main Center to look for research participants, in September, 2002, after almost two years, I was overcome with a warm feeling of homecoming. This

was the Center which had given me an interview and, subsequently, my first teaching job in Canada. I felt as if they had done me a favour when all the other LINC agencies had declined to hire me directly and had advised me to apply through the Toronto District School Board. I also reproached myself for not keeping in touch with former colleagues. I wondered whether I would get a warm reception after all these years.

My only link to the Centre was Riffat. We had said goodbye following our conversation and promised to keep in touch. Neither of us had been able to keep that promise, given our busy lifestyle, and now I was a bit apprehensive, feeling that I always go to her when I need anything for my studies. Riffat was quite gracious about letting me use her story for my aforementioned assignment. She even said she would be happy if her story could be of some help to other women like her and that I could use it in my thesis as well.

As I entered the Centre, I was pleasantly surprised to see a freshly renovated, well-kept office with beautiful plants at the reception and a bunch of pink roses in a vase on the receptionist's desk. The receptionist, a Chinese woman, asked me whom I had come to see and if I had an appointment. I signed my name on the register and said I was a friend of Riffat's. Riffat came downstairs to meet me; she was all smiles and gave me a warm hug. I felt reassured even though I had felt quite ill at ease about seeing her after all this time. We had quite a lot of catching up to do, and we sat on the couch in the reception room on the ground floor for more than half an hour. I told her that I had come to look for research participants in the Centre, especially those students who were utilizing the services of the counselors. She took me upstairs to her office and again I was surprised to see that the whole place had had a facelift. The open area which overlooked

the day care center below was covered beautifully with hard wood flooring and made into a very spacious computer lab-cum-waiting area for those wanting to meet the Executive Director. The offices all had a fresh look about them as well. Riffat introduced me to the counselors and said that after getting the appropriate permission from the administration I could request the counselors to help me in procuring participants.

The administrator who had previously interviewed me and the head teacher who was acutely conscious of racism in Canada were both very pleased to see me again. They were of the opinion that Canada agreed with me and that I looked happy. They had seen me when I was desperately looking for a teaching position and simultaneously struggling with a telemarketing job, selling lottery tickets to people across the border from Canada, something I had never imagined doing in my worst nightmares. I had been tense and fearful that if I did not get a teaching job soon I would lose all my self confidence. Now, after being admitted to the Ph.D. program, I looked serene and calm, they said.

The thing that struck me at the Center was the air of congeniality that pervaded it. Everybody there was happy to help everybody else. It felt like home not only to me but also, I presumed, to those who worked there. I wondered, what was so special about the Centre?

A haven for struggling women.

Newly arrived in a foreign country, living with an abusive husband, nowhere to go for help, no one to talk to about one's predicament, and not having English language skills to approach the authorities, sounds like a familiar story of any South Asian immigrant woman in Canada. In a situation like this, when someone lends a helping hand, it is a Godsend. The Immigrant Women's Centre is such a haven for women in

need of help in all facets of life. Established in 1982 as a non-profit organization, it still remains true to its mission statement:

> [The] Immigrant Women's Centre is committed to supporting Chinese speaking and South Asian women to take greater control of their lives. [The] IWC provides culturally appropriate and linguistically specific settlement and counseling services with the use of community determined strategies, which are developed and delivered by immigrant women.

According to the Centre's brochure it provides the following services:

1. *Settlement Integration* addresses the psychosocial and structural realities that affect the lives of immigrant women and their families in the process of settlement.
2. *Violence Against Women and Children*: [The IWC] assists those victimized by violence in developing the necessary skills to lead an independent life, free of abuse.
3. *LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)* provides language training at various skill levels and includes computer instructions.
4. *CED (Community Economic Development)* initiatives provide job training and facilitate the development of immigrant women's entrepreneurial skills to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

I was interested in knowing how the organization had touched some women's lives and why a deep commitment, dedication and devotion binds these women to the Centre. Behind the formal, bureaucratic exterior of the offices, a climate of congeniality

binds everyone together, be it employee or volunteer. What are the features that make IWC different?

The services offered by IWC.

When I taught ESL for more than eight months in one of the IWC's four locations, I thought it was just another centre that provided some services for immigrant women. But returning there for research purposes was another matter altogether. I had occasion to talk to some South Asian women in the administration (whose names and positions cannot be divulged for purposes of confidentiality). They opened my eyes to the long-term help the Centre had extended in order to enable them get out of their abusive situations and become self-reliant.

Given that one of the four mandates of the Centre is providing assistance to abused women, it has the requisite counseling services, workshops and follow up to support an abused woman through the turbulent period of her life during which she decides whether she wants to get out of the abusive situation, if she wants to retain custody of her children, and how she should prepare herself to go through the court proceedings. As one of the women put it, "The Centre provided me with the support I needed to get out of my (abusive) situation". On the other hand if the abused woman tries to leave her husband, she knows she will be a social outcast since married women in the South Asian community consider single women to be threats to their own marital life. If an educated woman decides to defy the odds and separate from her abusive husband, she knows she needs a place where she will be accepted and respected as a complete person. This is where Centres like this one lend dignity and courage to the shattered souls by providing them with important skills and supporting their economic independence.

Talking briefly to another woman, also abused and separated but not fortunate enough to be educated, I learned of the IWC's Community Economic Development Program. This program aims at enhancing and marketing immigrant women's skills with a view to making them economically self-sufficient. This woman was learning to cook international dishes at the Centre (she already knew how to cook her own cultural ones). She got a lot of practice because she ran a canteen for the Centre. While the proceeds went to the Centre's accounts, she was paid a nominal sum for her services. The Centre also procured catering contracts from educational institutions like George Brown College and York University which helped this woman and a few others like her, to cook for these clients. I was impressed by her enthusiasm for her goal of opening a restaurant on her own.

The Settlement Integration Program run by the Centre utilizes the full-time services of counselors who are readily accessible. Talking with one of the counselors, I was impressed by the lengths to which these counselors went to help new immigrants. The counselors' services ranged from filling out welfare forms to procuring employment, looking for subsidized housing for clients, helping with citizenship hearings, and legal matters pertaining to assault. Ideally there are two types of counselors, one dealing with wife assault cases and the other with settlement. I sensed an immense degree of understanding and empathy in the attitude of the counselors especially when they spoke about the challenges immigrants face upon arrival in Canada. The counselors' personal endeavors to ensure that these immigrants settled comfortably in their new environment and became productive citizens were highly commendable.

The overall impression that I got from talking to the counselors, as well as to employees who were previously abused, was of their deep attachment and commitment to the Centre and to their jobs. I was struck by the mutual willingness on the part of colleagues to help each other and to fill in if someone was called away. The establishment had a friendly, feminine air to it. There was no masculine sterility, or the impersonality and instrumentality that frequently haunts the corridors of bureaucracy. Being funded (and organized) by the government and various agencies, the Centre does have a bureaucracy structure but the prevailing atmosphere is that of a warm, flexible organization which encourages efficiency balanced with empathy.

A concern for process and the consequent empowerment of the employees was reflected in the work culture of the Centre. Women worked flexible hours due to the Centre's policy of accommodating their transition between home and work. The organizational features which stood out to my mind were extensive volunteerism, flexible work hours, mutual help, and the freedom to express personal concerns in a caring context. All these aspects speak of a nurturing (female) aura around the place. The Centre is run by a dynamic, well-educated South Asian Executive Director who agrees with the feminist view that "the personal is political" and, by implication, with Kathy Ferguson's statement that "feminism is not compatible with bureaucracy" owing to the hierarchical distribution of power in such organizations and also because of an absolute dearth of "caretaking, nurturance, empathy and connectedness" (Ferguson, 1984, p. 25).

From personal experience and from the experiences of the women I spoke with, I felt the prevalence of a strong humanitarian outlook in the culture of the IWC where the hiring criteria were not merely a woman's previous work experience and technical skills

(both of which were sometimes not very prominent in the cases of women discussed), but were more personal and political in nature. More attention was paid to the genuine needs of the person being hired, such as the need to find employment and become economically independent where the woman in question was abused, or the need to prevent abuse by assisting the woman in legal matters pertaining to her personal situation.

Not being able to provide employment in all cases, the Centre encouraged volunteerism. My impression was that the women felt empowered when the Centre offered them the opportunity, through volunteering, to improve their existing skills and later market them for economic self-reliance. The workshops organized in the Centre helped to boost women's self-confidence and, by demolishing oppressive cultural myths, subsequently promoted psychological change.

Social and cultural ideologies take a long time to change and communities tend to adhere to them religiously even while living in advanced societies like Canada, as illustrated in the attempts by Riffat's friends' to prevent her from separating from her husband. Centres like the IWC contribute to social change by holding 'consciousness-raising' workshops and by adhering to a broadminded approach themselves.

An Interview with the Executive Director

After a wait of almost two months, in November, 2002, I was able to obtain an appointment for an interview with the Executive Director of the agency. I have interwoven the interviews with the Executive Director and an ESL teacher with the stories of my participants, following the principle argued by Denzin and Lincoln.

> The move is toward pluralism and many social scientists now recognize that no picture is ever complete, that what is needed is many perspectives, many voices

> before we can achieve deep understandings of social phenomena and before we can assert that a narrative is complete. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, pp. 417 – 418.)

The meeting with the Executive Director was very pleasant. I found her to be a very dynamic and knowledgeable woman of South Asian background. She seemed to know what I was talking about when I outlined my intended research to her. Most of her ideas about immigrant women's situations resonated with mine. For instance, she also believed in the efficacy of a holistic curriculum for immigrant women where even sensitive issues like abuse could be addressed in an ESL classroom and a teacher could build a whole lesson around it by making use of resources and relevant vocabulary to give them the required information.

She saw the teaching of a needs-based curriculum as the politicizing of curriculum which she believed was important to make people aware of the unequal power relations existing in the society. For her, the major issues undermining immigrant women's lives were racism, access to trade and profession, capitalism etc.

> The whole idea of integration into the curriculum is that you need to make people aware and you want to politicize curriculum really. I mean that most of the issues are issues of power, so that if women are not getting jobs, there are issues in terms of racism, access to trade and profession in terms of how information is used or given or not given. I mean, if you are new here and you don't know anything and you don't have English as your language, especially if you are a woman, you can forget about finding out anything for yourself for the next three or four years right? So as far as I am concerned it is a very politicized activity and I must say

> there is an inherent contradiction within the way the government offers it and what it needs to be, so in fact there is a damping down of the politicization.

While reiterating that awareness-raising of immigrant women can take place in the ESL classroom, she believed that nothing tangible could be accomplished merely at the theoretical level of classroom teaching. Thus, even though government policies regarding human rights and antidiscrimination exist at the theoretical level, they are not effective because funds to implement them are not channeled to the infrastructure. Even the language programs are wholly Eurocentric due to the cultural devaluation of immigrants and the "globalization of the Western values" hence .

> You know the thing about the West is that it is all theory and no sort of ....you know the action part is tough. One can talk about these things.... I mean, look at all the bureaucracies that have been set up around these issues. I mean, there is basically the anti-discrimination policy, the human rights' policy so I think for most governments you know, the intent is good, right? They want to address these things, right? But if you really want to address these things ....to make it possible, you have to have the infrastructure, you have to have the ability to follow through, you have to have, say, for example, advocacy workers connected to language training. Now they are not willing to do that. Now, okay if the intent is really to address these issues why is it that they haven't put the money where their mouth is? Because that's where it counts. I mean, if you have taught ESL, you know what is happening to these women and men. What is basically happening, there is a whole cultural devaluation what Edward Said talks about, you know the

> globalization of Western values, especially within language training, it is even more Eurocentric.

In the Executive Director's view, the globalization that is being enforced is a vested interest globalization where only the interests of the major players like the United States, Great Britain, and the European powers are safeguarded. She believed that if a fair globalization were implemented it would incorporate the good aspects, not just the negative ones:

> It is hard to extricate ourselves out of it. So supposing, even if we buy into the framework, what the social justice people are saying is why don't you globalize democracy, why don't you globalize social justice issues, why don't you globalize equality, why don't you globalize the good things as well. You know, that's what's happening, because globalization is, that's not what its doing, it's corporate globalization. If you look at it more positively, globalization is really capitalism. Global capitalism is here to stay, unless there is a huge backlash against it in such a concerted way, because like anything else it is global power. It is not just power confined to small areas right? And there is now such a connection between corporate interests and government interests... there has almost been like a consensus, almost a collusion going on, that in fact, the governments are furthering corporate interests.

For the Executive Director, the corporate interests are more or less synonymous with the "imperialist globalization that the US is spreading" so that life is interpreted in the media through a US-biased lens:

> I wouldn't say there is no democracy anymore but it has certainly become very diluted, and also the freedom of press. It is a personal kind of disappointment for me. I mean how this "9-11" in terms of occupation has been dealt with now...Well, it was so centered on the West, that people all over have been struggling and dying and, you know, living under very very harsh conditions, but only if it happens in the West, and West meaning the US, so it is very hard to take that kind of imperialist globalization that the US is spreading.

She also asserted that no dissent is allowed by the corporate globalization to undo its policies of exploitation of people and values. This "repressive way of being" permeates the program delivery of well-intentioned government policies about antiracism, antidiscrimination and human rights, making them contradictory and ineffective. The immigration process itself is a casualty of the globalization syndrome giving rise to "a cheap labour force". O'Sullivan (1999) also points out that while bringing devastation to the environment through toxic waste, depletion of forests etc. globalization also destroys human existence.

Even though globalization is a first world phenomenon, it has wrought destruction, mainly in the Third World countries where, because of the availability of cheap labour and raw material, Western affluent countries set up industries and bring about widespread destruction in its wake. This is not to say that the Western countries are spared the devastating consequences of globalization. Homelessness has escalated to epidemic proportions. In the North American context, there has been an enormous increase in the underclass population, reinforced by marginality. Marginality, a by-product of modern multicultural civilization, is characterized by class, race and gender.

Swasti Mitter (1986) in her lucid portrayal of globalization, points out that while previously, the corporate industries were established in developing countries by the first world nations to avail themselves of the low cost of production, the finished goods and services subsequently being transported to developed countries for final consumption, it would now be more cost-effective to set up industries in the countries of consumption themselves, in view of the cheap labour reserve in the form of the Western underclass, which would keep in check any potential wage increase.

It is pertinent to point out here that the majority of South Asians belong to the marginalized underclass in North America, not only by virtue of their race but also their social class. South Asian women bear the double impact of this unfortunate state of affairs. In addition to being oppressed at their own cultural level, upon immigration to Canada, they are relegated to a low income class, regardless of their former financial status in their home country. Making a fresh start in a new country entails an enormous depletion of personal resources, loss of job security, as well as problems of professional accreditation in Canada. While their spouses struggle to keep their families from starving, unable to gain employment in their profession due to the lack of Canadian accreditation, these women are forced to look for menial jobs in factories, as low-paid labour. Thus their social and domestic wellbeing is undermined both by their psychological demoralization and by the financial difficulties they face .

When it comes to recognizing the qualifications of immigrants and utilizing their skills, the main issue, according to the Executive Director, is "a lack of political will on the part of the government and racism".

> And did you see the discourse in the newspapers, not one headline was "We have thousands of immigrant doctors, why can't we fast track them?" I mean there were some one or two things here, but that is not in the consciousness. "How can we get more graduates within Canada right? How can we give incentives to existing Canadian doctors so they move from the cities to the smaller areas?" I didn't see one clear article which said "Okay, there are X number of doctors here who are losing the skills...". I mean we have somebody working here who is doing group work for us. She is a doctor who had a flourishing practice in India and she is never going to go back to it. So the discussion is around "How can we put more money for ten years into the Canadian medical system to get home grown doctors?" not "Why can't we use the immigrants?" And that is shocking.

She pointed out that enormous immigrant potential is lost "through various unvisionary policy-making, thinking and program delivery." Qualified professional immigrants are driving cabs and the licensing bodies do not recognize their overseas credentials and work experience. Hence, even the most well-intentioned government policies aimed at the assimilation of immigrants in Canada go to waste when, through a lack of political will, they "succumb to the pressures of non-progressive forces like racism and discrimination and the kind of pressure they feel from groups and lobby groups that try to keep immigrants out".

> Definitely under globalization, the role of the state has been markedly reduced. I mean, it's— and all these arrangements through FTA.... and all of those things, who has done that, the governments have signed it and which is beneficial to our own national economy at the expense of everybody else. So they still do a lot for

> the corporate world but what they have done is they have receded from their social policy function, social economic policy function.

When I asked her about any recommendations she might make for the betterment of immigrants' life conditions, she envisioned a two-pronged approach: (1) Awareness-raising of issues at the policy level for bureaucrats; and (2) Reorientation of the system so that programs are holistic not fragmented

> because you can't do anything without the policy-makers buying into this.... Because they are the funders and they set the ground rules for everything, what is discussed what is not discussed. So I think definitely education and awareness-raising of issues at the policy level for high-level bureaucrats even ministers. Definitely that, followed by the reorientation of the system, you know, building it into the program delivery basically because if you work directly for the program then it is delivered, right? I mean, you have to move with those objectives. There is some room, for example, in terms of workshops, speakers, it depends on how creative the agency is... in terms of introducing these subjects and how they stay with it and there is follow up. So for example, for IWC it's easier, we have the program on site in each of the locations, for example, the violence against women program, if you are referring to that, and if something comes up here is a channel. But a lot of agencies don't have basically delivery. So the other recommendation is not to deliver programs in a fragmented way and [to] go for a holistic program delivery which a lot of community agencies do, so as not to isolate education from other aspects of life, particularly for immigrants. This is very important because so much of the political, social and economic policies impact on them in

> such a direct way, even more so than most people, because they are uprooted and they need to find their way and they need to stay away from self blame because if you don't get a job for ten years it gets internalized.

Her idea of a holistic LINC program was identical with how I envision it should be to be beneficial to immigrants.

> For example, language training should be offered in conjunction with employment. In fact, LINC says quite clearly that we are not training people for employment, which is ridiculous, right? If you look at their criteria you see that they want language training in isolation but if you ask them "Do you want it in isolation?" they'd say "No." But in fact, that is what is happening. So if they had employment, if they had counseling support.... The other thing that is missing for the immigrant community is that there is no counseling dollar allocation.

In addition to training for employment, she argued, immigrants could be given counseling support to deal with their feelings of uprootedness, devaluation and the psychological setbacks which they experience as a result of immigration:

> There is no counseling support for racism, no counseling support for feelings of uprootedness, devaluation, psycho-spiritual factors that impact on people when they are uprooted. Nothing. It is almost as if there are these people who, if they come here, they have to be physically strong, mentally strong, emotionally strong to that degree that all kind of rejection can go on and they should rise above that. So there is very very little counseling support for immigrants.

She also believed in the effectiveness of small community agencies in handling immigrant women's education and settlement affairs because these agencies gave them a

sense of belonging, as opposed to large, bureaucratic, service organizations set up by the government:

> So programs should be integrated, holistic and also I think for immigrant communities there should be community-based programs. Whether we like it or not, when women come here there is a certain feeling of you know, *Apnapun* (a sense of belonging) of recognition. They see that people like them can be in positions of power, that the counselors are from their own communities. At a very basic level, at the emotional level, it makes a difference, they can relate to them and they are role models, automatically. It gives them possibility and hope of things, that you can make it if you put up with all of this; eventually there is a possibility of being in these kind of spaces, having some power, decision-making, and that kind of thing. That is very helpful psychologically. So the community-based agencies are very important particularly for women. They are much less into pathologizing pain and trauma, they are much more structured in their approach. There is a lot more understanding and the total devaluation is not happening unless you have internalized racism, which is a possibility, you know. But by and large, there is an understanding, almost sort of automatic, reflexive understanding of culture and values. And because you are a part of it, the judgment is not harsh because it is hard to put down what you yourself have experienced, and so you do come with a broader understanding and you are less judgmental. It does provide a certain kind of validation, in terms of the cultural values.

> ....Where you are devalued or your credentials are devalued, you have a lot of things you are carrying on your shoulders. So in that it is very helpful to have community services and small agencies. I'm really not into the big bureaucratic structures. I mean even for IWC, if you break it down into smaller locations, because it is more personal, more accessible, people don't feel intimidated. It's less formal. You know, people feel that they can ask things, at least they can question things. The power differential is not that wide. Whereas just imagine if you go into an immigration office — automatically you are on guard, right? I mean you sort of feel out of place. Whereas here, you are more at home, there are things that you recognize, right?

The comfortable atmosphere of community agencies where people speak the immigrants' native language and wear their traditional attire, provides a feeling of homecoming, especially to those who have no family support network here.

> In the capitalist era there is so much alienation happening that people are feeling that even service has become so formalized. And because the support systems are not there, community agencies often become extended family support systems which is very necessary if you are an immigrant. If you are alone, if your family is not here, you need to feel that there is some place that you could go to that people would care about you if something happens to you. That sort of keeps you going.

Adult immigrants, who have a fairly established sense of identity, find these agencies very useful. This is, perhaps, less important to younger, adolescent immigrants who may be less afraid of losing face in their cultural community, and may be more open to experimenting (adopting new cultural values and norms), and who may have fewer

qualms about integrating into the host Canadian culture. I also resonate with the Executive Director's view that the compartmentalization and fragmentation of ideas is a Western characteristic, and that it is totally incongruent with the South Asian mental make up. Especially for immigrants, holistic thinking works best. For instance, the ESL teacher could both offer advice to an abused student and provide her with the relevant information to improve her situation. She would not feel that her "hands are tied" (Asfa's interview) because she was "just an English teacher" and not a qualified counselor.

> Like basically the whole notion of fragmenting of ideas, of separating, which the West has in some ways benefited from largely because when you specialize and go in depth in one field, it is inherently built into the system. There is very little holistic thinking. Like even at the Ph.D. level, a lot of people write, they are so close to the broader implications of policy and those kinds of structural issues they would have some very interesting things to say. But they often don't make the broader connection and I think it is in some way a fallout from positivistic thinking. And this kind of approach under capitalism has taken on huge proportions like of individualizing everything, separating yourself from what is going on around you, right?

Owing to this fragmentation of ideas it is very hard to "collaborate and cooperate" in Western countries like Canada because

> There is so much ego involved, so much sense of either your own power or the lack of it, that it becomes a real stumbling block to mobilizing and organizing, you know. Somehow we have gotten away from this nurturance. The whole mobilizing and organizing is very, sort of, class-based, patriarchal.

She argues that when everything is so task-oriented, even democracy and freedom of the press are undermined.

> Yeah, very much, task, task, task. Whereas, I think we need to develop other models. See the thing is there is such a stranglehold of Western ideals and values, it's so hard to get out of them, right? I mean, everybody, until 9-11, thought we had a flourishing free press and democracy right? But when you are pushed in a corner, you find out and, in fact, people who are coming from other countries are criticizing their governments left, right and centre, okay? Within their own country as well. The NGOs in their own countries are taking their governments on, they have no problem criticizing, for example, if you are from Pakistan, you can trash Musharraf or Taliban whatever. But try and say one word about 9-11 and see what happened to Sunera Thobani. ...yeah, so it is this kind of reaction, and this is the difference. They called her a crazy woman, they asked her to go back to Africa where she belonged. And it was in the Canadian Parliament. Imagine!

My interview with the Executive Directory opened my eyes to issues I had not considered, either because I was new in the country or because I was merely looking at the situation from the perspective of an ESL teacher in a LINC classroom. She highlighted issues that have to be looked into before the challenges faced by immigrants can be tackled. To me it seemed almost like a cobweb — touching one end could shake up the whole web because everything in the picture was interconnected.

To my mind, the Executive Director's ideas were a toned-down version of Himani Bannerji's (2000) stringent views on the interpolating influence of culture, class, racism,

and patriarchy on immigrants, inadvertently promoted by multiculturalism. According to Bannerji "...multiculturalism is a state initiated enterprise in Canada, with a legal and governing apparatus consisting of legislation and official policies with appropriate administrative bureaus" (Bannerji, 2000, p.16). The underlying premise for multiculturalism is diversity. Bannerji argues that the

> discourse of diversity is a fusion of a cultural classification, or an empirical/descriptive gesture, with politics. That is, our empirically being from various countries, with our particular looks, language and cultures has become an occasion for interpreting, constructing and ascribing differences with connotations of power relations. (2000, p. 35.)

According to Bannerji, the notion of diversity was initiated to negate hegemonic discourses of racism and sexism. It therefore performs a two-fold function; not only does it serve to describe the social and cultural characteristics of the different communities of immigrants in a neutral manner, but it also obscures the racist and sexist stereotypes that accompany such descriptions and underlie the hyphenated existence of the non-Whites. The same goes for patriarchy issues which, when they arise, are essentialized as those pertaining to a particular culture or community. For instance, it is assumed by the mainstream White culture that South Asians are traditional and conservative therefore patriarchy and the accompanying exploitation of women is somehow congruent with their culture and religion and hence not worth questioning on a state level. In my opinion, it is almost as if state intervention in matters of oppression and brutality against women would be considered an infringement of privacy, on the part of the government, for that community.

Assigning men the status of the head of the family in the immigration procedure and women as their dependents further exacerbates the already oppressive state of affairs of the South Asian household. The patriarchs hold a virtual life and death power over their wives who, for the most part, due to a lack of knowledge about their rights in Canada, live under the constant threat of being deported to their home country without their children and with no financial support (Bannerji, 2000, p. 5). The women thus bear the abuse and brutality of their husbands without making any tangible efforts to extricate themselves from the situation.

I believe patriarchy perpetrates the ultimate oppression of women in South Asian community in Canada, since it operates at two levels: one, where the male members of the community assume the self-appointed status of being the head of the family, as well as, by virtue of their status, the proprietors of women's body and existence. At the second level, patriarchy operates through systemic racism which, being a reflection of the colonial psyche, relegates non-White cultures to marginalized or minority cultures. "This way of thinking accomplishes de-politicization at deeply complex conceptual and political levels. Simultaneously as it disarticulates culture from hegemony, it reduces all political issues into cultural ones and converts culture into a private matter" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 51). I concur with Bannerji's analysis especially in relation to feminists' efforts to remove issues of violence against women from the closed walls of community and bring them into public forums for scrutiny, through their motto "the personal is political".

The labels "immigrant" or "ethnic" contain the connotation of "us" and "them" where the "us" are all the White cultures, who do not have to be concerned with the pressures of assimilation into the mainstream Canadian culture, or the feelings of

uprootedness, and who are automatically absorbed into the host culture irrespective of their countries of origin or when they arrived in Canada. On the other hand, "them" signifies any non-White culture which is always a deviation from the norm, remaining an immigrant culture even generations later. The Executive Director also referred to the predicament of immigrants who are expected to start afresh, perform their best in the career market and rise above the discrimination they face in the host country

Conclusion

I have called this chapter "An Old Wine in a New Bottle" because we immigrants come to Canada, a new country (or a new bottle) with our cultural baggage which is the old wine. We interpret our experiences in the new country through our traditional cultural lens which we keep intact through the years. When faced with domestic abuse, for instance, we evaluate our option of separating from the abusive spouse through our cultural lens, weighing it against the social stigma attached to divorce, and the social ostracization that goes with it. Likewise, our decision to remain in an abusive relationship is also influenced by the cultural requirement to preserve the family unit and provide children with a two-parent home. Successful adaptation of immigrant women can only happen with the aid of community agencies who help them overcome their challenges by providing them with language skills and relevant services.

Immigrants' hopes for a better life in Canada are often thwarted due to a host of problems — obstacles to accreditation, lack of funds, settlement issues, etc., to mention only a few — which are underlined by racism, gender, and class discrimination. This chapter addressed the macro factors that determine the positioning of immigrants in the Canadian context, and set the groundwork for the following chapter, "The Brave Women

Who Lived to Tell the Tale" which consists of stories about the challenges my research participants faced in Canada and their struggles to overcome them.

Chapter 6: The Brave Women Who Lived to Tell the Tale

Having revived my previous links in the Agency, with Riffat's help, I was able to approach the Agency authorities to request permission and assistance in procuring my research participants. Since Riffat wasn't directly linked to the student body of the agency, she introduced me to the three counselors in the Agency. As it happened, one of the counselors, Pat (a pseudonym), used to work at the location where I had taught for a year. We used to come to the Center by the same bus. Being from the same Indian subcontinent, although Pat was an Indian Gujarati Hindu and I am an Urdu-speaking Pakistani Muslim, we shared a similar cultural and even linguistic background, since she could speak Hindi which is very similar to Urdu. We soon became good friends and subsequently extended our friendship circle to include other South Asian teachers and baby sitters at the Centre. Our tea break used to be a social event in the staff room, filled with fun and laughter. Meeting again now, after more than three years, we had a lot of catching up to do. I asked about all the other teachers who I had neglected to keep in touch with, we talked about our families, how our children were settling in Canada, and how we ourselves were coping with the fast-paced life of the new country.

When I told Pat about my research, she was extremely helpful. She had a list of clients who, even though they had dropped out of LINC classes were still in constant contact with her. As I mention in the previous chapter, the Center was a haven for many women who were victims of abuse by their spouses. It was an unspoken assumption that whoever worked in the voluntary or temporary positions had a tragic tale of her own and that the smiling faces may have hidden many a tear. I was told of (but never met) an abused 20-year-old Afghani girl with two children who was married to a 62-year-old

man. Apparently, he would often come to the LINC center inquiring after her if she was even half an hour late. I wasn't given the details or the name of the girl for reasons of confidentiality. Another woman, who was on the verge of getting a divorce, was locked in her house by her husband when he went to work and prevented from attending LINC classes. Pat said when she was informed by the language teach that the woman hadn't come to classes for a long time, Pat sent police to her house to check up on her. The husband came out of the house and said his wife had gone to visit a friend. He did not allow the police in. This was surprising for me because I was under impression that the police had the authority to go in and check out the house. Despite my efforts, I couldn't get in touch with either of these women as their husbands did not allow them to attend school on a regular basis. Pat also wasn't sure whether they would be willing to tell their stories because of their fear. She did, however, assure me, on the basis of the trust and confidence she had instilled in her clients, that there might be one or two who would be willing to share their stories if Pat told them that I was a very close friend of hers. Being an experienced counselor, Pat was aware of the issues of confidentiality surrounding the research. I didn't want her clients to feel pressured into disclosure, so I asked Pat to talk to them beforehand in order to get a sense of their feelings.

The Story of Razia Irfan

I met Razia in Pat's office, on October 8, 2002, at the LINC Centre. A girl of slight build, pale complexion, and a hesitant command of English, she looked no more than twenty. Later I found out she was twenty-three. I was introduced by Pat as a friend, someone interested in the issues faced by immigrants in Canada. I sensed that it was a formal introduction only and Pat had already talked to her about me. Razia gave me a

brief smile but in her preoccupied gaze I could guess there was a lot on her young mind. I reiterated what Pat had said about me, adding that I was looking at the issues from the viewpoint of immigrants, and would she be willing to tell her story and become a participant. She was quiet for a while and then she acceded, after consulting Pat privately, presumably to get more reassurance. I wrote in my field notes later when I was collecting my thoughts that my first impression of her was that she had an air of indifference, as if she didn't care about the consequences of the research, as long as her son was safe. Later, when I learned that her concern for the safety of her son was one of the main issues in her story, I felt embarrassed at myself for having thought her concern for her son's safety exaggerated, and for having been judgmental about her even though, at the time, I had not been fully aware of her background .

I briefed her about the issues of anonymity and confidentiality that would be in effect once she signed the consent form. At that point, Pat explained the consent form to her and she signed it. I somehow knew I would still have a long way to go in gaining her trust. Coming home after my first meeting with Razia, I wrote down my reflections. I had felt that if it hadn't been for Pat's understanding nature, soft voice and a perpetual smile that gave confidence and support to all her clients, I perhaps wouldn't have been able to penetrate the wall that Razia had built around herself, a wall of apathy, indifference, and a certain fear and mistrust of the world.

The eldest born of five, Razia came to Canada with her family in 1995, when she was seventeen. The family came to Montreal as refugees. Razia had been in high school in Bangladesh. She said life was the usual mix of struggle for survival and the day-to-day small incidents of happiness that keep people going. For instance, when talking about her

childhood, she recounted an incident when their modest house was almost washed away by a flood. They thought they had lost her youngest brother, who was a toddler at the time, but fortunately he was found floating nearby and saved by a neighbour. Her hysterical mother, she reminisced, got a new lease on life when she got her baby back.

Razia's childhood had been happy. She had had many friends and she missed the rainy afternoons in Chittagong when she and her friends, on their way home from school, would run around trees splashing rain water on each other with banana leaves, not caring how wet they got. Or how they would laugh uncontrollably if one of them accidentally fell in a puddle . While talking about her childhood, her eyes had a far off look in them. I could almost envision what she was describing, having been to Chittagong (it was East Pakistan then) myself, at the age of seven, with my mom when my sister had had her first baby after four years of marriage. For a moment, it was almost as if we shared the same scenery, the same hills, the same trees, the same row of houses. All I remember about Chittagong are the evergreen hills, a perpetual rainfall, avenues with thick trees on either sides, a certain wet scent in the air, and the rows of dark-complexioned maidservants clad in cotton saris, standing outside my sister's house whenever she fired her baby-sitter (which was quite often). I remember feeling sorry for them, and when I asked my mother why there were so many of them she replied that there were more poor people in East Pakistan than in West Pakistan. I remember not being able to understand anything when they spoke against my sister in Bengali, I just inferred from their demeanor that they didn't like the way she was always scolding them about sterilizing milk bottles, holding the baby properly, and changing diapers frequently.

I knew my sister was very fastidious—she still is—and my sympathies were always with the servants, be it the cook who was being scolded for spoiling a dish or the maid who had not brushed the carpet properly, or the nanny who had not changed the diaper on time and the baby had gotten diaper rash. Whereas people could afford to keep only two servants in West Pakistan, you could have four for the same money in East Pakistan. My mother said Bengalis had many children because all they ate was fish.

I remember the huge party my brother-in-law threw to celebrate the birth of his first son. It was a day-long affair in the house starting with a religious gathering followed by a grand lunch. Then everybody went home to change for the evening and came back for tea which was served on the lawns, followed by music and dinner till late in the night. It was almost sinfully royal, about five hundred people were invited. Since the house where my sister and brother-in-law lived was a remnant of colonial days, the ballroom was converted into a dining room and my brother-in-law borrowed a neighbour's lawn too, to accommodate everybody. This was a huge contrast to the poverty of the general population.

Such an indiscriminate show of wealth had wider, long-term implications. Political analysts believe that it fuelled the fire against West Pakistanis to such an extent that the Bengalis just had to end this "exploitation" and, with the help of India, ousted the West Pakistanis in the 1972 war. My brother-in-law is a Bengali but since he was married to my sister, a green-eyed, blond-haired, West Pakistani of Afghan origin, he was considered to be West Pakistani. When things had really flared up against West Pakistanis in Chittagong, my brother-in-law's car was stoned by rioters who called him bad names in Bengali, saying that he should not have married a non-Bengali girl, and

couldn't he find a Bengali girl good enough to be his wife? We had later heard many horrifying tales of the *Mukti Bahinis*, the Nationalist Party that perpetrated atrocities against West Pakistanis during the rampage before the war. One Bengali friend of my brother-in-law invited all his West Pakistani friends to dinner and after making them drunk cut off their heads. This was the madness that culminated in the 1972 war between India and Pakistan when Pakistan surrendered to the joint forces of East Pakistan and India.

My flashbacks to the days of my childhood were brief. I returned from my nostalgic reminiscences about the pleasant aspects of life in Bangladesh, to the present and tried to give my undivided attention to Razia's story. When I briefly shared certain good memories of the place with Razia, she was mildly surprised that I had ever been to Chittagong.

Razia's father, Rahman, had wanted to be educated abroad when he was young but his parents never had the means to fulfill his dreams. Fate offered him a chance to educate his children in a foreign country when a friend told him that people could immigrate to Canada as refugees. Canada, the friend had told him, was a crime-free country and the immigration laws were not as stringent as those in the United States. People immediately got jobs on arrival and the schooling for children was free. Everything was perfect Rahman had thought.

He saved enough to pay an agent who prepared the case for refugee status for Rahman and his family when they landed in Montreal. In her halting mix of Urdu and broken English (because I couldn't speak Bengali), Razia recounted how the family felt elated that finally all their financial troubles had ended and they had come to the land of

plenty to make a bright future for themselves. The children got their first shock when they saw their educated father, who had been considered a respectable, middle-class, bank employee back in Bangladesh, working hard in a factory. The thoughts of a better future allayed any fears they had at the time. But in 1998, he was laid off and since then the entire family has been on welfare. They moved to Toronto.

During this time, the father met a presentable young man who seemed more than interested in marrying their eldest born daughter. Considering this a good fortune, and one less mouth to feed, Rahman married Razia off to this boy who claimed that he had no immediate family here in Toronto and was a refugee. It was like a deal, Razia gained a husband—the ultimate good fortune for a father who had three daughters to marry off with a huge dowry—and, in turn, she would help her husband Irfan get legal status in Canada by sponsoring him. Things went smoothly until Razia got pregnant. "Irfan didn't want any children, he didn't believe in taking on any responsibility until he had a permanent status in Canada," Razia recalled.

But thinking back, Razia believes he was planning to desert her as soon as he immigrated. Razia had already put in an application sponsoring him. Learning of the pregnancy he became violent, slapped her and ordered her to accompany him to a doctor for abortion.

> This was the first time he had actually hit me. I still remember the emotional shock and disbelief that had overtaken me. I couldn't believe that a mild natured person like Irfan could in reality be so abusive. I spoke to my mother about it who condoned it saying that men can sometimes be violent but they usually improve

> once they become fathers. But it didn't turn out to be that way for me. Things worsened after my baby was born. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

While listening to Razia's story of abuse and knowing her Bengali background, I went back in time to a period almost sixty years before, in India. My mother had told me a story when she herself, a young mother at the age of fourteen, used to live with her newborn daughter (my elder sister) and my father in a posh area called Worli, in Bombay. While the apartment building was on a seaside with a beautiful view, my mom knew no happiness even in those early days of her marriage.

Their apartment balcony overlooked another apartment just besides theirs so that my mom had a clear view of the one room apartment. She remembers the Bengali couple that lived there. The wife was a young beautiful girl with long hair, the husband was just an ordinary looking person according to my mother. What fascinated my mom was the way the wife used to entertain her husband every evening with dance and singing. She was an excellent dancer and she sang beautifully as well. Singing and dancing is part of Bengali culture, and an important prerequisite of being a dutiful wife. Even though my mom belonged to the same subcontinent, her conservative culture did not allow any such "frivolity." In fact, my mom's culture, a mixture of Afghani and Urdu speaking, kept their women completely secluded from outside life. While my mother envied the girl's talents, her fate was no different from that of my mother. My mom, an early riser, could see from her balcony that despite the previous night's love and romance, the Bengali girl's husband used to wake her up in the morning by kicking her. My mother says she was saddened to see herself and that girl, two different women, having similar

fates—experiencing abuse at the hands of their husbands, though the degrees of abuse may have been different.

My mom told me this story more than once and she would always sum it by saying "You know, Bengali husbands are never good with their wives." I knew that behind this stereotype was the fact that my sister's abusive husband was also a Bengali, (though he had opted for Pakistan when Bangladesh was carved out of Pakistan's Western wing). Also, my mom's stereotyped characterization of Bengalis did not take into account the reality that my father was not a Bengali but was still extremely abusive.

A pause in Razia's voice brought me back to the present.

> I held myself responsible for Irfan's abusive behaviour as the abuse became a regular feature in our family. I blamed myself for wanting to have a baby but then everyone had told me that husbands become more responsible after becoming fathers. I became a nervous wreck and never seemed to do anything right. Even when I accidentally broke a plate, he would hit me and then I became more nervous. It was like a cycle. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

Razia recalled, with tearful eyes.

> Upon his insistence I reluctantly went with him to the doctor for an abortion, but to my relief the doctor declined, saying that I was in an advance stage of my pregnancy and so I could not go through with an abortion. Irfan was disappointed to say the least.

Razia painfully recalled how he began to sexually abuse her. He would force her to have sex even in the last days of the pregnancy, and when she complained of pain, he would assure her that it would make the delivery much easier. She believed him then

because "men have the worldly wisdom and they know more about these things than women do." Now she thinks he wanted her to miscarry. The night before the delivery, he again forced himself on her but this time she said she would call the police. He desisted. The following day a healthy baby boy was born.

> I had always secretly hoped that Irfan's behaviour would improve once he saw the baby, I was sadly mistaken. I continued to be physically and sexually abused by him. He would always hit me on the head so that no bruises or cuts could be seen on the body that might be used against him as evidence in the court of law. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

I asked her why she didn't leave him even before the baby was born. Razia had two reasons:

> First, I didn't want to become a financial burden on my father, after all, as the saying goes "a married daughter is like a neighbour." I belonged in my house with my husband. Also the divorce or separation of a sister reflects badly on the marriage prospects of other sisters because people always say the girl must have misbehaved with the husband and the other sisters must be the same. Second, I thought the abuse was merely a part of adjustment problems that we were having with each other and Irfan would be fine once he sees his baby and gets the immigrant's status. Being the wife, of course I was responsible for keeping the family together. I tried my best to please him but to no avail. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

Irfan resented the presence of the baby in the household. He would often ask Razia to send the baby to his relatives' house when she went to the LINC school to

improve her English. Now that the baby was born Razia thought of improving her English and getting a job, so that she could become economically self-reliant. More importantly she thought of staying away from her house too once she got a job. She was admitted to the LINC school into level three.

> Once when I went to my husband's cousin's house to pick the baby up, I saw him perched on the balcony wall while the cousin held him precariously. I remember screaming at the cousin to hold the baby properly or the baby would fall. When I complained to Irfan about the careless way that his cousin was holding our son and said that I would never leave the baby at the cousin's house, Irfan threatened to kill me for the allegations and insisted that the baby would have to go there. I am sure that Irfan was planning to kill the baby in conspiracy with his cousin. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

As a listener, I was quite shocked at this assumption but was not in a position to judge the mother's intuition. As if she could sense my disbelief at her notion of a father trying to kill an infant, she recounted another incident when Irfan left the eleven-month-old baby out in the cold.

> When I returned home after class and asked where the baby was, Irfan said "he was pointing towards the door so I assumed he wanted to go out, I left him in the balcony". The baby was screaming at the top of his lungs but Irfan would not bring him in. I rushed to the balcony and brought Usman in, he would have died of the cold and maybe that is what Irfan wanted. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

Once, Irfan spilled boiling hot tea on the baby and said it was an accident, Razia was not convinced. All these painful memories were fresh in her mind and it was almost as if she couldn't go on with the story; she seemed emotionally and physically exhausted. Pat's office suddenly felt rather small and suffocating. I suggested we meet again sometime later. We had lunch at a Pakistani restaurant just across the street from the Centre. Razia ate sparingly and was in a hurry to get back home to her mother where she had left her son.

During lunch I asked if she was still staying with her husband. She looked at me with disbelief as if I had stated an utter impossibility. I was almost embarrassed at my assumption. She looked at Pat as if to ask if it was alright to tell me. Pat gave her a reassuring smile. She continued "It was the night we had a violent argument that I decided I couldn't stay with him any longer".

I ventured to ask her the reason for the argument but I added that if she didn't feel comfortable telling me she was free to decline. She was quite gracious about it and continued with the story.

> Irfan was working in a restaurant as a waiter, we didn't always have enough to meet our expenses. He wanted me to get some money from my father to make the two ends meet. I totally refused. How could I be so selfish? My family was on welfare and there were four other children that my father had to think about. I told Irfan that I was not my father's responsibility any more. Why should I ask him for any money? Irfan totally lost control of himself, the argument went out of hand and threatened to kill me and the baby. Usman was only eighteen months at the time. When Irfan came after me with a kitchen knife, I rushed, picked up the baby

> and locked myself in the washroom. He went totally mad. Would you believe it, he broke down the washroom door! I was completely petrified. I screamed and rushed out, clutching the baby very close to me. (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

She was overwhelmed, tears welled up in her eyes. I could see that everything was still fresh in her memory. I asked "What happened after that?" She took control of herself and continued.

> Hearing my screams the neighbours had called the police. I didn't want the police to take him away because I knew they were going to treat him very badly there [the police station]. You know they [the police] are very harsh with us coloured people. I was scared they would beat him up badly and he was after all my son's father. I implored them to let him stay. I even told them it was our first fight and he never treated me badly, but they saw that I had got grazed with the knife on my arm and I was bleeding. The police wrote a lengthy report and then they took him away. They kept him in jail for three days. I immediately went to my parents and have stayed with them ever since.
>
> I asked "what about Irfan, where is he now?"
>
> "Oh he was issued a restraining order, he cannot come and see us without the prior permission of the court." (Razia interview, October 8, 2002.)

We were all too exhausted to continue. We said our good-byes and I told Razia we would arrange a meeting to continue our conversation whenever it was convenient for her.

Almost a week elapsed and I heard nothing from Razia. I called up Pat to ask if Razia had not actually withdrawn from the research. Pat reassured me that Razia was a very responsible person and had she decided to withdraw she would definitely have called at least Pat, if not me (My field notes dated October 15, 2002). I asked Pat how she had come to know of Razia. She told me that Razia was a LINC student in level three and when she started missing classes the teacher was concerned. She then asked Razia the reason for cutting classes. Razia was evasive for some time then told the teacher that she had nowhere to keep her son, the husband wouldn't allow her to bring the baby to school and insisted that Razia send him to the husband's cousin's house. The LINC teacher guessing that it was a case of abuse sent Razia to discuss her situation with Pat. Soon she stopped coming to classes altogether, being unable to handle the pressure at home, but she kept in contact with Pat.

I met Razia again about two days after my telephone conversation with Pat. We again met in Pat's office. This time Razia was more friendly, having told me more than half of her story. I asked how she was doing. She said she was tense not so much about the situation she was in but by the fact that the judge was not sympathetic towards her. I was not aware of the background for her statement and asked "What judge?" She proceeded to tell me the details.

> I applied for and got legal aid through Pat. I then approached the immigration authorities to withdraw my sponsorship for Irfan. They turned down my request saying that it was too late since the application was already going through the process. They however said they could delay it until the court processed their divorce. (Razia interview, October 17, 2002.)

At that point I asked how long did she think it might take for the court to finalize their divorce. Pat intervened saying that since they had been living apart for a year now it shouldn't take the court long to come to a decision. Pat explained the rule to me: if a couple has been living apart for a year it is easier to get divorce than when they are living together because then they would have to prove the mental, physical and sexual abuse through evidence presented in the court.

Razia continued her story.

> Irfan's lawyer sent a notice to me that Irfan had appealed to the court to let him stay using the plea that Usman needed a father for his proper upbringing and since he was the baby's biological father it was important that he stayed for the wellbeing of Usman. I was furious at this clever strategy of Irfan's. He wanted to use Usman—the baby he once wanted to kill, as a shield to prevent his deportation from Canada. My lawyer advised me to apply for spousal allowance and child support. I couldn't get the spousal allowance because I was already getting the welfare but I regularly get the $200 that the court asked Irfan to give me for his son. (Razia interview, October 17, 2002.)

Irfan applied for visitation rights to see his son but Razia was very apprehensive about leaving her son alone with the father. She opposed it in the court but the court refused it on the grounds that a biological father had the right to visit his son. Razia then agreed to a supervised visit once a week. Usman who is now almost three, was never comfortable meeting his Dad. According to Razia, every time he went to meet his father he cried continuously. Razia said as much in the court, whereupon the judge replied that she believed the mother might have induced some kind of fear in the child with respect to

the father otherwise the child was too young to determine whether he wanted to meet his father or not. That day Razia was depressed because of the judge's attitude.

I wanted to know why she didn't want her son to meet his father even under supervision. She said she didn't want Irfan to have anything to do with her son, "He has a criminal record in Bangladesh and I don't want my son to know that he was a murderer's son".

I was shocked to hear that Razia had gotten married to a murderer. "Didn't your father do a background check on him before he married you off to him?" I couldn't resist asking.

> We only got to know about that when he became abusive towards me and I went to live with my parents. My father wrote to his friends back home to find out if Irfan had a family. As it turned out Irfan wasn't even his real name. He had changed his name and bribed the policeman so there was no report of a murder under his name. He then paid an immigration consultant to make a case for him as a refugee in Canada and nothing can be done about that now. (Razia interview, October 17, 2002)

"What plea did he make to become a refugee here?" I asked. She replied with contempt "Personal enmity. He said some people were trying to kill him, which now we know was completely false."

The last time I met Razia after a period of two months, she had finally got her divorce from Irfan, had managed to gain complete custody of her son and was now fighting for the termination of Irfan's visitation rights, so as to prevent him completely from seeing his son. Whereas Irfan was using the plea of being the biological father of

Usman to stay in Canada. Now that she had become a Canadian citizen, she was advised by the Judge to attend ESL (English as a Second Language) classes to improve her English and look for a job. I asked Razia about her future plans. She said "I'll get a job and raise my son, I just hope he doesn't turn out to be like his father. I'll raise him to be a good son." (Field notes, December 19, 2002).

I wanted to know if she planned to get married again, Razia had no such plans after going through the trauma of her first marriage,

> I can't trust men any more, if a mild natured person like Irfan could turn out to be this way, what can you say about the rest? Besides who would want to marry me now that I am a mother? Nobody wants to bring up another man's child. My life has ended now. I will wait for my son to grow up, get good education and get a well paying job. (Razia interview, December 19, 2002)

Razia's sister Rafia is engaged to a boy in Bangladesh and when she gets married, she too is going to sponsor her husband to Canada.

Saima's Story

Saima was a client of Pat's who was not a part of the LINC centre. Pat told me She just walked in because she was shopping around for services to help her with her situation but the agencies she approached weren't too helpful. Then one of the shelters she visited gave our agency's name and she came directly to me.

When I met Saima, on November 5th, 2002, Pat had already briefed her about me and my research. Not only had she agreed to become one of my participants, but she was hoping something tangible would come out of my research to deal with fraudulent immigration consultants in Canada. I couldn't assure her on that account but said that

through my research people would definitely come to know of such cases and be wary of them.

A beautiful woman in her early forties, Saima looked the confident sort, unlike most South Asian women that I had come across in Canada. She was delighted to know that I was also from Pakistan, but not too happy to discover that I was a Sunni. She asked me directly and for a while I was taken aback. People usually ask what city we come from in Pakistan, not what religious sect we belong to — an inevitable but a delicate question which comes up when acquaintances become friends. Her demeanor explicitly told me that she was a staunch Shia. Later, I was to find out that her tragedy had its roots in these religious factions.

After my disclosure that I was a Sunni, I felt that a chasm opened between us. The initial warm and friendly introduction gave way to an uneasy co-existence in Pat's office. The bond that we had shared of belonging to the same country and linguistic background somehow dissipated. I felt responsible for the deteriorated state of affairs and almost guilty for being born into the "wrong" religious sect. I immediately sought to repair the damage, however ineffectually, by informing her that I was married to a half-Shia; since my husband was from a family who were 80% Shia, although he was equally comfortable in both sects. I didn't sound very convincing to myself but sincerely hoped that to her I did. Saima showed some interest at this piece of information and asked where my husband's family was from, back in India. (If we were from Karachi, it is assumed that our parents immigrated from India in 1947, after the partition of India, and the inception of Pakistan.) I told her they were from Amroha, and instantly knew I had put a stamp of veracity on my statement, because Amroha is a famous Shia town in India where the

Pakistani calligrapher Saddiquain, and the renowned national poet Rais Amrohvi, hailed from.

My first meeting with Saima was thus an occasion of mixed feelings, where I felt as if I had gained some ground and then lost some. I remember feeling somewhat panic-stricken that I was going to lose her as a participant if I wasn't careful, an idea I did not particularly relish after having gone through the effort of looking for participants through Pat's mediation. While clients share their stories with counsellors in the course of getting their services, they are not willing to disclose their problems to anyone else, for fear of being talked about in the community. I knew that I would have to tell my story too if I wanted them to tell theirs. I would consider myself particularly lucky if one of Pat's clients willingly told me her story. Saima and I agreed to meet again after two days, at her friend's house where she was temporarily living.

On the agreed day, November 13, 2002, a warm, sunny Wednesday, I went to the two-storey, well-kept house in Etobicoke. Saima was waiting for me with a welcoming smile, though I felt that she looked a little tense. I asked her if there was something on her mind, and she told me there was going to be a court hearing in three days and she was worried about the outcome. Saima explained that she had sued her immigration consultant for fraud and the case was being heard in criminal court. Before I could piece all the information together, she said I would understand what she was talking about once I heard her story.

I asked Saima to tell me about her life in Pakistan. I took notes as she wasn't too comfortable talking with a tape recorder on. Later, she said, she would allow me to tape, but not just yet. She came from a very rich, business-class family:

> I owned a garment-producing and exporting business. I used to hold exhibitions in all the top-notch hotels in Karachi, like Marriott, Sheraton, and Avari. People said I had a knack for business. At the peak of my business career, I was making millions. On one of these well-advertised exhibitions, I met a very handsome young man who had brought his sister to the exhibition. Arif was a successful doctor. It was love at first sight for both of us.

Saima still recalled with a wistful look in her eyes.

> Even though he was a few years younger than me, we decided to get married. There was one hitch, though. Arif was a Sunni and I, a staunch Shia. I used to read mercias (religious hymns for Shias) in all congregations. Arif said it would be okay if we kept my sect a secret from his family. (Saima interview, November 13, 2002)

We had tea and some cookies while she asked about me. Saima wanted to know if mine was a love match as well, since I was married to a half Shia. I jokingly told her that I had a choice between marrying a Shia and a half- Shia, and my mother thought it would be better if I married a half-Shia, that way at least I won't be thrown out of the house during the Shia holy month of Moharram, when the emotions against the Sunnis ran high. I said I wouldn't exactly define my marriage as a love match. It was a well thought out decision, or so I thought until my husband started cheating on me. "Now I think it was a mistake marrying him. But as they say, matches are made in heaven and maybe I was destined to marry him." She was sorry to hear that he was having an affair with an Indian, Hindu woman and wanted to know why I hadn't left him. I explained my predicament: I didn't have a job yet, being a full time student, and my mother who was staying with me

didn't want me to leave him just yet. She believed it would be bad for my son not having a father figure for some kind of control over him in this liberal, foreign country where anything goes. "As for me I am becoming stronger in my resolve to leave him once I get a job. I can't go on like this. We are two strangers living under the same roof, and he is waiting for me to make the decision. He cannot marry that woman because she wouldn't leave her husband. And why should she? He is a young, handsome CPA from here, who is earning more than $ 50, 000 a year. I wouldn't leave a husband like that either, if I were her." Saima asked me if her husband knew of the affair and I told her that my mother had called him up and told him but he didn't do much about it. The affair is still going on.

For a while we reflected on the difficult situation that women in our society are in, once children are born — the limited choices they have, the social stigma attached to them once they get a divorce, the tendency of the Asian community to always blame the victim, etc. Coming back to her story, I asked her to tell me about her life in Pakistan.

> It was a very good life we led there, I had my own business, my own chauffeur-driven car and a very wide social circle. We had parties and I was always considered to be the best dressed one. We had a gala of a life. I became pregnant soon after getting married. It was considered very lucky since Arif was the first born of the family. Everybody was happy. One day when I was praying, my brother-in-law Asim saw me. He immediately went and told his mother that I prayed like Shias. It was like a bombshell on the family, when they confronted us we said we had kept it a secret because we knew they wouldn't accept me as their daughter-in-law. Things went from bad to worse and one day I and my brother-in-

> law had a violent argument. He said I had cheated the family and trapped his brother into marrying me. He all of a sudden kicked me in the belly. For a while I didn't know what had happened, it was so sudden! (sobbing) Can you believe a man actually kicking a woman on the stomach? And Arif wasn't home either. Of course, my mother-in-law didn't believe me. She said I had made up the story just so my husband would turn against his own brother and leave the house. She said I must have fallen down the stairs or something. But my sister-in-law Ayesha, was there, she saw the whole thing happen. (Saima interview, November 13, 2002)

Ayesha rushed Saima to the hospital when she started bleeding. Not only did she miscarry but the doctor said she would never be able to have a baby again. In South Asian culture it is the ultimate misfortune that can befall a woman, not only because of the social stigma attached to her, but also from the acute feeling of deprivation that wells up whenever new acquaintances ask a couple "how many children do you have?" and the look of pity that is given to the woman when they learn that she has none.

The couple felt threatened after this incident and moved in with Saima's parents. Saima'a father gave the couple enough money to buy their way into the United States. Without telling Arif's family, the couple came to the United States. But by then, Arif's family had informed the Sipa Sahaba that Saima's family were militant Shias. (The Sipa Sahaba are a Sunni organization dedicated to the destruction of Shias and furthering the cause of Sunnis. The Shia counterparts are the Sipa Mohammadi, with similar motives.)

After listening to Saima's story that day I felt I had to do some research on the origin of Shia –Sunni conflict. I conducted an Internet search and found some interesting details. The *Pakistan Backgrounder* gives the following history of the conflict:

Sectarian Strife: The roots of the conflict can be traced to the use of religion by General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88) as a tool for regime legitimization. Devoid of a democratic constituency, Gen. Zia turned to the right wing Islamic elements for support. His attempt to create an Islamic polity and society was an attempt to gain legitimacy. These goals subsequently coalesced with the national security goal of building close linkages with the Afghan Mujahideen after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. During the eighties, consequently a complex network developed between the Afghan Mujahideen, domestic religious groups in Pakistan, and the Pakistani State, with a generous supply of weapons from the U.S. The combination of easy availability of arms and a growing motivated cadre resulted in the rapid spread of violence from Afghanistan to Pakistan itself. Religious scholars in Pakistan say militancy among the rival extremist groups intensified with the shift from a broad support of Afghan groups fighting the Soviets to specific support for hard-line Islamic groups who were supported in the later phase after the Soviet withdrawal. The training camps established for training Afghan Guerrillas underwent a change. Establishment of just training centers gave way to growth of religious schools training students in Islamic ideology.

The conflict within Pakistan began in the 1980's when a group of Deobandi militants formed the Anjuman Sipa-Sahaba (ASS) to wage war against the Shia landlords of the Jhang. This organization was later rechristened as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). The Shias formed the Sipah-e-Muhammed (SMP) to counter the threat from Sunni militant groups (1993). An attempt was made in

> 1995 by moderate leaders to procure peace between these violent groups through the Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC) which brought about a temporary lull in the violence. The respite was brief, as the SSP and the SMP failed to co-operate with the peace effort. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001)

To me, the origin of the conflict was like any other political action with ulterior motives which cost the lives of innocent people. It was just another incident in human history of an irrational frenzy against fellow human beings which culminates in mass killings, reminding me of the holocaust during the Second World War and the "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia in the recent past.

Saima continued with her story "It was terrifying, my brothers were attacked by armed stalkers and only because I had married a Sunni boy." The repercussions of the armed attacks somehow reached the couple in the States. Arguments turned into violent rows and the once loving husband started beating up his wife.

> Now, sometimes I think Arif married me for the money. Otherwise how could a person change so drastically? He blamed me for everything, even for not being able to find a job. He started going out with American girls, and my relatives in States, with whom we were staying, couldn't do a thing about it. They said it was between me and my husband.

"Did Arif beat you up in their house"? I asked.

> Not really, it was just a slap or two then, because he didn't want them to know that we were arguing. It got worse when we rented a place of our own. We were running out of money and he wasn't able to get a job. They wouldn't recognize his Pakistani qualifications in the States. I worked on the cash register for some

> time but when I got home I would have to do everything, from cooking to laundry, to cleaning, and he would just be looking through newspapers to find a job or would go out with friends, squandering away my money. (Saima interview, November 13, 2002.)

Tired of her abused existence and with nowhere to go, she decided to return to Pakistan, but when she called her family up, before leaving the United States, they refused to take her back, fearing for their own lives. They said they would be attacked again if anyone in the Sipa Sahaba found out that she had returned. Saima felt completely helpless. She paid an immigration agent to enable her to immigrate to Canada. The agent left her in Montreal where she stayed in a motel for some time until almost all her money ran out and she was forced to come to Toronto to stay with a friend. The immigration consultant told her that he had filed her case as a refugee and she would soon get the status. Her case was rejected because the immigration agent had made a case for her seeking political asylum in Canada by portraying her as a Shia religious leader who was being persecuted by Sunnis in her country. The judge rejected the plea on the grounds that Saima had not even covered her head as a religious leader ought to, so she could not possibly be one.

This situation is an example of the stereotypes that are attached to people once they are categorized as belonging to a linguistic or cultural community. In the case of Saima, she was, in fact, religiously active in Pakistan and, as she herself previously said, she used to recite *mercias* (Shia religious hymns) in religious congregations. From personal experience, I know that covering one's head is not mandatory in this religious sect in Pakistan. Since Saima (and her family) were actually being persecuted in her

country due to her religious affiliations, the judge's dismissal of her case on the grounds that she had not covered her head as a religious leader should, was based on a stereotype of Islamic religious leaders and her own lack of knowledge.

Razack (1998) is critical of the refugee hearing process concerning non-Western women. Her interesting analysis shows that unless these women frame their stories in terms of oppressed/veiled Third World women running away from the patriarchal cruelty of families, communities or nations, their stories are not heard and asylum is not granted. Saima apparently fell short of this portrayal in her application for refugee status). The stories of oppressed Third World women, according to Razack, tend to perpetuate the epistemological binary between the Third World and the West, constructed by the West, which characterizes the Third World as being barbaric and cruel towards their women. While positioning themselves as being culturally superior in contrast to the underdeveloped Third World, the West tends to overlook the colonial legacy of exploitation that created asylum seekers in the first place (Razack, 1998). While Saima was, in fact, a victim of the sectarian violence in her country, on a wider scale, these violent clashes have their genesis in the West's vested interest in gaining hegemony in the region and containing Soviet expansionism.

Saima later approached another immigration consultant who said he would get a First Nation's man to adopt Saima as a daughter and she would become a citizen in no time. Saima recalls how hopeful she was that such a thing would definitely work out.

> I thought if the truth about me being persecuted didn't work in the Canadian court perhaps a fabricated plea would. I thought, all my troubles had come to an end and I would become an immigrant in Canada to start a new life, I would start my

> own business. My brothers would be able to send me garment consignments from Pakistan, and help me get back on my own two feet. But life isn't that easy, is it? (Saima interview, November 13, 2002)

The immigration consultant asked her for $15,000 as fee. Saima didn't have the money, so she borrowed the amount from the friends she was staying with and paid the agent. While he had asked for only two months, eight months passed. Whenever she went to his office he was out, and in the blistering Canadian cold she sat on the doorsteps waiting for him for five or six hours at a stretch. She was in tears telling me about the ordeal. Sometimes the tenants living on the floor above would give her a cup of tea, pitying her sitting out in the cold.

> I never felt so alone and helpless. It was as if God's land was getting narrower and narrower for me. [an Urdu proverb]. I couldn't go anywhere and I had no money. While I have a lot of money and jewelry in Pakistan that I can sell to pay off my debt, I can't even go back there. (Saima interview, November 13, 2002)

Women and the Midas touch.

I could relate to what Saima meant when she said she could sell off her jewelry to pay off the money she owed her friends. Gold has a very important position in South Asian culture. Gold jewelry, mostly given by parents to their daughters in dowry, is not only a symbol of the parents' status and wealth but is also a security against any unforeseen catastrophes in a person's life, like the death of the husband who might be the only earning member of the family, or a medical emergency which requires immediate funds (as all advanced and efficient medical services are privatized). Jewelry is sold off as a last resort to ease a difficult monetary situation. Though the selling of jewelry signals

the ultimate downfall of the family, as it is traditionally considered an asset, it is about the only possession and monetary security a woman has, unless it has been appropriated by her abusive husband. Since it is ready cash, wives are known to have given their husbands their jewelry, of their own free will, to sell in order to start a new business. But that is based on the promise that husbands usually make that they will buy their wives the same amount or more, of jewelry once their business takes off. In the South Asian culture, on one hand, gold is a status symbol which is displayed at weddings when given to the bride, to show off the wealth of the bride's parents, and on the other, it is the pride and honour of the girl when she goes to settle in a new family. The worth of a girl and the subsequent respect she is going to receive from her in-laws, is measured by the amount of gold she brings into the husband's family. She is literally worth the gold she brings.

Gold is also a metaphor for women. In South Asian society, be it in India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh, the status of women, based on their reputation, is synonymous with gold. They are, metaphorically speaking, a precious commodity like gold, a possession on which the honour of the feudal family system rests, but never a living entity with a right over her own life. Women of their family are jealously guarded by men, so much so, that another man may not even cast a glance on them. But once she is outside the protection of the status of a wife or a sister or daughter (when for example she is divorced or widowed) she is perceived to be available to any men outside the family, unless she chooses to live under the protection of a brother or father. To my mind, she is precious like gold but, at the same time, a lifeless entity attached to the person of a man, no matter how educated and independent she may be. It is believed that a virtuous woman

is like gold, pure, pristine and precious to the males in the family who own her person, be it a mother, a wife or a sister.

The feudal system in countries like Pakistan and India, goes to extremes in making women not only the keepers of family traditions but also the most expendable part of the family when it comes to protecting the family honour which is, again, inextricably tied to the women in the family. In the remote areas of Sindh and Punjab, where the population is divided into the feudal lords who own the entire land of the area, as well as the people who live on that land, and the farmers who are also part of the possessions of these feudal lords, heinous practices are often reported such as *karo kari* which means killing a girl (and sometimes the boy as well) if she is discovered to be having an affair. The justification given behind such murders is that the girl had violated the family honour by trying to choose a life partner herself (instead of marrying wherever her father and brother decide) or by attempting to carry on an illicit affair. The law enforcement agencies which are headed by officers who are themselves the product of the feudal system are ineffective in eradicating such evils. If, by chance, the law enforcement officer himself is not a part of a feudal family, he still cannot risk his life by attempting to challenge such crimes that are perpetrated by the feudal lords.

Apart from *karo kari,* another heinous crime is marrying sisters off to the Quran (the Islamic Holy Book) when there is no such thing in the religion. Not only are the patriarchs the self-styled custodians of women's lives but also of the religion which they violate for their own gains. The motive behind this crime is to keep a sister's inheritance within the family, which would otherwise be given to the husband if she is married off. I

had heard such horrifying stories from my maidservants who had experienced these crimes first hand (Field notes, November 16, 2002).

In Karachi, one of my maidservants, who was barely eighteen, had dared to fall in love with the chauffeur of our neighbour. They were unfortunately found out. She was immediately whisked off to her native village. The rules of the community, under *karo kari*, clearly invoked the murder of the girl. (The boy had influential connections and so had to be spared.) However the girl's parents petitioned the *jirga* (the council of elders) to change their verdict to a more humane one. She was then married off to a sixty-year-old widower, as punishment. I never saw her again as she was forbidden to ever return to Karachi. Educated, middleclass women, like me, who live in cities, can only rhetorically question the justice of such an unforgivable crime without being able to do anything tangible about it. Though it may sound like a lame excuse for our not being able to do anything for the rural women, we are neither a part of the time and space where such crimes occur, nor do we have the power and the means to challenge the formidable feudal lords who make the rules of their community.

Extreme poverty and vendetta also result in blood baths where, again, it is the women who are sacrificed at the alter of barbaric customs. Another instance of violence against women is when an enemy is framed in the murder of a woman who was in reality murdered by a male member of her own family. The enemy has to forgo his land as compensation to the family of the deceased, if proven guilty. Newspapers cite the names of highly placed government officials and ministers who are implicated in these crimes but nothing so far has been done to bring such remote areas under government jurisdiction for reprisals.

While the a woman in South Asian society is guarded like treasure and considered to be synonymous to gold, she is also the most downtrodden. Wouldn't it be fair to let her just survive as an ordinary person with the right to make mistakes and to rectify them by herself without having to account for her existence to the male members of the family.

Down the corridor.

After our detailed conversation at her place that day, I met Saima again after almost half a month on November 29, 2002. I needed to put my field text in order and I reckoned she needed some space too. I had also hoped that since she had sued the immigration consultant and the case was being tried in a criminal court, it would have progressed a little by the next time I met her. One morning Pat called me to ask if I would accompany Saima and her to Bluffer's Park. I agreed and met them at the Centre. Saima looked a completely different person. She had lost quite a bit of weight; she looked nervous, unsure of herself, distant, and fidgety. I was shocked to see what uncertainty, insecurity and a lack of funds could do to an otherwise confident, self-contained and cheerful person.

Saima and Pat had bought fish feed earlier and when I joined them we hired a cab and headed for Bluffer's Park. On the way I asked Saima how she was coping with the situation and if there was any progress in the case against the immigration consultant. She, in her same remote, totally aloof manner, told me that her case was now being handled by the UNHRCO (which I later found out, from Pat, was an acronym for United Nations Human Right's Commission, Ontario). I tried to be as tactful as I could when I asked if she had heard from her husband. She seemed indifferent to his existence, or so I

thought, when she answered, while looking out the cab window absented-mindedly, that she had not and didn't know where he was in the United States.

Saima had taken up a part-time job at a packaging factory. I asked her why didn't she think of improving her qualifications and getting a proper job to ease her situation (she already had a Bachelor of Arts from Pakistan). She said she didn't think she would be able to concentrate on her studies in her current state of mind. This situation resonated with Razia's. When I had asked Razia why she had dropped out of LINC classes, she had given me a similar answer that she found it hard to keep pace with the rest of the students when she had all these numerous problems at home. Besides, learning English did not feel like a priority for her at the time, since, when she got home, the same problems glared her in the face.

> It was like they were two different worlds, the school and my home. I could escape for some time from my problems by coming to school but how long could I run away for? I had to face them eventually. The day we had our last fight and I moved in with my parents after the police arrested Irfan, I was too scared to go out much. (Razia interview, October 17, 2002.)

While Razia did not say anything about the quality or the relevance of LINC classes, I believe, Brookes makes a pertinent point when she says "If in fact, abuse (or trauma) impedes how people learn and develop.... Then it is indeed time that teachers began to re-examine the outmoded models of learning and development" (1992, p. 6).

After seeing Saima that day, I incessantly thought about the futility of life for a woman who had left her business and a settled life behind for love. She got nothing back in the bargain while losing everything — a loving husband, the ability to become a

mother, her family, and her flourishing business back home. Now she was rapidly in the process of losing her mental and physical health. She had aged considerably since I had seen her last. I tried to imagine myself in her shoes. I would have probably gone crazy with all the pressure and insecurity. I admired her courage in being able to survive all the adversity in life. As it turned out, the outing to Bluffer's Park wasn't intended to be recreational for Saima. Pat confided to me that Saima wanted to feed the fish in order to please God so that He would listen to her prayers. Pat, being a Hindu from India, wanted to know if we Muslims had that belief. I wasn't aware of any such belief but said that perhaps it was Saima's personal inclination. As far as I knew, human beings, being the highest of God's creations, were enjoined to be responsible for animals generally and to feed them because animals couldn't themselves ask for food.

Saima's religious predilections made me reflect on how adversity in life makes a person incline towards religion and spirituality. It had been (and still is) an important part of my mother's life during her worst years. She says religion gave her an inner strength and a sense of purpose in life. My sister has become increasing religious-minded as she advances in age and I see myself speedily going in that direction as well, as I desperately try to find peace of mind and ensure a better future for myself and my son by praying. Though I believe that we are predestined to face the challenges that we do in life, I also know that prayers can change the course of events to become more favourable. I feel that if I entrust my life to God, He will surely plan it out for the better. The findings in an article in the *Reader's Digest* (van Buuren, 2003) give further credence to my belief. They found that apart from individual incidences reported of people being cured of rare types of cancers through prayers, "One study of older adults showed that those who pray

or read the Bible are 50 percent more likely to survive over a six-year period." Also, "In Korea, women who were prayed for were twice as successful in conceiving." Mel Gibson, playing the part of a priest in the movie *Signs*, loses faith in God after the gruesome death of his wife, only to regain it at the end when, in an alien's attack, he sees that everything has a purpose and is meant to happen — it is preplanned by Someone who is greater than mankind, and that Someone is watching out for them.

Jody Marshall (1998) in *Spirituality of South Asian Women: Implications for Adult Learning,* explores the role of spirituality in the lives and learning of South Asian Immigrant women in Canada. She differentiates between spirituality and religion by stating that "While religion tends to focus on belief, rituals and practice and is often culturally based, spirituality centers on personal experience...spirituality provides a relative perspective of the here and now and encourages exploration of values and ultimate concerns" (1998, p. 2). Though her research participants hailed from countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal and thus from different religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, they had one thing in common: religious practices formed an important part of their lives and though they did not all differentiate distinctly between spirituality and religion, they were all very much given to spirituality and self-reflection in their daily existence. This spirituality greatly impacted their lives, learning, and their perception of themselves, especially here in a foreign country where they lacked the family support network. Telling the story of one of her participants Ridha, a Pakistani of Shiite (Shia) sect, Marshall writes:

> Ridha's recognition of her own spirituality stemmed during a time of crisis while she was still living in Pakistan. Her hopes to marry a Pakistani man who was of

> Sunni background were not acceptable to her Shiite family. This was particularly true of her eldest brother who in lieu of her father's death, had assumed the primary decision-making role in her family. Her family had chosen another husband for her.... Ridha began to read the Koran (the Muslim holy text) daily. As with other participants, in discovering her spirituality, she did not reject her culture and religion, but rather sought a deeper and personal connection with her beliefs for a source of strength. (1998, p. 11)

Thus Marshall's participants "showed a movement inward towards themselves. They needed to sense the presence of and their faith in the divine themselves before they could shift outward" (p.16). Marshall discovered that the "awakening" that her participants experienced was very different from the one documented in Western literature:

> According to Western literature, women often go through a period of emptiness after having broken their ties with conventional sources of value but not yet discovering their grounding in new sources (Christ, 1986). While the Eastern women in this study did go through periods of struggle, they did not entirely release their ties with their traditional religious cultures. In Ridha's struggle with cultural expectations, she did not give up her religious beliefs nor find that she can no longer "fit the old mold". Ridha discovered her spirituality as she found a way to redefine herself in order to stay within her culture.... In fact, as opposed to critically and rationally analyzing the oppressive patriarchal forces that were inherent in her upbringing and current life story, Ridha accepted them and found new ways to live within the traditional structure. Certainly, Ridha noted the potential oddity of this perspective from a Western viewpoint, as she said

> If you hear my story, you will say… she is a victim of chauvinism or male dominance…. Anybody can say 'we think you have no rights'. At this point, if I want to think like that… I can come up to that conclusion…. But…. I really don't condemn. I am not frustrated. (Marshall, 1998, p. 19)

South Asian women's docile acceptance of their subordinate position in society and the uncritical way they fashion their lives to fit the patriarchal mold has major implications for the LINC program particularly, and adult education generally, which I discuss in the next chapter.

Even though, strictly speaking, Saima did not quite fit neatly into the category of my research participants (because she was not a student at the LINC center), she was an immigrant woman facing problems in a foreign country and utilizing the services of the counselor at the school. I decided I could include her story in my dissertation. Her problems had their roots in her own country yet she wasn't able to free herself of them despite coming to Canada, and though her challenges had acquired a different aspect here, they were nevertheless still very much in existence. She was right: God's hand was getting narrower and narrower for her and, while I empathized with her, there was nothing I could do to remedy her situation. If she withdrew her case against the immigration consultant, not only would she lose all the money that she had borrowed from friends to pay him, she would also lose her status as a refugee in Canada, which was still very uncertain. She was still living with her friends, not being able to afford a separate establishment for herself and that, in itself, weighed heavily on her as she felt she had outlived her welcome.

Rukhsana

I met Rukhsana, an Indian Muslim lady, through a friend, Bina. When Bina heard that I was doing a study about the lives of recent immigrant women in Canada preferably those attending LINC school, she told me about a family who came to Canada about three years ago. Bina said that the thing that made this family somehow different from the others who were living in her building was that Rukhsana and her husband were a middle-aged couple with five grown-up children, whereas all the other immigrants were like Bina and her husband Hussain, quite young with one or two very young children going to kindergarten or Grades 1 and 2. Bina further informed me that Rukhsana was attending a LINC school in their area. I had occasion to meet Rukhsana at a dinner hosted by Bina at her apartment on November 30, 2002, on a Saturday. Bina, being a very social person, is quite fond of throwing parties and cooking all the food by herself.

Rukhsana was a portly lady in her late forties, her husband was nearly ten years her senior. She was an extremely friendly person and when we were introduced by Bina, she was quite impressed by the fact that I was doing a Ph.D.. at the University of Toronto. Being the only one, so far, among the recent immigrant South Asian families I know, I get that quite often—the initial surprise at my being a doctoral student with three Master's in English, and then an expression of admiration at my being "so intelligent" though I, myself, have serious doubts about that assessment.

At the party, Rukhsana introduced me to her five children, four daughters and a twelve-year-old son. All four daughters were older than the son, the eldest being about twenty. Rukhsana shyly told me "we kept trying until we had a son, now we have four daughters to marry off." We talked about the similarities and differences between

Karachi (Pakistan) and Hyderabad (India); the weather, the malls, the shopping spree a night before Eid, all the things we missed, in Canada. In the end, we agreed that while we missed all these things, there were quite a few good things about Canada, too, — the clean peaceful atmosphere, pure, unadulterated food and water, and the general public security. She was, however, very concerned that though her husband was an engineer, educated from a well-known engineering university in India, his credentials were not recognized here and he was merely working in a factory as a labourer.

They had a big house that Rehman had built from his Saudi earnings and which they had to sell off in order to pay for the immigration lawyer's fee, landing fee and the air fare for all the family members, plus a few months maintenance of the brothers and sisters who Rehman was supporting in India. She said that relocating was a very difficult thing to do and they were now completely bankrupt, so to speak. They had had to pay six months rent in advance when they came to live in this apartment building because Rehman didn't have a job,

> That was an immediate drain of more than $6,000 on our resources, when we hadn't even brought much. People said if we didn't pay the whole amount up front and we paid only half of it, the management had the right to throw us out any day, even if they had three month's rent as deposit. (Rukhsana interview, November 30, 2002)

I told her there was no such rule and that they were misguided. Most new immigrants are completely intimidated by Canadians and feel they would be evicted even if they paid the rent.

> Rehman was panic-stricken. And to make things worse, I had to be hospitalized the same month because I fainted on my way back from the children's school. My stay in the hospital and all the tests they conducted cost us more than a thousand dollars, though they said the money would be reimbursed once we got our OHIP cards. They discovered that I had diabetes. I was more worried about the expenses than anything else. With five children in a foreign country and no relatives to help if our resources ran out completely, (which they did very soon) I would have had a nervous breakdown. Thank God Rehman got this job in a factory. (Rukhsana interview, November 30, 2002)

They were greeted at the airport by a friend's friend. The couple had three children, so Rehman and his family didn't want to impose upon them, they stayed only a day and went to the management office to rent an apartment the very next day. "It was very difficult with only one washroom. I wonder why people in the West have such few bathrooms, whereas we have a bathroom with every bedroom in India." I concurred.

I asked her why Rehman had left his job in Saudi Arabia and come back to India. She said that the company he was working for did not provide its employees with an accommodation for their families, neither did it give them air fares to call their families to Saudi Arabia. Even if Rehman had saved enough to call his wife and five children to Saudi Arabia, their education would have been disrupted. All education was in Arabic in Saudi Arabia, unless you could afford the American schools, which most people obviously could not. Rehman decided he had been homesick for too long and it was time to go back to his family. Rukhsana laughingly told me that their son had seen so little of

his father that he used to ask his mom "who is this man who comes to stay with us during the holidays"?

I and Rukhsana talked for some time before I broached the subject of her becoming a participant in my research. She readily agreed, in fact she said she was honored that she would be part of a Ph.D. research. We decided to meet on a weekend because she said she went to a LINC school on weekdays.

On a bright Saturday morning on December 7, 2002, around ten o'clock, I headed for her apartment in North York. It was a rented two-bedroom apartment like the rest in the building. The youngest two children slept in the living room. Everything was neat and clean, "the advantages of having grown-up daughters" Rukhsana told me. It was a large happy family. But Rukhsana said they had a hard time making ends meet. The eldest two daughters were working in 'No Frills' as well as struggling through their studies in a high school. They were not used to all this hard work and seldom got enough sleep. Rukhsana was sad telling me

> But what can we do? Their father can't make enough to feed all of us, plus he is getting old, he doesn't have the energy to work long hours. He mostly works nights. During the day, I try to keep the house quiet even when the children are back from school so they won't disturb him sleeping. The poor man has to leave home at six in the evening to get to work by eight. (Rukhsana interview, December 7, 2002)

They didn't have a car so they commuted daily. Rehman changed three buses to get to the place he worked.

The first job he got, it was a chewing gum factory. He had to lift heavy trays of chewing gum dough. Rehman soon developed a back problem and the doctor advised him to change his job. Easier said than done! (Rukhsana interview, December 7, 2002)

Rukhsana laughed. "Now this is a plastic factory. Even this job is through an employment agency, he doesn't get much but at least it is a lighter one than what he had before." I asked her if he was happy with what he was doing? She was almost surprised at my question.

How can he be happy? On the contrary, he often goes to the doctor because he gets bouts of depression. Well, you know, he was an engineer in Saudi Arabia, and even in India it wasn't so bad because he got a job in a cement factory. But here he has to pass a certain exam to get the license. He has already flunked once so he is about giving up now. He says he would never be able to get it if he failed for the second time, now he is trying to take the exam again. But he never gets the time to study, he is so tired working nights that he sleeps almost the whole day until it is time for him to go back to work again.

"So the older girls are helping out?" I asked.

Yes, poor girls. It is their time to have fun and rest. We don't know what kind of life they would have once they are married. Parents' house is the only place where you can have your own way, but even here they have had to work. (Rukhsana interview, December 7, 2002)

A common concept in South Asian middle-class culture that girls should be allowed to rest in their parents family, as one never knows what kind of hardships they might face once they are married —marriage is the be all and end all in a girl's life.

Rukhsana continued wistfully,

> You know, if I had been educated enough, these girls would not have had to work, I would have gotten a job in a factory or the cash register. Nowadays I am trying to improve my English so that at least I can understand what people say.

I asked about her LINC school. She said they taught computers as well but as she was still in the second level she had one more year to go before she started learning computers. I specifically inquired where she thought she needed English most.

> Oh, everywhere. You go shopping and you don't understand what the salesperson is saying. Thanks God our family doctor is an Indian, he can speak good Urdu. If he had been a Canadian I would not have been able to tell him about my illness. And more importantly, only a few months ago, my son was bullied at school. I went to the principal myself and complained to her in whatever English I knew, she immediately took action and suspended the bully for three days. (Rukhsana interview, December 7, 2002)

I wanted to know more about the incident. She explained how one day, her son complained of pain in his side. When the mother insisted on knowing whether he had got hurt while playing he told her there was this "White" boy who always teased him and threw away his lunch. One day when Saleem complained to the teacher, the teacher scolded the bully but the situation worsened after that. Now during break-time when the teachers were not looking, Steve, the bully would make it a point to kick Saleem. This

time the kick landed on his side and that hurt badly. When Saleem was taken to the doctor, he prescribed some painkiller but assured the parents that thankfully there was no serious injury. When the mother asked why Saleem didn't approach the teacher again, Saleem said Steve had threatened him that he would get beaten up more if he told the teacher. This had been going on for almost a year when the mother found out. As it turned out there were other complaints about Steve and, according to Rukhsana, the principal was very sympathetic, listened patiently and then, through an interpreter, assured her that it won't happen again. The bullying would have stopped earlier if Saleem had gone to the teacher after being kicked the first time.

The subject of racism came up inadvertently with the bullying incident. She told me that her husband said the people less qualified than him and with much less work experience got better jobs just because they were White and their first language was English. I told her that, in my opinion, Canada was a much better place than the States or the U.K. My experience was that people are more racist there than they are here but, of course, different people have different experiences.

We had lunch together. It was cooked by the eldest daughter Samreen. Rukhsana confided in me that she was training her to cook these days on the weekends as Samreen was engaged to be married in India. She was already engaged when they came to Canada. Rukhsana informed me that the plan was to sponsor the boy to Canada once they were married, so they had asked him to do computer courses back home so he would face less difficulties in getting a job. There was a hint in the mother's tone that the marriage was not arranged and that it was their daughter's choice. Samreen probably overheard our conversation and smiled shyly.

The second daughter, Noreen washed the dishes after lunch. She too was to be married to someone interested in coming to Canada. Presumably there were many hopeful candidates even within the family. The younger two sisters, Tehmina and Yasmeen, Rukhsana told me, helped with the cleaning and the laundry. She talked about how easy life in India was where everyone could afford to keep maids, one for the dishes and another one for the laundry. We laughed that we miss our maids the most when we come to Canada, not so much the family we leave behind.

After the dessert, I was looking around the living room when I noticed a large framed picture of Rukhsana and her husband. "It was taken a few days after our wedding on a hill station where we had gone for our honeymoon." Rukhsana looked so much slimmer and Rehman had a full head of hair. She said she married very early, at the age of eighteen, because her own mother had died of cancer and they were seven, five sisters and two brothers. Her father remarried, and the stepmother found it very difficult to manage seven teenagers. She arranged a match between her brother and Rukhsana, the eldest daughter. They were married immediately as Rehman was leaving for Saudi Arabia, having gotten a job as a mechanical engineer.

I asked her about her life in India. She said it was a very busy one, being the wife of the eldest born she was considered the maternal head of the family, responsible for boarding and lodging the other brothers and sisters, and getting them married off. So Rehman had to earn not only for his wife and children, but also for his sisters and brothers who, in the absence of parents, were the eldest son's responsibility. She cooked for the entire household of twelve — she and her five children plus Rehman's six grown up siblings. I had spent a good part of the day with Rukhsana and we were both tired.

We decided to meet again the following week. I wanted to have a chance to talk to the children as well.

When I went the following week, on December 14, I found Rukhsana busy with her sewing. I suggested she take it up as a profession because she was very good at it. She told me it was her hobby to crochet, knit and embroider as well. Then she showed me all the stuff she had made by herself. It was very beautiful and I again said she should actually think of selling such dresses and that way she would be helping her family financially. Rukhsana had never done any business and was of the opinion that if she could get some expert advice about how to set up a small business it would certainly help. The thought of opening up a boutique had occurred to her but seeing so many similar businesses fail had discouraged her. She told me that another option she had was that of opening up a restaurant, but that required a lot of initial capital which they didn't have at the time. She had also heard of retailing food items from her house to private South Asian parties, so she tried it but only got orders sporadically. She even set up a food stall at the South Asian *mela* (fair) at Markham. After all the hard work, the net earning was merely $100. She was quite disappointed. She thought she might get a job cooking international dishes but she didn't know the names of all the vegetables and food items in English. She jokingly said it would be a good idea for the LINC teachers to teach students the different vocabulary items for cooking rather than just English. "At least it would help people like me earn a bit of money." I thought it was a useful suggestion for LINC curriculum makers.

Rukhsana believed that the options were there but she didn't have the venues to market her business. She was also hesitant about taking up a business venture for fear of

wasting her husband's money as she said she did not have any business acumen. I was impressed that despite her lack of formal education she was very open-minded about trying anything new.

While Rukhsana and I were busy talking about business options, Samreen and Noreen went out for a while and bought some groceries from a store across the street. I noticed that they both covered their heads with scarves. I asked them if they had worn their *hijab* (Veil) even when they were in India. They had not, but here they were more conscious of their identity as Muslims. "From the point of view of Islam, we women wear a hijab to avoid the stares of men. But after September 11th, we get more stares and dirty looks from the Whites because we are wearing hijab" (Samreen and Noreen, December 14, 2002).

We laughed at the irony of the situation. I told them my husband often gets dirty looks after September 11th, because he has moustache and he resembles Saddam Hussain. We have a running joke in the family that if he boards a plane he would definitely be offloaded because people would think he is a terrorist.

On a more serious note, we discussed our feelings about the 9-11 catastrophe. I told them that I was attending classes in OISE that day and when we reconvened after our usual mid morning break and my teacher, Professor Connelly, told us all about the blowing up of the twin towers. It did not register at first but when the enormity of the situation dawned on me, and the terrorists were reported to be from Afghanistan, being a Muslim, I felt overwhelmed with guilt somehow. It was almost as if I had been a part of the whole conspiracy. The guilt overtook my sense of self to such an extent that by the evening, in another class when we were having a round of introductions (it being our first

class of the semester) I clarified that I was from Pakistan and not Afghanistan, because one of the participants heard it as Afghanistan, maybe because it was so much on their minds that day.

Samreen and Noreen didn't quite agree with my sense of guilt. They believed I needn't have felt that way at all; "nobody blames a Christian or the U.S. government when a crackpot blows up Waco in Texas, why should they blame the whole Muslim community?" I could see the sense in what they were saying. They went on to say that

> We become more conscious of our Muslim identity here because they [the Westerners] make us aware of it by their discriminatory behaviour. We wear hijab, because we want to wear it here, we want to show them we are Muslims. Our mother does not wear it because she didn't wear it in India either. There everybody is the same, at least in the area you live, like you know, the Muslim areas. (Samreen and Noreen, December 14, 2002)

They talked about a British documentary they had watched on television where the Muslim British of South Asian background said openly that they would volunteer to go to war if there was a war against Islam. Likewise, they had seen in their school that children born in Canada of South Asian parents were better Muslims than those who had just immigrated. These Canadian-Muslims adhered more staunchly to observing prayers, eating only *halal* meat and wearing *hijab*. I concurred, having myself met with such families in Mississauga who had established Islamic schools and preferred religious education for their children over the usual education being offered in public schools. I believed it was because children (and educated parents) developed the critical awareness

to choose the best from both the cultures by living in a Western culture. It is only when you live in a different culture that you begin to appreciate the positive in your own.

We also talked at length about how difficult it was for people with Muslim names to get a job after September 11th. Rehman was also preparing for a licensing exam but Rukhsana was concerned that even if he did pass it, he might not be given a job easily because of his name. Canadians, like Americans, were now wary of Muslims in their country.

> Sometimes I think coming here was a big mistake. Rehman had a good job back home but he wanted his children to have a good life, English education and a good standard of living. I have my family there, I was never keen to come here in the first place. Life is not easy here. I have to do all the housework and then think about the financial problems that we are facing. There is nothing I can do to help the situation because I am not educated. I have always been a housewife. I try not to show that I am depressed sometimes because if I am depressed what will Rehman do? He will have no one to turn to. He doesn't like admitting that he made a mistake coming here but, you know, that is how men are. They seldom acknowledge that they are wrong and we women shouldn't remind them that they are. But I am sure you know more than me in such matters, you are so educated. (Rukhsana interview, December 14, 2002)

I frankly admitted that I didn't know much about human relationships, on the contrary, I perceived myself to be a failure in that area. So acquiring education, in my opinion, did not have much to do with being a good companion. I wanted to know more from her about her notions of a successful married life. She continued, using the

metaphor of "a vehicle" for a family unit, which is continually instilled in the minds of young brides by their parents:

> Husband and wife are the two wheels of life's vehicle if one of them goes weak for some reason the other one cannot go on. They have to keep the family unit together, bring up the children properly and cater to all their needs. After getting married, a girl doesn't have a life of her own. She leaves her parents house so she could serve her husband and children. I had so many friends before I got married. Now I have none, I mean, really good friends, of course. I have acquaintances and some ladies I meet in the children's park when I accompany my son there but no serious friends. You know, people you could go to the movies with or to shopping. I never get any time for myself, to actually enjoy life since I have gotten married but it has been worse since I came here, with all the house work and scheduling yourself to the work shifts of either your husband or your children. It is like I am here only to cook and clean while everybody else is running about everywhere trying to earn money. Even so, no money seems to come into the house. (Rukhsana interview, December 14, 2002)

She laughed in her good-natured way.

We talked at length about how the lives of immigrants were measured in hours in Canada. Everybody was trying to work a certain number of hours to make ends meet. This, she said was a totally new concept for her. I agreed because although we came from different countries our culture was essentially the same and the work environment, too, was identical. People got money at the end of the month and the work atmosphere was very relaxed. You could take time off work and you would still get your salary at the

month's end. If you were in a government job, no one could even fire you. You were literally there for life if you wanted, unless you had committed a serious misdemeanor like embezzling government funds or red tape or nepotism.

I believe, as I have mentioned earlier in my education chronicle, that life actually teaches a person more than what formal education could. Rukhsana's worldly wisdom, although she had little formal schooling, far exceeded my expectations (Field notes dated December 15 and 16, 2002). I encouraged her to talk more about the relationship and power dynamics between a husband and wife. The question of trust naturally came up and since Rukhsana and I had become quite good friends by now, she freely shared her insights. Though her views were very different from mine and reflected her traditional upbringing, they were nevertheless quite educating for me.

> Women are only successful when they are both mothers and companions to their husbands. We are like their mothers when we have to care for them and cater to all their needs just as you would for a child. We have to put up with their tantrums as well, when anything goes wrong, even if it was their own doing. They simply wouldn't admit to their own mistakes. If they did, how would they be considered "men." They think a man, being the head of the family, has the ultimate wisdom. What they don't know is they are also human beings and human beings make mistakes. If they didn't, wouldn't they become gods? (Rukhsana interview, December 14, 2002)

While she talked, I was mentally comparing notes, if this was indeed the criterion for being a successful wife, what were the major areas where I had fallen short? I tried postponing my judgment of myself till later. She continued

> Like good companions we have to listen to their work-related problems and like good mothers we forgive their transgressions. Women are in fact the ones who make men "men." If we did not take it upon ourselves to bear all the hardships they would not be able to face the world.

She was almost speaking like a sage and I felt like a novice despite having been married for more than fifteen years. I wanted her to elaborate on "transgressions." She said:

> God had allowed men to keep four wives because he would not be content with just one. It is in a man's nature to go for variety, so sometimes they digress and go for other women. If the wives are patient, they would know that their husbands would eventually come back to them. (Rukhsana interview, December 14, 2002)

Listening to her, I reflected on how what she took for granted was in fact socially constructed by men who using religion to endorse their vagrant natures. Embedded in this theory of men as naturally predisposed to seek variety in women is the prescription that virtuous women should wait for their wayward husbands to come around and not go looking for variety for themselves. I was appalled at this male chauvinistic interpretation of history and religion which was successfully instilled in the minds of traditional women by the culture. I tried to explain the historical background for the religious injunctions that men could keep four wives. The fact that, during the days of the Prophet Mohammed, wars had depleted the male population and women were left on their own with no one to take care of them or their children. It was then that men were enjoined to take at most four wives so that social and financial problems could be avoided. After that time, throughout Muslim history, men have exploited that privilege and considered it

their birthright. I knew I didn't make sense to her. The roots of her notion of male superiority were deeply instilled in her social and mental world view.

Rukhsana went on to recount a time when Rehman, while living in Saudi Arabia, had fallen for a woman and had almost married her, but the Saudi government required him to produce the permission of the first wife which, of course, he didn't dare get. She smiled confidently, "I knew it was just a phase. He would get over her and come back to me. He wouldn't leave four daughters for a woman (we hadn't had our son yet)."

I wondered if it was pure luck that brought Rukhsana's husband back, otherwise in my bitter experience men were not beyond anything. I kept my cynical thoughts to myself.

Rukhsana's ideas about men's natural tendency to go for variety sounded too familiar. They are embedded in the very fabric of South Asian society where almost all marriages are a compromise, having been arranged by parents, often without the consent of their children. All South Asian families are replete with tales of people with disparate natures brought together by traditions and an overbearing parent. The resulting marriages are a burden born primarily by the women — saddled with children, no favourable prospects of a second marriage, and a fatalistic view of destiny. Whereas men are always able to start a fresh life with a new mate, women almost invariably lose their market value after having being married. In case of divorce, the prospects of being reestablished— brought back into the society—and "recycled" are rather slim, and worse when a woman has children that she is not willing to part with. In a society where virginity is very highly valued, where marriage is the be-all and end-all of women's existence, where respect is accorded to women only when they are under a man's

jurisdiction, the chances of leading a respectable life for women living on the periphery of the society are negligible.

Conclusion

This chapter deals with the stories of my research participants interwoven with my discursive thoughts on various subjects. My childhood memories reveal a personal link to their stories and highlights the common cultural threads running through our stories. It is intriguing how our tragedies and joys intermingle to give life's fabric a certain richness. The vicissitudes in people's lives change their existence dramatically. Saima, leading a full life as a successful business person suddenly found herself a fugitive and a pauper. Both misfortunes drastically undermined her identity as a woman of an affluent background. Razia lost confidence in the goodness of human nature when she was confronted with an abusive husband. Rukhsana, although a self-contained homemaker, at peace with her family life and the world generally, is nevertheless acutely aware of the increasing demands of life in the new country and feels the need to redress her inadequacies as a viable contributor to the family income.

For me, two poignant themes emerged in the stories: immigration as a catalyst in the lives of all the three women and a certain disenchantment with life. While immigration to Canada seemed to offer the promise of a better life, the disenchantment, in my opinion could be remedied if immigrant women were to be given a chance to explore their identities and find peace in rebuilding their lives on their own. The disconnection between classroom life and the life immigrants experience can be eliminated when education is brought out of the ivory towers to make it more meaningful to immigrants in Canada. The next chapter called "A Reconstruction of My Journey

Through the Inquiry," enumerates the various issues confronted by the participants in this research study which, if addressed in a LINC ESL class, through a narrative curriculum, might help make life easier for them (and others like them) in future.

Chapter 7: A Reconstruction of My Journey Through the Inquiry

> One studies stories not because they are true or even because they are false, but for the same reason that people tell or listen to them, in order to learn about the terms on which others make sense of their lives: what they take into account and what they do not; what they consider worth contemplating and what they do not; what they are and are not willing to raise and discuss as problematic and unresolved in life (Brodkey, 1987, p. 47)

I consider the above quote to be at the core of my approach to my research — the importance of stories to delineate the uniqueness of people's experiences. But reviewing my field notes, I somehow felt uncomfortable. I was using narrative as the method for my inquiry, and yet some of the themes and identifiable theories emerging in my research had been presented earlier by formalist researchers. I knew I was searching for narrative unities between my own and my research participants' experiences as immigrants in Canada so as to be able to mutually understand the challenges we face in a new country, and eventually to be able to address them effectively in an ESL class. Would I be considered a formalist or a reductionist if I tried to categorize these experiences into major themes as other researchers do? Would I be disparaging the uniqueness of human experience if I attempted to situate my research in the existing body of literature? That would totally destroy the purpose of my work. I tried to reason it out with myself. Did I need these theories to validate my research in the academia? Would these theories help my readers understand the immigrant women's experiences better? They certainly did help me in understanding mine.

A line from Clandinin and Connelly came to my mind which addresses the use of theory: They state that "This positioning of our inquiries is necessary if narrative inquirers are to contribute to questions of social significance" (2000, p. 136). I was indeed dealing with the social significance of the immigrants' experiences. Clandinin and Connelly's words helped me to clarify that my purpose for situating the stories of these women in pre-existing theories was not to provide a theoretical framework for them but rather to delineate similar prejudices, outlooks and attitudes that people have which could eventually help interpret the experiences of my participants and give them a new meaning. Clandinin and Connelly argue that

> The contribution of a narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field. (2000, p. 42)

This "new sense of meaning and significance", in my view, comes about with reflection and reconstruction of experience through memories, whether it be between the researcher and participant or in a classroom context—which is my ultimate intention.

The cornerstone of narrative is experience. Experience is manifested through the memories of events laid out on the three-dimensional (3D) space in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Memories are crucial to the reflection (of past) and reconstruction (for future) of experience. Other people's memories strike a familiar chord in us and evoke our own memories. We often interpret our participants' memories in the light of our own which also become intricately bound with the inquiry. The three-dimensional narrative inquiry landscape thus enables the researcher to reflect upon the

experiences of others to inform and reconstruct their own for future retrieval, as well as using their own experiences to interpret their participants'. According to Clandinin and Connelly Clandinin's, superimposed on the 3D narrative inquiry space are the four directions that an inquiry adopts when utilizing the Deweyan 3D concept. These four directions are:

> *Inward* and *outward*, *backward* and *forward.* By inward, we mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality—past, present, and future. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

For me, going in these four directions, while listening to the stories of my participants was a natural journey on the narrative landscape. For instance, while treading the paths of memory with Razia, I felt transported back in time to more than fifty years ago, in India, when my Mom was herself a young mother. I recalled to the very last detail, her words and her feelings seeing the abusive Bengali husband and his talented wife. I reminisced about my own childhood when I had gone to visit my sister in Bangladesh, my memories inspired by the conversation with a Bengali girl. Likewise with Rukhsana, I explored my own feelings about gender inequality in my culture and the metaphors I attached to it. This was the "inward" movement which, Clandinin and Connelly say, concerns feelings, reactions and moral dispositions.

The discussion with Samreen and Noreen around our Muslim identity and its ramifications in the Canadian society, is an illustration of the Deweyan dimension of an interaction between the personal and the social, and of Clandinin and Connelly's notion

of "outward" movement. Being a Muslim evoked negative reactions in the mainstream culture which, in turn, had negative consequences on the identity formation of young adults, whose reactions went through resentment to retaliation and perhaps eventually to antagonism towards Westerners. A parallel notion can be cited from the research done by Gloria Anzaldua (1987) where she found women of Hispanic origin going through psychological turmoil when they were discriminated against by White women. These Hispanic women subsequently went through stages of denial, resentment and acceptance on their way to developing an "alien consciousness," when confronted by the reality of racial discrimination. A trace of is seen, perhaps. in Noreen and Samreen's decision to wear *hijab* voluntarily while their mother did not. Such negative transfer, which is the by-product of stereotyping, in my opinion, can result in the bifurcation of cultures into the mainstream Canadian culture and the "other" culture. Bannerji alludes to these cultural divisions when she talks about the racism inherent in discourses of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada.

> [The] dominant cultural language in every one of these countries resounds with an "us" and "them" as expressed through discursivities of "minority/sub/multi-culture." A thinly veiled, older colonial discourse of civilization and savagery peeps out from the modern versions. Here difference is not a simple marker of cultural diversity, but rather measured or constructed in terms of distance from civilizing European cultures. Difference here is branded always with inferiority or negativity. This is displayed most interestingly in the reading of the non-white or dark body which is labeled as a visible and minority body. The colour of the skin, facial and bodily features—all become signifiers of inferiority composed of

> an inversion and a projection of what is considered evil by the colonizing society. Implied in these cultural constructions is a literal denigration, extending into a valorized expression of European and racist-patriarchy coded as white. (2000, p. 107)

Scholars like Mohanty et al. (1991) and Ng (1988) have explored the stereotypes attached to the deficiency discourse about the socially constructed category of an immigrant/Third World woman: she cannot speak English, she is passive, oppressed, and home-based, she is usually found in the lower stratum of the workforce and if labeled a refugee, she is a drain on the system. What further demoralizes the situation of a Muslim immigrant woman in the West is the veil syndrome as it is tied to the colonial narrative of oppression that she is subjected to by her barbaric culture. Leila Ahmed (1992) in her work *Women and Gender in Islam* argues that the use of the veil as a symbol of oppression served two purposes for the West: (a) it established its superior status over the colonized Muslim world based on the premise that Muslim society's oppression of its women was the result of its primitive culture and religion, both of which needed to be replaced by the Western cultural and religious values, and (b) it served to appropriate the feminist discourse at home and channel it to the East (White men saving Brown women from Brown men, as Spivek (1988) has expressed it) so as to contain Western feminism. But this discourse was unfortunately adopted by White feminists to their disadvantage as Ahmed points out.

> European feminists critical of the practices and beliefs of the men of their societies with respect to themselves acquiesced in and indeed promoted the European male's representations of Other men and the culture of Other men and

joined in the name of feminism, in the attack on the veil and the practices generally of the Muslim societies. (1992, p. 243)

Even to this day the colonial discourses in the media around the oppression of Muslim women are linked to the veil. Ahmed reiterates "that the measure of whether Muslim women were liberated or not lay in whether they veiled and whether the particular society had become 'progressive' and Westernized or insisted on clinging to Arab and Islamic ways."

Such attitudes based on stereotyping, I believe, have educational implications for the new immigrants as well as for people in the host country.

Another instance of the interaction between the personal and the social is the Executive Director's concerns (interview reproduced in Appendix A) about the psychological, social and economic hurdles that new immigrants have to overcome in the process of getting a foothold in a new country, when they are expected to perform their best. Their challenges in negotiating their identity in Canada are compounded if they are from a Third World country, with a different skin colour and a hesitant command of English. Her main argument was that no counseling services were being offered by the government to help immigrants with settlement problems and the attendant social, psychological and economic challenges.

My research inquiry, like any other inquiry into human experiences, addresses both personal and social issues "by looking inward and outward, and address(es) temporal issues by looking not only to the events but to its past and to its future" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Our present experiences and challenges are coloured by our past experiences. This can be seen poignantly in the case of Saima whose

present problems had their roots in her past. Thus in all the three cases, we see the participants living through present challenges in the hope of a better future. Razia plans to bring up her son on her own and she has no immediate plans to remarry, Saima wants to sue the immigration consultant, retrieve her money and eventually get Canadian citizenship and start afresh. Rukhsana hopes for a better future for her children and looks to contributing towards the family income by adopting a viable vocation.

When I met my participants, they had a past, they were now living in a new country, facing new challenges, and they had plans for future. A sense of history pervades our future plans and anticipations. As Clandinin and Connelly put it, "Narrative threads coalesce out of a past and emerge in the specific three dimensional space we call our inquiry field" (2000, p. 70). When I met my research participants, I myself had a past and my stories interwoven with those of my parents and grandparents, spanned different countries and different times. My present is in Canada, struggling in my personal life and at the same time trying to make a career for myself. I thus find myself "in the middle of a nested set of stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63), mine and theirs.

The retelling of our stories and the reconstruction of our experiences not only had a cathartic effect upon us but the insights gained and shared definitely contributed to our shaping of the future. For instance, Razia had the suspicion that Irfan would probably have deserted her after getting his immigration and so she now had no plans to remarry by "importing" a person who would only be interested in getting Canadian immigration. Saima, after going through her struggles, now believed that her husband had married her for her money. She had lost faith in all men somehow, and was planning to rebuild a life on her own in Canada by starting up her own garment importing business.

Seeing other women in a more challenging situation than myself had the effect of strengthening my resolve to make the best of what I have, of mustering the determination necessary for carving out a future for myself and my son. The whole experience further highlighted for me the importance of education for women. I had better economic options, or so I thought, because I was more educated than them. So if immigrant women acquired the education relevant for their own development as well as for their economic advancement and became proactive by developing an awareness of their rights and options, things might actually turn out for the better. "Enhancing personal and social growth is one of the purposes of narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 85).

I identified with the women not only because I shared, to a large extent, their South Asian cultural background (despite minor ethnic differences), but also because, by coincidence, they were all Muslims. I say "coincidence" because the counselor who introduced us was an Indian Hindu, and I had stated no preferences as far as religion was concerned when looking for my research participants. Belonging to the same religion entailed sharing the basic cultural and religious assumptions about women's status in the family and society.

I felt I could resonate with what these women were going through not merely because I myself came from a long line of abused women but also because in my experience as an Urdu interpreter in Toronto I had seen how women struggled to reclaim social recognition, self esteem and a sense of purpose in life after going through a life of abuse. I had often met women trying to keep sane, survive the trauma, and to make sense of the world. I have known, too, the struggles of women like my mother, my grandmother and my sister, who were unable to come out of it and who tried to preserve their sanity by

engaging in literary pursuits—the only escape they could afford. In exchange, they kept their family unit from disintegrating (by not opting for divorce). But to what extent were they able to keep themselves from disintegrating emotionally, is a question I have yet not been able to answer.

The 3D narrative inquiry space thus permitted my research participants and I to explore our experiences and interpret them articulately from a myriad of past experiences, to make meaning out of them and to look at options for a better future. The narrative space, I believe, also allowed us the opportunity to unearth hidden emotions and responses to situations in our lives. Sharing our experiences and discovering similarities accorded a considerable validation to them—a phenomenon that I myself had experienced when I shared my Education Chronicle with my class and received very encouraging feedback in the form of letters from them. (More on the importance of letters is presented in Chapter 8: Towards a Narrative Curriculum.)

Despite the inherent individuality in every story, our stories highlighted the commonality of human experience across the narrative landscape. We were then able to look at the narrative unities that ran through our lives in the broader sense of their social significance. In the next section, I discuss the issues that emerged as important in the lives of immigrants in Canada and which have epistemological and ontological implications.

The Hegemonic Discourses and my Research

Interpreting the stories of my research participants through the 3D narrative inquiry space showed them to be almost completely influenced by hegemonic discourses like gender inequality and the resulting sexism, racism, and class. Such discourses are

inescapable when we are looking at human experiences. People may choose to either fashion their lives to live out these hegemonies or, conversely, try to contend with them, either collectively (e.g., Feminism) or on an individual basis as when they write against them or simply even raise their voice in opposition (Brookes, 1992). My participants themselves were confronted with issues that had their origin in these discourses. Despite the fact that I would not feel comfortable being classed as a researcher coming from a formalist school, it was a humbling experience for me to acknowledge that my inquiry could not free itself from these hegemonies. I know I am not a formalist because I have a firm belief in life and human experiences being a strong educative force in a person's life and because I view my research participants' experiences as "embodiments of lived stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 43) and not, as in a formalist inquiry, "exemplars of a form—of an idea, a theory, a social category."

Despite this clarification, I can still enunciate some of the narrative unities that were common in the lives of the women I met with, and which could effectively be addressed in an ESL class for the benefit of others like them.

Abuse.

Though varying in degree and intensity, this theme lay at the core of the stories and lives of both my research participants and the women in my family. There was no escaping it. Saima tried escaping from the religious persecution, itself a kind of an abuse on a larger scale, by changing the geography of her existence (migrating to the United States), only to find herself faced with a different kind of abuse, from her jobless, frustrated husband. This being more unbearable than the earlier kind of abuse, she again sought refuge in moving, this time to Canada. Here she became a victim of the swindling

immigration consultants who robbed her of her money. Her present plight might, in part, be attributed to her being a woman with limited sources of knowledge, a total lack of support network in a foreign country, and a hesitant command of English. Having gone through repeated trauma, and bereft of all her money, she had now completely lost her self-confidence.

Razia was another woman who had experienced abuse. Abuse in the home prevented her from obtaining education in the LINC school and perhaps, subsequently, a suitable job for the betterment of her family and herself, and culminated in her narrow escape to save her life, and the arrest of her husband. It was a shocking revelation to Razia that the man to whom she was entrusted to by her father, was the source of all her nightmares. To top it all, when Razia complained about the abuse to her mother, she was told that men usually behave better once they become fathers. The ensuing incidents in Razia's life only revealed the fallacy of such traditional beliefs. Her experience again is reminiscent to Brookes' statement:

> Not one adult taught me that women are not necessarily safe in their own homes. Instead I was taught the illusion that I would be cared for, and protected by men. In other words, I was taught the ideology of social relations which prevented me from examining and knowing the oppression and powerlessness of women. This same ideology, of course, also prevents men from knowing how they are taught to oppress and misuse power. Because women and men are taught to uncritically live the ideology of social inequality, albeit in differing ways, it is therefore very difficult for women and men to learn to critique illusions—which work like truths when one is not taught to critique them—for the purpose of imagining better ways

of relating to each other. Traditions are reproduced in the same manner, I suggest. (1992, p. 130)

Rukhsana was spared the actual abuse perhaps only because she had successfully internalized her subordinate position in the scheme of things. In my field notes (November 23, 2002), I record the impression I got of her as being adept, in a traditional sort of way, at leading a successful married life. Her emotional fortitude, especially in her role as a bulwark for her husband, impressed me greatly even though it went against my notions of gender equality. I saw her as an epitome of the ideal South Asian wife, something that all wives in the patriarchal society aspire to be but often fall short of.

For my part, I had tried to escape abuse by obtaining sufficient education to make myself economically independent. While my well–paying teaching career perhaps prevented the physical abuse that I might have received had I not been capable of making a living for myself, it wasn't a safeguard against the emotional abuse I was destined to experience. While education provides the potential freedom and options to escape abuse, it does not guarantee escape until women have the determination and the awareness to make the choice.

Immigration.

In my experience as an Urdu interpreter, I discovered that the vulnerability entailed in immigration weighed heavily on the minds of women who were abused by their husbands. They were petrified by the thought that their husbands might get their status revoked if they sought help from agencies, and they would have to go back to their country, possibly without their children. On the other hand, even if they managed to take their children with them they would be financially on their own. The prospects for such

women indeed seemed grim mainly because they were unaware of their rights in Canada. Coming from a patriarchal culture where the husband is the head of the family and deals with all the matters pertaining to the outside world, they didn't know that they had equal rights with their spouses and they could not just be deported to their country at the whim of their husbands. For such women, language was also a barrier along with their lacking the confidence required to approach authorities.

In answer to the question "Why are the rates of domestic violence so much higher among Asian Americans?", Irene Kim (2000) in her study called *Risk Factors and Intervention for Domestic Violence among Asian Americans*, emphasizes sociocultural determinants such as family structure, family roles, cultural values and immigration/ adaptation. In keeping with the findings of other researchers, (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Ho, 1990; Uba, 1994; Yee, Huang & Lew, 1998; Lee, 1998) Kim characterizes the Asian-American families as being "hierarchical" and "patriarchal" where "communication tends to be unidirectional.... and males tend to dominate.... sons are often given more privileges than daughters.... the family unit is given precedence over individual interests (reinforcing a collectivist orientation) and interdependence." Citing Dasgupta and Warrier (1996), Ho, (1990), and Tran (1997), Kim further explains the cultural terrain to be one where "Marriage is male-dominated and females are looked upon more as the husband's property or possession while the wife tends to believe that she has no rights to property, wealth or her children."

Important causes of domestic violence given in Kim's research, which are also resonant with the stories of immigrants in Canada, are the settlement challenges and the

culture shock that many immigrants face. Some of the related challenges that Kim describes immigrants have to overcome upon settling in a new country are:

> Language barriers, limited economic resources, lack of familiarity with service system, minority status and related prejudice/discrimination/racism and social isolation. Some factors which may increase stress on the marital subsystem include: status inconsistency (e.g., pre-immigration level of education is inconsistent with current occupation, especially for the husband) downward job mobility, role reversals (between parents and children, may cause parents' loss of face) and the loss of extended family support. (Kim, 2000, p. 7)

While Kim's research is based on the data gathered from various Asian communities (Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and East Indian), I believe it reflects the situation of most immigrant families in Canada as well. Kim recommends consciousness raising and community level intervention programs to educate Asian women on gender equality and safety rights. The under-reporting of domestic abuse, she argues, is due to "the lack of familiarity or misinformation about one's legal rights, fear of deportation, rejection from the community, and fear of legal and government authorities." Although Kim's study is based on the findings of various researchers, most prominently Dasgupta and Warrier (1996), she emphasizes the need for intensive outreach methods to help overcome the above-mentioned obstacles and provide the Asians with legal, psychological and economic support beyond the general sources of aid against domestic violence in the form of battered women's shelters, crisis hotlines, support groups, and legal advocacy, which already exist. Similar concerns were also voiced by the Executive Director of the agency where I conducted my research, who believed that more streamlined and

concerted efforts on the part of the government were called for to help immigrants settle in the new country because immigration itself exacerbated the harsh conditions in people's lives.

Immigration itself was thus a major factor that had influenced the lives of my research participants either positively or negatively. For Rukhsana's family, it had brought their financial status down. As a result, not only the daughters but also the mother, who until then had been a homemaker, were preoccupied with making ends meet. This family realized that everyone had to contribute financially if they were to survive in Canada, and this contribution often came at the expense of health when they were forced to work extra hours or to perform beyond their physical capabilities. For Rehman, it was a demotion as well, since he was an engineer in his home country whereas here he was merely a factory labourer. His repeated visits to a counselor attested to the psychological strain he was going through. Immigrants have to go through this psychological setback in Canada, no matter how educated they are, since they do not have 'Canadian qualifications' and the 'Canadian experience' relevant to professional employment.

Saima's husband faced similar problems of accreditation in the United States, and his inability to get a job exacerbated Saima's already deteriorating marital life. For Saima, securing immigration to Canada was an escape from the horrifying realities of her life yet her exploitation at the hands of immigration consultants stemmed from her lack of knowledge about her rights and, eventually, shortage of funds. Like Rehman, she too lost her self-confidence because she felt helpless in a foreign country. As I wrote in my field notes (November 29, 2002), the negative change in her personality was too drastic to go unnoticed. While she took up a temporary job, Saima could not upgrade herself

educationally because, she said, her mind was too preoccupied with the immigration problems.

For Razia, immigration was partly a blessing and partly a curse. While it made her and her sister eligible for marriage, it also induced ex-cons like Irfan to deceive them into marriage. According to Razia, marriage for Irfan was like a lottery business, once the usefulness of the marriage contract based on sponsorship expired, he became abusive. Razia had gone through the mill, it remained to be seen what her sister would go through once she sponsors her future husband to Canada.

Immigration was a major theme in my family as well. My parents immigrated to Pakistan with a negligible amount of money, leaving their palatial family home in India. Here my father had to start afresh facing all the settlement problem that anyone would face coming to a new country after leaving behind a settled life with servants and family support network. My grandfather was an immigrant from Afghanistan who came to India to get a degree in religious education. I myself am an immigrant from Pakistan trying to get a foothold in Canada. The initial financial, psychological and social impacts of immigration are enormous and surviving them is a daunting task for most.

Education.

Education is another theme that figured prominently in the lives of my participants as well as my own family. My grandfather immigrated to India in search of education, just as one of the major reasons behind immigration for most South Asians is their desire to acquire higher education in a Western country like Canada. In a previously colonized country like India (parts of which are now Pakistan and Bangladesh), a person's level of English is an important determinant of the type of job he/she is likely to

get. My father's and uncle's respectable positions as an engineer and a magistrate, respectively, and their consequent status in society, were attributed to their reputable qualifications and a high caliber of English.

I have also recounted in the earlier chapters how literacy provided an "escape" to my grandmother, my mother and my sister from their harsh lives. I had pursued literacy at my mother's behest in order to insure monetary independence from any man that I might marry. Lifelong experience had taught my mom that, although abuse cannot be condoned under any circumstances, one of the major reasons men resorted to violence were constrained financial conditions which led them to perceive their spouses as a liability rather than a responsibility.

In Rukhsana's household, not only were the children acquiring education with a view to getting university qualifications and building careers for themselves, but Rukhsana herself sought to improve her English language skills to enable her to get at least a survival job. The only impediment in her plans to market her skills was her limited proficiency in English, especially in the specific areas that were relevant to her talents. Rukhsana was keen to acquire computer skills in the LINC classes so that she might have better options when looking for a suitable job in sales. Thus, in this family, there already was awareness that literacy was the only road to gaining financial and social ascendancy.

Razia was attending LINC classes when she got married but dropped out because she was not able to cope with the abusive situation at home. Education tends to get impeded or interrupted in the cases of traumatized women. Razia was of the opinion that when one is facing problems at home, learning English seemed like a luxury. She was too

distraught to continue her classes. I suspect that she didn't think the classes helped her much in overcoming her challenges. Brookes addresses this issue when she says

> Not acknowledged in most theories of learning, nor openly discussed in most educational institutions, is how male abuse is a significant, but invisible, aspect of women's educational experience. Developmentally, male abuse is a highly ignored sociological variable...the inclusion of this variable indicates a need to rethink and re-analyze the political implications of current pedagogical practices. (1992, p.14)

If indeed male abuse is taken into account as a variable in the educational experience of women, then classroom activities which acknowledge their real life experiences might help equip women to handle their lives better. One useful outcome of the LINC classes for Razia, however, was the fact that she was sent to a counselor, Pat, by the teacher and since then all her affairs have been handled by her counselor. Thus, Pat is Razia's link to the outside world. Razia does realize, however, that she has to improve her English in order to get a job and support her son. Now that she is a citizen, she was advised by the judge to take up ESL classes (as LINC classes are only meant for immigrants).

Saima was at a stage in her life where everything depended on the case against her immigration consultant, so acquiring education in Canada did not figure prominently in her immediate plans. It was as if her life was on hold; she had postponed her life until the case was decided in her favour, she got her money back, and was given immigrant status in Canada. I sensed that the state of uncertainty was taking its toll on her personality and this manifested itself in her anxiety, loss of confidence and her

obliviousness to the world (Field notes, November 29, 2002). In my opinion, she was so traumatized that her subjective self was acutely damaged.

Settlement problems.

Settlement problems, a corollary of immigration, tend to form a whole new set of challenges that immigrants must face in a new country. Issues under this theme are

(a) the immigrants' lack of knowledge about their rights (for instance, Rukhsana's concern that they might be evicted if they did not pay the entire six month's rent up front);

(b) problems of accreditation (such as those faced by Saima's and Rukhsana's husbands);

(c) the inability of fresh immigrants to find work in their own professions, leading to the other challenges like finding survival jobs that turn out to be totally unsuitable for their mental and physical well being;

(d) wives' inability to market their skills not only because of the new context in which their skills are not valued very but also because they are unaware of business venues. The Executive Director addressed this issue as well in her interview (see Appendix A), when she suggested that LINC agencies should offer co-op facilities for their participants as well as provide a platform for the owners of small business to organize workshops and talks for interested immigrants. These agencies could, in her opinion, act as liaisons between business organizations and immigrants.

Other challenges are

(e) lack of funds or an immediate depletion of reserves upon arrival (as was the case with Rukhsana); and

(f) culture shock or the struggle to negotiate one's identity in a very different cultural milieu (e.g., Rukhsana's children facing a sort of identity crisis due to a variety of factors like racism, stereotyping and their own fixed notions about their identity).

Settlement problems may look like minor obstacles to overcome but precisely these problems, on a wider scale, of not being accepted by the host community, or inequity in jobs and housing, can rise to monumental proportions and spread discontent among immigrants. I am alluding to the challenges faced by the millions who immigrated to Pakistan from India more than fifty years ago (my family being an example), who felt that they were discriminated against in jobs by the host communities despite their better qualifications (they had formed the educated class in India prior to immigration, as compared to the uneducated feudal landlords in the host country). Their acute discontentment at being discriminated against and not being accepted as citizens of the new country (Pakistan) by "the sons of the soil," resulted in the inception of a new political party composed of immigrants from India, calling itself '*Mohajir* ('Immigrants') *Qaumi* (National) *Movement*; (MQM). This political party signified the first crack in the national unity of Pakistan. Tracing the history of ethnic strife in Pakistan, the *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, a website providing background for terrorist movements in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, says:

> The roots of ethnic conflict in Pakistan, primarily concentrated in Karachi and other urban regions of Sindh, lie in the concentration of *mohajirs* (refugees) within a province where a common religion is too weak to build bonds with other population groups who were injected into the area at the time of Partition. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001)

Mohajirs, meaning immigrants or refugees, came with high hopes of making a good life in the new country whose inception they had themselves spearheaded. Their hopes were brutally thwarted when they were discriminated against in job opportunities despite their superior educational and cultural backgrounds. The web site goes on to explain:

> Refugees from Indian Punjab have been successfully integrated into Pakistani Punjab, owing to a common language and culture. (The term *'mohajir'* refers to refugees who arrived in Pakistan from the areas that fell within the newly constituted India, in the aftermath of Partition. It derives its origin from the term Hijr, the flight of the prophet from Mecca to Medina, a journey that was undertaken to escape persecution due to religious beliefs.) Refugees from other parts of India, however, did not undergo any comparable process of assimilation and were initially concentrated in Karachi, though they later moved to other provinces of Sindh, such as Hyderabad and Latifabad, as well. These refugees spoke Urdu and had a set of cultural and social values different from the native Sindhis. Unlike the Sindhis, the new *mohajir* society did not suffer from the restrictions imposed by a feudal order and hence adapted to modern education. Being in the forefront of the struggle for Pakistan, they were naturally in a dominant position and were ardent supporters of Pakistani nationalism, as opposed to the regional identities professed by the Sindhis, Pathans and Punjabis. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001)

A deep feeling of resentment eroded the enthusiasm for the new country. These immigrants henceforth channeled all their energies into fighting a losing battle for their rights. Defeated by a lack of voice in the government and a smaller population compared

to the other ethnic groups, the once most educated class of India became one of the most downtrodden ethnic minority in Pakistan.

> Mohajir dominance in Pakistan's politics was gradually eroded by the Punjabi bureaucratic-military clique, and Federal power gradually shifted to Punjab. This was followed by Sindhi assertiveness, particularly provincial government initiatives, such as imposition of Sindhi language in education and the adoption of the Sindh (Teaching, Promotion and Use of Sindhi Language) Act in 1972. These actions led to the first violent clashes involving *mohajir* groups.... Subsequent police intervention led for the first time, to clashes between the state and mohajir groups, a common occurrence since then. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001)

Judging from the problems faced by immigrants in Pakistan, it can be seen that it is imperative for newcomers in a country to achieve economic equity with the host population. Otherwise, their psychological and social well being is eroded. I am of the opinion that discrimination results in engendering an "alien consciousness" (Anzaldua, 1987) in the people experiencing it which subsequently undermines their allegiance to the host country and its people.

Sexism and patriarchy.

Sexism and patriarchy is another theme that surfaces prominently in the stories of my research participants and in my family history. Sexism and patriarchy, in fact, forms the very fabric of a South Asian society. Sexism, for example, is apparent in the importance accorded to the birth of a son. The Rehmans kept on having children until their son was born. Sexism is also depicted in the treatment of the male members of a family. For example, the men in Rukhsana's household were not expected to contribute

to the chores while the women, despite their jobs and studies, continued to be responsible for them. Saima faced the same thing with her husband in the United States. While, this patriarchal tradition is complacently accepted in the home country, South Asian women folk feel the impact of housework more in a foreign country owing to their inability to afford maids.

Sexism pervades Rukhsana's discourse regarding the relationship between men and women. Given her views, she would easily be considered a model woman in her country of origin. However, ideas often change in second generation immigrants and her children may not subscribe to the same views in their later life. The mainstream Western culture acts as a catalyst to break down socially constructed dichotomies which were traditionally given the status of major truths.

Razia's fatalistic belief that her life has ended now that she is divorced, (although she herself initiated the divorce proceedings) further shows the sexism in her mindset and the importance of marriage, especially for women, in South Asian culture (Field notes, October 18, 2002). She is waiting for her son to grow up and earn a decent living for both of them, which is again typical of the South Asian culture.

Another theme directly linked to patriarchy is considering men to be the ultimate source of knowledge. Religion, culture and language endorse the notion of men's intellectual superiority resulting in the unquestioning acceptance by women of the absolute authority of men in the South Asian social system. This theme is glaringly apparent in my participants' stories when, for example, Razia says "Men know more about these things than women do", referring to childbirth and related knowledge (whereas one would this was the domain of women). Rukhsana never once questions

Rehman's decision to come to Canada, even though she "knows" it was wrong. Developing the critical consciousness to challenge patriarchal notions of men's intellectual superiority over women would result in social ostracization for such women, which they cannot risk. South Asian culture does not encourage the development of critical skills for the very reason that it might encourage societal transformation and undermine the foundations of patriarchy upon which the system is built. A change in society can only come about through the conscious education of South Asian women to develop their skills in critical reflection. Brookfield argues:

> Critical reflection, however, if it is transformative requires that the students....become able to identify the implicit and the explicit assumptions that inform thought and action, to understand how these assumptions are culturally formed and transmitted, to investigate the accuracy and validity of these assumptions, and to take alternative perspectives on the thoughts and actions that these assumptions inform. (1995, p. 4)

The educational implications for women coming from a culture which does not favour critical thinking are discussed in the next section.

Racism and stereotypes.

In my experience, racism is a relative phenomenon underlined by a sense of superiority of one's own culture. It is not just Whites looking down upon Coloured, it is people with lighter skins denigrating those with darker skins. The lighter the skin, the more civilized the culture is perceived to be by proponents of racism. When I was a teenager, I remember I wasn't allowed to associate with Nigerian boys, the reason given was that they were too liberal and Westernized. However, I sensed a strong racist

undertone in statements made by people in my language community as well as my own family, such as "Our cultures don't mix" or "They are unaware of the finer sensibilities of life. They still have a long way to go." I often say, to the utter shock of my mother, that if I had stayed in that country longer I would probably have married a Nigerian. I remember the disdain with which the Nigerians were looked upon, especially when they approached South Asian parents with marriage proposals for their daughters, which was rare. While my religion favours interracial marriage, the South Asian community does not. In my education chronicle, I have mentioned the wave of fear that went through the South Asian community in Nigeria, in the late 1970's, when they heard news that Idi Amin, the president of Uganda (across the border in East Africa), had given the ultimatum to Indians to assimilate or leave the country. Indians sent all girls of marriageable age back to India, fearing that Ugandans would want to marry them by force. Some cases of coercion were reported and the entire South Asian community in Nigeria was paralyzed with fear.

Closer to home and nearer in time, racism is seen in the incident when Rukhsana's son was beaten up by a Caucasian Canadian boy at school. This was just one of many stories of "bullying" that are reported in schools, stories in which most of the victims are visible minority children. Other instances of racism are apparent in the stories of my participants when:

- Despite his qualifications, Rukhsana's husband couldn't get the job that people less qualified than him got;
- Antagonistic stares are directed at people with Middle-eastern looks and women wearing *hijab* after the 9-11 catastrophe;

- Saima's case for a refugee status in Canada was dismissed by the judge because she was not appropriately attired as the stereotypical Islamic religious woman should be;
- Razia's prior knowledge (which may well be a part of a commonly held belief) that, once arrested, Irfan would receive brutal treatment at the hands of Canadian police. She therefore tried, in vain, to prevent his arrest .

Educational Implications

I have outlined the issues that are relevant to the harmonious intellectual, social, psychological and financial growth of immigrants and lead to their effective integration in the Canadian society. Here, I tentatively explore some pedagogical techniques to address these issues in an ESL class. My purpose is to focus on what other people think and what I believe is a useful methodology to evoke the internal curriculum of abused and traumatized women and to enable them to become critically aware and take charge of their own lives.

What needs to be acknowledged is that for immigrants generally, and immigrant women particularly, a classroom environment where they can critically reflect about unequal access to power is essential to enable them to begin to question the "infallible truths" of their cultural knowledge and to become aware of how their "knowledge" about power relations is socially constructed, just like knowledge in the rest of the world. Otherwise men will continue to exploit women and women will continue to endure abuse considering it a *fait accompli* (Brookes, 1992). The patriarchal ideology sustains an exploitative power structure, at the micro level of family relations or at the macro level of corporate globalization. At both levels, it is the women who are the abused party.

I envision a possible transformation for these women through the use of a feminist pedagogy in concert with a narrative curriculum. Issues around sexuality, gender, race, class, and power, stemming from immigrant women's stories themselves, have to be taken up in an academic context to develop women's educated awareness. In an intellectually and emotionally conducive atmosphere, such as a classroom, a knowledgeable facilitator can help women learn to challenge social constructions that result in oppression.

The idea of using stories or narrative as pedagogical tools is not new. Egan believes that themes from children's stories can be used to generate interest in Mathematics, Social Studies and History and to "re-humanize" them by giving them a "living context of human emotions and intentions" (Egan, 1986, p. 30). In fact, he argues that the teaching of history should not be postponed for later years just because people think that children lack the abstract concepts of chronological time and causality in their cognitive make up. He believes that children "do have the available conceptual tools that can make history meaningful. They may lack a logical conception of causality but they clearly have available the sense of causality that hold stories together and moves them along" (p. 14). Egan argues that children do not learn those concepts at school; they already possess them and they use these concepts to understand the world around them.

Another aspect of children's learning that Egan notes is the dialectical tendency of forming binary opposites and then mediating between them in subsequent stages of learning. Hence when learning the temperature continuum, children first acquire the concept of binary opposites "hot" and "cold" which gradually get mediated by "warm" and "fairly cold". Egan expounds on the usefulness of the mediating process even in a

territory where imagination substitutes for categories that do not exist. He gives the example of the binary opposites, nature and culture, where there are no mediating terms, but suggests that the human imagination would invent some things like "talking middle-class worms" (p. 16). Similarly, in the binary opposites of life and death, people "mediate and create ghosts, spirits, and all kinds of being which are both alive and dead, as warm is hot and cold and middleclass worms are natural and cultural" (p. 16).

Egan emphasizes the importance of imagination as a tool for learning in the early years of children's intellectual development because current teaching methods "have excluded much of the richness of human experience to which young children can have direct access" (p. 17). I strongly believe, as I stated earlier, that effective pedagogical principles can just as effectively be applied to adult education as to the education of children. Egan's ideas resonate with my view that immigrant women, as learners, come to class with a whole array of conceptual tools (not learned at school) even though they may lack the linguistic repertoire in the second language to utilize those concepts effectively.

I also see a consonance between Egan's notion of binary opposites and their further refinement into mediating concepts (what I might call a progression from black and white into gray zones) and William Perry's (1970) idea of people's gradual intellectual development which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3 "The Curricular Foundations of my Research." Perry argues that learners gradually progress from the basic dualism of right/wrong, good/bad, we/they to the multiplicity of opinions and finally 'relativism', which muddy the waters somehow and make them come out of the binary dualism as they grow intellectually.

Egan argues that education should capitalize on the imaginative powers of children to make the curricula more engaging and relevant. He encourages teachers to utilize the infrastructure of stories to set up a conflict or a sense of a dramatic tension at the beginning of each lesson which would be resolved at the end. Egan's idea is to use binary opposites in the plotline of stories to bring about an affectively and cognitively satisfying resolution at the end. In contrast with seeking fictionalized binary opposites to impart meaning to children's curricula, the lives of the immigrant women I have worked with are themselves fraught with binary opposites, e.g., men/women, white/coloured, us/them, civilized/uncivilized, First World/Third World. The actual life experiences of immigrants are themselves conflict ridden, and these conflicts need to be resolved for the sake of their identity transformation and subsequent integration in the Canadian society. If the LINC curriculum could be oriented to helping immigrants resolve some of these conflicts, the relevance of its curriculum would be enormously enhanced. The stories of immigrant women constitute their lives as lived by them. Making their powerful stories the focus in their education can give these women a grasp on reality. Looking at my own research in Egan's terms, my purpose is to propose a narrative curriculum which would make education work for immigrants by helping them resolve the conflicts they confront each day of their lives.

The need for a postmodern education.

Any discussion about the education of South Asian women would be incomplete without looking at the devastating influence of globalization on Third World countries that has been touched upon frequently in the preceding chapters. That is, the identity of an immigrant woman should be looked at from two dimensions—the micro and the

macro—where the micro aspect consists of the family unit and culture, and the macro aspect of the global corporate culture. South Asian women are exploited at both the levels — as a second rate citizen at the cultural level and as cheap labour at the global corporate level (Mitter, 1986). The educational considerations for her should therefore incorporate both the variables.

Globalization, preoccupied with profit-making and wealth accumulation and accompanied by a total disregard for human values or culture, is a prominent aspect of modernism. Postmodernism, on the other hand, in reaction to modernism, attempts to give voice to those who have been subordinated on account of their colour, class, ethnicity, race or culture. The LINC curriculum that I had taught as an ESL LINC teacher was designed by the Catholic District School Board and embodies the principles of modernism with its pre-structured exercises and comprehension passages based on the Western culture. This curriculum emphasizes the Western corporate culture and the training of immigrants in specific skills to cater to the demands of that culture. The exclusion of other cultures and diverse voices from the curriculum is, in my opinion, a reflection of modern education which is geared to globalization and its corporate culture (O'Sullivan, 1999). I believe that in order for the South Asian culture to be given validation in the curriculum, which would be an important step towards the affirmation of South Asian women's identity in Canada, a postmodern education is imperative.

A postmodern education, while criticizing the grand narrative which is the framework for modernism, advocates a broader outlook which recognizes culture, difference and subjectivity. This revolutionary perspective entails the inclusion of indigenous cultural and spiritual values, a proximity to nature, and a deep concern for the

preservation of human life on earth. As stated earlier, up till now all educational systems catered to the requirements of the world market and trained people to skills that were currently in demand in the market. Now there is a need to look beyond the goal of profit to the fulfillment of human needs, whether spiritual, social, cultural, or even personal. The recognition of the human person with all its cultural, social and intellectual dimensions, as opposed to a distant promise of an economic utopia, is the aim of postmodern education. Patrick Slattery argues against the notion that postmodern education could be defined through a set of predetermined objectives:

> Postmodernism challenges educators to explore a worldview that envisions schooling through a different lens of indeterminacy, aesthetics, autobiography, intuition, eclecticism and mystery. In this sense, a concrete definition of postmodern education with universal goals, behavioral objectives and predetermined outcomes is an oxymoron. (1995, p. 23)

Postmodernism aims at a multifaceted or a multidimensional educational system that addresses all issues concerning human existence, be they universal or personal. It is a holistic education advocating a harmonious existence of man and the universe. Thus it is the complete antithesis of modern education: "The present institutions of modernism have fostered a deeply truncated sense of self that has caused great suffering, alienation and fragmentation in our century" (Bellah, 1985, p. 24). Christopher Lasch (1978) calls it nihilist self-encapsulation — "the minimal self." The aim of postmodern education is personal growth which can only be achieved if there is a sense of community embedded in education in addition to a healthy dosage of differentiation and subjectivity. O'Sullivan explains the terms in detail: "the cosmological task embedded in the task of

differentiation is to articulate in the most developed sense who we are as persons and who we are as specific communities" (1999, p. 223). That is, that every person and every community brings a uniqueness to an interaction and relationship. The quality of uniqueness contributed by each person and community must therefore be recognized in education. "Subjectivity" is achieved when human beings see a deep relationship not only between themselves and the universe but also between themselves and their capabilities, moving towards self-fulfillment and autonomy.

Postmodern education with its emphasis on diversity, uniqueness and subjectivity, is a total antithesis of modern education characterized by the homogenized culture of globalization. The only sense of community that emerges in the modern global village is for the purpose of profit-making. An inclusive education that takes into consideration the diversity, uniqueness and creativity of all communities would serve to purge xenophobia, racism, sexism, and religious fundamentalism from the minds of participants as well as educators themselves. Formidable institutions like patriarchy and global exploitation of women would be called into question once these women open their minds to cultural diversity and self-actualization. I believe that the current LINC education, although striving towards cultural diversity, is still very much influenced by modernism. What is needed, in my opinion is a pedagogy that encourages the student to reveal his/her cultural and personal uniqueness through self-reflection leading subsequently to self-actualization.

Rukhsana, for instance, was talented in cooking, knitting and crochet. If she could be encouraged in LINC classes to enhance those skills through hands-on experience and the requisite vocabulary development, she could have perhaps found the venue to take her

talents further and turn into a proactive woman contributing to the family income. In addition, she could have, through the sharing of stories and subsequent class discussions, learned to question some of her own assumptions derived from her cultural and social location in the society. In other words, I believe that a heuristic state of mind is a prerequisite for developing into a critically aware person. If Saima had acquired some critical awareness through a postmodern narrative curriculum, it would perhaps have assisted her in retaining her self-confidence and connection to the world which she had lost as a result of being out of touch with her 'self' and her family support network. I see the validation of cultural and personal uniqueness that emerges through self-reflection, as a means of attaining self-actualization for South Asian immigrant women. I discuss a possible course outline for a narrative curriculum in the last chapter.

An education engendering self reflection in students.

My personal experience with abused women in my family has shown that they employ avoidance strategies to escape the unmanageable realities of life by talking about the day to day, mundane existence and the things that are routinely done. At the risk of sounding judgmental, I would say that their discourse is what Trevor Pateman calls "idle discourse" (cited in Cameron, 1985, p. 172) because they try to steer clear of the heavy issues in their life for fear of having to confront them and thereby, disturb the status quo which, in turn, might invite reprisal or break up the family unit. Women can be encouraged by teachers to talk about what they have always considered taboo, in a congenial classroom atmosphere. Learning to critique texts, "whether the embodied texts of self or the disembodied written texts" (Brookes, 1992, p. 65) will help students see how theory can be developed from experiences and practices of everyday lives.

My impression is that the South Asian society does not encourage critical thinking in its women for fear of upsetting the patriarchal applecart. The women for their part, do not engage in critical thinking because they risk being socially alienated and committing "cultural suicide." Brookfield notes "Across the world people live lives in which the possibility for critical reflection remains unrealized, either through political oppression, apathy, poverty, or educational neglect" (1995, p. 4). The question then arises: is it feasible or advisable to lead the South Asian women out of their cultural frame of reference and impose upon them a Western pedagogy which encourages rational and critical thinking? The Canadian adult educator MacKeracher says adults learn best "when they are treated in ways which are consistent with their existing description of who they are and what they are capable of doing" (1996, p. 28). Daloz reminds us to be sensitive to the whole student:

> We can listen to our students' stories, seeking to understand how their quest for education fits into the larger questions and movements of their lives.....we can sense the whole lives of our students, recognizing how the aspirations, relationships and values of their lives hold them in a web of forces enhancing or inhibiting their movement. (1986, p.xviii)

The emphasis on the "students' stories," I think, is significant to the need to develop narrative thinking in students. It is through their stories that we understand how they relate to the world around them, how their past experiences influence their future aspirations how they interpret their present reality and how they envision education to play a role in their lives.

Implications for adult education.

Adult learning depends largely on self-directed learning when the learners are assisted in "learning how to learn" (MacKeracher, 1996). The two most important characteristics of self-directed learning are self-reflection and critical reflection. In her research with South Asian women, Jody Marshall (1998) notes that while her participants engaged in self-reflection they did not exhibit signs of critical reflection. She concludes that "rational, critical reflection is not as valued in South Asian cultures as it is here in the West" and subsequently recommends that since

> our current educational programs representing models encouraging independence and rational thought may not best meet the students needs.... Methods that emphasize the development of relatedness and connectedness and value that facilitate intuitive learning may be more appropriate teaching and learning styles for Asian students. (Marshall, 1998, p. 22)

This idea seems to be congruent with the LINC agency Executive Director's idea that community agencies should handle immigrants' affairs because of the obvious feeling of "belonging" that they evoke in a homesick immigrant. I believe that the "development of relatedness and connectedness" will emerge when learners share their stories with each other in an ESL class using a narrative approach.

Living in a new country and overcoming new challenges is a daunting task. Daloz encourages students and teachers to "discuss the important matters together so that our students can regain the courage, insight and passion they will need to move ahead in their lives more fully, to weave and reweave the fabric of meaning more richly and strongly" (1986, p. 2). MacKeracher (1996) also states that adults learn best when their learning

has relevance for the student, based on current needs and meanings and when they feel respected and acknowledged. MacKeracher emphasizes the importance of a culturally responsive teaching which "respects and incorporates the learner's deeper meanings to create joyful, absorbing and challenging learning experiences" (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 163). Course contents could then be delivered in such a way that the "discourse acknowledges all voices—the multiple ways in which people interpret and reflect their understanding in their of the world" (p. 171). According to Williamson "students learn best to 'see' the 'invisible' ideology, when it becomes own interest to—when they are actually caught in the contradiction" (1981/82, pp. 82 – 85). I concur with Williamson because I personally believe that dialectic learning experiences in ESL classes can be instrumental in encouraging critical thinking in immigrant women with respect to their current Canadian environment while at the same time giving them a platform to endorse their own cultural background which is important to validate their identity as complete persons. I believe that once they feel comfortable with their own identity as South Asian women, they would be better able to critically understand and interpret their life experiences in Canada.

My research participants (as well as the women in my family, had they been given the chance to acquire education conducive to the development of their own person) would have benefited immensely from an education focused on their personal development precisely at a time when they were "caught in the contradictions" in their lives: Saima uprooted from her comfortable life in Pakistan to the life of a fugitive in Canada; Razia unable to find LINC education relevant to her abusive life at home; and Rukhsana not finding the venues in LINC to utilize her skills in Canada. I am of the

opinion that, not being able to find viable options or answers to their difficulties, these women, like thousands of other immigrant women, were left to drift and lost touch with themselves. A strong focus on the development of self as a complete person is, I believe, important for looking at life meaningfully.

Implications for a LINC classroom.

At this juncture, I introduce the views of a LINC teacher I interviewed to gather her ideas about how to approach sensitive issues like abuse in class and what she thought were the major areas of interest to immigrant students (the full interview is set forth in Appendix A). Not a South Asian herself, Asfa (a pseudonym) comes from a Middle Eastern background. As the population constituency of the LINC classes changes from year to year, she was still quite cognizant of the challenges faced by South Asian immigrant women, having taught in that community for more than ten years. Asfa was teaching Levels 3, 4, and 5.

The major technique that Asfa described was her use of newspaper articles to generate discussion around controversial topics. Students, could then, as a follow up, be given similar situational topics with a dilemma to resolve and later critique. A class lesson on "Stress" (part of the lesson is given in Appendix B) also initiated discussion about the factors that contributes to stress in people. Sensitive topics like abuse—a major factor of stress and subsequently breast cancer in women, are touched upon peripherally but not in detail. Asfa says that being "just a teacher" prevents her from comfortably discussing sensitive issues and she has to "step back" because she feels her "hands are tied". She explains:

> I don't know the person and I am not the authorized person to do this [advise]. I am just a teacher and if they come for advice it depends on the problem. I have to see the problem. If it is a problem between a husband and a wife, I step back.

However, if she suspects anything serious, she sends them "next door" to the community centre for legal services. She talked at length about the general reticence of students when it comes to discussing "uncomfortable" topics. This teacher is aware of the silencing factors in these women's lives — "controlled money, power and authority" — when their spouses are in-charge. However, she feels "they listen and they learn."

In my opinion, in a classroom of South Asian women where they must "first learn and then unlearn the male organization of all social perspectives" (Brookes, 1992, p. 11), a certain amount of teacher control is necessary so that a teacher does not feel that her "hands are tied" because she is "just a teacher." As a South Asian, I know that a more defined teacher-student dynamic is considered important in the South Asian culture. A teacher could encourage the students to contribute their ideas not only verbally but in writing so that they would learn to recognize their own subjective experiences. This entails "not so much saying new things but saying the same basic things again and again" (Williamson, 1981/82, p. 81). To me, this means a continual questioning, through reading, writing and discussion, of our social practices which are informed by unequal power relations. Thus what is being taught (the subject matter/content) is, to a certain extent, inconsequential as long as it is aimed at a dialectical learning. Brookes points out:

> Schooling practices which empower students and teachers can be implemented in quite simple and obvious ways, once teachers agree to the importance of this work. What we need to do I think is to critique our positions of power and

> privilege as well as our positions of fear and inadequacy. This is difficult but not impossible work. To do this is to begin facing students as real people whose ideas are shaped and informed by particular social histories. The goal is to learn in ways which will clarify these histories. I am not advocating here that content is not important. Rather, I am calling for a kind of dialectical learning which will enable teachers and students to examine theories from the perspective of personal histories. Key to this way of learning is a recognition of how our perspectives are informed by need, desire, pain, emotion, trauma and joy. I think this kind of learning depends upon our willingness and ability to teach students to read and write in ways which allow them to emotionally experience the theories and ideologies to which they are exposed. (1992, p.151)

Brookes believes that teachers should encourage students to

1. *Read* extensively, as

> Reader response in any capacity is intricately and intimately tied to how we reproduce knowledge, precisely because its focus is reader agency. In other words, by teaching students to value their own reader agency—their experience of the text—we can begin to teach students how to construct and make meaning through the mediation of texts, and from a perspective located in their own experiences. In this way we are able to provide spaces in which students can view, from their own experiences, the social constructedness of ideology and knowledge. (1992, p. 157)

2. *Write* profusely. Using her own experience of abuse as an example, (1992, p. 34) Brookes states:

> I am discovering that writing is an effective means of shifting outward the effects of an *internalized, naturalized* abuse. In the process of writing out these abuses I am rejecting the effects of oppressors whose authority I have internalized and whose power has silenced me in particular ways, making it difficult to choose from a place of self-authority. In this way I am beginning to reclaim my authority as a knower. (Freire, 1970, p. 33)

3. Encourage students to approach personal histories through *autobiographical writings*, because "Autobiographical writings... enable us to identify, analyze, and change those assumptions and social practices which work unconsciously to sustain social illusions" (Brookes, 1992, p. 61), and, again, "autobiography seems like a wonderful way to examine and theorize educational experience" (1992, p. 157).

MacKeracher also states that in order to optimize adult learning, the "learning must bear some relationship to past experience" (1996, p. 28). Autobiographical writing can be an effective vehicle for collectively and individually theorizing our memories and making the personal political by connecting present learning to past experiences. In addition to issues of power relations, Asfa believes that getting good jobs and making money is another of the immigrants' concerns. This connects with Rukhsana's need to market her skills, as well as the Executive Directors idea (see next section) of immigrant agencies acting as liaisons between business organizations and immigrants. Another pedagogical corollary to this is the teaching of register specific vocabulary relevant to the career needs of LINC participants.

Implications for educational policy makers.

The Executive Director of the agency where I did my research, saw the underutilization of qualified immigrants' services as the result of faulty policy-making. (The complete interview is given in Appendix A.) She believes that there is a need to politicize the curriculum, and that the underlying issues are racism, access to trade and profession, use of information, etc. These issues, she argues, result in an inherent contradiction between how the government offers programs for immigrants and what the programs need to be. Policy-making and funding considerations affect the quality of the program being offered. In my understanding, this refers to a hierarchical structure where the globalized corporate agenda influences the national government's policy-making which, in turn, influences the delivery of a program which is totally incongruent with the needs of immigrants and society.

The Executive Director advocates awareness raising at the policy level, educating high-level bureaucrats to the needs of people, in order to reorient the system and train immigrants for employment in LINC. In her view, immigrants are expected to perform their best in the corporate world despite the rejection and denigration they face in Canada, whereas no provision is made in terms of infrastructure and funds to provide counseling support for immigrants experiencing racism, feelings of uprootedness, devaluation, and psycho-spiritual factors that impact people when they are uprooted.

She believes that since service providing organizations give very impersonal services, immigrants prefer to use community services where they get a sense of belonging and connectedness. But as the government does not put "their money where

their mouth is" and because there is inequity in employment opportunities, the climate is not conducive for the proliferation of community-based programs.

While sharing a feminism outlook, the Executive Director and I saw the situation of immigrant women from different vantage points. From the perspective of an ESL teacher who has lived in Canada a little more than four years, I thought that the life conditions of immigrants could be improved by making them intellectually and critically alert. The Executive Director, on the other hand, believes that changes should be brought about at the governmental policy-making level in order to ameliorate the lives of immigrant women. As I see it, she believes in a top-down approach towards change, whereas my approach is from the bottom up. The basic premise of her argument is grounded in the leftist structural feminist theory. The "structural and deconstructive educational theorists do not view formal education as the most important venue for social change, but they do see schools as providing at least some scope for critical inquiry and social transformation" (Thompson, 2003, p. 17). Structural theorists believe that since marginalized groups have been underrepresented in canonical disciplines like history, literature, science and arts, having been denied full access to education and policy-making apparatus, the best form of educational intervention for them should be one that utilizes

> a liberationist pedagogy and a counter-hegemonic curriculum, both intended to provide students with critical leverage, on their own and other's situation. Some structuralist feminists explicitly challenge the ideology that frames existing power relations as natural or meritocratic; others concentrate on exploring alternative frameworks. (Thompson, 2003, pp. 18.)

I see my position as being more akin to what Thompson calls liberal feminist approaches, namely, socialization theory and gender difference theory. Thompson (p. 14) states that "Whereas leftist approaches to feminism consider the social order to be systematically unequal, liberal approaches assume that inequity is a consequence of ignorance or prejudice and thus something that can gradually be modified through enlightened educational programs and corrective policies such as affirmative action." I imagine that effective educational programs can remedy the discriminatory attitudes and policies with regards to immigrants.

Moreover, I also believe that recommending changes merely in the educational system in Canada might not entirely provide for a successful integration of immigrants in Canada. I believe that mandatory orientation programs, with a strong language component, organized in the immigrants' country of origin, as well, would go a long way toward acquainting potential immigrants with what to expect when they come to Canada. In this way, they would be spared the initial shock and disappointment when they do not get easily absorbed into the Canadian job market. Such programs would also serve to caution them in advance against any unrealistic expectations they have about social acceptance in the mainstream culture. A diagrammatic representation of how I conceive of the different approaches to immigrants' educational needs is given below. As stated earlier, I see my approach as being a bottom up approach and that of the Executive Director a top down one.

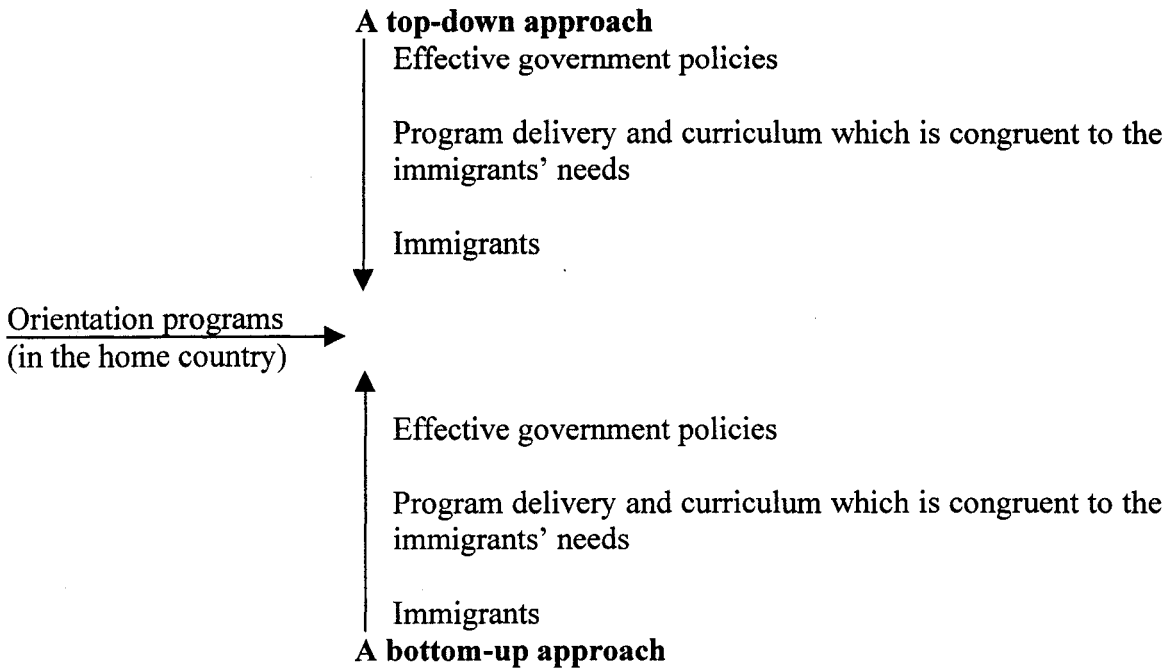

Figure 3. **Different approaches to educational programs for immigrants.**

Conclusion

In this chapter, as the title (A Reconstruction of my Journey Through the Inquiry) suggests, I attempted an interpretation of the stories as well as an interpretation of the social and historical context of those stories across time and space. I looked at the prominent narrative unities that emerged in my stories and the stories of my research participants.

Having listed the narrative unities, so to speak, I also trace the trepidation I went through, caught between two opposing methodologies—formalism and narrative inquiry—and the need to validate my research in the academic community by grounding it in existing theories while retaining my claim to subscribe to narrative inquiry. Thus I explore discursively, my feelings and thoughts on various subjects like the methodology of my research, the educational needs of immigrants, educational program delivery in LINC, and my reflections on the stories of my research participants.

In order to give a more or less complete picture of the situation around the pedagogical needs of immigrant women in LINC, I have discussed the views of a LINC teacher and the Executive Director of a LINC agency. The teacher sees her role in the ESL class as very distinct from that of a counselor (which differs from the sense of a teacher in South Asian educational systems), so she can only suggest pedagogical techniques that would make LINC participants, especially women, critically aware of their environment. The Executive Director, on the other hand, looks at the situation from a broader perspective and focuses on government policy where factors such as funding and corporate interests are prioritized over the pedagogical needs of the immigrants.

For me, the narrative unities that emerge from my research participants' and my own stories, and the crucial importance of stories and the uniqueness of human experience in my research study, constitute the most salient parts in the chapter. I present the views of various educators to ground my study in the existing research. The discussion of these views is not meant to diminish the significance of the glaringly harsh realities of life faced by the women in their stories.

In this chapter I also present my ideas, interwoven with those of prominent educators, to suggest "what" is needed for immigrants to integrate successfully in Canada. The implications for policy-makers at the governmental level (the macro level) and the implications for the LINC education (the micro level) with respect to the findings of other researches are also discussed. In the next chapter I will examine the "why" and the "how" of the proposed narrative curriculum.

Chapter 8: Towards a Narrative Curriculum

Multiculturalism in Canada is the norm of life, and diversity in the Canadian population is endorsed by the official policy on multiculturalism adopted as early as 1972. The Canadian Heritage web site explicates:

> Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging... Multiculturalism is a relationship between Canada and the Canadian people. (Augustine, n.d.)

The need for a narrative curriculum for South Asian immigrant women arises because the multicultural Canadian context demands a synthesis of the transplanted South Asian culture and the host Canadian culture if a harmonious coexistence between the immigrants and the hosts is to be envisioned. In order for the South Asians and their children to adapt successfully to Canada and use their hybridized identities to their advantage (rather than be hampered by them), they must learn to narrativize their storied past and let it assist them in understanding their present and future, while retaining their cultural heritage.

The purpose of the narrative curriculum would then be to educate the South Asian immigrant women to enter into the complex multicultural Canadian context, negotiate their identities successfully and, to grow and transform so as to keep pace with the changing demands of life in the new country. Context is crucial to meaning making. Meaning emerges when we situate ourselves in the matrix of a three-dimensional narrative space or the narrative context by thinking of our storied lives temporally, interactionally and contextually. People tend to interpret their lives and everyday

experiences in terms of these three dimensions as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (2000) based on Dewey's ideas.

> [Dewey believed] that experience was on a continuum; that every experience grew out of prior experience and led to future experience. No experience ...could be imagined in isolation but only... in temporal and interactional context. By interaction he meant exchanges taking place with the environment. (Phillion & Connelly, 2002, p. 11)

In the situation of South Asian immigrant women, we can surmise that their interpretation and subsequent resolution of everyday situations would be coloured by their prior knowledge which is historical (temporal), interactional, and situational (spatial).

Connelly and Clandinin believe "that a person's personal practical knowledge which comes to bear on any particular situation is best imagined as crystallizing out of a matrix of personal practical knowledge" (Phillion & Connelly, 2002, p. 12). Therefore when a person acts in a particular situation, it is a value-laden action in that the knowledge base out of which the action evolves is "complex, vast, historical and sweeping on one hand, minute and detailed ...on the other" (Phillion & Connelly, 2002, p. 13). Although the abstract nature of the knowledge base would defy any attempt at a definition, it can safely be assumed that a person's actions in a given situation are informed by a rich experiential context which is composed of a three-dimensional narrative space.

Why a Narrative Curriculum?

My research into the life issues that I feel should be addressed in LINC education for the benefit of South Asian immigrant women suggests an experiential, story-based

approach to their curriculum. While politicizing the issues of immigrants, as the Executive Director of the LINC agency had suggested, is also effective in that it draws attention to the problems at hand, the downside to it is that it turns the situation into a generic cause and essentially categorizes people. Thus, it is assumed by the policy-makers that a certain type of curriculum is best suited to all immigrants' requirements. This clearly is not tenable. People as unique individuals require a curriculum tailored to their unique needs. Therefore, I believe, there is a need to think of people as individuals, there is the need to think narratively.

A pertinent question here is "How best to describe and interpret the experiences of other people and other cultures for curricular research purposes, and hence make them major stakeholders in their own learning process?' One of the ways to resolve this problem of representation, according to Lincoln and Denzin, is by "presenting to the inquiry and policy community a series of auto histories, personal narratives, lived experiences… that allow the Other to speak for him-or herself" (1998, p. 411).

By using narrative as a method in my research study and presenting the stories of my participants, I have attempted to do just that — to make them speak for themselves. The fact that I presented the interviews of the Executive Director and an ESL teacher in addition to the stories of my participants, is to me, congruent with Lincoln and Denzin's view when they argue that:

> The move is toward pluralism and many social scientists now recognize that no picture is ever complete, that what is needed is many perspectives, many voices before we can achieve deep understandings of social phenomena and before we can assert that a narrative is complete….

> The postmodern project challenges the modernist belief (and desire) that it is possible to develop a progressive program for incorporating all the cultures of the world under a single umbrella. The postmodern era is defined in part, by the belief that there is no single umbrella in the history of the world that might incorporate and represent fairly the dreams, aspirations and experiences of all people. (1998, p. 417 – 418)

The existing LINC curriculum has been designed to accommodate the needs and aspirations of the entire immigrant population in Canada. It is like saying "one size fits all." The current curriculum ignores the fact that people have different cultures and that, even within those cultures, different people have different issues that need to be addressed in the curriculum. Immigrants thus become casualties of a system that does not pay attention to the individual. The homogenizing character of the existing LINC curriculum, which I believe, is a result of the globalized corporate agenda, leaves the students with a sense of a discontinuity between education and life, and does nothing to make education a generative response to the community.

Thus reiterating the need for a narrative curriculum, as a researcher and as an ESL teacher, I echo Clandinin and Connelly:

> In our view, experience is the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry. We see personal experience methods as a way to permit researchers to enter into and participate with the social world in ways that allow the possibility of transformation and growth. Personal experience methods offer all of us… the opportunity to create a middle ground where there is a conversation among people with different life experiences. (1998, p. 176)

The Efficacy of a Narrative Curriculum for Immigrant Women

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) distinguish between knowledge for teachers and teacher knowledge. They believe that "knowledge for teachers" is teachable knowledge which "can be identified, put into a curriculum, educated so that it becomes an attribute of the teacher, and may be tested" (Phillion & Connelly, 2002, p. 19). I understand what they refer to as "teacher knowledge' to be the abstract, internal database mentioned in the previous section. They view this knowledge as having both personal and professional dimensions; the personal aspect consists of the teachers' own predispositions, while the professional is the result of their interaction with others in their profession.

If I utilize this distinction and apply it to the situation of the South Asian immigrant women in my research, I could say that there is the "knowledge for immigrants" and "immigrants' knowledge." The knowledge for immigrants is the formal identifiable and quantifiable education that is imparted in the educational institutions, which can be tested and considered to be an attribute of the immigrants by virtue of their acquiring it. The "immigrants' knowledge" is their personal, cultural and religious knowledge that they use to make sense of the world. In the case of educated immigrants, this abstract knowledge database would also have a professional dimension attached to it as in the second category, which Clandinin and Connelly, referring to "teacher knowledge", call "personal practical knowledge" (2000) .

Extending the analogy of knowledge for teachers/immigrants and teachers'/immigrants' knowledge, I suggest that if immigrants' knowledge—their personal practical knowledge—is explored to its fullest extent in LINC classes, it could provide a viable curriculum for immigrants in Canada. My own experiences as a student

and subsequently as a teacher influenced my efforts to become a better teacher not only in terms of knowing my subject matter thoroughly but also in terms of human interaction. My personal experiential knowledge informed my practices as a teacher throughout my teaching career. The crucial importance of such experiential knowledge cannot be ignored, be it in the case of professionals or unskilled and semi-skilled homemakers, as are my research participants.

As stated in Chapter 1 (South Asians in Canada and the Immigrant Experience), the identity of an immigrant woman is never static, it is in a state of flux, always in the making, whenever confronted with the stereotypes and the predominant discourses of racism, sexism, and patriarchy. When they negotiate their identities, interpret the reality of life in Canada and make decisions—no matter how small the decision may be—it is determined by a whole complex of personal, cultural, social and economic considerations. It is thus a multi-tiered, interlayered, complex of considerations that constitute the personal practical knowledge of South Asian immigrant women.

In agreement with Phillion and Connelly (2002), I also believe that formal education can have only limited value in preparing South Asian immigrant women to face the challenges in a culturally diverse country like Canada. The formal education I acquired only assisted me marginally in becoming the person I am. Life experiences taught me considerably more. If, however, an attitude of inquiry is developed in these women to understand their narrative context better, their experiential knowledge could become more focused towards proactive thinking and this would enable them to view more clearly the options available to them for the future rebuilding of their lives. In other words, a narrative curriculum could help South Asian women "join the flow of life" in

Canada. Presently, I believe, they feel uprooted, having immigrated to a new country with foreign customs, they have "to go slowly, watch customs, check their responses, observe and begin to see where they might fit in" (He, 2002c; see also Phillion, 2001).

The Epistemological Implications of Personal Practical Knowledge

In Connelly and Clandinin's distinction between "knowledge for teachers" and "teachers' knowledge," they describe "knowledge for teachers" as "something teachers possess, something which they acquire from researchers, policy makers and curriculum developers.... [whereas "teacher knowledge" is] knowledge that comes from experience, is learned in context and is expressed in practice. Teachers' practice is their knowledge in action.... Personal practical knowledge has both a personal and cultural origin and quality" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 9). Similarly, "knowledge for immigrants" is the objective body of knowledge offered in LINC programs. "Immigrants' knowledge" is the subjective knowledge that immigrant women bring with them, shaped by personal and cultural considerations, that they employ in interpreting everyday experiences and act accordingly. Clandinin and Connelly further explain the difference between knowledge for teachers and teachers' knowledge (the personal practical knowledge) by drawing on Polanyi's (1958) distinction between two kinds of human knowledge: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin liken their concept of "knowledge for teachers" to "explicit knowledge" which is formal education, something to be acquired "as set out in written words or maps or mathematical formulae". Similarly, they draw a parallel between "teacher knowledge" and Polanyi's "tacit knowledge" which is "unformulated knowledge such as we have of something we are in the act of doing" (1958, p.12). Clandinin and Connelly state:

> These epistemological notions are central to our understanding of teacher knowledge as experiential, as personal, as having a subjective quality and a precognitive bodily basis that is expressed as tacit professional/cultural knowledge. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 10)

To develop their concept of teacher knowledge, Connelly and Clandinin also draw on Hollingsworth (1994) who posited the notion of relational knowledge, and Schön who talks about "the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life... [as knowledge that is] ...tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing" (1995, p. 6). For me, the idea of personal practical knowledge is not restricted to teachers; it has a much wider application. Personal practical knowledge is the knowledge all human beings possess relative to their level of cognition in the field of education and culture and which reveals itself as "a pattern of tacit knowing in action" (Schön, 1983, p. 6) As I see it, this tacit knowledge which is an amalgam of cultural and personal predilections as well as previous experiences in life, manifests itself in the everyday actions of people.

To take the case of the South Asian immigrant women in Canada, they already have a strong sense of identity dictated by their positioning in the cultural matrix. This sense of identity which constitutes their tacit knowledge influences their everyday actions and interpretation of experiences. It is this sense of identity that I believe needs to be explored through autobiographical writings in a multi-dimensional narrative curriculum and reflections in LINC classrooms. Such a curriculum may prepare these women so that when confronted with a dilemma or faced with trauma, they will have the will to consciously survive the moment, heal by thinking, self stabilize, analyze the present,

consider the options and see the future in positive ways, and subsequently view themselves as an instrument of change.

MacKeracher (1996) states that adults learn best when the learning has relevance, based on their current needs and meanings. The everyday lives of immigrant women in Canada are fraught with challenges, being confronted with racism, sexism, cultural, and class considerations which, of course, are not found solely in the context of the host culture but are also embedded in the transplanted South Asian culture. I believe that teaching South Asian women to acquire skills to confront ontological issues has major pedagogical implications for adult educators. "Self directed learning" could be encouraged in these women in view of the wealth of cultural and personal experience they possess.

MacKeracher states that self direction is facilitated when learners are assisted in learning how to learn. The two key elements in self direction are developing 'self reflection' and 'critical reflection'. Jody Marshall (1998), notes the lack of "critical reflection" among her South Asian participants. She argues that developing critical reflection in South Asian students "would involve Asian students increasing their comfort with conceiving and implementing their own goals and plans, and learning without a primarily teacher-directed focus" (1998, p. 21). Yet, critical reflection, if it is to be transformative, requires that the students

> Become able to identify the implicit and explicit assumptions that inform thought and action, to understand how these assumptions culturally are formed and transmitted, to investigate the accuracy and validity of these assumptions, and to

> take alternative perspectives on thoughts and actions that these assumptions inform. (Brookfield, 1995, p. 4.)

To my mind, developing a sense of inquiry in students is an essential prerequisite to self-reflection and critical reflection. Schön wrote:

> In the domain of practice, we see what John Dewey called inquiry: thought intertwined with action—reflection in and on action—which proceeds from doubt to the resolution of doubt, to the generation of new doubt. For Dewey doubt lies not in the mind but in the situation. Inquiry begins with situations that are problematic—that are confusing, uncertain or conflicted, and block the free flow of action. (cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 15)

Though the notion of inquiry here, in my opinion, can easily be extended to include the self-reflection and inquiry that ordinary people engage in when faced with a dilemma. Writing autobiographies and keeping journals are a few of the activities that could be encouraged in an ESL class to encourage South Asian women to reflect. My impression is that "critical reflection" on the existing cultural assumptions would follow, once the skill of "self-reflection" has been adequately developed.

While, self-reflection and critical reflection come naturally in most Western cultures, they have to be taught as skills to South Asian women. I know from personal experience that such thinking is strongly discouraged in women by our patriarchal culture, where critical thinking is considered to be a masculine domain and women are expected to merely comply An statement like "it's not a woman's job to think when men are there to do it for her" is an one example of injunctions common to the culture. Brookfield notes the unrealized potential for critical reflection in many cultures: "Across

the world people live lives in which the possibility for critical reflection remains unrealized, either through political oppression, apathy, poverty or educational neglect" (Brookfield, 1995, p. 4). People from Western cultures then often wonder why women from patriarchal cultures do not critically reflect on and subsequently question the prevalent cultural assumptions. Jody Marshall, quoting Brookfield, observes:

> A primary reason may be that in critically analyzing the patriarchal assumptions upon which their cultures are formed, the women risk being alienated from their culture. Brookfield (1994) discussed the inherent difficulties of critical reflection. In a study of adult educators who engaged actively in critical reflection "cultural suicide" was an impending threat. The learners perceived that if they critically questioned conventional assumptions, justifications and structures too deeply they risked being excluded from the cultures that had defined and sustained them up to that point in their lives. (Marshall, 1998.)

Marshall suggests that Western educational programs that encourage rational thought and critical reflection may not be best suited to Asian students' needs, and that "methods that emphasize the development of relatedness and connectedness and values that facilitate intuitive learning may be more appropriate teaching and learning styles for Asian students," I, on the other hand, believe that since South Asian women have to keep pace with the changing cultural demands in Canada, and that when the students are encouraged to self reflect, through autobiography and daily journal writing, critical reflection can also be facilitated. Journal writing would encourage South Asian women to reflect on their everyday actions, to reason out what they do and why they do it the way they do it, and possibly to question whether it could be done any differently? A

teacher with a narrative orientation could use this process to develop a sense of inquiry in these students, and to engage them in self study and in exploring their personal practical knowledge with regards to their everyday lives.

Self studies as a means of inquiry.

Following Dewey, Connelly and Clandinin developed a method of inquiry called "self study" to look into teacher knowledge as manifested in everyday practice. They view teacher knowledge as "experiential, as contextual, as expressed in practice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 17). Similarly, I suggest that South Asian women be encouraged to reflect on their life incidents and decisions, through self study, because their actions are determined by their cultural knowledge and identity, which can be called their "personal practical knowledge" as they live their narrative knowledge in their practical life. Performing their multiple roles as mothers, wives, daughters, immigrants, and students, these women interact with different people and different events in their workaday lives. Their interpretations of those life experiences and their subsequent actions are seen through the lens of their past experiences, their multidimensional personalities and their culture. They live their knowing in their lives.

Influenced by the Deweyan concept of experience as having both a personal and a social dimension, Connelly and Clandinin see narrative self-studies about teacher knowledge as being positioned along a continuum between personal and social. They argue that self studies regarding teacher knowledge as narrative could range from those emphasizing the personal to those emphasizing more the social aspects. Likewise autobiographical studies initiated in the ESL class could also be placed on such a personal and social continuum depending on the theme of the autobiography. Those for

instance, closest to the personal end on the continuum could be construed as being ones that have a personal significance as narrative texts. Such autobiographical self-studies according to Connelly and Clandinin engage someone in studying himself or herself in order to learn about their practice. South Asian immigrant women could thus be encouraged to write autobiographies and try to interpret their own experiences. The raw data for an autobiographical inquiry would consist of remembered stories and artifacts from their past life.

Since life events take place on a three-dimensional narrative space, they are bound to have a social dimension attached to them as well. The LINC participants could then be taught through their autobiographies to compare and contrast their lives in their home countries with their lives here in Canada. They would thus be able to explore how their identities and their responses to life situations have changed over the years.

There are many other methods of narrating and reconstructing one's stories of experience, for instance, self-reflection, the use of dialogues with other participants in the stories, and reconstruction of narrative histories of selected participants etc. Using whatever method best suits them, the LINC participants could be taught to discuss issues in their journals and autobiographies relating to their lives at the margins of society and their positionality against the backdrop of gender, sexism, racism, patriarchy and class. In the process of writing, they could learn how to valorize their experiences and present their own interpretation of those experiences, in turn leading to a reflection on their personal practical knowledge as constructed on a temporal and social span of their lives.

Autobiographical self-studies, according to Connelly and Clandinin, are both historical and developmental in that they trace a history of a phenomenon and then reflect

on the changes that have taken place over time. I believe, that the personal practical knowledge that these South Asian immigrant women bring with them is also historical—because it is the result of their vast cultural experiences in the past, and developmental—because their everyday experiences undergo a change in Canada due to a different sociocultural milieu. This personal practical knowledge is also social, as culture and society influences people's decisions in everyday activities.

I believe self studies could also help South Asian immigrant women understand themselves with regard to their rationalizations of their cultural practices. They could then explore ways to successfully adapt to the Canadian context while retaining the good aspects of their own culture. Their awareness in making various choices could assist them in adaptation and transformation, leading to their subsequent cultural and personal growth. For example, if my research participant Rukhsana were taught to reflect upon her life and the cultural assumptions that determine her actions (for instance, her traditional beliefs about the supremacy of men and women's role in preserving that supremacy), through writing her autobiography in LINC, she would probably have rationalized her beliefs and later sought to adapt them according to the new Canadian context.

To my mind, journals and autobiographies are self reflective explorations of the writers' cultural and personal knowledge provided they are undertaken with the purpose of digging deep into the meanings of life. I use "meanings" here to denote the author's understanding of a chain of events as they happen in her life, assuming that an event may have different meanings for different people. It is through these interpretations that the writer's multidimensional identity as influenced by different discourses in her life, shines through and might determine the interpretation of her future experiences.

A third type of self-study research, discussed by Connelly and Clandinin, which I would consider to be synonymous to autobiography, is "where a researcher sets out to study something else and in the process of doing so learns something about themselves". This notion indicates a research phenomenon whereby the author of an autobiographical research could incidentally stumble upon something new while exploring an entirely different aspect of her life. My personal experience is that such flashes of insight contribute immensely to a person's emotional growth. While writing my autobiography and the life story of my mother for a course called "Foundations of Curriculum," I was confronted with the fact that I would have to discuss the abusive behavior of my father towards my mother if I were to give an honest account of our lives. After three sleepless nights, I was able to face the reality and explore my own feelings on the subject of abuse. Things that we had considered taboos with regards to my father's life and which we had always brushed under the rug, came up and had to be faced squarely. I now feel that the soul searching that I went through at the time, reinforced with lengthy discussions with my mother, subsequently gave me the courage to voice my own opinions and face my life bravely. Metaphors symbolizing my life which had hitherto remained confined to my mental vision assumed a concrete form on paper and that gave me and my life a certain validation. This was an eye opener for me, a unique experience of self-exploration and discovery—the wonders of writing autobiography, albeit a brief one.

Emotional reactions to one's situation occur only in the spaces that allow for and encourage an in-depth reflection and I believe autobiography allows a person that space. Emotions that are ordinarily reined in, manifest themselves when a person is given the task to analyze and interpret his/her experiences especially in exercises like daily

reflective journal-keeping or an autobiography. Another great advantage that I experienced as I interwove my autobiography with the stories of my research participants (both in my "educational chronicle" in Chapter 1 and in "The trilogy of abuse" in Chapter 4) was that many narrative unities emerged which were common in our stories. The major discourses which shaped my identity more or less shaped theirs, since we shared almost the same cultural and religious background. Thus it is my belief that autobiography has an enormous potential in exploring one's life and that of others with a view to future growth and transformation for a better life.

In my research, coming up with narrative unities had wider educational implications in that they suggested the need to look into life issues relevant to immigrants in educational settings. Thus my research moved "from an intensely personal focus to connect to audiences of other researchers, other teacher educators, other teachers and perhaps policy makers" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 38). While the personal practical knowledge construct proposed by Clandinin and Connelly for teachers, ultimately gets "transformed into professional knowledge by narrativizing the relationship of personal practical knowledge to professional knowledge context" (p. 38), my present purpose is merely to suggest the potential for transformation and growth through self studies like autobiographies and journals for South Asian women through the re-storying of their personal practical knowledge in an ESL class where they can explore their lives as lived at cultural boundaries.

Sharing autobiographies and journals might induce these women to tell their stories in compelling ways that allow other LINC participants to resonate with their narratives of experience, which would then be a way of initiating their own restorying. A

multidimensional narrative curriculum, in my opinion, would allow the immigrants to explore their own understandings of culture, cultural difference and diversity.

While discussing teachers as curriculum makers, Connelly and Clandinin argue that self studies leading to self knowledge are not important in themselves but as a means to achieving a viable curriculum. They state that "For each of us, the more we understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do, and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be" (1988, p. 11). This fits with my notion of applying the construct of personal practical knowledge to South Asian immigrant women's LINC curriculum, as the goal of my research study is to make South Asian women major stakeholders in their own curriculum. If through their autobiographies these women are able to explore their identities in relation to the matrix of the three-dimensional narrative space, they might then be able to understand and interpret their present experiences which would subsequently have a bearing on their future plans. In other words, the subject matter in the LINC classes could result from the personal practical knowledge of these South Asian immigrant women, which might then help them situate themselves within the larger cultural narrative of coexistence not only within the Canadian culture but also in their own family with its changing demands in Canada.

"Looking in," or narrative knowledge of oneself as posited by Clandinin and Connelly (2003, p. 46), is not like a psychologist undertaking a clinical self study inquiry in an effort to understand a state of mind. That is, it is not merely confined to the realms of mental activity; it has major social connections. Clandinin and Connelly state:

> We mean a temporal understanding with temporal and existential/social elements. Narrative knowledge...is best thought of as situational crystallizations of narrative histories and narrative social constructions. Particular situations draw forth and crystallize particular expressions of one's personal practical knowledge. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 46.)

As I understand it, Clandinin and Connelly mean that a person's narrative knowledge about himself or herself, which is an amalgam of past and present experiences, are translated into their response to everyday experiences; documenting those responses with due rationalizations constitute good self studies in a narrative curriculum. Connelly and Clandinin sum it up with "Self study holds the highest possible potential for improving education" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2003, p. 47). While they talk about teachers improving educational practices by conducting self studies, I look at the situation from the students' perspective; I believe that self study and reflection through writing autobiographies could eventually help South Asian immigrant women see what they want out of life in future. Thus their curriculum for life could evolve out of their own storied self and they could then become their own curriculum makers in collaboration with their teachers.

Narrative Inquiry as a Pedagogy of Trust

In this section I explore the pedagogical implications of involving students in their own learning in an ESL class. The idea of making learners major stakeholders in their own curriculum is not a novel one. Elsa Auerbach calls it "a participatory approach [which] starts by involving students in the process of uncovering themes and issues as an integral part of classroom interaction" (1992, p. 42).

Though Auerbach describes Freirean pedagogy as being the ideal one for exploring issues of critical importance to students, she also believes it may not be suitable in an adult ESL North American context because:

> Students often don't come from a single community, teachers don't have time to do this kind of intense participant observation and most importantly issues identified in this way lose some of their timeliness because they don't emerge from actual, concrete concerns of participants. (1992, p. 42.)

I am of the opinion that it is exactly where such actual, concrete concerns of participants need to be looked into that the efficacy or usefulness of writing and sharing autobiographies emerges. Hence, the importance of a narrative curriculum.

The classroom atmosphere that Auerbach proposes for her participatory approach (for which I would substitute "narrative approach") is that of trust built by the teacher through "non-threatening activities that allow students to share something of their lives in a format that is familiar and comfortable" (1992, p. 43). The aim of establishing a congenial classroom atmosphere is to show the students that their life experiences are valued in that context and they can comfortably share aspects of their lives with their classmates. Building trust is essential in any collaborative or participatory venture; be it a student-teacher interaction in class or a narrative inquiry research such as I was conducting into the life issues of my research participants. Auerbach captures the crux of the matter when she states:

> A delicate balance must be struck between inviting students to be open and respecting their privacy: It is important not to put them on the spot with direct

> personal questions. Drawing students out without being invasive requires sensitivity on the part of the teacher. (1992, p. 42)

I see a resonance between the role of a teacher and that of a researcher in this statement. While narrative inquiry is not so structured and formal in its procedure as is the participatory approach, it requires the same degree of sensitivity, if not more, on the part of researchers as Auerbach proposes for teachers.

I realized during my research that building trust was a matter of give and take. I shared my story with my research participants in order to give them a safe space to share theirs. It was an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence in which it was okay to laugh and cry and express anger at our human failings. Being a teacher and a researcher simultaneously, I see the roles of researcher and teacher to be similar. The emotional bonding that I felt with my participants is, I believe, akin to what a sensitive teacher would feel towards her students. This can only come about by the narrative sharing of stories.

Brooks (1992), although coming from a critical pedagogy stance, echoes my ideas when she writes about emotional reactions to the unequal power relations in society :

> I think we must develop practical ways of contending with these eruptions; we must not avoid them or soothe them away. It is after all these which, once dealt with, may inspire a student or teacher to begin learning in a meaningful way.... I argue that instructors interested in working from feminist perspectives must be taught how to examine and work with the ghosts of their past and present lives, else they will not be able to work with the ghosts of their students' lives in a safe and caring manner. (1992, p. 156)

While this statement speaks to teachers, it also highlights the similarity between a classroom and a research relationship in the emotional climate that must be established. Building trust is an important prerequisite for evoking students' life themes and making them the subject matter of class curriculum.

As part of a trust-building strategy in order to generate themes of importance to students, Auerbach proposes two teacher-initiated activities:

> "*conscious listening* (an openness to going with the flow, hearing what is hidden between the lines, following up on diversions, etc.) and *catalyst activities* (guided language activities that encourage students to contribute their ideas experiences and problems). (1992, p. 43.)

I see a consonance between "conscious listening" and Connelly and Clandinin's concepts of "recovery of meaning" and "reconstruction of meaning" (1988) when reading a text. Here, it is not the disembodied printed text that we are referring to but the embodied text of students' stories that sensitive teachers must listen to consciously, so as to interpret them for generating themes.

Auerbach identifies grammar exercises, student research and open-ended activities with minimal teacher control as "catalyst activities." Giving free rein to students' responses, she believes, results in creativity, spontaneity and serendipity while providing them with a language activity to complete in the class. She states:

> Catalyst activities serve the dual purpose of providing the structured language lessons that students expect and triggering discussions which lead to the identification of student issues. They provide a window on the students' daily reality through a safe and familiar framework. (1992, p. 43.)

She offers a caveat that activities aimed at building trust may not directly yield the themes. However, they would certainly give the students an idea that "participants' realities provide legitimate content for language and literacy development" (1992, p. 44).

I find these activities a useful infrastructure for ESL teachers to provide their LINC participants with the requisite language as well as an emotionally safe atmosphere to share their life experiences. Auerbach's successful implementation of class activities show that by generating an atmosphere of trust and confidence, other educators have been able to develop a curriculum based on the life themes of students, even if not using a narrative approach to curriculum. However, a narrative curriculum, to my mind, has the advantage of preserving the uniqueness of an individual's experiences through autobiographies, journals and artifacts from a person's past, therefore providing an added value to the process of learning from one's own experiences through reflection, reconstruction and reinterpretation. Gathering all the threads together, I have tried to devise a tentative course outline to show what a narrative approach to curriculum building might look like in a LINC ESL classroom (adapted from Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, and Connelly, 2001).

A Supplementary Narrative Course Plan to be integrated with the existing LINC Curriculum

The Intended Purpose of the Course:

1. On a macro level, to develop an understanding of the concept of immigrants' personal knowledge and its implications for personal curriculum development, learning and evaluation.

2. To have students link their own narratives of experience to the content of the course
3. On a micro level, to develop the skills of self reflection and critical reflection on the way to understanding one's personal practical knowledge.

The Infrastructure of the Course:

1. The "Recovery of Meaning"

Students are initially taught to read and discuss a text at its face value and not to interpret it according to their own predilections or through their cultural lens. In other words, the students learn to see what the author is trying to say on his/her own terms.

2. Situational assessment

Through class discussions students acquire a sense of situation by seeing how things are done differently in the Canadian context. The discussions lay the groundwork for learning the skills of critical reflection in the backdrop of the immigrants' cultural and personal experiences.

3. The "Reconstruction of Meaning" and Personal Knowledge.

Students are encouraged to provide reactions, insights and interpretive questions on the text. This step thus constitutes the opposite of the "Recovery of meaning" step. The interpretive stance that the students adopt, provides a link with their personal knowledge. Students have an experiential history behind them and multiple biographies and stories which provide the personal context of their actions—all actions including reading. The students' personal knowledge will manifest itself in class discussions, writing stories and reflecting on them, interviewing, and drafting a personal narrative towards the end of the course. Class activities like reading a certain text or listening to

others constitute experiences for the students who would draw on their personal experiences and reconstruct personal meaning because our personal knowledge is reshaped during experience and this leads to a personal reconstruction of meaning.

The Assumptions behind the Course:

1. Immigrants, as adults, possess a wealth of personal and cultural knowledge which they bring to the ESL class.
2. They are highly motivated to learn English. Their motivation may either be instrumental (getting a job after learning English) or integrative (assimilating with the mainstream culture) in nature but it nevertheless provides a strong reason for their commitment.
3. Owing to the immigration and settlement challenges that they are facing in the new country, immigrants are particularly vulnerable and disoriented. They therefore need validation of their experiences to help them carve a better future for themselves. The study of the immigrants' practical knowledge (the aim of this course) which will eventually provide the groundwork for achieving a validation of their experiences, capitalizes on the motivation and the cultural context of the LINC participants.
4. Deliberate attempts on the part of students to reflect on their personal practical knowledge will render the LINC ESL experience more meaningful for them while providing the necessary validation to their life experiences.
5. The aim is to study the personal practical knowledge of immigrants which constitutes "the intellectual matrix for intuitive actions" as opposed to courses of action which are rationally planned.

Goals:

1. To develop skills in the reading and recovery of meaning from newspaper articles and (inter) cultural literature in ESL course books.
2. To develop critical skills for interpreting and adapting information to their own situation.
3. To develop skills at communicating one's own personal knowledge and obtain confidence from that knowledge.
4. To develop discussion skills which consciously acknowledge students' own personal knowledge and the knowledge and wants of others.
5. To gain some sense of how reflection upon, reconstruction of, and an understanding of your personal belief system is a metaphor for one's curriculum in future (future plans).
6. To increase confidence in the value of personal experience.

Summary of Student Activities:

1. Journal notes
2. Letter response to narrative presentation
3. Personal stories
4. Family stories
5. Chronicle-biography
6. Interview
7. Rules, Principles and Maxims, Beliefs
8. Metaphors
9. Pictures

10. Memory boxes

11. Interpretive letter

12. Final narrative

Rationale for the Course Outline:

Activities like journal keeping, writing letters, writing personal stories, interviewing others, etc., are all aimed at the distillation of a person's rules, principles, maxims, beliefs and metaphors that he/she lives by, on the way to understanding that person's personal practical knowledge. Narrative unities (themes) which provide a connecting thread through these rules, principles, maxims and metaphors, naturally evolve in the study of one's life experiences. They are the focus of this tentative curriculum.

1. *Journal Keeping*: a regular activity throughout the course.

Elementary level

Write a daily journal: Record your reflections about the English course. What relevance does the course have to your daily life?

Intermediate level

Write a journal style entry to comment on your conception of

- Education
- Family
- Culture
- Religion

And write on how they interact to give meaning to your life.

Advanced level

Write a short essay emanating from your journal to reflect on the stories told so far in the course; how the metaphors and cultures reflected in those stories were different from your metaphors and way of life. In other words, what was your take on the stories? How would you have done things differently or viewed situations in the stories differently?

Catalyst grammar exercises designed to elicit issues and concerns:

Structured exercises that allow space for students to contribute authentic information from their lives.

- "In my country… in Canada…."
- Substitution drills: "I'm worried about…."
- I need/I want/I like charts
- Feelings: "I feel angry when…"
- Charts (jobs, families, reasons for coming to Canada, etc)
- Superlatives: Easiest/hardest, most/least, etc.
- Modals: List five things that could be better in your life. (Auerbach, 1992)

Suggestions for journal keeping:

- Write the journal in a hardbound notebook to avoid the danger of losing papers.
- Write detailed journal entries about daily events, and your feelings and emotional reactions to those events. Record any past event that somehow relates to this present incident and record your emotional and moral reactions at the time.

- Go over the journal entries after a few weeks to see if any ideas or patterns emerge. Make notes in the margin for any themes that seem to recur.
- Compare present ideas with past entries.

Catalyst exercise:

Teacher introduces the topic of stress from the passage *What is Stress?* (see Appendix B)

Outcome of this exercise:

- Validation of the students' experiences
- Knowing that there is no one right answer to a problem or a situation
- Learning to respect other people's perspectives
- Learning vocabulary about 'Stress'
- Developing confidence in one's own interpretation of different experiences

2. *Letter Response to a Narrative Presentation*

The class as a whole generates questions to ask someone about their life with special emphasis on the appropriateness of questions be asked.

Write a letter to the person who made a presentation asking him/her questions about the aspects that perplexed you in that person's story. Also offer your opinion on a point of interest to you in the story.

Outcomes:

- Focus on wh— questions
- Learning to interpret other's viewpoints
- Clarifying points of confusion

- Learning to offer opinions
- Learning to reflect critically

3. *Personal Stories*

Teacher shares a personal story with the class to generate an atmosphere of trust.

Students' activities:

- Write about an event in your life that taught you something about life and living.
- Write about a person whose teaching or actions had an impact on your thinking.
- Write about an important decision that you took once and which somehow changed your life.

Catalyst activities:

Reading the passages entitled *Hoa's stressful life* and *Anwar's stressful life* and doing the accompanying exercises (See Appendix B).

Outcomes:

- Reflecting; going back in time and space
- Learning to describe a person or an event
- Learning the idioms and phrasal verbs associated with 'Stress'
- Relating to the experiences of other people
- Reflecting critically on actions taken in the past

4. *Family Stories*

Write out one or more family stories. Why is the story significant for the family?

- Is it instrumental in keeping memories alive?
- Is it important for creating a sense of family identity? If so, what identity does it give to the family?
- Does the story have an educational value attached to it?
- What significance does the story have for you?
- How would you have acted in a similar situation?

Outcomes:

- Exploring identity issues and issues of location
- Learning to critically reflect on one's possible line of action
- Learning to make a connection between actions and values governing those action
- Learning to connect self with the milieu

5. *Chronicle-Biography*

Teacher shares some pictures of his/her birthplace with the class and talks a little about his/her childhood.

Students' activities:

Reconstruct your past and compare it to your present:

- Write what your life was like in your home country
- Write about your life in Canada
    1. What aspects of your life do you find interesting in Canada?
    2. How has your life improved/changed since coming to Canada?

Share it orally in class. Classmates discuss aspects of your life that they find intriguing. They then write letters to you in response to your presentation.

Catalyst activities: (See Appendix B)

- Prioritize problems

  Part 1: What is complicating my life right now?

  Write down the things that are causing you the most stress in your life right now.

  Prioritize the list with the most stressful thing at the top of the list.

  Part 2: What do I do next?

  Follow the steps below:

  1. Look at the first item on your list
  2. Think of everything you need to do to solve that problem
  3. Break the solution into small manageable steps (what you need to do) and write the steps down
  4. Work on that problem only. Don't go to the next problem until you have solved this problem. If you try to solve all your problems at once, you will be more stressed than when you started!
  5. After you have solved the first problem, repeat the above steps for the second problem.

- Discussion

  Discuss with a partner:

  1. What is the difference between an optimist and a pessimist? Which one are you? Explain.

2. Is it more stressful to be married or single? Explain.
3. Describe some ways you have helped a stressed-out family member or close friend.

- Write About Yourself
  1. Pick one of the topics below.
     a) Describe a stressful time in your life, or in the life of someone you know. What steps were taken to relieve the stress?
     b) Describe ways you could organize your life to reduce the stress.
  2. Write a paragraph from personal experience.
  3. Give your paragraph a title.

Outcomes:

- Reflecting on and reconstructing one's past
- Analyzing the present in relation to the new context.
- Anticipating and writing about the future
- Acquiring problem solving skills through critical reflection

6. *Interview*

The teacher and students collectively generate questions for an interview and write them on the board.

Students' activities:

Interview a classmate about his/her life back home and how it has changed since coming to Canada.

Interview questions might focus on:

- Family dynamics: then and now
- Daily routine: then and now
- Job situation: in the home country and now in Canada
- Thoughts and reflections about future: then and now

Questions for the interviewer to consider:

- What were the points of similarities and difference between your life in Canada and your classmate's?
- How did you feel, as an interviewer during the process of interviewing? Did you feel inhibited in asking certain questions? Share your insights with the rest of the class.
- How educating was the process of interviewing?

Outcomes:

- Critical reflection
- Comparing and contrasting
- Framing interview questions and asking them

7. *Rules, Principles, Maxims and Beliefs*

Students' activities:

The code of conduct you live by: Write out a list of rules and principles for family relationships in your culture, for example:

- Parent – child
- Husband – wife
- Siblings

Do a library research on the Canadian lifestyle and write a short report on:

- How is your way of life different from the Canadian way of life?
- How are your life and cultural assumptions different from the reality in Canada?

Use your rules and principles to sketch out a personal philosophy. Have a group discussion about each other's personal philosophy.

Catalyst activities:

The class reads "What is your stress level?" of CLB/LINC 4 (See Appendix B, p. 349) with the story about *Palvinder and Vikash*, and discuss the following questions with their partners.

- What life events are the most stressful? Explain why these events are stressful?
- What are some things that cause a lot of stress for married couples?
- What was your biggest problem when you first came to Canada? Describe the problem and how you solved it.
- What do you do when you are angry (e.g., throw something at the wall, go for a walk, kick the furniture)?
- What are some good ways to handle anger?

Write about someone you know.

- Pick one of the topics below

1. What are some ways a stressed out homemaker can reduce the stress in her life?

2. What advice would you give to newlyweds to help them cope with the stress of marriage?
3. What advice would you give to someone who is retiring to help that person cope with the stress of retirement?
4. What advice would you give to someone who is immigrating to Canada to help that person cope with the stress of immigration?
5. Think about someone you know who is/was very stressed-out. Describe that person's symptoms and signs of stress
6. Pick one of the following people. What advice would you give that individual if he or she asked you for help? (See Appendix B)
   - Hoa (Appendix B, p. 346)
   - Anwar (Appendix B, p. 348)
   - Palvinder (Appendix B, p. 349)
   - Vikash (Appendix B, p. 349)

Write a paragraph giving advice to the person.

- Some common advice phrases are given below:

1. Giving Advice
2. I think you should…
3. Why don't you…?
4. If I were you I would…
5. You can/could…
6. What about…?
7. Have you tried…

Give your paragraph a title.

Outcomes:

- Laying out the cultural rules and principles of family relationships
- Writing out one's personal philosophy of life
- Understanding how these rules and principles change under stress or in a different context
- Learning how to advise people
- Acquiring the critical consciousness to understand the changes and the accompanying flexibility in life

8. *Metaphors*

The terms "target" and "source" are used to talk about metaphor. 'Target' refers to the application of the metaphor while 'source' denotes the thing the target is compared to, for instance, a river. Hence, life (target) is like a river (source). Write about a metaphor that has meaning for you. Think about:

- How do you conceive of yourself metaphorically?
- How do other people see you; what do they compare you with?
- How do you look at your life's journey?
- What is your perception about the important people in your life?
- Where do the metaphors you have used break down, that is what are the limitations and where they cannot be applied?

9. Document Analysis

Teachers use authentic material like newspaper articles, school newsletter, course outline, travel brochure, biographies, and true life stories for involving students in discussion and critical reflection.

- Oral activities like encouraging students to express their opinion and diverse views on the content of the newspaper articles in the light of the students personal and cultural knowledge.
- Written activities like
  1. Writing to the person in the story or the biography to express an opinion or to ask a question.
  2. Writing a critique of the piece that they have read.

Outcomes:

- Recovery of meaning
- Reconstruction of meaning
- Critical reflection
- Developing arguments orally
- Writing critiques and making a point]

10. Memory Boxes

Describe a memory box if you have one. If not, describe one or more treasured, possibly "useless" items or keepsakes. Write enough about your memory box to give the reader an idea of what you hold dear. It could be a culturally significant item or collection of items or it could be a thing of personal value.

Catalyst writing exercise

To evoke student themes, students are asked to write freely about whatever comes to mind in the following categories:

- A smell you remember
- A food that reminds you of something
- A place that you love
- Something you did that you are proud of
- Something you worry about
- Something you remember learning
- A person who taught you something
- A dream that you have
- A dream that you had
- A time when you taught someone something
- A time when you were afraid/angry/brave
- A time when you were lost
- A time when you were punished
- A story about yourself five years ago
- A story about yourself in five years (Auerbach, 1992, p. 57).

11. Interpretive Letter

Write a letter to your teacher about what aspects of the course, if any, linked to your life. Was it in any way helpful in making you see things differently? Are there any suggestions that you might want to make to improve the course. You should be prepared to share the letter with the class.

Outcomes:

- Reconstruction of meaning
- Critical reflection and interpretation of the course content

12. Final Narrative

- Read a biography or an autobiography of an important person.
- Write 5-10 pages of your autobiography.
- Revisit (reread) it and then add details and events that you might have overlooked.
- Reread it after a few days to look for major themes and patterns.

***

At this juncture it would be pertinent to look at a couple of modules in the current LINC curriculum to see what is already there that would qualify it as a Narrative Approach to curriculum and what could further be included to make it more narrative-based.

A Glance at the Current 2002 LINC Curriculum Designed by the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

My initial premise when I had set out to suggest improvements to the 98/99 LINC curriculum (which I was teaching at the time) was that it should be made more inclusive of the immigrants' culture by using a narrative approach so as to validate it for them and to accord the immigrants a sense of identity in the mainstream Canadian culture. The skeletal nature of that curriculum with its unidirectional Eurocentric approach had inspired me to look at it in a more holistic way and suggest a narrative curriculum as a

viable remedy to address the identity issues of immigrants in Canada. I was nearing the end of my research when I studied the 2002 version of the LINC curriculum. I was pleasantly surprised to see that quite a few of the pedagogical techniques that I had suggested for a narrative approach to LINC curriculum were already included. To me, this indicated that the curriculum makers were, of their own accord, discovering the usefulness of an inclusive curriculum, only they had not called it a narrative curriculum.

In this section I attempt to streamline the 2002 LINC curriculum further towards the narrative approach. As critiquing the entire curriculum would be beyond the scope of this research study, I have chosen two modules to comment on: "Canadian Culture" and "Family & Relationships." The complete modules are given in Appendix C. One commendable aspect of the curriculum is that it is spiral so that the same topics are dealt with at increasing levels of difficulty and vocabulary development. However, the topics mostly deal with the descriptive aspects of the immigrants' culture, for instance, describing customs associated with a celebration, or the "cultural difference in attitudes concerning gender- and age-based activities" (Appendix C). They do not engage the learner in critical thinking, self study and analysis which I believe is the key to exploring one's personal practical knowledge—the question of why we do something the way we do it. As stated earlier, some pedagogical techniques geared towards the narrative approach are already included in the curriculum. For example, in the module "Family & Relationships" (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2002) the narrative aspects are [The following page references given in parentheses refer to Appendix C]:

1. Use personal photographs to describe own family relationships. (p. 393)
2. Learn about cultural differences in family relationships (e.g. parental expectations of children, role of seniors, level of formality) (p. 393)
3. Give a basic description of own family (p. 394)
4. Learn about culture in Canada in order to appreciate its effects on roles within own family (p. 401)
5. Talk to classmates to find out how their families have adapted to their new country (p. 401)
6. Tell a story about the sharing of responsibilities in own family (p. 402)
7. Give a brief description of family routines (p. 402)
8. Talk about feelings regarding family responsibilities (p. 402)
9. Tell a detailed story about an event in the present, past or future (p. 404)
10. Ask for and give information related to routine daily activities (p. 404)
11. Give opinions, agree and disagree in small group discussions (p. 404)
12. Write a one-paragraph description of experiences or events in the past (p. 404)
13. Learn about cultural differences in perception of friendship (p. 405)
14. Write a short one paragraph formal or informal letter or three- to five-sentence note for an invitation, thank you, regret, cancellation, or apology (p. 406)
15. Work with a partner. Create a list of situations where people might meet a new friend (e.g. ESL class, a party). Make small talk conversations for each situation (p. 406)
16. Write a letter to a friend inviting her/him to visit you in Canada (p. 406)
17. Share parenting issues with other parents (p. 407)

18. Write a one-paragraph description of an experience with a parenting problem, giving reasons (p. 408)
19. In a group, brainstorm a list of problems that immigrant parents face in Canada and suggest solutions (p. 408)
20. Write about problem you have had as a parent or as a son or daughter (p. 408)
21. Learn about cultural differences related to dealing with conflicts (p. 409)
22. Brainstorm possible solutions for different types of conflict (e.g. between spouses, parents and children, co-workers, people from different cultures (p. 410)
23. Write a story about dealing with an interpersonal personal conflict (p. 410)
24. Learn about cultural comfort levels with space and touching (p. 411)
25. Learn about cultural differences in understanding professional relationships (p. 411)
26. Make simple and extended suggestions on how to solve an immediate problem and provide reasons (p. 412)
27. Compare the life of an older person in own country and in Canada (e.g. daily routine, activities, rights) (p. 414)

The mostly descriptive nature of the topics and sample tasks could be made more interesting and challenging by incorporating the critical thinking element in them. One-paragraph writing tasks could be developed into full-fledged autobiographies and chronicles corresponding to the cognitive level of the learner indicated by the Canadian Language Benchmarks. I have therefore, attempted to include a few tasks as examples, to encourage critical thinking in learners so that they may explore their personal practical

knowledge. These sample tasks could be incorporated into the existing set of tasks to make the curriculum more narrative.

Family and relationships.

Sample Task 4 (p. 402): Write about a typical day in your family.

Write about the roles and responsibilities of men and women in your culture. Consider:

1. How have the roles and responsibilities undergone a change in the Canadian context?
2. What would you describe as an equitable distribution of household chores among your family members? Provide reasons in accordance with your personal, religious and cultural background.

Sample Task 4 (p. 408): Write about a problem you have had as a parent or as a son or daughter.

Consider the following aspects in the story:

1. How did you handle it as a parent?
2. How did your parents handle it when you were the son or daughter?
3. How would you have handled it differently if you were the head of the household (a) in your country of origin (b) in Canada?

Topic development (p. 409): Personality types—True Colours, (Myers-Briggs)

1. Write about and discuss the following:
   - What personality type would you describe yourself to be?
   - What are the life experiences that have influenced the development of your personality?

- What are the metaphors that associate with your experiences?
- How do you view yourself in the light of those metaphors?
- How do others view you?
- How does your personality conform to or conflict with the stereotypical men/women in your culture and religion?
- Do you often find yourself to be at odds with or in consonance with the established norms of your society?

2. Write about a personal experience that involved you in a conflict with your society or your family. Consider the following in your written piece:
   - How did you resolve the conflict?
   - What compromises did you have to make, keeping in view your culture and religion?
   - What considerations motivated you to take that line of action and why?
   - What would you have done differently if you were in Canada at the time of the conflict? In other words, how would the Canadian context and the knowledge of your rights have influenced your subsequent actions and why?
3. Reflect on and write about how your perspective on life has undergone a change since coming to Canada. That is, compare and contrast the approach you had as a spouse, a parent, a sibling, (a) in your country of origin (b) in Canada.
4. Write an autobiography and at the end indicate your future plans.

Sample Task (p. 414): Compare the life of an older person in your own country and in Canada (e.g. daily routines, activities, rights).

Write a story of a senior citizen in your family or interview a senior member of your family. Consider the following aspects when writing the story (or interviewing the person):

1. How does she view her life and what are the metaphors he/she associates with his/her life?
2. How are the person's views on life and metaphors different from yours?
3. What were the unique experiences that each of you had that account for the difference in perspectives.
4. What significance does the person's story have in your family in terms of identity development?

Canadian culture.

Sample Task 3 (p. 367): Read one of the several texts about celebrations such as Mother's Day, Chinese New Year, Eid, Diwali, or Nah Ruz. Share details from memory with a group.

Write about:

1. What are some of the rituals associated with the celebration of
   - Weddings
   - Childbirth
   - Birthdays.
2. Are these rituals different for men/women, boy/girl, young/old? Why are the differences age-based and gender-based?

3. Think of a ritual that you find particularly intriguing. How would you suggest that it be done differently? Present arguments in favour or against the ritual/ceremony.
4. How would you describe some rituals/cultural activities to be in favour of one sex and against the other? What are some traditions that are becoming redundant in your culture?
5. Write a personal or family story about a ritual/ceremony that was done differently and which somehow changed the life of an individual or a group of people. Was it justified in your opinion? Present your reasons.

Sample Task 4 (p. 375): Write a paragraph describing own experience with cultural diversity in Canada.

1. Write an essay about cultural diversity and consider the following issues in the essay:
   - How is cultural/ethnic diversity received in your culture?
   - Are there any tendencies of xenophobia?
   - What are some of the attitudes of people in your culture around inter-racial/intercultural marriages and marriages into different religions?
   - How flexible are you towards such practices?
   - What, in your opinion, are the social ramifications of intercultural marriages. In other words, what are the advantages and disadvantages of such marriages? Validate your views with relevant library research.

2. Relate a story where a conflict arose due to an intercultural marriage. How was the conflict resolved? How would you have resolved the conflict differently and why?
3. Write a personal story or an experience that you had with regards to racism and intolerance. How was it resolved?

Sample Task 1 (p. 383): Give a presentation about an aspect of Canadian culture that differs from your own. (e.g., attitude toward work and family, friendships, business relationships).

1. Make a detailed journal entry about:
   - How much do you yourself conform to your cultural values?
   - What cultural values do you deem important for your children to preserve in Canada and why?
   - What aspects of your culture could easily be replaced by the Canadian ones to make life easier for you and your family?
2. Reflect upon and write about:
   - What aspects of the Canadian culture have affected you, your children and your spouse?
   - In what ways was the change 1. for the better 2. for worse?
   - How were things done differently in all these aspects in your country of origin?
   - Keeping in view your past (in your country) your present (in Canada) how do you envision your future and that of your family?

Possible outcomes of the above supplementary exercises.

1. Encourage critical reflection in learners
2. Encourage learners to move towards self-directed learning
3. Provide catharsis for LINC participants
4. Help learners to explore their personal practical knowledge so that they can then interpret their past, present and future experiences
5. Encourage learners to conceive and implement their own goals without the intervention of the teacher
6. Encourage learners

   to identify the implicit and explicit assumptions that inform thought and actions, to understand how these assumptions are culturally formed and transmitted, to investigate the accuracy and the validity of these assumptions and to take alternate perspectives on thoughts and actions that these assumptions inform. (Brookfield, 1995. p. 4)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have suggested the need for a multidimensional narrative curriculum for the benefit of immigrants in the multicultural Canadian context. To account for the multidimensional identity of immigrant women—as third world, semi-skilled or unskilled women of working class background, from a patriarchal culture, who are at the same time mothers, wives and daughters—and their multifaceted lives in these roles, a multidimensional narrative curriculum is imperative. I believe that a narrative approach to curriculum development is important if human society is to preserve the sanctity of human values like love, friendship, loyalty (or even conflict) as well as the

uniqueness of human experience, and not sacrifice them on the alter of the homogenizing syndrome perpetuated by corporate globalization and modernism. In this chapter I also discuss possible pedagogical methods and the ideal climate of a LINC ESL class for a narrative curriculum.

As an example of how a curriculum could be adapted towards a more narrative approach, I have also tried to suggest exercises which could be incorporated into the 2002 version of the LINC curriculum currently being taught in LINC institutions.

By referring to the research of various educators such as MacKeracher, Marshall, Brooks and trail blazers like Dewey, Connelly and Clandinin, I have shown that, to me, they are essentially talking about the same thing—a narrative curriculum—even though they may use different terminology. Whether it is self-reflection, or self-directed learning, participatory curriculum development, self-study, or personal practical knowledge, they are in essence referring to the restorying of self on a narrative landscape for a narrative approach to curriculum.

Having presented the stories of my research participants, the narrative unities that emerged from their stories, along with the views of a LINC teacher and an Administrator regarding the needs of immigrants in Canada, I envision my future research as inquiring into the efficacy of the pedagogical techniques mentioned in this chapter, in a real classroom context, for immigrant women.

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Appendix A

An Interview with a LINC Teacher: ASFA

(A link to a prior brief discussion about my research and abuse)

A: With the newspapers we can pick the news that you think would be useful in the classroom. For the number of students from that part of the world (South-Asia and Middle East) it matters because Chinese don't have that problem (abuse).

M: They don't?

A: No, I don't think so. Students are bright and motivated when they come to class and they express ideas but when these issues (abuse) come, I see that people from the other side of the world (South-Asia and Middle East) become closed, they just listen, they hardly participate.

M: They don't participate?

A: Hardly, I said, because they have the language to talk; I know that they can. I see that they keep quiet and I know why but I don't want to push too much because then they are not going to be comfortable. That is very important; how you convey the message, where do you do it, how do you choose the topic. It could be in the newspaper as I said.

There are problems with Canadian families. A Canadian man beat up his wife and was sent to jail so that was the issue. If you ask what do you think about that, in this way they can generate and express ideas. 'What do you think, what should the woman do, do you think the woman did the right thing to call the police, and they put the man in the jail?' And then ask for their (students') ideas. I find it the best way to convey the message. You have to get them involved in the topic. This is the topic that we can talk about (A topic called 'Stress' in the LINC textbook)

M: Stress?

A: Stress, because stress is a very big area. There are so many factors that stress out a person. We all know that when they (students) come to the class and when you look at their eyes and you look at their faces, you know there is something there, but when you

talk about it (stress) they might say, 'Oh my God this is it, this is what is bothering me'. Even if they don't say anything they learn and they know the problem, but you know, what I don't know is how to help them to solve their problems. I just bring it up and they get familiar, but of course in the classroom they have to learn the vocabulary, learn how to say it where to say it and whom to…

M: Yes, who to go to.

A: Because they cannot just go to the next class when they don't really know. And teachers have had this experience in the past. A student came to me and asked me about a personal thing. It is kind of ....you know they came a little close but they were not comfortable to get into the problems.

M: You were not comfortable or they were not?

A: I wasn't because I don't know the person. You understand what I am saying. I was not comfortable to give the advice or suggestions because I said my hands are tied. I don't know I just listen.

M: How are your hands tied?

A: I don't know the person and I am not the authorized person to do this (advise). I am just a teacher and if they come for advice it depends on the problem. I have to see the problem if it is a problem between a husband and a wife I step back.

M: Why, because it is not within your jurisdiction?

A: It is not, but I can tell where they can get help, I can refer them but I cannot give them the advice.

M: But you do touch upon the topic of abuse in class through newspaper articles.

A: Sure, for example breast cancer. It is very common among women, what is the reason for it? One of the reason is stress. Why women are stressed? It is not only the South Asian women who are stressed, all Canadians are stressed but the way they are stressed is different. We are stressed out because we are working so hard. Just look at yourself. You are stressed out, everybody is. To stay home raise your children with so mush power and money and authority and money which is all controlled. And then you are stressed

out and you don't know where to go and whom to call and how to get help. But when they get into the classroom they listen and they learn. I am sure they learn but I am not sure if they get help.

M: Okay and how would you think they could be induced to get help? How would they get the courage to get help?

A: We actually have a topic which is about services that we can refer them to for example if they have any tenant or 911 problem we have to send them to the community center next door. If they have legal problems we can send them too. They might just come and ask me a question 'how can I get a lawyer?' but they might not tell me what it is for, so I refer them next door. We have a very nice community center they have legal services that I refer them to. Understand?

M: Unhun, That's good. Do you think that language is a problem as far as their getting help is concerned?

A: Maybe! But in level 4 and 5 they are looking for key words, they write them down if they are so interested in that field. You will see them writing all the time. It depends on the interest. When I talk about this topic (abuse) I see the other students are okay they don't have a problem with it, but they sit down they listen to the vocabulary they gain something but those who have problems they might just be more interested and you see them, they are trying to listen more carefully, attentively and they are writing down things then you know.

M: Then you know that there is something wrong?

A: Yeah if they have any problems they come to me for the words and vocabulary but then the rest I have no control.

M: Have you ever felt there is some kind of a barrier preventing them from coming forward and discussing it, for example when you discuss newspaper articles do you think there is anything stopping them from bringing it out into the open. Sometimes I have seen women not wanting to discuss a topic, have you ever come across such a situation?

A: Yes, when we were talking about gays and lesbians. There was a parade last year and one of the students brought the information from the internet about what is going on in

Toronto, you know you can get it also from the TTC, on the bus and when we discussed it I felt that some of the people were not very comfortable to talk about these things. I know that because I got experience, I am very much experienced in this area---how to change the topic, how to smoothly, you know attract attention to another subject so if you feel that they are not very comfortable then as a teacher you must be in control, you have to change it.

M: Okay so you have to steer the discussion away from the uncomfortable topic.

A: Absolutely. We talk about divorce we talk about marriage, we talk about different kinds of relationships we talk about the common law (existence) but only because it is in the newspaper, right?

M: Right.

A: So there was a dispute between a man and a woman living under common law under one roof, now they were going to get separated, so what will happen to their monies, what happens to things they bought together. They (students) listen to everything because this is the society, they have to know what is going on and they are living in it, they are not supposed to live in a closed door society, they can't. So at this level it is very interesting for them, I can tell you that and they learn everything. As a teacher, I never just stick to the curriculum, I teach them a lot more that I feel they are interested in, that they need, so that's what I do, but we have to follow the curriculum as well.

M: So what are the topics that you think they are more interested in discussing in your class?

A: Job search, is one. Then they are very interested when it comes to what kind of society for example is Canada. And then there are also other topics, but to be honest with you, they are new comers they are also keen to know how they can make money where they can go and what to do, there is a lot of interaction among students. People get jobs; money is the issue. Like today we were talking about Ontario cutting the budget on the health system. They might say "Oh what if I get sick" that's Okay we were talking about the obese people who are overweight and the government is cutting the budget, there is no such treatment anymore, and they were so shocked when they read that this woman

was 434 lbs. So they said that how is it possible that a woman grows that big, what do they eat? Is it normal in Canada? Is it abnormal? So these are the things that they talk about and takes you to other issues 'why they eat too much, maybe they are depressed, the life style they have, maybe they are lonely. Because at that level they have the language, so they can talk but I am sure if you go to level 1 or 2 there are so many people who are suitable for your research but they cannot talk, they need a translator.

M: Yeah that's right but I am not so much into the levels. It is just that I was thinking even if at level 4 and 5 if they don't have enough vocabulary, would they be able to come forward with a problem because at level 4 and 5 they do have the vocabulary.

A: Yeah, that's right they have the vocabulary, it is the culture and barriers I don't know what, areas probably you know better because you are familiar with the culture. It is not just the language that stops them, I know that they can talk, they can use simple language, no problem, why they don't come forward, it is not just the language, there are so many other factors that I cannot really think but I know the problem, I know that at home they are not the one in control, their husbands are. Maybe they are scared to say something in the classroom.

M: Do you have any men in your class?

A: Yes, I have 6 men.

M: What is the total number of students?

A: I have 16. The majority is that of women but I have 5 or 6 men too.

M: Is it that they are uncomfortable discussing these things in the presence of men, or do you think they are o.k with that?

A: That could be possible.

M: Or is there any pressure from home, do you think? As you said they might be culturally constrained.

A: Most men in my class are from China they are quite open-minded people, if you have met Chinese. It is not just the men, I don't think they feel comfortable to refer to their own personal problems, but if you take a general topic, maybe they will express ideas.

Not much, but they may be nodding their head when for example I say men should not beat women in Canada, they nod but they don't say anything.

An Interview with the Executive Director of the Agency.

(*Note.* N is the executive director; M is myself.)

N: When we get immigrants, recent immigrants in general who don't discuss these issues [abuse and settlement problems] there are not that many avenues for them to discuss. If you offer a sort of a holistic program, if you take the case of R... right? So we have an E.S.L program which is kind of connected to our settlement program, so as soon as it is identified and the teachers here have been asked to identify [cases of abuse and settlement problems] and to deal with it in terms of referrals, so the way we would do it, we would sort of want to make sure that it is part of the curriculum design because it is a women's agency. So you can build a whole language thing around abuse you know. I mean you don't have to deal with it outside E.S.L; you could deal with it inside, so for example, a lesson would look like you know, what is happening in terms of abuse, vocabulary of abuse, resources etc. so they would build something around that, right?

M: Yes but is it being done?

N: Yeah, I would hope so, that I would have to check because the whole idea of integration into the curriculum is that you need to make people aware and you want to politicize curriculum really. I mean that most of the issues are issues of power, so that if women are not getting jobs, there are issues in terms of racism, access to trade and profession in terms of how information is used or given or not given. I mean, if you are new here and you don't know anything and you don't have English as your language, especially if you are a woman you can forget about finding out anything for yourself for the next three or four years right? So as far as I am concerned it is a very politicized activity and I must say there is an inherent contradiction within the way the government offers it and what it needs to be, so in fact there is a damping down of the politicization.

M: So you do believe in that too.

N: Oh, there is, I mean the thing is...the political reality is that you can only go so far, right? And because we have been funded by the government...and not there will be overt sort of penalties it is just that where does that politicization lead? That politicization leads to action. I mean suppose a good example would be say within the E.S.L. There is a huge discrepancy in terms of what school board salaries are what salaries of teachers in community colleges are. Now ideally we should be mobilizing. The entire community should be saying: "where is your employment equity, where is your pay equity?" you know like what are you talking about? We are delivering the same curriculum, the exact same program and you know so...

M: So there is a lot of disparity in salaries?

N: Oh a huge amount of disparity, the interesting part about this is that because people don't think in terms of structures that anger, that frustration is actually targeted against us.

M: "Us" meaning?

N: The management, or the agency or the program; it is too far, people don't make those kinds of links that actually it is the way the program is structured at a very, you know high, policy–making level, you know that is sort of impacting on our lives, but that's not what happens, what happens is the anger and the frustration is actually targeted against us so I mean I bring this up a lot in the policy-making, you know that we are taking the flack for the policies that the government has made, and then because no advocacy is built into anything....If you look at the LINC guidelines or any language training guidelines, I mean, it is essentially about language training, And so that whole chunk of what language really means ...so if you are really looking at "meaning-making" it is just not there. It is very individualized so if I am willing to take that kind of risk and you know, put my neck out there, then I am willing to take my chances and we have done that, we have taken our chances and it has sometimes not been very good because once you keep challenging these kinds of political dimensions of language training and program delivery which are inherently connected to the program then there are prices to pay and so there is a whole management of service providers that is happening in the way the funding takes place because obviously you don't want to give up the program, I mean always say 'are these

risks worth it' because that would mean 60 people from immigrant community would lose their job so there is this constant kind of balancing act that you have to say you know, how far can you push, also I am finding that the pushing is not happening at a very collective level. I mean what has happened under capitalism is that even organizing and mobilizing is becoming very individualized. I mean ...nobody wants to give up their job, basically right? So there those kinds of concerns that you have to take into account, you don't want to give up the program obviously, you don't want to give up the community support that you have been able to mobilize, because you found employment within the community, the community knows about you so all of these factors become very complicated. I mean it is not simple as you might have noticed.

In terms of the politicization of the training itself, it is a very fine line: what, how and to what extent right? I don't even know if this kind of thinking goes on. Most of the people are SPO (service provider organization), they just say 'this is the contract, this is the criteria and this is what needs to be done'. Now agencies, community agencies go way beyond that; they want the women to learn about their issues, in case of violence, we want women to be aware of their rights, we want them to be aware of what they are going through, how to access services, you know and we want them to be aware of where they fit into the schemes of things, why this is happening to them. I mean obviously it is just not happening to them sort of, based on their little family, although the abuse is located within the family, it is connected to broader structures. You know Angela Davies says if a community breeds a culture of violence and militarization it is going to permeate into family relationships.

M: I was talking to one of your teachers here and she said and I quote "my hands are tied, I know that there are people who are being abused, in my class I really cannot advise them". So what I am quoting here is "my hands are tied". I was just wondering if it is from the administration's point of view that she should not be addressing these issues in class. [The teacher's interview is given in a latter chapter]

N: Not at all, not at all...

M: Because the teachers are not professionally qualified and they are just there to teach English...

N: No I think what happens is because it is such a complex situation, because once you start dealing with abuse you have to stay with the person, right? So once the class is over that person is gone, say there are 5 women in the class, so either there is a follow through....what we have done is we've said 'please don't shy away from identifying it (abuse) because we actually have counselors who can deal with it. So the teacher has to work with the internal wife assault counselor or the violence counselor to be able to deal with that so the hands are tied only in terms of how they see their personal limitations, not from the agency's perspective at all.

M: If they are using the Freirean pedagogy in class by qualifying the issues through newspaper articles and stuff and then perhaps bringing out their ideas and giving them the relevant information, do you think it can work?

N: Absolutely, I Mean in fact that is exactly what needs to happen in the ongoing training of teachers who need to know what the agency stands for, what the values are and how we are distributed a bit around, right? We have four locations and very few admin. Staff, I mean it is also a structural problem, essentially when a LINC teacher is hired all of the different counselors within that location go and visit the class, introduce themselves, tell them about the services R.....offers. Already the students know about that right? But how to actually .....I mean it is a skill, how do you deal with something that comes up within the context of a completely different program and then how do you channel so you don't lose it. I mean still...and you are right there should be sort of greater orientation, more reminders, where it is happening. I think it is quite obvious when they look at the absentees, that is a kind of an alert, right?

M: Absolutely, I found that out in one of the stories I did with the participants. In terms of finding out, do you think just bringing up issues like racism, sexism and abuse in class would help?

N: Not at the theoretical level, you know the thing about the West is that it is all theory and no sort of ....you know the action part is tough. One can talk about these things.... I mean look at all the bureaucracies that have been set up around these issues. I mean there is basically the anti-discrimination policy, the human rights' policy so I think for most governments you know, the intent is good, right? They want to address these things,

right? But if you really want to address these things ....to make it possible, you have to have the infrastructure, you have to have the ability to follow through, you have to have say, for example, advocacy workers connected to language training. Now they are not willing to do that. Now, Okay if the intent is really to address these issues why is it that they haven't put the money where the mouth is, because that's where it counts. I mean, if you have taught E.S.L you know what is happening to these women ,and men. What is basically happening, there is a whole cultural devaluation what (Edward) Said talks about, you know the globalization of Western values, especially within language training, it is even more Eurocentric.

You know all these things are happening, so how do you address it, in a genuine sincere way or in a real way where it counts, and that's not happening because the provincial government has taken the word 'advocacy' out of their mandate so you can imagine what kind of... you know, for example the wife assault program, we are only supposed to do counseling, group counseling and support right? How can you deal with women from immigrant community who are not advocates, it is so inherent in every aspect of the service, so unless there is change at the very fundamental level, at the practical or policy level and it is not going to move and you can see how governments then bring about a particular kind of ideology, for example under the NDP there was some room to maneuver under the Tories there hasn't been any room to maneuver and that is connected to what is happening at the global level. We are in a very complex time and it is a very corporate world and the impact is on everything. Before the impact would be from the national governments and national policies now it is out of our hands. It is global governance, global policy-making, so there is a neo-liberal agenda that is being unleashed. I mean what you can offer as a service is completely tied to that, so there are broader forces...much broader forces that one has to contend with, than, say what it was in a less globalized world.

M: If it were a less globalized world, as you say, would you feel that there would be more or better services provided for immigrants?

N: Well we had globalized under a social justice agenda, then it would be better. So if you look at the international instruments and this is what I have been finding out, and

that's probably why I have been more drawn to it, look at even the instruments and even the things that have developed like CIDA, Beijing 5, Cairo, all of those things you can see that the international policies and stuff are way ahead of us, way ahead. So if that was actually implemented at the National Government it wouldn't be such a big problem, right? But what is happening is there is a big disjuncture between what is happening at the UN level and who is in control of the UN process. So there is a corporate control happening. There is a globalized neo-liberal agenda that is being unleashed and we know the players who are involved with that. I mean the US Britain and all the European powers who have all been very careful in how they sort of maneuver the whole thing. So in answer to your question---not necessarily, so if it was a globalized social justice agenda, we would benefit from it. So under the UN if we were to take those things seriously we would benefit.

M: Don't you think it is a contradiction in terms, 'Globalized Social Justice' because Globalization has so far done nothing to implement any kind of social justice?

N: Yes, in fact the meeting was about that. It was an association for women's rights and development and they were talking about re-inventing globalization. I was very upset because basically everybody has just come to accept it now, it has such a stranglehold now that really all people are talking about is maneuvering within it. So what they are saying is that if you are only talking about global values supposing we buy the framework, then there is no getting out of it, to some extent that is true, the way it has happened, technology and all of those things, right?

It is hard to extricate ourselves out of it, so supposing even if we buy into the framework, what the social justice people are saying is why don't you globalize democracy, why don't you globalize social justice issues, why don't you globalize equality, why don't you globalize the good things as well, you know that's what's happening, because globalization is that's not what its doing, it's corporate globalization. If you look at it more positively, globalization is really capitalism. Global capitalism is here to stay unless there is a huge backlash against it in such a concerted way because like anything else it is global power. It is not just power confined to small areas right? And there is now such a connection between corporate interests and government

interests… there has almost been like a consensus, almost a collusion going on that in fact the governments are furthering corporate interests.

M: Including Canada, right? We always follow in the footsteps of the US and so we have to condone whatever the US does.

N: Also because we are tied trade-wise to the US; our economy is based on it, people have to give up something to make changes and transformations. If you want to operate within the system and say 'Oh don't touch my lifestyle but change it, its not going to happen right? So I think that kind of consciousness and thinking is important. This whole transformation is very hard within the kind of world we are living in now, it has got out of hand, I mean with the trade agreement and everything, and education, it is one of the thing that we are negotiating. You saw what is happening in the school system, how the whole notion of what education should be is changing. It is no more politicized education in fact you can't even talk against certain issues, certain communities. You can't take positions.

M: So there is no democracy any more because of globalization?

N: Definitely, Yeah! I wouldn't say there is no democracy anymore but it has certainly become very diluted and also the freedom of press; it is a personal kind of disappointment for me, I mean how this 911 in terms of occupation has been dealt with now.

M: You mean that it was blown out of proportion or…

N: Well it was so centered on the West, that people all over have been struggling and dying and you know living under very very harsh conditions, but only if it happens in the West and West meaning the US, so it is very hard to take that kind of imperialist globalization that the US is spreading.

M: Don't you think this is almost parallel to the imperialistic regime that they had back in India somehow?

N: You know they were at least apologetic about it. They used to feel a bit of shame when they were attacked they would try to make up stories ….they would say no this is not what we did. Now it is regime change, right? We don't like the people's preemptive

attack, it is very different, it also goes to show what people are willing to tolerate at this point in time, you know notwithstanding the dissent which is going on because that is also controlled. Look at how their numbers have been falling in terms of protest, because they have come down hard on them they have militarized dissent. If you take Angela Davis's theory you could see how if you militarize dissent, how you could do the same thing in the programs. I mean there is a connection between the consciousness and the kind of values that go on at that level—the policy level—into how the different programs are offered. So dissent in this DNA age to challenge or to bring any kind of action would be suicidal, right? So it is that the things have shifted definitely towards more repressive way of being.

M: If we look at the smaller plane what you are basically saying is because no dissent is allowed at the top levels, we cannot really expect some of the issues to be addressed in the classroom as well because that might be considered politicizing the personal and that is not accepted by the society.

N: That is not accepted not only by the society but by the funders because…

M: because money is the main issue here right?

N: Or management of people really, I mean one has to look at the whole immigration process. Some people say it is a cheap load of labor force that is being developed here, so everything is being technologized now. People who are driving cabs also need to know technology. Immigration is a good way of having a cheap labour force available to do all the work.

M: Yeah, I have engineer and doctor friends driving cabs.

N: For years, and they have given up. The sad part is the shift, like people would initially come in and everybody knows at immigration nobody is going to get a job tha from what they did and to begin in a new country people are willing to pay the price for that, but now it is just that they cannot get out of it.

M: There is this acute dearth of doctors in our hospitals and my friends who are US qualified doctors, are security guards here.

N: And did you see the discourse in the newspapers, not one headline was 'we have thousands of immigrant doctors, why can't we fast track them' I mean there were some one or two things here, but that is not in the consciousness: 'How can we get more graduates within Canada right? How can we give incentives to existing Canadian doctors so they move from the cities to the smaller areas. I didn't see one clear article which said okay, there are X number of doctors here who are losing the skills....I mean we have somebody working here who is doing group work for us. She is a doctor who had a flourishing practice in India and she is never going to go back to it. So the discussion is around how can we put more money for ten years into the Canadian medical system to get home-grown doctors not why can't we use the immigrants and that is shocking.

M: Is it deliberate?

N: No I think it is partly the CMA the Canadian Medical Association are very powerful lobbies, it is supply and demand, definitely there is racism, I mean I can't see how a body in India is different from a body here. I can see law, how it could be different, see other fields being different. I can't see how these people who have been practicing for so long if they can get a crash course done they can fast track them , why wouldn't they be able to do this. I mean it is mind boggling and again the government doesn't want to push the CMA. So lack of political will on the part of the government and racism, there is a whole thing somehow as soon as they say qualification they talk about merit, with immigrant doctors they talk about merit as if these two things are contradiction in terms. But nobody is saying that you have to be a quack and do this, it is almost as if it is in their minds that if you recognize the immigrants' qualifications there would be a loss of quality of service, right? That is played up as well, I mean frankly why can't they solve the doctor crisis with so many immigrant doctors. From the optics of it, it seems very bad, it seem almost like a deliberate way of keeping people out.

M: Yeah, that's what I was thinking; whether it was deliberate or they are totally not into looking at the credentials that immigrants bring with them.

N: Yes but that itself is part of racism.

M: Yes, making the other person's culture and education dysfunctional. This is very educating for me. I was wondering what kind of recommendations would you make, for,

if you narrow it down, to the training of immigrants, how would you recommend doing that, with the system as it is going.

N: Well I think, for me there are always more political solutions because I think for instance the provincial and national governments could come down hard on the licensing bodies they can set up non-profit organizations for example to fast track doctors, to fast track immigrants, it is not that hard, right? There are a lot of skilled immigrants and they have been asking for skilled immigrants, right? For example in the field of medicine they need to recognize alternate models of health. I mean it is a highly beneficial system for everybody concerned, it is cost effective, it is taking responsibility for your own health because everything is tied in with say nutrition. So we should be using the best of both knowledge base; the allopathic and the traditional, i.e from India or China and the homeopathy or herbal medicine. It is slowly trickling in because people are buying anyway in spite of it. It is a huge multibillion dollar industry now so definitely if the governments take their roles seriously ....if you look at government as Gramsci would have looked at it in its distributive function then they can do a lot. They still have a lot of power, they are elected they want to stay in power and they can pave the way to keep all this knowledge going. In a globalized world they would benefit from it because they would be at the cutting edge of things. I mean that's where diversity is taking everybody.

Societies that are benefiting the most are the ones that are the most diverse right?

Because you need that kind of different thinking the cross-pollination of ideas. So our thing would be policy programs that are supportive of immigrants coming in, in terms of holding them keeping them and supporting them, even paying them, I mean at one point there used to be programs where you would pay to take courses so that you are not at the survival level that you have to go do factory work or drive a cab because you cannot put food on the table, and immigrants are willing to put up with a lot; they are willing to put up with bad housing, to come down in terms of their expectations of what they had as a lifestyle, so they are great pioneers in that sense and we are losing all of that through various unvisionary kind of policy making, thinking and program delivery. Like for example in LINC there could be interesting programs after say level 5 and 6, you know which is the maximum level where you could have intensive vocabulary plus if

they can be combined with employment, right? Like co-ops for example, would be a good place where you get paid and you are saving the employer a salary, it is a win- win situation. The employer is saving some money so they are open to it but it all depends on how, in their own terminology 'market the immigrants' they are doing a very poor job of it.

So I think the single most important factor would be a lack of political will, you know, succumbing to the pressures of non progressive forces like racism and discrimination and the kind of pressure they feel from groups and lobby groups that try to keep the immigrants out. So the state would take back its function of looking at all of these things and balancing of its different functions that would help, and as we said earlier national governments are almost paving the way for corporate takeovers. Definitely under globalization the role of the state has been markedly reduced, I mean it's not gone completely when they want to go into developing world, pave the way through trade and all these arrangements through FTA.... and all of those things, who has done that, the governments have signed it and which is beneficial to our own national economy at the expense of everybody else. So they still do a lot for the corporate world but what they have done is they have receded from their social policy function, social economic policy function.

M: Would you say there is an economic underclass here that you would define as being only the immigrants who are subsisting on the basic level and instead of setting up industries in the third world countries, they can even do so here where they will get free labour.

N: Two very good studies were done, you must have heard of economic apartheid right? The studies looked at 1996 census data and in fact have found that in terms of actual income over the years, the incomes of immigrants have gone down and they are indeed at the bottom.

M: So it is like a two class system, one for the immigrants and the other for the Caucasians.

N: Yeah, definitely there is a lot of discrimination.

M: So coming back to the ESL class, I have two more questions: would you recommend a reorientation or a retraining of teachers in order to introduce a methodology that could perhaps address issues that are relevant like racism and sexism?

N: Yeah, a two-pronged approach because you can't do anything without the policy makers buying into this.

M: because they are the funders?

N: Because they are the funders and they set the ground rules for everything, what is discussed what is not discussed. So I think definitely education and awareness-raising of issues at the policy level for high-level bureaucrats even ministers. Definitely that followed by the reorientation of the system, you know building it into the program delivery basically because if you work directly for the program then it is delivered, right? I mean you have to move with those objectives. There is some room for example, in terms of workshops, speakers, it depends on how creative the agency is... in terms of introducing these subjects and how they stay with it and there is follow up, so for example for R... it's easier, we have the program on site in each of the locations for example, violence against women program, if you are referring to that and if something comes up there is a channel, but a lot of agencies don't have basically delivery, so the other recommendation is not to deliver programs in a fragmented way and go for a holistic program delivery which a lot of community agencies do, so as not to isolate education from other aspects of life particularly for immigrants. This is very important because so much of the political, social and economic policies impact on them in such a direct way, even more so than most people because they are uprooted and they need to find their way and they need to stay away from self blame because if you don't get a job for ten years it gets internalized.

M: One then tends to think that there is a deficiency in oneself, and that is why one couldn't get a job.

N: Exactly, for example language training should be offered in conjunction with employment, in fact LINC says quite clearly that we are not training people for employment which is ridiculous, right? If you look at their criteria you see that they want language training in isolation but if you ask them do you want it in isolation, they'd say

'no' but in fact that is what is happening. So if they had employment, if they had counseling support.... The other thing that is missing for the immigrant community is that there is no counseling dollar allocation.

M: No funds?

N: No, for example ISAP is only supportive counseling and supportive means that if you are going through abuse and stuff, settlement counselors can't deal with it or they are not allowed to deal with it because counseling is supposed to be at different levels, right? If you look at the entire budget of any government there is very little money in counseling and hardly any money in counseling support for violence. There is no counseling support for racism, no counseling support for feelings of uprooted ness, devaluation, psycho-spiritual factors that impact on people when they are uprooted, nothing it is almost as if there are these people who if they come here they have to be physically strong, mentally strong, emotionally strong to that degree that all kind of rejection can go on and they should rise above that so there is very very little counseling support for immigrants.

The city used to have a program for counseling support where they would actually pay the agencies. They would have one or two counselors especially around antipoverty issues and things like that. It used to be called 'purchase of service' from an agency like us. So we would provide the services and they would give us a grant to provide those services, right? It has been scraped now; there is no such money...The only counseling money that is available is violence against women, there is nothing else for immigrant communities. I mean nobody has really cared about building counseling support like real counseling support for immigrant communities when they have to go through such trauma at so many different levels.

So program should be integrated, holistic and also I think for immigrant communities there should be community based programs. Whether we like it or not, when women come here there is a certain feeling of you know, *Apnapun* (a sense of belonging) of recognition, they see that people like them can be in positions of power, that the counselors are from their own communities. At a very basic level at the emotional level it makes a difference, they can relate to them and they are role models, automatically. It gives them possibility and hope of things that you can make it if you put

up with all of this; eventually there is a possibility of being in these kind of spaces, have some power, decision-making and that kind of thing. That is very helpful psychologically so the community-based agencies are very important particularly for women. They are much less into pathologizing pain and trauma; they are much more structured in their approach.. There is a lot more understanding and the total devaluation is not happening unless you have internalized racism which is a possibility, you know. But by and large, there is an understanding, almost sort of automatic, reflexive understanding of culture and values and because you are a part of it the judgment is not harsh because it is hard to put down what you yourself have experienced and so you do come with a broader understanding and you are less judgmental. It does provide a certain kind of validation, in terms of the cultural values.

M: And there are no stereotypes attached to your person.

N: Yeah, exactly, so if you are coming in different clothes and stuff, obviously there is an acceptance of that so it works on many levels. The community based programs are very cost effective because you know the salaries are not that high, the agencies are very posh. Whatever you want to call them it is not an office building, also it works more on the spiritual level that you come in, and in some ways even if there is a waiting list, people would see you. In the capitalist era there is so much alienation happening that people are feeling that even service has become so formalized and because the support systems are not there community agencies often become extended family support systems which is very necessary if you are an immigrant. If you are alone, if your family is not here you need to feel that there is some place that you could go to that people would care about you if something happens to you, that sort of keeps you going.

M: Yeah in a foreign land where you don't even know the language....

N: Yeah, where you are devalued or your credentials are devalued you have a lot of things you are carrying on your shoulders, so in that it is very helpful to have community services and small agencies. I'm really not into the big bureaucratic structures, I mean even for R.... if you break it down into smaller locations because it is more personal, more accessible, people don't feel intimidated; it's less formal. You know people feel that they can ask things at least they can question things; the power deferential is not that

wide. Whereas just imagine if you go into an immigration office automatically you are on guard, right? I mean you sort of feel out of place, whereas here you are more at home, there are things that you recognize, right?

M: Yeah, I still feel that myself, even though I am studying at the University. If I go to an office which is all Canadian, I phrase my sentences properly, English not being my first language and all. I cannot be myself.

N: Yeah, being yourself is so important, right?

M: Yeah to keep your sanity in this place; it is true because it does tell on your sanity after a while, when you are absolutely demoralized and pushed to the wall, you don't know where you are.

N: Yeah even you in the University setting must have felt that.

M: It is like having an identity crisis, right?

N: Exactly, and at an adult age, which is much harder because your sense of who you are is already built up, it is formed very strongly, so you are right, there is a crash in the identity. And then you need support when that happens and there is no support, no counseling, no in depth kind of work with people.

M: This has been very educating for me because now I am going to be looking at different aspects; I was just focusing on the classroom pedagogy but I think there are wider implications that I have to look into if I want to present a complete picture of what is going on. Doesn't just have to be the teachers, their students and their problems; it is a much wider issue than that, isn't it? So any other comments that you might want to make to add to this?

N: Tell me what's more relevant to your study?

M: Well as I said before I was an English teacher at one of your locations, though not this one, and when issues of abuse came up, I thought I was too inexperienced at that point to address them or being in Canada you have your own boundaries and I wasn't sure if I was qualified enough to cross them. Could I actually talk to the person being abused or should I bring up a general topic to address the issue I wasn't sure. I thought I was deficient at that point then I also believed that the issues should be addressed in the class

so the students would have the vocabulary and the courage to look for the services being offered. So this was the point I was going to bring in my thesis somehow. When I talked to you earlier and you said something about 'advocacy education' that intrigued me and I wanted to interview you.

N: You might also want to look on a more theoretical level at 'positivism' like when you say 'I was ignorant of....'it was not so much that you were ignorant, this is how the system works, you see? Like basically the whole notion of fragmenting of ideas of separating, which the West has in some ways benefited from largely because when you specialize and go in depth in one field, it is inherently built into the system. There is very little holistic thinking like even at the Ph.D level a lot of people write, they are so close to the broader implications of policy and those kinds of structural issues they would have some very interesting things to say but they often don't make the broader connection and I think it is in some way a fallout from positivistic thinking and this kind of approach under capitalism has taken on huge proportions like of individualizing everything, separating yourself from what is going on around you, right?

So you blame yourself rather than saying what could I have done how could I have approached N, these are my difficulties and how could I redress them. So it's the whole notion of individualizing problem, so the problem becomes 'your' problem not a social problem.

M: Which is the result of fragmented thinking because it is so compartmentalized.

N: Right and positivism contributes to that definitely, I mean it has good sides to it I mean you need in depth knowledge but it creates.....even mobilizing I find that when people get together, for example, I don't know, the community development work in India and Pakistan happens at such a different level, it's personal, you're integrated, your barriers are down and if the values are the same it's not that hard to collaborate and co-operate. Here it is impossible to collaborate and cooperate there are such power struggles within the feminist community itself, right? There is so much ego involved so much sense of either your own power or the lack of it that it becomes a real stumbling block to mobilizing and organizing, you know. Somehow we have gotten away from this nurturance, the whole mobilizing and organizing is very, sort of, class-based, patriarchal.

M: Very bureaucratic, because I worked as an NGO, I know.

N: Yeah, very much, task, task, task, whereas, I think we need to develop other models. See the thing is there is such a stranglehold of Western ideals and values, it's so hard to get out of them, right? I mean, everybody till 911 thought we had a flourishing free press and democracy right? But when you are pushed in a corner you find out and in fact people who are coming from other countries are criticizing their governments left, right and center, okay? Within their own country as well. The NGOs in their own countries are taking their governments on, they have no problem criticizing for example if you are from Pakistan you can thrash Musharraf or Taliban whatever, but try and say one word about 911 and see what happened to Sunera Thobani.

M: Yeah, did you see that backlash?

N: yeah, so it is this kind of reaction, and this is the difference. They called her a crazy woman, they asked her to go back to Africa where she belonged. And it was in the Canadian Parliament. Imagine some reactionary people saying that but it was in the Canadian Parliament.

Appendix B

STRESS

What is Stress?

STRESS

At one time or another everyone, from children to grandparents, complains about feeling stressed or stressed-out. What are they talking about? Stress is the pressure a person feels in his or her mind and/or body because of other people and **life events**. It affects how a person deals with life.

Stress is a necessary part of life; however, not all stress is bad. Everyone needs a certain level of stress to get up in the morning and do all the things that need to get done. Not all stressful situations in a person's life are negative. Some examples of events that can cause positive stress are a job **promotion**, falling in love or buying a new house. Negative stress can be, and often is, a major **obstacle** to staying healthy. Negative stress can be caused by many things, for example, **marital** problems, the death of a loved one, a difficult job, illness, financial problems, or problems with your children.

The difference between positive and negative stress is in how the stress affects your life. Stress can affect you physically by causing high blood pressure, headaches and **insomnia**. It can affect you emotionally by causing **anxiety** or **depression**. If you do not watch the stress in your life, it can lead to illness, both physical and emotional. The important thing is how you deal with the stress in your life. You need to **keep an eye on** how much stress you are experiencing and take steps to keep stress **manageable**.

Vocabulary Development

Match the words to their definitions.

1. _____	anxiety (n)	a. having difficulty sleeping at night for a period of time
2. _____	depression (n)	b. relating to marriage
3. _____	insomnia (n)	c. a more important position at work, usually including a raise in pay
4. _____	to keep an eye on [something] (idiom)	d. a situation, event or person in one's life that makes it difficult to do something
5. _____	life event (n)	e. a condition in which a person feels very unhappy or sad
6. _____	manageable (adj)	f. nervousness or worry
7. _____	marital (adj)	g. not too difficult or too much for a person to do
8. _____	obstacle (n)	h. to watch or monitor [something] for signs of trouble
9. _____	promotion (n)	i. something unusual or important that happens in a person's life

STRESS

What is Stress?

Comprehension

A. Write T for True or F for False.

1. _____ All of us have stress at some time in our lives.
2. _____ We should try to remove the positive and negative stress in our lives.
3. _____ If negative stress is left unchecked, it can lead to illness.
4. _____ Immigrating to a new country can be stressful.
5. _____ Your first date is an event that can cause positive stress.
6. _____ People need a certain amount of stress in their lives to do all the things they need to do.
7. _____ Getting a better paying job is an example of negative stress.
8. _____ Children are not affected by the stress in their lives.

B. Give two examples of negative stress in a child's life.

a. _____

b. _____

C. Give two examples of negative stress in a senior citizen's life.

a. _____

b. _____

D. Give two examples of positive stress in your life.

a. _____

b. _____

Discussion

Discuss in small groups.

1. Do you think people have more stress today than they did 50 years ago? Give reasons why.
2. Do people in Canada have more or less stress than people in your country? Explain your answer.
3. Describe the difference in the amount of stress children have in Canada compared to the children in your country.
4. What are the most stressful jobs? Why?
5. Describe a stressful workplace.

STRESS

Stress Symptoms

HOA'S STRESSFUL LIFE

Hoa is a **middle-aged** woman from Southeast Asia. She immigrated six years ago with her family. She and her husband, Yen, have worked very hard and have just bought a brand-new restaurant. It is a dream-come-true because they have always wanted their own business. They have two teenage sons in high school.

Hoa has been feeling depressed for several months. She has lost a lot of weight and is often sick with a cold or the flu. Hoa is very worried about her oldest son, Tran. Tran is in Grade 12. He has been skipping school, failing math and English, and has been getting into a lot of trouble with his teachers. Hoa does not like Tran's friends at all. She knows Tran and his friends drink a lot and get into fights. Hoa **nags** Tran about school and his friends. Tran never listens.

Hoa has insomnia. She lies awake at night worrying or crying about Tran. She and Yen are having marital problems because they are constantly arguing over what to do about Tran. She **resents** Yen because he is too busy with the restaurant to have any time for Tran.

Vocabulary

middle-aged	adj	between the ages of 45 and 60
to nag	v	to complain to someone over and over in an annoying way
to resent	v	to feel bitter, angry or hurt because of what someone did

Comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. Give two examples of negative stress in Hoa's life.

   a. _____ b. _____

2. Give an example of positive stress in Hoa's life. _____

3. Is stress affecting Hoa's marriage? _____ Explain how. _____

   _____

4. What does "skipping school" mean?

   _____

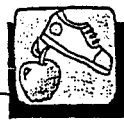
5. Do you think Tran is stressed-out? Why or why not?

   _____

   _____

Discussion

1. What advice would you give Hoa and Yen to help their son Tran?
2. What would be a dream-come-true for you?



STRESS

Stress Symptoms

OTHER SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Stress can affect a person's life in many ways. The symptoms of stress vary from person to person. Physical symptoms such as tight shoulders, a sore neck and headaches are obvious, but many other symptoms are not as obvious. It is important to consider an individual's personality, age and many other factors that influence how he or she responds to stress.

Mental Symptoms of Stress

- Confusion
- Forgetfulness
- Having difficulty **concentrating** on your work
- **Mental blocks**

Emotional Symptoms of Stress

- Anxiety
- Crying often
- Feeling **isolated**
- Depression or "**the blues**"
- Frustration
- **Mood swings**
- Loneliness
- Nightmares
- Worry
- Losing your temper; anger

Vocabulary

to concentrate	v	to give complete attention and energy to something or someone
to have the blues	idiom	to feel sad or depressed
isolated	adj	feeling separated from others in some way (e.g. physically, emotionally, socially, politically)
mental block	n	not being able to think clearly for a short time; unable to solve a problem or to remember something
mood swing	n	a dramatic change in feelings (e.g. from feeling happy to feeling depressed)

Vocabulary Development

Fill in the blanks with the correct forms of the vocabulary words.

1. When Michael is writing a final exam, he sometimes has a _____. He can't remember the answer even though he studied for the test.

2. I need to_____ very hard when I'm preparing my income tax form because of all the information that must be included on the form.

3. Jill is pregnant and has noticed a change in her feelings. She has _____. She feels happy and then sad several times in one day.

4. Hannah immigrated to Canada three months ago. She has no family or friends in Canada and feels very _____.

5. Stephen broke up with his girlfriend. He has _____ and has been depressed for a couple of weeks.

STRESS

Stress Symptoms

ANWAR'S STRESSFUL LIFE

Anwar, a young man from the Middle East, is a computer programmer for a local computer software company. He immigrated to Canada last year and has found it difficult to adjust to life in Canada. Anwar does not like his job for many reasons. The work is very boring and he is making a lot less money than he did in his country.

Anwar is not used to having a woman for a boss; in fact, he has never worked with women before. He does not like his boss at all. She is very **demanding** and Anwar has a very negative **attitude** toward the projects she gives him. He doesn't work very hard and often turns in his work late. He is **irritable** and has lost his temper several times with his secretary when she has made a mistake.

Anwar is very lonely in Canada. He doesn't know anyone from his country. He avoids making new friends or going to places to meet new people. He feels discouraged at times and often feels depressed.

Vocabulary

attitude	n	the way a person thinks and feels about something
demanding	adj	requiring a lot of a person's time and energy
irritable	adj	easily annoyed or angered

Comprehension

A. *What are Anwar's stress symptoms? Refer to "Other Symptoms of Stress" and the story above.*

1. Mental _____
2. Emotional _____

_____

B. *Answer the questions.*

1. Describe Anwar's relationship with his boss.

_____

_____

_____

2. Describe how stress has affected the quality of work that Anwar does.

_____

_____

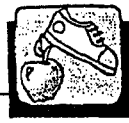
_____

3. What advice would you give Anwar?

_____

_____

_____



STRESS
Measuring Stress

WHAT'S YOUR STRESS LEVEL?

Once you have identified your personal stress symptoms, it is a good idea to take a look at what is causing the stress. Life events, both happy and sad, have their own share of stress. For example, think about how much stress was involved when you were immigrating to Canada to start a new life.

It is important to look at recent events that have happened in your life to get a realistic picture of how much stress you are dealing with. One event by itself may not cause a lot of stress, but several events within a few months or in a year can have a big impact on your life.

Discussion

Discuss with a partner.

1. What life events are the most stressful? Explain why these events are stressful.
2. What are some things that cause a lot of stress for married couples?
3. What was your biggest problem when you first came to Canada? Describe the problem and how you solved it.
4. What do you do when you are angry (e.g. throw something at the wall, go for a walk, kick the furniture)?
5. What are some good ways to handle anger?

Palvinder and Vikash

Palvinder and Vikash are newlyweds from India who immigrated to Canada six months ago. They had a beautiful wedding three months before they came to Canada. After the wedding, they moved in with Palvinder's family until they left India. It was Vikash's idea to immigrate to Canada. He had always wanted to live in another country.

Palvinder did not want to leave India or her family. She is very close to her family, especially her grandmother and her younger sister, Nirmal. It is the first time Palvinder has been away from her family and friends for any length of time. She is very lonely and feels isolated because she doesn't know anyone in Canada. She never told Vikash that she didn't want to immigrate to Canada.

A year ago, Vikash graduated from university with a degree in electrical engineering. He was working with a construction company before he came to Canada. He has been looking for a job, but hasn't found one yet. He is depressed and grouchy because he can't find a job. He blows up over nothing, and often makes Palvinder cry. He is worried about their finances and doesn't want Palvinder to spend money on anything except groceries. Several nights a week he can't sleep because he is so worried. Palvinder and Vikash are a very stressed-out couple.

STRESS

Coping with Stress

PRIORITIZE PROBLEMS

What do you do about stress? The first step is realizing that you are stressed-out, that stress is affecting your life and that you need to do something about it.

Part 1: What is complicating my life right now?

A. *Take a minute and write down on a separate piece of paper the things that are causing you the most stress in your life right now.*

B. *Prioritize the list with the most stressful thing at the top of the list.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Part 2: What do I do next?

Follow the steps below.

1. Look at the first item on your list and **only** that item.
2. Think of everything you need to do to solve that problem.
3. Break the solution into small manageable steps (what you need to do) and write the steps in the box below.

Problem 1 _____

Step 1 _____

Step 2 _____

Step 3 _____

Step 4 _____

Step 5 _____

4. Work on that problem only. Don't go to the next problem until you've solved this problem. If you try to solve all your problems at once, you will be more stressed than when you started!
5. After you have solved the first problem, repeat the above steps for the second problem.

Discussion

Discuss with a partner.

1. What's the difference between an optimist and a pessimist? Which one are you? Explain.
2. Is it more stressful to be married or single? Explain.
3. Describe some ways you have helped a stressed-out family member or close friend.

STRESS

Review

WRITING

A. Write About Yourself

1. *Pick one of the topics below.*
   a. Describe a stressful time in your life, or in the life of someone you know. What steps were taken to relieve the stress?
   b. Describe ways you could organize your life to reduce the stress.
2. *Write a paragraph from personal experience.*
3. *Give your paragraph a title.*

B. Write About Someone You Know

1. *Pick one of the topics below.*
   a. What are some ways a stressed-out homemaker can reduce the stress in her life?
   b. What advice would you give to newlyweds to help them cope with the stress of marriage?
   c. What advice would you give to someone who is retiring to help that person cope with the stress of retirement?
   d. What advice would you give to someone who is immigrating to Canada to help that person cope with the stress of immigration?
   e. Think about someone you know who is/was very stressed-out. Describe the person's symptoms and signs of stress.
   f. Pick one of the following people. What advice would you give that individual if he or she asked you for help?

• Hoa	Page 94	• Palvinder	Page 99
• Anwar	Page 98	• Vikash	Page 99

2. *Write a paragraph giving advice to the person.*
   Note: Some common advice phrases are in the box below.
3. *Give your paragraph a title.*

Giving Advice

- I think you should...
- Why don't you...?
- If I were you I would...
- You can/could...
- What about...?
- Have you tried...?

Appendix C

Appendix C

Canadian Culture

Celebrations

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- appropriate gifts for specific celebrations and special occasions in Canada
- conventions around gift giving and gift opening at parties
- cultural differences in attitudes concerning gender- and age-based activities
- cultural differences in celebrations
- customs associated with celebrations for children
- customs associated with parties (arrival and departure, role of guests and hosts, giving gifts)
- meaning and customs of special days celebrated in Canada (e.g., Mother's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, St. Jean Baptiste Day)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- compare celebrations in Canada with those of own country or classmates' countries
- confirm or clarify appropriate message choice in greeting cards with a proficient English speaker
- learn appropriate messages for greeting cards
- learn short polite phrases for accepting and declining invitations
- rehearse short conventional messages of thanks and congratulations

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Canadian Conversation, Book One:* Unit 4, "Days, Dates, and Weather"
- *A Grab Bag of Canada*
- *Canadian Concepts 1, Second Edition:* Unit 4, "What's the Date?"
- *English Extra:* Unit 15, "José and Carlos are having a party"
- *Let's Celebrate!*
- *New Interchange Intro:* Unit 11, "What are you going to do?"
- *Ontario Reader 2001:* "Caribana," "Multicultural holidays," "Dates to remember"
- *The ESL Tool Box:* Unit 1, "Ask Around"
- *When's the Next Canadian Holiday?*
- sample invitations and greeting cards with written messages inside
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource:* Stage 1, Social Interaction dialogues 1– 4
- ELLIS – Intro – Greetings, Introductions and Goodbyes; Social Situations
- Chinese New Year: http://www.new-year.co.uk/chinese/cards/cards.htm and http://123greetings.com/events/chinese_new_year
- Ramadan and Eid cards: http://www.123greetings.com/events/eid
- Yahoo Canada Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, holidays, enter name of specific holiday (e.g., Ramadan)

LINC 1

Celebrations

Topic Outcomes (CLB 1)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- use and respond to a few basic courtesy formulas
- give two- to three-word basic instructions for participating in a celebration
- give basic personal information
- identify greetings or other goodwill expressions in speech
- identify details in a listening text about celebrations: numbers, letters, a few keywords and short expressions
- understand short greeting card texts
- get information about a celebration from a very basic text of up to five sentences
- complete a standard greeting card with minimum required information
- describe a celebration by filling in blanks in a short three- to five-sentence guided text

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*New Year's Eve, birthday, anniversary, Christmas, wedding, party, present, gift*)
- vocabulary for expressing personal information (*name, address, phone number*)
- dates, times, and ordinal numbers
- phrases for basic courtesy (*Hello, How are you, bye, thank you*)
- expressions for specific celebrations (*Happy birthday, Congratulations, Merry Christmas*)
- prepositions of time (*on the weekend, in December, at noon*)
- pronouns: subject, object, possessive
- verbs: *be, have*
- verb tenses: simple present, past (high-frequency verbs)
- pronunciation: word stress in ordinal numbers (*fourth, sixteenth, twentieth*)

Sample Tasks

1. Ask classmates for names and birthdays. Complete a table.
2. Listen to a simple text about an important holiday in Canada (e.g., Thanksgiving). Complete sentences about the date, food, and customs using a list of vocabulary.
3. Read a very simple paragraph about Mother's Day. Complete sentences by filling in blanks.
4. Choose an appropriate card for a friend at New Year's. Complete the inside with a simple salutation and closing line. Write the mailing and return address on the envelope.

Additional Tasks

- Novice: Open an instructor-made document with a short list of well-known holidays. Type the dates on the blanks provided.
- Experienced: Add a title to Novice Task document by inserting WordArt. Follow instructions to edit or format the WordArt.

  Skills: Open, Keyboarding, Insert Text, Insert, Format WordArt

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- acceptable behaviour in public places (e.g., lineups, smoking, public displays of affection)
- appropriate topics for small talk conversations
- Canadian concepts regarding time and physical proximity
- common practices for social situations such as visiting someone, ordering in a restaurant, weddings, baby showers, and funerals
- customs surrounding names
- differences between English and French culture
- gender issues in Canada
- initiating and/or responding to small talk conversations with neighbours
- non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, vocal volume, handshaking, and listening signals such as nodding
- telephone etiquette
- titles for addressing people

Strategies & Tactics

Learners find it useful to...

- be aware of formal and informal ways of addressing people
- compare social behaviour in Canadian culture with behaviour in other countries
- learn phrases for accepting or declining offers of assistance
- learn polite phrases for getting attention and making requests
- observe the actions and attire of others
- practice English intonation patterns for questions and requests

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Writing Book, English in Everyday Life, A Teacher's Resource Book, Second Edition:* Unit 3, "Greetings"
- *Basic Grammar in Action:* Unit 1, "Hello"
- *Canadian Concepts 1, Second Edition:* Unit 1, "What's Your Name?"; Unit 2, "Nice to Meet You"
- *New Interchange Intro:* Unit 1, "It's nice to meet you"
- *The ESL Toolbox:* Unit 3, "Decision Making"; Unit 4, "Culture Checks"; Unit 6, "Out and About"
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource:* Stage 1, Social Interaction dialogues 1– 4; Restaurant dialogues 42, 43, 45
- ELLIS – Intro – Greetings, Introductions and Goodbyes; Social Situations
- Government of Canada Site: http://www.canada.gc.ca (Canadians, Newcomers to Canada)
- Yahoo! Canada, Society and Culture Directory: http://ca.dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture
- Yahoo! Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, customs, etiquette Canada

Customs & Social Behaviour

Learning Outcomes

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- use and respond to a few basic courtesy formulas
- indicate communication problems
- attract attention
- ask for and tell time
- identify greetings or other goodwill expressions in speech
- identify expressions used to attract attention
- understand short greeting card texts
- get information from a very basic text of up to five sentences about a social situation
- complete a standard greeting card with minimum required information
- describe a social situation by filling in blanks in a short three- to five-sentence guided text

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for greetings and courtesy formulas (*Hello, Goodbye, See you tomorrow, How are you? Fine thank you, Thank you, You're welcome, Do you want a coffee? Yes please, Here you are*)
- vocabulary for greeting cards (*greeting card, get well, sympathy, signature*)
- numbers for telling time
- titles (*Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss, Dr., Rev.*)
- expressions for attracting attention (*Excuse me, Hello*)
- expressions for asking for and telling time (*Do you have the time? What time is it? half-past, quarter to, o'clock*)
- expressions to indicate communication problems (*Pardon? Sorry, Please repeat*)
- verb *be*
- pronunciation: word linking (*How are you, Thanks a lot, See you on Monday*)

Sample Tasks

1. Circulate in the classroom and greet classmates or attract their attention and ask for the time. Talk to at least five people.
2. Listen to a conversation between friends and circle expressions used for greeting and leave-taking on a worksheet.
3. Read a short text that uses titles with people's names (e.g., *Mr. Aziz*). Answer yes/no questions about the text (e.g., *Is Mr. Aziz a woman?*).
4. Look at a picture of two people greeting each other. Complete a dialogue by filling in blanks.

   Novice: Word-process Language Task 4 and underline the gapped answer words. Save and print. Attach pictures for display.

   Experienced: Use the AutoShapes menu to create callout speech bubbles for the dialogue in Language Task 4. Print the bubbles and display with the pictures.

   Skills: Underline, Save, Print, Insert Picture (AutoShapes)

Leisure Activities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- benefits of participation in leisure activities
- clubs concerned with leisure activities
- costs of activities and low-cost alternatives
- cultural differences in leisure pursuits, including gender-based and age-based activities
- leisure activities for children, such as day camps, swimming lessons, recreation centres
- local and seasonal leisure activities
- local sites and organizations offering cultural or sporting events
- volunteer work as an alternative leisure activity

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- attend leisure shows (e.g., Outdoor Life Show)
- participate in leisure activities to acquire specialized vocabulary and to practice socializing in English
- use leisure activities to develop self-esteem and confidence for language learning
- use picture dictionaries for specialized terminology
- visit tourism bureau, chamber of commerce, public library for information on local activities

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *New Interchange Intro*: Unit 10, "You can play baseball really well"
- *Ontario Reader 2001*: "Algonquin Provincial Park"
- *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary*: Unit 12, "Leisure"
- *The ESL Tool Box*: Unit 1, "Ask Around"; Unit 12, "Summer Holiday"
- continuing education calendars
- local parks and recreation brochures
- local YMCA or YWCA may provide an orientation tour
- ELLIS – Intro – Leisure Activities and Social Situations
- Active Ontario: http://www.activeontario.org
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation: http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca (Sport and Recreation)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Community and Recreation, Arts and Culture *or* Sports and Recreation)
- YMCA Canada: http://www.ymca.ca (follow links to local branch's schedule)
- recreation, leisure Ontario

LINC 1

Leisure Activities

Topic Outcomes (CLB 1)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- use and respond to a few basic courtesy formulas
- attract attention
- request assistance
- give basic personal information when registering for a sport or leisure activity
- express ability/inability regarding a leisure activity
- follow simple two- to five-word instructions for registering for an activity
- identify expressions used to request assistance
- use a simplified map or diagram to locate a recreational facility
- understand common signs in recreational facilities
- copy contact information for local recreational and entertainment facilities from a list
- fill out a very basic five- to seven-item registration form

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for leisure activities (*swim, dance, ski, cook, play tennis, play piano, soccer, park, theatre*)
- vocabulary for personal information and instructions (*name, address, telephone number, postal code, age, date of birth, write, print, spell, say, tell*)
- expressions for greetings and leave-taking (*How are you? Hello, Goodbye, Good morning, Good afternoon*)
- expressions to attract attention and request assistance (*Excuse me, can you help me*)
- adjectives
- modals for ability: *can/can't*
- pronouns: subject, object, possessive, demonstrative
- yes/no questions
- verb *be*
- pronunciation: reduction of *can* and comparison with *can't*

Sample Tasks

1. Interview four classmates to complete a table of activities. Enter your classmates' names and check off which activities they can do. Ask questions like: *Can you dance/sing/swim/play tennis?*
   - **Novice:** Open an instructor-made file with a table and insert information from Language Task 3. Print and compare with classmates.
   - **Experienced:** Follow instructions for creating a new document and inserting an Excel chart of the class results from Language Task 1. Print for class display.

     Skills: Open, Keyboarding, Insert/Edit Object (Excel Chart), Format Chart, Print
2. Listen to dialogues of people requesting assistance. Circle the expressions you hear on a worksheet.
3. Read a sign about hours of operation for a recreational facility. Answer yes/no questions.
4. Copy information for local entertainment centres (e.g., cinemas, swimming pools) from a community directory.

Celebrations

Topic Recommendations

Classes might want to learn more about...

- appropriate gifts for specific celebrations and special occasions in Canada
- conventions around gift giving and gift opening at parties
- cultural differences in attitudes concerning gender- and age-based activities
- cultural differences in celebrations
- customs associated with celebrations for children
- customs associated with parties (arrival and departure, role of guests and hosts, giving gifts)
- meaning and customs of special days celebrated in Canada (e.g., Mother's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, St. Jean Baptiste Day)

Learners find it useful to...

- compare celebrations in Canada with those of own country or classmates' countries
- confirm or clarify appropriate message choice in greeting card with proficient English speaker
- learn appropriate messages for greeting cards
- learn short polite phrases for accepting and declining invitations
- observe the actions of others at celebrations and ask questions
- read simple published materials about specific social occasions
- rehearse short conventional messages of thanks and congratulations

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Canadian Conversation Book, Book One:* Unit 4, "Days, Dates, and Weather"
- *Canadian Concepts 2, Second Edition:* Unit 3, "Days and Dates"
- *Let's Celebrate!*
- *Ontario Reader 1999:* "Canada Day," "Sweet tradition of Diwali"
- *Ontario Reader 2001:* "Multicultural holidays"
- *The ESL Tool Box:* Unit 1, "Ask Around"
- *The Pizza Tastes Great:* Unit 3, "Birthdays"
- *When's the Next Canadian Holiday?*
- sample invitations and greeting cards with written messages inside
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource:* Stage I, Social Interaction dialogues 5–6
- Chinese New Year: http://www.new-year.co.uk/chinese/cards/cards.htm and http://123greetings.com/events/chinese_new_year
- Ramadan and Eid cards: http://www.123greetings.com/events/eid
- Yahoo Canada Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, holidays, enter name of specific holiday (e.g., Ramadan)

Celebrations

Topic Outcomes (CLB 2)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- make and respond to simple requests
- give a basic description of a celebration
- identify introductions and basic courtesy formulas
- identify details in a listening text: numbers, dates, time references, places, keywords, short expressions
- generally understand the main point of a short written message or text in a special occasion greeting card, invitation, and postcard
- get information about a celebration from a very basic text of up to seven sentences
- complete an expanded range of greeting cards with minimum required information
- give a basic description of a celebration by answering five to six simple questions in writing

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*Diwali, Rosh Hashanah, Chinese New Year, birthday, anniversary, Christmas*)
- dates and times
- expressions for specific celebrations (*Happy Anniversary, Congratulations, Seasons Greetings*)
- articles: definite and indefinite (*a party, the weekend, some people*)
- prepositions of time (*on the weekend, in December, at noon*)
- verb tenses: simple past, present, and future tenses (high-frequency verbs)
- pronunciation: vowel contrasts /ey/ (*birthday, age, today, baby, eighth*) and /ɛ/ (*send, seventh, friend, dress*)

Sample Tasks

1. Talk to a partner about a popular celebration from own culture.
2. Listen to a conversation about a celebration. Complete sentences by filling in the blanks.
3. Read paragraphs about holidays in Canada. Complete a table with information about names and dates of holidays. Compare with classmates.
4. Answer questions about a recent or upcoming celebration.

Additional Tasks

Novice: Survey the class and word-process a list of celebration dates. Include birthdays, anniversaries, and popular celebrations in Canada and other countries (e.g., May 11, 2003: Mother's Day). Sort the list by date.

Skills: Keyboarding, Select, Sort

All Levels: Go to an electronic postcard site (e.g., http://greetings.yahoo.ca). Follow instructions for finding and choosing a birthday card for your instructor. Type the given e-mail addresses. Type an appropriate message to your instructor and send the birthday card.

Skills: Internet Basics, Browsers, URL, Forms, Mouse Skills

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- acceptable behaviour in public places (e.g., lineups, smoking, public displays of affection)
- appropriate topics for small talk conversations
- Canadian concepts regarding time and physical proximity
- common practices for social situations such as visiting someone, ordering in a restaurant, weddings, baby showers, and funerals
- customs surrounding names
- differences between English and French culture
- gender issues in Canada
- initiating and/or responding to small talk conversations with neighbours
- non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, vocal volume, handshaking, and listening signals such as nodding
- telephone etiquette
- titles for addressing people

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- be aware of formal and informal ways of addressing people
- compare social behaviour in Canadian culture with behaviour in other countries
- learn phrases for accepting or declining offers of assistance
- learn polite phrases for getting attention and making requests
- observe the speech, actions, and attire of others
- practice common phrases used in telephone calls
- practice English intonation patterns for questions and requests

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Writing Book, English in Everyday Life, A Teacher's Resource Book, Second Edition:* Unit 3, "Greetings"
- *Canadian Concepts 2, Second Edition:* Unit 1, "Nice to Meet You"; Unit 2, "People and Places"
- *The ESL Toolbox:* Unit 3, "Decision Making"; Unit 4, "Culture Checks"; Unit 6, "Out and About"
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource:* Stage I, Social Interaction dialogues 1–8, Restaurant dialogues 42, 43
- ELLIS – Intro – Greetings, Introductions and Goodbyes; Social Situations
- Etiquette in other countries: http://intljobs.about.com/cs/etiquette (for comparison activities)
- Government of Canada Site: http://www.canada.gc.ca (Canadians, Newcomers to Canada)
- Yahoo! Canada, Society and Culture Directory: http://ca.dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture
- Yahoo! Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, customs, etiquette Canada

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Outcomes (CLB 2)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- greet familiar and unfamiliar people; use and respond to courtesy formulas
- respond appropriately to introductions
- indicate communication problems in a number of ways
- give expanded basic personal information
- identify introductions and basic courtesy formulas
- identify a range of expressions used to ask for repetition and clarification
- generally understand the main point of a short written message or text in a special occasion greeting card or invitation
- get information from a very basic text of up to seven sentences about a custom
- complete an expanded range of greeting cards with minimum required information
- give a basic description of a custom by filling in blanks in a short five- to six-sentence guided text

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary and expressions, in greeting card messages (*Best wishes, Congratulations, All the best, Get well soon, Hope you have a..., With love, Love always*)
- vocabulary for expressing personal information (*full name, surname, initials*)
- expressions for introductions (*Hi, Nice to meet you, Glad, Pleased, This is...*)
- conventions for addressing an envelope
- yes/no questions
- verb *be*
- pronunciation: word linking (*How are you? Thanks a lot, See you on Monday*)

Sample Tasks

1. Ask classmates questions to complete a chart with information (e.g., married/single, children, siblings, when they came to Canada).
2. Listen to dialogues of people answering personal identification questions. Identify phrases used to ask for repetition and clarification by circling phrases on a worksheet.

   Novice: Open a document containing a dialogue between a customer and a server in a coffee shop. Locate and change the font colour of statements asking for clarification and repetition. Save, print, and compare your dialogue with classmates.

   Skills: Open, Select, Font Color, Save, Print
3. Complete dialogues by matching questions with answers (e.g., *Do you have change for a dollar? – Yes. Here you are*).
4. Choose and complete a greeting card and envelope for a classmate, friend, or family member

Leisure Activities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- benefits of participation in leisure activities
- clubs concerned with leisure activities
- costs of activities and low-cost alternatives
- cultural differences in leisure pursuits, including gender-based and age-based activities
- leisure activities for children, such as day camps, swimming lessons, recreation centres
- local and seasonal leisure activities
- local sites and organizations offering cultural or sporting events
- volunteer work as an alternative leisure activity

Suggestions

Learners find it useful to...

- attend leisure shows (e.g., Outdoor Life Show)
- participate in leisure activities to acquire specialized vocabulary and to practice socializing in English
- use leisure activities to develop self-esteem and confidence for language learning
- use picture dictionaries for specialized terminology
- visit tourism bureau, chamber of commerce, public library for information on activities

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topics

- *A Conversation Book 1, Revised Third Edition*: Unit 10, "Leisure"
- *Interchange 1*: Unit 6, "Do you play tennis?"
- *The ESL Tool Box*: Unit 1, "Ask Around"; Unit 12, "Summer Holiday"
- *The Pizza Tastes Great*: Unit 7, "Sports and Fun"
- continuing education calendars
- local parks and recreation brochures
- local YMCA or YWCA may provide an orientation tour
- Tense Buster – Elementary – Simple Present – Negatives, Questions
- ELLIS – Intro – Leisure Activities and Social Situations
- Active Ontario: http://www.activeontario.org
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation: http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca (Sport and Recreation)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Community and Recreation, Arts and Culture *or* Sports and Recreation)
- YMCA Canada: http://www.ymca.ca (follow links to local branch's schedule)
- recreation, leisure Ontario

Leisure Activities

Topic Outcomes

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- greet familiar and unfamiliar people, use and respond to courtesy formulas
- provide expanded personal information when registering for an activity
- talk about leisure activities one enjoys
- identify a range of expressions used to make and respond to requests, express warnings
- identify details in a listening text: name, address, phone number, time references, keywords
- get information about leisure activities from a table or schedule
- get information from a short two- to three-sentence notice
- fill out a simple eight- to 12-item registration form
- give a basic description of own leisure activities by filling in blanks in a short five- to six-sentence guided text or by answering five to six simple questions

Language Items

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for sports and hobbies
- vocabulary for expressing personal information (*full name, surname, initials*)
- adverbs of frequency
- questions: wh-, yes/no
- simple present tense
- pronunciation: third person singular voiced, voiceless, and sibilant -s endings (/z/ *lives*, /s/ *walks*, /əz/ *watches*)

Sample Tasks

1. Interview a partner about his/her leisure activities during the week by asking questions from a worksheet.
   - Novice: Create a table with columns for each day of the week. Fill out the table with information about your own leisure activities. Print for display.
   - Experienced: Format the table by using the Table Toolbar to shade cells and change the line style on the cell and table borders.

     Skills: Keyboarding, Insert Table, Table Toolbar, Borders and Shading, Print
2. Listen to a dialogue of someone registering for lessons. Complete a registration form with the personal information given in the dialogue.
3. Refer to a swimming pool schedule to answer questions.
4. Complete a simple registration form.

Celebrations

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- appropriate gifts for specific celebrations and special occasions in Canada
- conventions around gift giving and gift opening at parties
- cultural differences in attitudes concerning gender- and age-based activities
- cultural differences in celebrations
- customs associated with celebrations for children
- customs associated with parties (arrival and departure, role of guests and hosts, giving gifts)
- meaning and customs of special days celebrated in Canada (e.g., Mother's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, St. Jean Baptiste Day)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- compare celebrations in Canada with those of own country or classmates' countries
- confirm or clarify appropriate message choice in greeting card with proficient English speaker
- learn appropriate messages for greeting cards
- learn short polite phrases for extending, accepting, and declining invitations
- observe the actions of others at celebrations and ask questions
- read simple published materials about specific social occasions
- rehearse short conventional messages of thanks and congratulations

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Interchange 2*: Unit 8, "Let's Celebrate"
- *Let's Celebrate!*
- *Ontario Reader 2001*: "Getting married the traditional way"
- *When's the Next Canadian Holiday?*
- *Canada: A Cultural Profile*
- sample invitations and greeting cards with written messages inside
- ELLIS – Intro – Leisure Activities and Social Situations
- Chinese New Year: http://www.new-year.co.uk/chinese/cards/cards.htm and http://123greetings.com/events/chinese_new_year
- Ramadan and Eid cards: http://www.123greetings.com/events/eid
- Yahoo Canada Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, holidays, enter name of specific holiday (e.g., Ramadan)

Celebrations

Topic Outcomes (CLB 3, 4)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- greet, introduce self, and ask about other person; introduce two people
- give short three- to four-step directions for getting to a celebration
- give a brief description of a celebration from own country
- identify specific factual details and implied meanings in a dialogue of casual small talk or a short phone call
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a listening text about celebrations
- get information from a simple, explicit, one- to two-paragraph text
- write a personal message in a three- to five-sentence note
- describe a celebration in five to eight sentences

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*Diwali, Rosh Hashanah, Chinese New Year, birthday, anniversary, Christmas*)
- expressions for greeting and making introductions (*Hi. How have you been? Nice to finally meet you, It was nice to see you*)
- expressions for time (*...at the moment, When I arrived..., ...when I was a child*)
- adjectives
- prepositions: time, location
- verb tenses: regular and irregular simple past, present, and future
- pronunciation: vowel discrimination /æ/(*anniversary*), /ɛ/ (*celebration*), /ɪ/ (*gift*), /a/ (*boxing*), /ə/ (*unwrap*)

Sample Tasks

1. Tell about a popular celebration from own culture.

   Novice: Create and show a presentation on the celebration from Language Task 1.

   Skills: (PowerPoint) Create a New Presentation, Font, Font Alignment, Insert Bullets and Numbering, Insert Clip Art, Show a Presentation

2. Listen to three short conversations about unnamed celebrations. Match the conversation with a list of celebrations.

3. Read one of several texts about celebrations such as Mother's Day, Chinese New Year, Eid, Diwali, or Nah Ruz. Share details from memory with a group. Complete a table with details such as dates, countries, food, and customs.

4. Write a thank-you note for a gift from a friend or family member. Include an appropriate message.

   Experienced: Create a thank-you card by inserting a picture from Clip Art (e.g., flower). Insert a Text Box with message from Language Task 4. Print for display or delivery.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Font, Save, Insert Picture, Insert Text Box, Format Picture, Print

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- acceptable behaviour in public places (e.g., lineups, smoking, public displays of affection)
- appropriate topics for small talk conversations
- Canadian concepts regarding time and physical proximity
- common practices for social situations such as visiting someone, ordering in a restaurant, weddings, baby showers, and funerals
- customs surrounding names
- differences between English and French culture
- gender issues in Canada
- initiating and/or responding to small talk conversations with neighbours
- non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, vocal volume, handshaking, and listening signals such as nodding
- telephone etiquette
- titles for addressing people

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- be aware of formal and informal ways of addressing people
- compare social behaviour in Canadian culture with behaviour in other countries
- identify topics for small talk situations
- learn phrases for accepting or declining offers of assistance
- learn polite phrases for getting attention and making requests
- observe the speech, actions, and attire of others
- practice common phrases used in telephone calls
- recognize vague invitations (e.g. *Let's get together some time*)
- use English intonation patterns to initiate and conclude small talk exchanges and to recognize leave-taking

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Toolbox for ESL Tutors*: Theme 5, "Banking"
- *A Writing Book, English in Everyday Life, A Teacher's Resource Book, Second Edition*: Unit 3, "Greetings"
- *Canadian Concepts 3, Second Edition*: Unit 1, "Getting Together"
- *LINC Classroom Activities, LINC 3*: "Recreation"
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource*: Stage I, Social Interaction dialogues 7–13; Restaurant dialogues 42–45
- ELLIS – Intro – Greetings, Introductions and Goodbyes; Social Situations
- Canada – business culture, customs, and etiquette: http://www.executiveplanet.com/community (Canada)
- Etiquette in other countries: http://intljobs.about.com/cs/etiquette (for comparison activities)
- Government of Canada Site: http://www.canada.gc.ca (Canadians, Newcomers to Canada)
- Yahoo! Canada, Society and Culture Directory: http://ca.dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture
- Yahoo! Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, customs, etiquette Canada

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Outcomes (CLB 3, 4)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- greet, introduce self, and ask about the other person; introduce two people
- open, close, and respond to short casual small talk; take leave appropriately
- identify formal and informal styles, verbal and non-verbal details in greetings, introductions, and leave-taking
- identify specific factual details and implied meanings in a dialogue of casual small talk or a short phone call
- get information from a simple, explicit, one- to two-paragraph text
- write a personal message in three- to five-sentence informal notes
- describe a custom in five to eight sentences

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- expressions for introductions (*I'd like to introduce, Have you met...*)
- expressions for small talk (*terrible, so-so, couldn't be better, great, nice day*)
- expressions for opening and closing conversations (*You look nice today, Well..., It was nice seeing you, I have to get going*)
- idioms (*stay in touch, for ages, get going*)
- adverbs: time, frequency, duration
- phrasal verbs (*ask out, bring up, butt in, run into, line up, help out, call up*)
- questions: tag, wh-, yes/no
- verb tenses: simple present, past (regular and irregular forms)
- pronunciation: contrast /p/ (*open, people, sip*) and /b/ (*public, table, cab*)

Sample Tasks

1. Introduce yourself to classmates and them to each other. Practice both roles: the person introducing and the person being introduced.

   All Levels: ELLIS – Intro – Greetings, Introductions, and Goodbyes.

   Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

2. Listen to a dialogue of a Monday morning small talk conversation asking about the weekend and answer questions.
3. Read a text about acceptable topics of conversation when people meet for the first time. Cross off unacceptable topics in a given list and explain the reason to your partner.

   Novice: Create a table with the following columns: Topics of Conversation, Canada, other countries represented in the class. Insert the topics of conversation from Language Task 3 in the first column, and then insert check marks in the appropriate cells to indicate if the items are acceptable in Canada or the other countries.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Save As, Insert Table, Format Table, Insert Symbol (Wingdings)

4. Write five to eight sentences about a custom in your country such as marriage, death, or birth of a child. Read to a partner or small group.

Leisure Activities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- benefits of participation in leisure activities
- clubs concerned with leisure activities
- costs of activities and low-cost alternatives
- cultural differences in leisure pursuits, including gender-based and age-based activities
- leisure activities for children, such as day camps, swimming lessons, recreation centres
- local and seasonal leisure activities
- local sites and organizations offering cultural or sporting events
- volunteer work as an alternative leisure activity

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- attend leisure shows (e.g., Outdoor Life Show)
- participate in leisure activities to acquire specialized vocabulary and to practice socializing in English
- use "how-to" books with illustrations for reading practice
- use leisure activities to develop self-esteem and confidence for language learning
- use picture dictionaries for specialized terminology
- visit tourism bureau, chamber of commerce, public library for information on activities

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Amazing! Interviews and Conversations*: Chapter 6, "Sports"; Chapter 9, "Free-time Activities"
- *Canadian Concepts 3, Second Edition*: Unit 10, "In Your Spare Time"
- *Great Ideas*: Chapter 7, "Staying Home"; Chapter 8, "Going Out"
- *LINC Classroom Activities, LINC 3*: "Recreation"
- continuing education catalogues
- local parks and recreation brochures
- local YMCA or YWCA may provide an orientation tour
- ELLIS – Intro – Social Situations
- Tense Buster – Intermediate – Will and going to – Practice: decisions
- Active Ontario: http://www.activeontario.org
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Recreation: http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca (Sport and Recreation)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Community and Recreation, Arts and Culture *or* Sports and Recreation)
- YMCA Canada: http://www.ymca.ca (follow links to local branch's schedule)
- recreation, leisure Ontario

Leisure Activities

Topic Outcomes (CLB 3, 4)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- leave a short telephone message with details of arrangements for a leisure activity
- ask for, accept, or decline assistance
- tell a story about own leisure activities or hobbies
- express immediate and future needs, wants, plans
- identify expressions used to ask for and accept assistance
- identify factual details and some implied meanings in a listening text about free-time activities
- get information from a brochure or flyer from a local recreation center
- use a standard map to locate recreation facilities
- fill out a 15- to 20-item fitness survey
- write five to eight sentences about own leisure activities

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for sports, hobbies, and interests
- idioms (*free time, spare time, pastime, be fit, stay in shape, couch potato, easy as pie*)
- expressions for requesting, accepting, and rejecting assistance (*I need help with…, Yes please, No thanks*)
- adverbs: frequency, duration, manner
- gerunds and infinitives
- modals: permission, polite requests (*may, can, could, would*)
- questions: wh-, yes/no
- verb tenses: simple present, future with *going to*
- pronunciation: reduced form of "do" (*How often d' you exercise?*)

Sample Tasks

1. Work with a partner and leave a telephone message for a friend about a planned evening activity.

   Experienced: Use Windows Sound Recorder to record a message from Language Task 1. Save the file to allow your instructor or other learners to listen.

   Skills: (Windows Sound Recorder) Controls, Save, Peripherals (Speakers, Headset)

2. Listen to a dialogue of people talking about their free-time activities. Match the people with a list of activities.

3. Find a course that interests you in a brochure from a recreation centre. Answer questions about cost, location, number of weeks, etc.

   Novice: Create a table of information about different kinds of facilities in your community (e.g. theatres, art galleries, parks, etc.). Preview and print for reference.

   Experienced: Format the table by using the Table Toolbar to shade cells and change the line style on the cell and table borders.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Insert Table, Table Toolbar, Borders and Shading, Print Preview, Print

4. Complete a fitness survey and compare with classmates.

Celebrations

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- appropriate gifts for specific celebrations and special occasions in Canada
- conventions around gift giving and gift opening at parties
- cultural differences in attitudes concerning gender- and age-based activities
- cultural differences in celebrations
- customs associated with celebrations for children
- customs associated with parties (arrival and departure, role of guests and hosts, giving gifts)
- meaning and customs of special days celebrated in Canada (e.g., Mother's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, St. Jean Baptiste Day)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- compare celebrations in Canada with those of own country or classmates' countries
- confirm or clarify appropriate message choice in greeting card with proficient English speaker
- learn appropriate messages for greeting cards
- learn short polite phrases for extending, accepting, and declining invitations
- observe the actions of others at celebrations and ask questions
- read simple published materials about specific social occasions
- rehearse short conventional expressions for thanks and congratulations

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Canadian Concepts 4, Second Edition*: Unit 8, "It's All in the Family"
- *Gateway to Canada*: "The Mosaic of Canada"
- *Interchange 2*: Unit 8, "Let's Celebrate"
- *Let's Celebrate*
- *Ontario Reader 2001*: "Getting married the traditional way"
- *When's the Next Canadian Holiday?*
- *Canada: A Cultural Profile*
- sample invitations and greeting cards with written messages inside
- Chinese New Year: http://www.new-year.co.uk/chinese/cards/cards.htm and http://123greetings.com/events/chinese_new_year
- Ramadan and Eid cards: http://www.123greetings.com/events/eid
- Yahoo Canada Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, holidays, enter name of specific holiday (e.g., Ramadan)

Celebrations

Topic Outcomes (CLB 4-5)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- offer, accept, and decline an invitation
- express and respond to compliments and congratulations
- tell a detailed story about a planned future celebration
- ask for and give information related to a common celebration in Canada or own country
- identify situation and relationship between speakers in a dialogue
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a descriptive or narrative text about a celebration
- get information from a simple two- to three-paragraph text
- write a three- to five-sentence note for an invitation, thank-you card, regret
- write a one-paragraph description of a celebration

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*Diwali, Rosh Hashanah, Chinese New Year, shower, anniversary, engagement, congratulations*)
- phrases for expressing and responding to apology, regrets, excuses (*Thank you for..., I appreciate your..., but..., I'm afraid I won't be able to make it, That's okay, I understand*)
- idioms (*live it up, have a ball, over the hill, paint the town red*)
- adverbs of frequency
- conjunctions and transition words
- prepositional phrases
- verbs: *hope, wish*
- verb tenses: present, past, and future
- pronunciation: intonation in sentences expressing and responding to apologies, regrets, and excuses

Sample Tasks

1. Role-play giving, accepting, and declining an invitation to a celebration.
2. Listen to a presentation about celebrations in Canada and other countries. Complete a chart comparing the celebrations.
3. Read a text about a celebration in Canada and answer questions.
4. Write an invitation to a classmate for a celebration in your culture. Include details about the celebration.

   Novice: Word-process the invitation in Language Task 4. Print for peer evaluation.

   Experienced: Insert Clip Art Pictures or pictures found on the Internet in the invitation created in Language Task 4. Print one for evaluation and class display. Print another to give to a classmate.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Save as, Insert Picture (Clip Art or From File), Format Picture, Print, Save Picture As (Browser)

Additional Tasks

All Levels: ELLIS – Master Pronunciation – Speech Acts – Dealing with Language Problems – Express Disappointment.

Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

Cultural Diversity

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- advantages of diversity
- balancing individual and collective rights
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canadian Human Rights Act, Employment Equity Act, Official Languages Act, Pay Equity Act, and Multiculturalism Act
- connection between multiculturalism and Canadian identity
- constitutional right of parents, who are members of the French linguistic or English minority in a province, to have their children educated in that language, where numbers warrant
- ethnocultural associations
- history of multiculturalism in Canada
- past failures to protect minorities (e.g., Canadians of Japanese descent during Second World War)
- peaceful conflict resolution
- respect for cultural distinctiveness
- ways to combat racism and intolerance

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- attend cultural events outside of one's own cultural group
- learn politically correct terms
- use repetition and rephrasing to clarify information provided by community agencies
- volunteer with an ethnic organization

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Amazing 2! Canadian Newspaper Stories*: Chapter 6, "Mountie in a Turban"
- *Brainwaves*: Part 1, "Politics is the Game"
- *Gateway to Canada*: "The Mosaic of Canada"
- *New Interchange 3*: Unit 5, "Crossing Cultures"
- *Ontario Reader 2001*: "Diversity: This is what 'Canadian' looks like"
- *Read On Canada*: Chapter 3, "Taking Action Against Crime"
- About Canada Online Publications: http://www.pch.gc.ca/csp-pec/english/about
- All One Heart: http://www.alloneheart.com
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: http://lois.justice.gc.ca/en/charter
- Canadian Heritage Multiculturalism: http://www.pch.gc.ca/multi/flashindex.html
- Canadian Race Relations Foundation: http://www.crr.ca
- CIC Cultural Profiles Project: http://cwr.utoronto.ca/cultural/english
- Statistics Canada: http://www.statcan.ca
- cultural diversity, multiculturalism

Cultural Diversity

Topic Outcomes (CLB 4, 5)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- participate in a conversation by showing interest and taking turns
- tell a detailed story of a custom from own culture
- give opinions, agree and disagree in a small group discussion about multiculturalism
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a descriptive or narrative text
- find information about immigration in an authentic form, table, schedule, or directory
- get information about a multicultural issue from a simple two- to three-paragraph text
- write a one-paragraph description

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*ethnic origin, visible/racial minorities, multiculturalism, tolerance, discrimination*)
- expressions for showing interest and taking turns (*Really? That's interesting. Is that right? Hmm, What do you think?*)
- expressions for agreeing, disagreeing (*In my opinion, I don't see it that way*)
- adjective clauses (*One thing that surprised me was…, I like the fact that…*)
- complex sentences
- pronouns: reflexive, relative, reciprocal
- questions: tag, wh-
- verb tenses: present, past, habitual past
- pronunciation: intonation in tag questions

Sample Tasks

1. In a small group, discuss an issue involving cultural diversity. Report to the class.
   - Novice: Open an instructor-made file about cultural diversity with spelling errors. Spell-check and make corrections. (See http://alphaplus.ca/linc/cultural_diversity_novice.htm for sample activity.)
   - Experienced: Use the thesaurus to replace underlined words.

     Skills: Open, Save, Delete, Backspace, Spelling, Thesaurus
2. Listen to a conversation expressing first impressions of Canadian multiculturalism and answer questions.
3. Refer to immigration statistics to answer questions.
   - Novice: Insert information from Language Task 3 in a blank spreadsheet. Follow instructions to create simple formulas and apply functions. Create a graph or pie chart to illustrate the information. Preview and print for display.

     Skills: (Excel) Create and Insert Formula, Print Preview, Print
4. Write a paragraph describing own experience with cultural diversity in Canada.

Additional Tasks

- All Levels: Master Pronunciation – Speech Acts – Conversing – Express Opinions, Agree and Disagree.

  Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- acceptable behaviour in public places (e.g., lineups, smoking, public displays of affection)
- appropriate topics for small talk conversations
- Canadian concepts regarding time and physical proximity
- common practices for social situations such as visiting someone, ordering in a restaurant, weddings, baby showers, and funerals
- customs surrounding names
- differences between English and French culture
- gender issues in Canada
- initiating and/or responding to small talk conversations with neighbours
- non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, vocal volume, handshaking, and listening signals such as nodding
- telephone etiquette
- titles for addressing people

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- memorize and practice polite phrases for accepting or declining invitations
- observe the actions of others, ask questions
- practice common phrases used in telephone calls
- practice small talk conversations with classmates
- read simple published materials about specific social occasions
- role-play different social situations

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Grab Bag of Socializing*
- *Amazing 2! Canadian Newspaper Stories*: Chapter 10, "Long Distance Romance"
- *Amazing! Conversations and Interviews*: Chapter 1, "Dating and Marriage"
- *Brainwaves*: Part 1, "Sharing Customs and Culture"
- *Canadian Concepts 4, Second Edition*: Unit 1, "Finding Your Way"; Unit 7, "Where Does the Time Go?"
- *Let's Talk 3*: Unit 7, "Around the World"
- *Take Charge*: Unit 5, "At Home"
- *Take Part, Second Edition*: Unit 5, "Food for Thought"; Unit 7, "It's Customary"
- advice columns in the newspaper such as Ann Landers
- Canada – business culture, customs, and etiquette http://www.executiveplanet.com/community
- Etiquette in Other Countries: http://intljobs.about.com/cs/etiquette (for comparison activities)
- Government of Canada Site: http://www.canada.gc.ca (Canadians, Newcomers to Canada)
- Yahoo! Canada, Society and Culture Directory: http://ca.dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture
- Yahoo! Greetings: http://greetings.yahoo.ca
- postcards, customs, etiquette Canada

Customs & Social Behaviour

Topic Outcomes (CLB 4, 5)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- initiate and respond to small talk comments
- offer, accept, and decline an invitation
- express and respond to compliments and congratulations
- participate in a conversation by showing interest and taking turns
- give opinions, agree and disagree in small group discussion
- identify factual details and implied meanings in a dialogue containing compliments, invitation, offers, discussion of interests, likes/dislikes, or preferences
- identify situation and relationship between speakers in a dialogue
- get information from a two- to three-paragraph personal note, letter, or e-mail message
- write a short one-paragraph letter or note for an invitation, thanks, regrets, cancellation, or apology
- write a paragraph describing a social event you attended in the past

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- expressions for responding to small talk (*That's terrible, Sounds great, Oh good*)
- expressions for invitations (*Do you want to…, Why don't you come along? Let's…, Sounds good, RSVP*)
- expressions for compliments (*What a beautiful dress, Good for you*)
- expressions for showing interest and taking turns (*Really? That's interesting, Uh huh, Is that right? Hmm, What do you think?*)
- expressions for giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing (*I think that…, I'm with you, No way! Absolutely!*)
- compound sentences
- transition words
- verb tenses: simple past, habitual past, and future
- pronunciation: intonation for showing interest

Sample Tasks

1. In a group, discuss statements about customs in Canada and decide if they are true or false.
2. Listen to a dialogue concerning an invitation for dinner. Answer questions about the party and the relationship between the speakers.
3. Read personal notes and match to the appropriate occasions.
4. Write a paragraph about a social event you attended in Canada or own country.
   - Novice: Word-process Language Task 4.
   - Experienced: Add a title to Novice Task document by inserting WordArt. Follow instructions to edit or format the WordArt.

     Skills: Keyboarding, Insert/Format WordArt Save As, Print Preview, Print

Additional Tasks

- All Levels: ELLIS – Master Pronunciation – Speech Acts – Social Interactions – Formal and Informal Invitations.

  Skills: Open, Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

National Unity

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- distinct societies in Canada
- federal-provincial relationships
- history of Quebec in Confederation
- independence movements in different parts of Canada (e.g., Quebec, Western Canada)
- independence movements in other countries
- movement for Aboriginal self-government
- origins of bilingualism in Canada
- regional inequalities (economic and demographic)
- the effect of Canada's constitution on Quebec and Aboriginal nations
- unique culture and language of Aboriginal and French Canadians

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- develop strategies for vocabulary learning, such as grouping content words into categories and guessing word meaning from context in newspaper articles
- learn strategies for debating an issue (holding the floor, changing the topic, continuing after an interruption)
- paraphrase and repeat to confirm understanding
- practice taking notes when someone is speaking
- request clarification and repetition or explanation
- use unilingual learner's dictionary for unfamiliar words

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Amazing! Interviews and Conversations*: Chapter 12, "French and English Canada"
- *Gateway to Canada*: "The Mosaic of Canada," "Challenges for Canadians"
- *Ontario Reader 1999*: "Quebec Referendum"
- *Ontario Reader 2001*: "Canada's constitution"
- *The Sweater*
- CBC News Online Indepth Unity Debate: http://www.newsworld.cbc.ca/news/indepth/unity/index.html
- Council for Canadian Unity: http://www.ccu-cuc.ca
- First Nations Governance: http://www.fng-gpn.gc.ca
- Uni: http://www.uni.ca
- unity, national unity Canada

National Unity

Topic Outcomes (CLB 5, 6, 7)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- predict consequences of Quebec separation
- give a summary of the main points of a presentation
- express feelings, opinions; qualify own opinion in a group discussion on national unity
- identify mood and attitude of speakers in a listening text
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a 10- to 15-minute presentation, group discussion, report, or narration when events are not in sequence
- identify rhetorical signs of chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect
- understand a one-page moderately complex report, interview, news item, or story about national unity
- find information through a table of contents, index, or glossary
- write a one- or two-paragraph report to narrate a sequence of events, make a comparison, or give a detailed description

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*sovereignty, governance, Québécois, anglophone, francophone, bilingual, distinct society, federalism, separatism, nationalism*)
- expressions for giving and qualifying opinions (*I think that. It's important to remember that, and that is because, for these reasons*)
- expressions for feelings (*I am not happy about, I feel very strongly about, I am saddened by*)
- conditional sentences: real, unreal
- passive voice
- questions: tag, embedded
- pronunciation: English words that originate from French (*debut, soufflé, faux, resumé, bureau, sauté, tête-à-tête*)

Sample Tasks

1. Interview two Canadians about their views on national unity and share their opinions with the class.
2. Watch a short news report on an issue affecting Aboriginal or French-speaking Canadians. Summarize the main points presented. Compare your group's list with the others in the class.
3. Read two simplified texts about national unity from opposing viewpoints and identify biases in both texts. Answer questions and discuss in small groups. (See http://alphaplus.ca/linc/unity_computer_task.htm for a sample activity.)
4. Write a report to compare the three largest distinct societies in Canada: English-speaking, French-speaking, and Aboriginal. Read information provided by the instructor and give brief information on the following points: geographic location, uniqueness, one or two current issues.

   Novice: Work in pairs to create and show a presentation using your reports from Language Task 4. Create a slide for each point. Show your presentation to the class.

   Skills: (PowerPoint, Create a New Presentation, Font, Font Alignment, Insert Bullets and Numbering, Insert Clip Art, Show a Presentation

Social Issues

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- community resources for dealing with homelessness, teen pregnancy, poverty, unemployment, etc.
- government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Community and Social Services) that deal with specific social problems
- legal aspects of social issues (e.g., domestic violence)
- responsibilities of levels of government
- social advocacy groups and their work

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- practice calling community agencies to ask for information about social problems
- read for the gist without using a dictionary when they encounter unfamiliar words or phrases in newspaper articles
- scan the Blue Pages of the telephone directory for the names and addresses of MPPs
- volunteer with a social advocacy group

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Amazing! Interviews and Conversations*: Chapter 14, "People with Disabilities"
- *Read On Canada*: Chapter 4, "Wronged and Rights"
- *Words We Use*: Unit 18, "Legal Rights"
- local community information centres
- representatives from community agencies and advocacy groups to explain services offered (e.g., food bank, shelter)
- Canadian Council on Social Development: http://www.ccsd.ca
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Organizations Database, Social Services)
- The Centre for Social Justice: http://www.socialjustice.org
- Web networks community: http://community.web.net
- social issues, enter a specific issue (e.g., poverty)

Social Issues

Topic Outcomes (CLB 5, 6, 7)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- maintain a conversation by asking follow-up questions, confirming comprehension, holding the floor, changing the topic, continuing after an interruption
- predict consequences of action or inaction regarding a social issue
- express feelings, opinions, qualify own opinion; express reservations, approval, disapproval in a small group discussion
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a 10- to 15-minute presentation, report or narration
- identify rhetorical signals of chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect in an oral discourse
- find information in a directory (e.g., telephone directory) to locate agencies that deal with specific social issues
- understand a one-page moderately complex news item or story
- write a one- to two-paragraph report

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*illiteracy, poverty, domestic violence, homelessness, hostel, shelter, substance addiction*)
- expressions for maintaining conversations (*So what you're saying is…; Excuse me, I'd like to finish my point; As I was saying…; Anyway, going back to what you said…; That reminds me of…*)
- expressions for giving opinions (*I think that…, In my opinion…*)
- adjectives: comparative, superlative (*better, worse, more serious, more dangerous, the poorest, the most disadvantaged*)
- conditional sentences: real and unreal
- transition words (*however, on the other hand, in addition, nevertheless, yet*)
- pronunciation: stress on information words (*What I'm **most worried** about is **homelessness***)

Sample Tasks

1. Discuss a social issue in Canada from different perspectives (e.g., teen pregnancy from the perspectives of the parents, the teenager, a teacher, and a doctor).

   All Levels: ELLIS – Master Pronunciation – Speech Acts – Conversing – Express Opinions, Give and Accept Opinion.

   Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

2. Listen to a news story involving a social issue. Check off the words used to indicate chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect on a worksheet. Retell the story to a partner.
3. Use the White and Yellow Pages to complete a table with the names of local agencies that deal with specific social issues (e.g., homelessness, abused women, mental health).
4. Write a report describing a social issue.

   Novice: Word-process the report in Language Task 4.

   Experienced: Add a title to Novice Task document by inserting WordArt. Follow instructions to edit or format the WordArt.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Insert/Format WordArt, Save As, Print Preview, Print

What is Canadian?

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- Canadian cuisine
- Canadian heroes, writers, musicians, artists, athletes
- common topics of conversation (e.g., weather, sports)
- effect of climate, changing seasons, and geography on Canadian culture
- how Canadian culture varies from region to region
- influence of Aboriginal Peoples, English, French, and subsequent immigrant groups
- influence of American culture on Canada
- nationalism and Canadian identity
- symbols of Canada and the history and values they represent
- values that are important to Canadians

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- attend local holiday and multicultural celebrations
- match symbols with provinces (e.g., wheat sheaves and Saskatchewan, mountains and Alberta)
- practice small talk by referring to weather or sports
- read community newspapers to learn about local concerns
- read editorials in major newspapers to learn about attitudes, concerns, and values important to Canadians
- visit museums, art galleries, and other cultural locations to build a personal understanding of Canadian identity

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Being Canadian, Language for Citizenship*: Chapter 10, "Who Are These Canadians?"; Chapter 11, "What is Typically Canadian?"
- *Canada From Eh to Zed*
- *Canadian Concepts 6, Second Edition*: Unit 2, "Being Canadian, Slices of Life"
- *Symbols of Canada*
- Canada: A Cultural Profile
- Explore Canada – History
- Canadian Heroes: http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/2/6/index-e.html
- Ceremonial and Canadian Symbols Promotion: http://www.pch.gc.ca/ceremonial-symb/english/index.html
- Communication Canada – Fact Sheets – Canada and the World: http://www.communication.gc.ca/facts/index_e.html
- Oh Canada!: http://www.ualberta.ca/~bleeck/canada
- Well-Known People Who Happen To Be Canadian: http://schwinger.harvard.edu/~terning/Canadians/main.html
- Canada symbols, Canadian culture

What is Canadian?

Topic Outcomes (CLB 5, 6, 7)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- tell a detailed story of own impressions of Canadian culture, giving reasons
- describe, compare, and contrast an aspect of culture in Canada and own country
- express feelings, opinions; qualify own opinion in a small group discussion
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a 10- to 15-minute presentation
- find information in a brochure or directory about a local cultural event
- find and compare two to three pieces of information in a CD-ROM
- take a phone message or information from a pre-recorded message with five to seven details about local cultural attractions and events
- write a one- to two-paragraph report about an aspect of Canadian culture

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*cultural, identity, belief, standard of living, bilingual, values, multicultural, heritage, impression*)
- phrases for expressing and qualifying opinions (*I think, I feel, I believe, What I meant was, What I'm trying to say is*)
- adjective clauses
- adverb clauses with *after, before, when*
- conditional sentences: real, unreal
- logical connectors (*and, so, but, because, therefore, on the other hand, however*)
- noun clauses
- prepositions of purpose (*Canadians use humour to lighten a tense situation*)
- verb tenses: simple past and past perfect
- pronunciation: /v/ (*value, voice*) and /f/ (*famous, future*)

Sample Tasks

1. Give a presentation about an aspect of Canadian culture that differs from your own (e.g., attitude toward work and family, friendships, business relationships) and answer questions.

   Novice: Work in groups to create and show presentations for Language Task 1.

   Skills: (PowerPoint) Create a New Presentation, Font, Font Alignment, Insert Bullets and Numbering, Insert Clip Art, Show a Presentation

2. Watch a video about a region of Canada. Answer questions from a class brainstorming exercise prior to the viewing.
3. Refer to brochures or an on-line web site with information about upcoming local cultural events. Find events you would be interested in attending during each weekend of the coming month. Write the details (location, time, price of admission) beside the dates and why you'd like to attend.
4. Write about the topic "My Impressions of Canada."

   Novice: Word-process Language Task 4.

   Experienced: Add appropriate Clip Art and a page border to the Novice Task.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Insert Picture (Clip Art), Page Border, Save As, Print Preview, Print

Appendix C

Family & Relationships

Family Problems

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- children's legal rights in Canada
- conflict resolution
- counselling services for families
- cultural differences in attitude toward spousal abuse
- cultural differences in child discipline and sex education
- elder abuse
- parental rights and obligations
- problems arising from generation gap and differences in traditions and cultures
- recognizing signs of drug abuse, smoking, eating disorders, sexual abuse, emotional abuse
- role of police in family problems
- social programs for teenagers
- telephone helplines

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- ask for assistance from agencies in own ethnic community
- ask for counselling in own language
- talk to other parents (e.g., classmates, neighbours) for advice on resources or problem-solving strategies

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Family Violence is Abuse*
- Child and Family Services Portal on 211Toronto.ca: http://www.211toronto.ca (Child and family services)
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Health Canada Online: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Just for You, Parents)
- Legal Canadian FAQs: http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/legalfaqs/nat/v-chi-en.htm (Child Abuse)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family problems; name of specific problem (e.g., elder abuse)

Family Problems

Topic Outcomes (CLB 1)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- request assistance with a family problem
- give basic personal information
- identify expressions used to request assistance
- identify details in a simple listening text about a family problem: numbers, a few keywords, short expressions
- get information from a very basic text of up to five sentences
- copy agency names and telephone numbers from a simple directory for personal use or to complete a short writing task
- describe a personal situation by filling in blanks in a short three- to five-sentence guided text

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary and expressions (*drinks too much, no money, drugs, hit, scream, fight, swear, sad, pregnant, sick*)
- vocabulary for giving personal information (*name, address, phone number*)
- vocabulary for dates and time
- numbers: cardinal, ordinal
- expressions for requesting assistance (*Please help, Can you help me? I have a problem*)
- pronouns: subject and object
- verbs: *have* and *be*
- pronunciation: tense and lax vowels (/iy/*beat*, /ɪ/*bit*, /ey/*late*, /ɛ/ *let*, /uw/ *boot*, /ʊ/ *book*)

Sample Tasks

1. Work with a partner to match pictures with a list of problems.
2. Listen to simple dialogues of clients making appointments at community agencies. Complete sentences by filling in blanks with date, time.
3. Find the telephone numbers of emergency helplines in the front section of the telephone directory.

   Novice: Create a table and insert name of helplines and telephone numbers in Language Task 3. Preview and print for future reference.

   Skills: Insert Table, Save, Keyboarding, Print Preview, Print
4. Describe a family situation by completing gapped sentences.

Family Relationships

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- alternative family arrangements (e.g., blended families, common-law relationships, families with adopted children, same-sex couples)
- cultural differences in family relationships (e.g., parental expectations of children, role of seniors, levels of formality)
- effect of Western/Canadian culture on children's relationships with parents
- multicultural families
- types of families (e.g., extended, nuclear, single parent)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- communicate with family in other countries using the Internet
- use personal photographs to describe own family relationships
- use picture dictionaries and family trees to describe own family relationships

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Basic Grammar in Action*: Unit 3, "The Family"
- *Canadian Concepts 1, Second Edition*: Unit 9, "My Family"
- *English Extra*: Unit 2, "There is no school on Saturday"
- *Foundations*: Unit 1, "Personal Information"
- *Going Places 1*: Unit 19, "Your Family"
- *Side by Side, Book 1, Second Edition*: Unit 6, "My Favourite Photographs"
- *The ESL Toolbox*: Unit 4, "Culture Checks"
- *The New Grammar in Action 1*: Unit 4, "The Family"
- *The Oxford Picture Dictionary, Canadian Edition*: Unit 2, "People"
- ELLIS – Intro – Home and Family
- Tense Buster – Elementary – I, me, my
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family relationships Canada

Family Relationships

Topic Outcomes (CLB 1)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- give basic personal information about own family
- identify details in a listening text about family: numbers, letters, a few keywords, short expressions
- understand a short greeting card text
- get information from a very basic text of up to five sentences about family relationships
- complete a standard greeting card with minimum required information
- describe personal family situation by filling in blanks in a short three- to five-sentence guided text

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for family relationships
- vocabulary for simple greeting cards (*Happy Birthday, Get Well Soon*)
- possessive adjectives
- pronouns: demonstrative, subject
- nouns: singular, plural
- *there is/ there are*
- verbs: *be, have*
- simple present tense
- pronunciation: voiced and voiceless -s endings of plural nouns /s/ (*aunts, parents*), /z/ (*uncles, brothers*)

Sample Tasks

1. Bring family photos to class and describe own family.
   - Novice: Open an instructor-made blank family tree and fill in with the names of own family members. Preview and print.

     Skills: Open, Save As, Insert Text, Print Preview, Print
2. Listen to a text about a family and answer questions by matching family vocabulary with names of family members.
3. Match greeting cards with the family members they are intended for (e.g., mother, brother, grandfather).
4. Write about own family by filling in blanks.
   - Novice: Word-process the completed text from Language Task 4. Bold and underline the gapped text.

     Skills: Keyboarding, Font, Select Text, Font Style (Bold, Underline)

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- child support
- Children's Aid Societies and their services
- cultural differences in attitude toward family roles and responsibilities
- Family Law Act of Ontario
- finding child care
- gender issues in Canada
- marital rights and legal protection in Ontario
- parental obligations
- services available for seniors
- spousal support
- types of child care available (e.g., home child care, child-care centre, babysitter)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- learn about culture in Canada in order to appreciate its effect on roles within own family
- talk to classmates to find out how their families have adapted to their new country
- use the Internet and community directories to locate agencies and resources that provide family counselling and support

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Basic Grammar in Action*: Unit 4, "At Home"
- *Foundations*: Unit 2, "Everyday Activities"
- *Going Places 1*: Unit 6, "Who's Cleaning the House?"
- *Side by Side, Book 1, Second Edition*: Unit 9, "Mr. And Mrs. DiCarlo"; Unit 10, "Every weekend is important to the Franklin Family"
- *The ESL Toolbox*: Unit 4, "Culture Checks"
- *The New Grammar in Action*: Unit 17, "Around the House"
- legal aid and community legal clinics
- BC Council for Families: http://www.bccf.bc.ca
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Family Service Canada: http://www.familyservicecanada.org (Documents)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Outcomes (CLB 1)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- give basic personal information about own family responsibilities
- express ability, inability regarding family responsibilities
- identify details in a listening text about family roles: numbers, letters, a few keywords, short expressions
- get information from a very basic text of up to five sentences
- describe personal family responsibilities by filling in blanks in a short three- to five-sentence guided text

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for family members and household responsibilities (*do dishes, laundry, chores, cook, clean, wash floors, cut the grass, pay the bills, iron, vacuum, grocery shopping, babysitting*)
- possessive adjectives
- *can, can't* for ability, inability
- prepositions of time
- subject pronouns
- yes/no questions
- pronunciation: /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ contrast /ʃ/ (*dishes, wash, she*), /tʃ/ (*watch, catch, chores*)

Sample Tasks

1. Ask a classmate a list of instructor-made questions about household chores (e.g., *Can you cook? Can you clean?*). Record his/her name and answers on the worksheets.
2. Listen to someone talk about her/his typical day and answer questions by filling in blanks.
3. Match a list of household chores with pictures.
4. Write about own family responsibilities by filling in blanks in sentences.

   Novice: Create a list of household responsibilities. Insert the member of your family who is responsible for each chore at your home. Change the colour of the items in the list according to the family members' names (e.g., Van-green, Thuy-red, Lan-purple).

   Skills: Keyboarding, Font, Font Color

Family Problems

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- children's legal rights in Canada
- conflict resolution
- counselling services for families
- cultural differences in attitude toward spousal abuse
- cultural differences in child discipline and sex education
- elder abuse
- parental rights and obligations
- problems arising from generation gap
- recognizing signs of drug abuse, smoking, eating disorders, sexual abuse, emotional abuse
- role of police in family problems
- social programs for teenagers
- telephone helplines

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- ask for assistance from agencies in own ethnic community
- ask for counselling in own language
- ask for written version of information about children's rights
- attend parenting workshops
- learn mediation strategies for parent-child conflicts
- share parenting issues with other parents

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Family Violence is Abuse*
- About: The Human Internet: http://childparenting.miningco.com/library/howto/htfamilyconflict.htm (How to Resolve Family Problems and Conflicts)
- Child and Family Services Portal on 211Toronto.ca: http://www.211toronto.ca (Child and family services)
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Fact Sheet: Elder Abuse: http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/files/facts7.asp
- Health Canada Online: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Just for You, Parents)
- Legal Canadian FAQs: http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/legalfaqs/nat/v-chi-en.htm (Child Abuse)
- Parenting of Adolescents: http://parentingteens.miningco.com/msub11.htm
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family problems Canada; name of specific problem (e.g., elder abuse)

Family Problems

Topic Outcomes (CLB 2)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- make and respond to simple requests
- give expanded basic personal information
- give a basic description of a family problem
- identify a range of expressions used to make and respond to requests
- identify details in a listening text: numbers, letters, time references, places, keywords, short expressions
- get information from a very basic text of up to seven sentences
- copy information from a directory for personal use or to complete a task
- give a basic description by filling in blanks in a short five- to six-sentence guided text or by answering five to six simple questions

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*abuse, injury, right, lawyer, trouble, drugs, alcohol, fighting*)
- vocabulary for giving personal information (*name, address, phone number*)
- expressions: time, frequency
- modals for requests
- possessive adjectives
- pronouns: subject, object
- questions: yes/no, wh-
- verb tenses: simple present, simple past
- pronunciation: unstressed vowel sounds (*alcohol, cousin, support*)

Sample Tasks

1. Practice asking for help with different problems illustrated in pictures.
2. Listen to a dialogue of someone explaining a family problem to a friend and circle details in a list.
3. Read a short story about a family problem and answer true/false questions.
4. Complete a worksheet by locating and copying phone numbers and addresses of family agencies from a community directory.

Additional Tasks

Experienced: Open an instructor-made file containing simple sentences describing family problems and another file with a list of local agencies or services to help with the problems. Switch between documents using the Window menu to cut appropriate agency names and paste them beside corresponding problems.

Skills: Open, Switch Between Multiple Windows, Cut, Paste

Family Relationships

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- alternative family arrangements (e.g., blended families, common-law relationships, families with adopted children, same-sex couples)
- cultural differences in family relationships (e.g., parental expectations of children, role of seniors, levels of formality)
- effect of Western/Canadian culture on children's relationships with parents
- multicultural families
- types of families (e.g., extended, nuclear, single parent)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- communicate with family in other countries using the Internet
- use personal photographs to describe own family relationships
- use picture dictionaries and family-trees to understand family relationships

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Conversation Book 1, Revised Third Edition*: Unit 1, "Welcome to Class"
- *Canadian Concepts 2, Second Edition*: Unit 4, "Family and Friends"
- *Interchange 1*: Unit 5, "Tell me about your family"
- *Ontario Reader 1998*: "My father would be proud of me"
- *The ESL Tool Box*: Unit 4, "Culture Checks"
- ELLIS – Intro – Home and Family
- Tense Buster – Lower Intermediate – Present Continuous – Practice: proofreading
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca/site_map (Family Life)
- Kinderstart: http://www.kinderstart.com/familydynamics
- Parents Place.com: http://www.parentsplace.com
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family relationships Canada

Family Relationships

Topic Outcomes (CLB 2)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- give a basic description of own family
- talk about things family members enjoy
- identify details in a listening text: numbers, letters, time references, places, keywords, short expressions
- generally understand the main point of a short written message or text in a special occasion greeting card, invitation, or postcard
- get information from a very basic text of up to seven sentences
- complete an expanded range of greeting cards with minimum required information
- give a basic description of personal family situation by filling in blanks in a short five- to six-sentence guided text or by answering five to six simple questions

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary for family relationships and greeting cards
- adjectives: comparative, superlative, possessive
- subject pronouns
- questions: wh-, yes/no
- simple present tense
- verbs: *be, have*
- pronunciation: /p/ and /b/ contrast (*brother/parent, boy/play*)

Sample Tasks

1. Find someone who…: Ask classmates questions in order to find someone who meets specific criteria listed on a worksheet (e.g., has siblings, is an only child, lives with extended family, etc.)

   Experienced: Interview three classmates using questions from Language Task 1. Organize the information in a table. Insert check marks or other symbols using Wingdings in the appropriate columns.

   Skills: Insert Table, Insert Symbol, Wingdings
2. Listen to a story about a family and answer true/false questions.
3. Read greeting cards and choose appropriate messages from a list to insert in the cards.
4. Describe own family by answering five or six questions.

Additional Tasks

Experienced: Create a table to name and organize male and female family vocabulary (e.g., husband – wife, son – daughter, mother-in-law – father-in-law). Remove the cell borders between the paired words. Shade the two columns with your choice of colours.

Skills: Insert Table, Borders and Shading

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- child support
- Children's Aid Societies and their services
- cultural differences in attitude toward family roles and responsibilities
- Family Law Act of Ontario
- finding child care
- gender issues in Canada
- marital rights and legal protection in Ontario
- parental obligations
- services available for seniors
- spousal support
- types of child care available (e.g., home child care, child-care centre, babysitter)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- ✓ learn about culture in Canada in order to appreciate its effect on roles within own family
- ✓ talk to classmates to find out how their families have adapted to their new country
- use the Internet and community directories to locate agencies and resources that provide family counselling and support

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Grammar Connections 1*: Unit 3, "What a Nice Family"
- *New Grammar in Action 1*: Unit 4, "The Family"
- *The ESL Toolbox*: Unit 4, "Culture Checks"
- *The Pizza Tastes Great*: Unit 1, "Food"
- legal aid and community legal clinics
- ELLIS – Intro – Home and Family
- BC Council for Families: http://www.bccf.bc.ca
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Family Service Canada: http://www.familyservicecanada.org (Documents)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Outcomes (CLB 2)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- give a basic description of own family and responsibilities of family members
- talk about things one enjoys
- identify details in a listening text: numbers, letters, time references, places, keywords, short expressions
- get information from a very basic text of up to seven sentences
- give a basic description of family responsibilities by filling in blanks in a short five- to six-sentence guided text or by answering five to six simple questions

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary and expressions for household chores (*make the bed, do laundry, do the dishes, take out the garbage, housework, cleaning, gardening, babysitting*)
- adverbs of frequency
- possessive adjectives
- prepositions: time, location
- pronouns: interrogative, subject
- questions: wh-, yes/no
- *like* + gerund or infinitive
- simple present tense
- pronunciation: third person singular endings /z/ (*lives*), /s/ (*walks*), /əz/ (*watches*)

Sample Tasks

1. Complete a worksheet about household chores by asking a partner questions (e.g., *Who does the dishes? Who does the shopping?*). Record your partner's name and answers on the worksheet.

   Novice: Report your findings from Language Task 1 by word-processing sentences about partners' responses. Find and insert appropriate an appropriate Clip Art picture.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Insert Picture (Clip Art)

2. Listen to a text about someone's day and put pictures in chronological order.
3. Read a dialogue of two people talking about household chores they enjoy doing. Answer true/false questions.
4. Write about the responsibilities of members of your family by answering questions.

   Experienced: Word-process the answers for Language Task 4. Change the orientation of the document to landscape. Add your name in a header and date in a footer. Print for evaluation.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Page Setup (Orientation), Insert Header and Footer, Print

Family Problems

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- children's legal rights in Canada
- conflict resolution
- counselling services for families
- cultural differences in attitude toward spousal abuse
- cultural differences in child discipline and sex education
- elder abuse
- parental rights and obligations
- problems arising from generation gap
- recognizing signs of drug abuse, smoking, eating disorders, sexual abuse, emotional abuse
- role of police in family problems
- social programs for teenagers
- telephone helplines

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- ask for assistance from agencies in own ethnic community
- ask for counselling in own language
- ask for written version of verbal information about children's rights
- attend parenting workshops
- guess meaning of unfamiliar words from context
- learn mediation strategies for parent-child conflicts
- learn strategies for conflict resolution
- share parenting issues with other parents

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Canadian Conversation Book, Book Two*: Unit 2, "Family Life"
- *Ontario Reader 1998*: "Bittersweet romance"
- *The Chicken Smells Good*: Unit 4, "Families and Fighting"
- advice columns such as Ann Landers
- *Family Violence is Abuse*
- guest speaker from an immigrant agency or family-counselling service
- About: The Human Internet: http://childparenting.miningco.com/library/howto/htfamilyconflict.htm (How to Resolve Family Problems and Conflicts)
- Child and Family Services Portal on 211Toronto.ca: http://www.211toronto.ca (Child and family services)
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Fact Sheet: Elder Abuse: http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/files/facts7.asp
- Health Canada Online: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Parenting)
- Legal Canadian FAQ's: http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/legalfaqs/nat/v-chi-en.htm (Child Abuse)
- Parenting of Adolescents: http://parentingteens.miningco.com/msub11.htm
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family problems Canada; name of specific problem (e.g., elder abuse)

Family Problems

Topic Outcomes (CLB 3, 4)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- indicate communication problems and ask for an explanation
- ask for, offer, accept, or decline assistance with a family problem
- give a brief description of a family problem
- talk about feelings
- identify expressions used to indicate communication problems
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a listening text about a family problem
- get information from a simple one- to two-paragraph text about a family problem
- describe a person, situation, or event in five to eight sentences

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*verbal, physical, emotional abuse, delinquency, alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, poverty, conflict*)
- expressions for worry or concern (*I'm worried about..., I'm afraid*)
- idioms (*be fed up with, blow one's top, drive someone crazy, get on one's nerves*)
- adjectives to describe feelings (*angry, frustrated, depressed, lonely*)
- adverbs of frequency
- modals: requests
- verb tenses: simple present, present continuous, simple past, present perfect
- pronunciation: intonation and pitch for indicating emotion

Sample Tasks

1. Role-play a family problem involving a teenager. Describe the problem and your feelings.
   - **Novice:** Recall and word-process a version of the dialogue from Language Task 1. Check spelling, preview, and print for peer evaluation.
   - **Experienced:** Insert an appropriate watermark, and change font style in previous task. Preview and print for peer evaluation.

     Skills: Spelling, Borders and Shading, Background (Watermark), Print Preview, Print
2. Listen to a description of a family problem. Then read a summary of the problem, check for accuracy, and identify errors.
3. Read a description of a family problem and answer comprehension questions.
4. Write about an event involving a family problem.

Family Relationships

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- alternative family arrangements (e.g., blended families, common-law relationships, families with adopted children, same-sex couples)
- cultural differences in family relationships (e.g., parental expectations of children, role of seniors, levels of formality)
- effect of Western/Canadian culture on children's relationships with parents
- multicultural families
- types of families (e.g., extended, nuclear, single parent)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- communicate with family in other countries using the Internet
- use personal photographs to describe own family relationships

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Canadian Conversation Book, Book Two*: Unit 2, "Family Life"
- *Line by Line, Second Edition, Intermediate*: Unit 5, "A Wonderful Family"
- *Ontario Reader 1997*: "One big happy family"
- ELLIS – Intro – Home and Family
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca/site_map (Family Life)
- Kinderstart: http://www.kinderstart.com/familydynamics
- Parents Place.com: http://www.parentsplace.com
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family relationships Canada

Family Relationships

Topic Outcomes (CLB 3, 4)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- give a brief description of own family
- talk about health and feelings of family members
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a listening text about a family
- find information about families in a table
- get information from a simple, explicit, one- to two-paragraph text
- write a five- to eight-sentence text about a personal family situation

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*adopted, nuclear, extended, blended families, single parent families, stepchild, divorced, separated, same-sex couple*)
- vocabulary for health and feelings
- adjectives: comparative, superlative, order
- verb tenses: simple present, simple past, present continuous
- pronunciation: word stress on content words in sentences (*This is my oldest son*)

Sample Tasks

1. Describe family members to a partner using personal photographs.
   - Novice: Word-process the names of people in your immediate family and words for their relationships. Save and print the list. Using scissors, cut out the names and relationship words and paste onto a diagram of a family tree. Present to a small group or the class.
   - Advanced: Create a family tree by using text boxes for names of family members and the Line and Arrow buttons on the Drawing Toolbar for connecting the text boxes. Preview and print your family tree for presentation or display.

     Skills: Save As, Insert Text Box, Drawing Toolbar, Line and Arrow Buttons, Print Preview, Print
2. Listen to a text about a family and complete a family tree based on the information heard.
3. Read a simple text about Canadian families and answer questions.
4. Write about your own family situation, including information about extended family.

Additional Tasks

All Levels: Find information about Living Arrangements in Private Households on the Statistics Canada web site: http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Families/famil52a.htm. Decide which household definition fits your family. How many other people in Ontario have the same situation?

Skills: Internet Basics, Browsers, URL, Hyperlink

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- child support
- Children's Aid Societies and their services
- cultural differences in attitude toward family roles and responsibilities
- Family Law Act of Ontario
- finding child care
- gender issues in Canada
- marital rights and legal protection in Ontario
- parental obligations
- services available for seniors
- spousal support
- types of child care available (e.g., home child care, child-care centre, babysitter)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- learn about culture in Canada in order to appreciate its effect on roles within own family
- talk to classmates to find out how their families have adapted to their new country
- use the Internet and community directories to locate agencies and resources that provide family counselling and support

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *A Canadian Conversation Book, Book Two*: Unit 2, "Family Life"
- legal aid and community legal clinics
- BC Council for Families: http://www.bccf.bc.ca
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Family Service Canada: http://www.familyservicecanada.org/ (Documents)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Outcomes (CLB 3, 4)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- tell a story about the sharing of responsibilities in own family
- give a brief description of family routines
- talk about feelings regarding family responsibilities
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a listening text
- get information from a simple, explicit, one- to two-paragraph text
- describe own family's daily routines in five to eight sentences

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*chores, errands, housekeeping, role, allowance*)
- idioms (*make ends meet, wear the pants, lend a hand*)
- adjectives: comparative, superlative
- adverbs of frequency
- modals: necessity, obligation
- prepositions: time, location
- questions: wh-, yes/no
- verb + gerund or infinitive to express likes, dislikes
- simple present tense
- pronunciation: -ing endings (*shopping, cleaning, gardening, babysitting*)

Sample Tasks

1. Interview a partner about the busiest and most relaxing days of her/his week.

   Experienced: Create columns with headings for each day of the week. Insert responsibilities you have for each day. Follow instructions to insert paragraph borders. Colour code the level of activity for each day by choosing shading for busy, busiest, free.

   Skills: Format Columns, Insert Column Break, Borders and Shading

2. Listen to a dialogue of someone describing her/his least favourite household chores. Answer questions.
3. Read a text about roles and responsibilities in a family and answer multiple-choice questions.
4. Write about a typical day in your family.

   Novice: Word-process Language Task 4. Preview and print.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Save As, Print Preview, Print

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- child welfare and parental obligations in Canada
- child-care options including subsidized care
- cultural differences and attitudes toward family and extended family
- divorce laws in Ontario and how they differ from own country
- elderly persons in Canada
- family laws in Ontario including the Child Protection Act
- gender issues in Canada
- marital rights and legal protection in Ontario
- relationship between the family and society
- types of families (e.g., nuclear, extended, single parent, same-sex, common-law)

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- access counselling in own language
- practice asking for referrals for specific problems or issues
- use community agency resources to deal with family problems
- use pictures when describing own family
- use predicting skills to locate key information in printed pamphlets
- use the Internet and other directories to locate agencies and resources

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Amazing 2! Canadian Newspaper Stories*: Chapter 7, "The Cappuccino Family"
- *Canadian Concepts 4, Second Edition*: Unit 8, "It's All in the Family"
- *Take Charge:* Unit 5, "At Home"
- *Take Part, Second Edition*: Unit 9, "Family Ties"
- *The Parenting Program*
- legal aid clinics
- *Across Generations*
- BC Council for Families: http://www.bccf.bc.ca
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca
- Child Welfare Resource Centre: http://www.childwelfare.ca/cwrccas.shtml
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Family Service Canada: http://www.familyservicecanada.org (Documents)
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- family

Family Roles & Responsibilities

Topic Outcomes (CLB 4-5)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- tell a detailed story about an event in the present, past, or future
- give a detailed description
- ask for and give information related to routine daily activities
- give opinions, agree and disagree in a small group discussion
- identify the situation and relationship between speakers
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a descriptive or narrative text
- get information from a two- to three-paragraph text
- write a one-paragraph description of experiences or events in the past

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*single parent, caregiver, child care, elder care, yard work, housekeeping, chores, stay-at-home mom, two-income family*)
- idioms (*wear the pants, henpecked husband, lend someone a hand, breadwinner, pull one's weight, bring one's work home*)
- expressions for giving opinions and agreeing or disagreeing (*In my opinion*)
- adjective clauses (*The father is the one who should...*)
- modals: suggestions, advice
- questions: yes/no, wh-
- verb tenses: simple present, simple past, present perfect, habitual past with *used to*, future
- pronunciation: sentence stress and tone for indicating mood

Sample Tasks

1. Brainstorm a list of household responsibilities with the class. Then interview a partner about who is responsible for those chores in his or her family.
2. Listen to conversations about sharing family responsibilities. For each, identify the relationship of the speakers and the topic of the conversation.

   Experienced: Prepare a conversation between a parent and a child about chores in the house. Record the conversation using the Windows sound recorder. Save and play the conversation for the class.

   Skills: Windows Sound Recorder, Controls, Save
3. Read a short text about the changing roles of mothers and fathers in today's society.

   Novice: Open an instructor-made file with incomplete sentences related to Language Task 3. Complete sentences by cutting and pasting from a list. Save and print for peer evaluation.

   Skills: Open, Save, Cut, Paste, Print
4. Write a paragraph about the responsibilities you had in your family when you were a child.

Friendship

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- appropriate ways to greet friends
- balancing personal and professional relationships
- cultural differences in perceptions of friendship
- dating services
- different register use for a friend or a co-worker
- non-romantic male/female relationships
- pen pals and Internet chat partners
- places to meet people
- responsibilities attached to friendship

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- learn culturally appropriate ways of expressing affection towards friends
- practice expressing feelings in English
- practice small talk conversations (openers, closers, responding to vague invitations)
- practice techniques to keep the conversation going (e.g., making eye contact, nodding, repeating, paraphrasing)
- use the Internet to find e-mail pals and safe chat partners

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Brainwaves*: Part 1, "Conversation Management"
- *Interchange 3*: Unit 1, "That's what friends are for"
- *The Oxford Picture Dictionary, Canadian Edition*: Unit 2, "People"
- *George and Rosemary*
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource*: Stage II, Social Interaction dialogues 1, 11
- Acquaintance or friend: building close friendships: http://www.cyberparent.com/friendship
- English as 2nd Language Chat: http://esl.about.com/mpchat.htm
- Friendship Overseas: http://www.d1.dion.ne.jp/~kentac
- Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connections: http://www.iecc.org
- msn chat: http://chat.msn.com
- The Friendship Page: http://www.friendship.com.au
- friendship

Friendship

Topic Outcomes (CLB 4, 5)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- initiate and respond to small talk comments
- offer, accept, or decline an invitation
- express and respond to a compliment or congratulations
- participate in a conversation by showing interest and taking turns
- identify factual details and implied meanings in a dialogue containing a compliment, an invitation, or an offer
- identify situation and relationship between speakers
- get information from a simple two- to three-paragraph text
- write a short one-paragraph formal or informal letter or three- to five-sentence note for an invitation, thank you, regret, cancellation, or apology

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- idioms (*drop someone a line, keep/stay in touch, shoot the breeze, wear out one's welcome, two peas in a pod, stab someone in the back*)
- expressions for giving and responding to compliments (*That's very kind of you*)
- adjectives (*honest, reliable, caring, fun loving, easygoing, understanding*)
- modals: requests, suggestions
- phrasal verbs (*get together, meet up with, catch up, run into, come over*)
- questions: wh-, yes/no, tag
- pronunciation: intonation in tag questions

Sample Tasks

1. Work with a partner. Create a list of situations where people might meet a new friend (e.g., ESL class, a party). Make small talk conversations for each situation.
2. Listen to a conversation between two friends talking about their weekends. Answer multiple-choice questions.
3. Read a text about building friendships. Answer true/false questions.

   Novice: Create and show a presentation of the strategies from Language Task 3.

   Skills: (PowerPoint) Create a New Presentation, Font, Font Alignment, Insert Bullets and Numbering, Insert Clip Art, Show a Presentation
4. Write a letter to a friend inviting her/him to visit you in Canada.

Additional Tasks

- All Levels: ELLIS – Senior Mastery – Casual Introductions and Small Talk – Making Introductions.
- All Levels: Tense Buster – Upper Intermediate – Past Continuous – Practice: Was doing/did.

  Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

Parenting Dilemmas

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- children's legal rights in Canada
- counselling services for parents and teenagers
- cultural differences in child discipline
- parental rights and obligations
- parenting information hotlines
- problems arising from generation gap
- signs of drug abuse, smoking, eating disorders
- social programs for teenagers
- what to do if a teenager is being detained by police

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- ask for written information about children's rights
- attend parenting workshops
- learn mediation strategies for parent-child conflicts
- learn to identify indicators of teen problems
- share parenting issues with other parents

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Brainwaves* Part 3, "Parenting Dilemmas"
- *LINC Parenting Program*
- Ann Landers or other advice columns in the newspaper
- BC Council for Families: http://www.bccf.bc.ca
- Canadian Parents Online: http://www.canadianparents.com (Library, Parenting-General)
- Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca
- Family Service Canada: http://www.familyservicecanada.org (Documents)
- Health Canada Online: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Parenting)
- Parenting of Adolescents: http://parentingteens.miningco.com/msub11.htm
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services: Child, Youth and Family)
- Transition Magazine – September 1998 – Immigrant Families Adapting to Life in Canada: http://www.vifamily.ca/tm/283
- parenting

Parenting Dilemmas

Topic Outcomes (CLB 4-5)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- give a detailed description of a parenting issue
- ask for and give information in an inquiry about a parenting problem
- give opinions, agree and disagree in a small group discussion
- express necessity, worry, or concern
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a descriptive or narrative text
- find information about resources for parents in an authentic directory
- get information from a simple two- to three-paragraph text about a parenting issue
- write a one-paragraph description of an experience with a parenting problem, giving reasons

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*drug abuse, spanking, teenage pregnancy, discipline, juvenile delinquency, safe sex, depression*)
- idioms (*be fed up with, blow one's top, get on one's nerves, have one's hands full, until you're blue in the face, time out*)
- expressions for indicating worry and concern
- adjectives: equative, non-equative
- modals: necessity, obligation, polite request
- passive voice (*Teenagers should be allowed to...*)
- questions: embedded, wh-, yes/no
- pronunciation: stressed/unstressed vowels (*abuse, discipline, delinquency*)

Sample Tasks

1. In a group, brainstorm a list of problems that immigrant parents face in Canada and suggest solutions.
2. Listen to parents talking about the rules they have for their children. On a worksheet, check off the rules you hear in the conversation.
3. Read advice for parents who have just come to Canada. Answer questions.
   - Novice: Word-process sentences containing unfamiliar words from Language Task 3. Highlight the words with a colour of your choice. Define the words after the sentence.
   - Experienced: Use Thesaurus to find three meanings for each word in previous task and decide which meaning would best replace the actual word in the sentence. Discuss your choices with a small group or the class.

     Skills: Keyboarding, Highlight, Thesaurus
4. Write about a problem you have had as a parent or as a son or daughter.

Additional Tasks

All Levels: ELLIS – Master Pronunciation – Conversing – Express Opinions, Disagree Politely

Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

Conflict Resolution

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- cultural differences related to dealing with conflicts
- dealing with personality clashes
- personality typing tools (e.g., True Colors, Myers-Briggs)
- professional counsellors who specialize in conflict resolution
- types of common conflicts (e.g., between spouses, parents and children, co-workers, people from different cultures, customers and businesses, neighbours)
- ways of avoiding or solving different types of conflict
- ways to avoid miscommunication

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- apply newly learned strategies to own circumstances
- ask for written version of verbal counselling information
- improve communication skills to avoid conflict
- listen attentively and delay speaking when resolving conflicts
- locate professional help in directories
- observe and use appropriate body language and tone of voice
- recognize signals such as facial expressions or hesitations in speech as predictors of a conflict
- role-play conflict-related situations
- talk to Canadians about issues pertaining to conflict resolution

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Dinner for Two*
- *Neighbours*
- *The Big Snit*
- Conflict Resolution Network: http://www.crnhq.org
- Conflict resolution resources on 211Toronto.ca: http://www.211toronto.ca (enter *conflict resolution* in search box)
- Family Mediation Centre: http://mediationcentre.com
- conflict resolution, family mediation

Conflict Resolution

Topic Outcomes (CLB 5, 6, 7)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- express and respond to a complaint, apology, regrets, excuses, disappointment, dissatisfaction
- ask for and respond to recommendations and advice
- express feelings, opinions; qualify own opinion in a small group discussion
- identify facts and inferences in a conversation expressing or responding to complaints, disappointment, dissatisfaction, or disapproval
- identify mood and attitude of speakers in an oral text
- suggest an appropriate conclusion to a story based on inferences
- understand a one-page moderately complex report, interview, or news item
- write a one- or two-paragraph story or report to narrate a sequence of events, describe a simple process, give a detailed description

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*attitude, frustration, racism, prejudice, attack, stereotyping, blame, miscommunication, communication skills, mediation*)
- idioms (*cool off, blow one's top, have a chip on one's shoulder, let it go, sleep on it, take it easy, be fed up with, get out of hand, jump all over someone*)
- expressions for apologizing and expressing disappointment (*I apologize…, I am surprised that…*)
- conditional sentences: real and unreal
- modals: suggestion, advice, advisability
- pronouns: reflexive, reciprocal
- speech: direct, reported
- pronunciation: using sentence stress to change meaning (*I'm **angry** about that, I'm angry about that, I'm angry about that*)

Sample Tasks

1. Brainstorm possible solutions for different types of conflict (e.g., between spouses, parents and children, co-workers, people from different cultures).
2. Listen to a dialogue about a conflict situation. Identify the mood and attitude of the speakers. Check off the complaints and responses you hear on a worksheet.
3. Read a newspaper story about a conflict situation and answer questions. (See http://alphaplus.ca/linc/topic2.htm for a sample activity.)
4. Write a story about dealing with an interpersonal personal conflict.

Additional Tasks

- All Levels: ELLIS – Senior Mastery – Discussing Business. Identify complaint and possible solution. Role-play situation with a partner.
- All Levels: ELLIS – Master Pronunciation – Speech Acts – Social Interactions – Apologize, Make Excuses; Dealing with Language Problems – Express Disappointment; Getting Things Done – Offer Suggestions

  Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

Professional Relationships

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace
- cultural comfort levels with space and touching
- cultural differences in understanding professional relationships
- cultural miscommunication in the workplace
- differentiating between personal and professional matters
- importance of team building
- levels of formality including correct register usage
- organizational culture
- personality typing tools (e.g., True Colors, Myers-Briggs)
- professional rules of conduct

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- become aware of and use culturally appropriate body language, facial expressions, tone of voice
- identify own strengths and weaknesses to better understand relationships with others
- learn strategies for starting and closing conversations
- learn techniques to keep a conversation going

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Communicating In The Real World*: Unit 10, "Conflict Management: What's the Problem?"
- *Take Part, Second Edition*: Unit 3, "The Workplace"
- *Crosstalk*
- *CLB Listening/Speaking Resource*: Stage II, Workplace dialogues
- Ellis – Senior Mastery – Discussing Business
- Communication Skills Test: http://www.queendom.com/tests/relationships/communication_skills_r_access.html
- Register Use in English: http://esl.about.com/library/weekly/aa091001a.htm
- professional relationships, networking tips

Senior Citizens

Topic Development Ideas

Classes might want to learn more about...

- discounts for seniors
- elder abuse (physical, psychological, or financial)
- financial assistance for seniors (Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Widowed Spouses' Allowance)
- health services for seniors (e.g., Ontario Drug Benefit Plan)
- housing for seniors (retirement homes, seniors' apartments, nursing homes for long-term care)
- local services for seniors (e.g., library and recreation programs)
- programs encouraging interaction between seniors and young people
- socio-cultural factors in dealing with seniors

Strategies for Learners

Learners find it useful to...

- ask classmates, teachers, or neighbours about local resources for seniors
- ask for written information about seniors' rights
- attend workshops about issues concerning seniors
- use the Government Blue Pages and Yellow Pages to locate services and programs

Resources for Developing and Teaching Topic

- *Amazing! Interviews and Conversations*: Chapter 8, "Senior Citizens"
- *Ontario Reader 1999*: "Elliot Lake: Mining town becomes retirement centre"
- Seniors' Guide to Federal Programs and Services
- CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario): http://www.cleo.on.ca
- Fact Sheet: Elder Abuse: http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/files/facts7.asp
- Seniors Canada Online: http://www.seniors.gc.ca
- Settlement.org: http://www.settlement.org (Social Services, Seniors)
- seniors, senior citizens

Professional Relationships

Topic Outcomes (CLB 5, 6, 7)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- open and close a short routine formal conversation
- maintain a conversation by asking follow-up questions, confirming comprehension, holding the floor, changing the topic, continuing after an interruption
- express and respond to gratitude, appreciation, complaint, apology, regrets, or excuse
- make simple and extended suggestions on how to solve an immediate problem and provide reasons
- identify facts and inferences in a conversation expressing and responding to gratitude and appreciation, complaint, or hope
- get factual details in a moderately complex one-page note, e-mail message, or letter
- write a one- to two-paragraph letter, or one-paragraph e-mail expressing or responding to congratulations, thanks, apology, offer of assistance, or invitation

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*rules of conduct, point of view, miscommunication, attitudes, criticism, body language, gestures, frustration, discouragement, sexual harassment, discrimination, company policies and procedures*)
- idioms (*put oneself in the other person's shoes, bite off more than one can chew, do a bang-up job, call it a day*)
- expressions for apologizing and making excuses
- gerund as object of a preposition (*apologize for being late, complain about having no training*)
- questions: embedded, wh-, yes/no
- formal letter writing conventions
- pronunciation: proper intonation for apologizing and making excuses

Sample Tasks

1. Discuss problems in various workplace situations and brainstorm possible solutions in small groups. (See http://alphaplus.ca/linc/topic18.htm for a sample activity.)
2. Listen to short workplace conversations. Match the conversations with a list of functions (e.g., thanking, appreciating, complaining).
3. Read a letter of invitation to an orientation day for new employees. Answer questions.
4. Write a letter or e-mail note responding to an invitation.
   - Novice: Word-process the letter in Language Task 4. Preview and print.
   - Advanced: Use the Letter Wizard to complete the letter in Language Task 4. Create an envelope.

     Skills: Keyboarding, Letter Wizard, Envelopes and Labels

Additional Tasks

- All Levels: Tense Buster – Advanced – Reported speech – Introduction: gossip!; Practice: direct speech

  Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills

Senior Citizens

Topic Outcomes (CLB 5, 6, 7)

Possible outcomes for this topic:

- ask for and give detailed information related to personal needs in an inquiry about services for seniors
- express feelings, opinions; qualify own opinion in a small group discussion
- understand details in a spoken exchange that involves suggestions, advice, and encouragement
- understand factual details and some implied meanings in a 10- to 15-minute presentation
- find information about programs for seniors in an extensive directory
- understand a one-page moderately complex report, news item, or story
- write a one- to two-paragraph text to compare senior citizens in Canada and own country

Language Focus

Items to help learners achieve the outcomes:

- vocabulary (*abuse, aging, dependency, elderly, fixed income, golden years, lifestyle, nursing homes, retirement home, snow bird*)
- expressions for indicating feelings
- adjectives: equative, non-equative
- logical connectors: transition words, adverbial clause words
- modals: advice, suggestions
- questions: embedded, wh-, yes/no
- pronunciation: intonation in yes/no and wh-questions

Sample Tasks

1. In a group, discuss the pros and cons of a policy related to age in Canada (e.g., mandatory retirement at 65) and present to class.
2. Listen to a conversation of someone giving an ESL student information about resources available in the community for an elderly parent. Complete a chart with information about financial, medical, housing, and recreation services.
3. Read a news story involving a seniors' issue. Answer multiple-choice questions.
4. Compare the life of an older person in own country and in Canada (e.g., daily routines, activities, rights).

   Novice: Word-process Language Task 4. Spell-check, preview, and print for peer or instructor evaluation.

   Experienced: Open an instructor-made document and use Format Painter to replicate the instructor's format in own document.

   Skills: Keyboarding, Save As, Spelling, Format Painter, Switch between Multiple Windows, Print Preview, Print

Additional Tasks

All Levels: ELLIS – Master Pronunciation – Speech Acts – Conversing – Express Opinions; Getting Things Done – Ask for Information

Skills: Open/Close Application, Select and Navigate Through Options, Mouse Skills