Mapping the Terrain: South Asians and Ethnic Media in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

by

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ABSTRACT

Using antiracist and feminist theories and critical media approaches, this qualitative study analyzes the role (including associated contributions, challenges, and opportunities) South Asian ethnic media plays in the lived experiences of South Asian immigrants in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia. In 2013, South Asian communities constituted 11% of the total population of Metro Vancouver. Currently, several newspapers, magazines, television (TV) shows, and 24/7 radio stations serving audiences in Metro Vancouver are produced and/or broadcasted in various South Asian languages, including Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu. This dissertation deals with South Asian ethnic media and its potential to create space for dialogue among immigrant communities, including opportunities for these communities to understand and debate their rights and responsibilities in their host country. Current ethnic media-making (including various formats, technologies, approaches, languages, and socio-political-religious orientations) was also explored and analyzed.

The findings of this study suggest that ethnic media has the potential to create space for dialogue among immigrant communities, particularly in Canada. The majority of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the portrayal of South Asian communities and their cultures in the mainstream media, criticizing the lack of representation and negative stereotyping of their communities. This dissertation reveals that ethnic media is emerging as a socio-culturally and politically significant space for its audiences. Ethnic media sources are providing information and knowledge about immigration, settlement, integration, and everyday life challenges in simplified ways. South Asian ethnic radio seems to be the most popular, accessible and efficient medium, meeting the information, news, and entertainment needs of its audiences. Educated, skilled, and multilingual ethnic media practitioners use their platform to bridge the gap between the mainstream media, policymakers, and society vis-à-vis immigrant communities. This study reveals that ethnic media play a significant role in the lived experiences of South Asian immigrant communities in Metro Vancouver by opening space and opportunity for communication and social inclusion.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Diasporas (re-)create home by instilling such resonance into the spaces they occupy: they do it with their languages, customs, art forms, arrangement of objects and ideas. Their electronic media reterritorialise the diaspora through the resonance of electromagnetic frequencies. However, the milieux that diasporas seek to create are not bounded by the borders of nation states – their rhythms resonate transnationally to mark out non-terrestrial spaces that stretch out intercontinentally. (Karim 2003, 10)

Ethnic media is becoming a significant source of information, communication, and activism for transnational migrants in their host countries (Atton 2015; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). Today, Western countries and cities with larger concentrations of immigrants have larger numbers of ethnic media sources (Gentles-Peart 2014; Lay and Thomas 2012; Shi 2008; Tayash 1988; Yu 2012). In Canada, for example, Toronto hosts the largest number of immigrants along with 50% of the country’s ethnic media (Fernando 2006, 46). With the overall growth of visible minority immigrants in Canada, specifically from South Asian countries, the ethnic media of these populations has also grown (Ahadi and Yu 2010; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011; Murray, Yu, and Ahadi 2007). This growth is gradually occurring in many parts of the country, including Metro Vancouver.

Murray and Yu (2007) report that Vancouver is “a major hub for ethnic media,” with roughly 144 ethnic media outlets. South Asian ethnic media ranks number one among these, with 33 outlets in Metro Vancouver (Murray and Yu 2007, 100). South Asians have 24/7 exclusive radio stations offering services in different South Asian
languages in Metro Vancouver. Several newspapers, magazines, and online media sources are also available in Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu languages for Indo-Canadian and Pakistani-Canadian communities. Although there is no dedicated full-time television (TV) station in Canada offering programming for South Asian communities, there are several locally produced TV programs broadcasted on multicultural channels. Interestingly, satellite media broadcasting live TV and radio services from South Asian countries (e.g., India and Pakistan) does not preclude the need for locally produced ethnic media.

The sheer number of ethnic media outlets in Canada demonstrates the significance of local ethnic media. Because of this significant need, ethnic media is growing at an exponential rate, offering alternative means of communication for South Asian communities in Canada. Ethnic media plays a central role in the everyday life of South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver and elsewhere. There has been a considerable amount of research conducted on media of various ethnic minorities (Alia and Bull 2005; Browne 2005; Cottle 2000; Ellis 2006; Levo-Henriksson 2007) but there has been no significant qualitative research on South Asian ethnic media in Canada, including its growth, challenges, role, contribution, and future. This dissertation addresses the existing

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1 South Asian countries have diverse cultures, languages, religions, and historical features that distinguish communities within one country. For example, in Pakistan, ethnic cultures of different regions mark the lives of people in different ways; they have different ways of living, languages, festivals, and so on. My use of the terms “community/communities” throughout the dissertation is meant to reflect the diversity among South Asian immigrants, even those from the same country.
gaps in the literature regarding the ethnic media of South Asians and its impact on the lived experiences\textsuperscript{2} of these communities.

**Defining South Asian Immigrants**

Canada offers policies and programs to recruit immigrants from around the world to boost the country’s population and economic growth (Boyd and Grant 2007; Li 2003; Zaman 2006). Asians, including Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos, and South Asians, with diverse backgrounds, are steadily increasing in numbers in different parts of Canada. In 2006, approximately 1.3 million self-identified South Asians made up 4% of the total Canadian population, surpassing Chinese-Canadians as the country’s largest visible minority (Jin and Kim 2011).

South Asia, often presented as a homogenized category in Canadian political and public discourse (Ashutosh 2014; Zaidi et al. 2014), includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, as defined by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (Bose and Jalal 2004; Mines 2010). South Asians—practicing all major religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism—speak several languages and follow diverse cultures (Menon 2009; Zaman and Bukhari 2013). They have a long history of migration, not only to Canada but also to other countries around the world.

\textsuperscript{2} Lived experiences are comprised of internal and external views and feelings of the subject related to the events happening in their life (Morris 2017). Research methods employing lived experiences as a lens allow expression of emotional experiences based on subjectivity, emotions, and feelings (Ellis, Carolyn, and Flaherty 1992). Qualitative interviews, informed by feminist theory, are a good example of recording lived experiences of the participants, since participants have the freedom to express events however they want to frame them (Creese, Laura, and Frisby 2011).
The history of South Asian migration to Canada begins in British Columbia (BC) and dates back to as early as the early 1900s (Nayar 2012). After their first arrival on an official trip with Queen Victoria around 1902, followed by subsequent immigration of labourers in 1906-07, the immigration flow of South Asians was noticeably low until 1967 (Rahim 2014). Unlike immigrants from European countries, South Asians were not encouraged to enter and stay in Canada as immigrants. Racially designed immigration policies and practices prevailed until 1967. These racialized policies and practices were predicated on the assumption that South Asians (and other third world immigrants) did not fit into the nation-building project of Canada, which sought to make Canada a “white man’s country” (Dua 2000; Huttenback 1973). Hence, to restrict the entry of unwanted immigrants, including South Asians, discriminatory laws such as the Continuous Journey Regulation\(^3\) and the Head Tax\(^4\) were imposed (Rahim 2014; Sherry and Catherine 2007).

Canadian immigration policy went through a major shift in 1967, when the point-based system, (i.e., recruiting immigrants based on criteria such as education, language, and professional skills), was introduced. With the introduction of this system, immigration possibilities for skilled and qualified immigrants from third world countries, including South Asian countries, opened up (Zaman 2010a). Consequently, in the last two decades, the numbers of South Asian immigrants coming to Canada have increased tremendously.\(^5\) For example, “more than 140,000 [South Asians] arrived between 1986 and 1995, and nearly double that—266,000—between 1996 and 2006 [in Toronto alone]”

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\(^3\) The regulation required immigrants from South Asia to come to Canada via ship without making any stops. There was no direct steamship service from India to Canada, making it impossible for South Asians to immigrate to Canada.

\(^4\) This was a type of landing fee, comparatively higher for people coming from Asia and other third world countries.

\(^5\) It is important to note that in the last ten years, preference has been given to skilled immigrants rather than family reunification cases; however, family reunification has been the second major category of immigration in the past three decades.
(Gee 2011). In Metro Vancouver, South Asians are the second largest visible minority (11.1%), after East and South-East Asians (29.7%)\(^6\) as compared to people of Caucasian origins\(^7\) (52.5%) (Statistics Canada 2013). It is anticipated that “by 2031, roughly 30% of the Canadian population will likely be a visible minority, with 36% of those under 15 years of age” and that “among these, Canadians of Chinese and South Asian origins will predominate” (Biles et al. 2010, 5). The increasing number of South Asian immigrants has also transformed these communities’ settlement and integration needs, family and gender dynamics, community issues, and socio-political/economic realities, as well as their media use and consumption patterns.

**Immigration and Settlement: Information and Communication Quandary**

Immigration poses major, complex, and at times, unanticipated challenges for many immigrants. One of the major challenges is learning and benefiting from information and communication channels available in the host country (Caidi and Allard 2005; Chien 2005; Quirke 2012). Lack of information and knowledge about communication technologies in the host country impedes fast settlement for some immigrants, especially for immigrants from the Global South. Faster settlement could lead to quicker social inclusion, which should be the ultimate goal of immigration in any society. Social exclusion denies access to and provision of:

- a livelihood; secure, permanent employment; earnings; property, credit, or land; housing; minimal or prevailing consumption levels; education, skills, and cultural capital; the welfare state; citizenship and legal equality; democratic

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\(^6\) This category includes immigrants from East (China) and Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, etc).

\(^7\) Statistics Canada uses “Caucasian” as a term for immigrants of European origin.
participation; public goods; the nation or the dominant race; family and sociability; humanity, respect, fulfilment and understanding. (Silver 1995, 60)

Social inclusion, on the other hand, enables equal access to economic, social, and political rights and privileges, and the prevalence of non-discriminatory policies and actions related to immigrants. The list of ingredients for social inclusion is quite long and it might take years, sometimes decades, for new immigrants to achieve full social inclusion. In any event, the starting point is always correct and timely information (Caidi and Allard 2005; Cuban 2007). Galabuzi (2008, 81) argues that “women, new immigrants, racialized group members, and Aboriginal peoples” are specifically at risk of being socially excluded in Canada. Establishing a connection between social inclusion and information and communication technologies (ICTs), Warschauer argues that access to ICTs does not ensure that users (immigrants) can actually benefit from these sources. Such benefits depend on other dynamics, such as literacy and the “practices of literacies” as well—in other words, people should be well-versed in the language in which information is provided as well as have the ability to interpret and make productive use of that information (Warschauer 2004, 38-39).

Nadia Caidi (2005) reports that most immigrants do not get adequate information to smoothly start their socio-economic lives in Canada. Critical race theorists (Agnew 2009; Bannerji 2000; Ng 1998; Thobani 2007) argue that the process of settlement is often racialized in order to maintain socio-economic hierarchies in the society, thus
benefiting its dominant groups. In this regard, some mainstream media\(^8\) also plays a crucial role in racializing immigrants and their cultures. Yasmin Jiwani (2006, 107), using case studies of South Asian communities, shows “how certain cultures are racialized [in the media, influenced by conservative orientation] with the intent of differentiating them as Others and legitimizing their inferiorization, criminalization, ghettoization, and eroticization.” She argues that reports on crime in some mainstream media sources often highlight the ethnic background of immigrant minorities instead of presenting their criminal acts as personal actions, thus stereotyping the entire ethnic community. For various reasons, therefore, media, as part of a broader network of ICTs, ultimately plays a crucial role in the lived experiences of immigrants in their host countries.

**Mainstream Media and Ethnic Minorities in Canada**

Media is not only a source of information and entertainment; it also helps to shape perceptions and create “realities” and social identities (Hall 2000). Purposive agenda setting could create a generalized opinion about different groups, including immigrants within a society. Media also provides a sphere for public dialogue on issues of concern to different social groups. Public opinion built through such dialogue may result in a power shift by breaking the hierarchies embedded in socio-political and economic systems.

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\(^8\) I am aware of the diversity and range of different approaches as well as possibilities of mainstream media’s reaching out to different audiences at different levels. Mainstream media is used as a term to explain an array of media; it is difficult to come up with a common term. In the scholarly world, “mainstream media” is recognized as one cohesive term for the mainstream’s media. My use of the term “mainstream media” mostly refers to large size media organizations controlled and managed by influential elites of Western mainstream society. I also imply that within mainstream media, liberal and conservative orientations could affect the messages of these media outlets. As compared to liberal and somewhat neutral media, conservative mainstream media sources—especially with large production, circulation and distribution channels—have greater consequences because of their scope, orientation, and access to larger audiences.
Conversely, media can also stereotype and racialize immigrant groups, particularly those who do not fit into the discourse of nation-building, further marginalizing these groups (Fleras 2011; Mahtani 2009a).

The public space constituted by media is expected to incorporate opinion and representation of minority groups as well. Mainstream media, especially the most influential outlets with larger circulations and distributions—supplemented by conservative socioeconomic and political orientations—are often criticized for ignoring the issues of visible minority immigrants and/or tagging them with stereotypes, mostly negative in nature (Batziou 2011; Fleras 1994, 2009; Jiwani 1992; Miller 1994). Fleras (2009, 726) argues that “media (mis)treatment has tended to frame Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, and racialized minorities using one of the five frames, namely, as invisible, problems, stereotypes, adornments, or whitewashed.” Other minority groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people have also expressed criticism of mainstream media for often under-representing or misrepresenting their issues (Pullen and Palgrave 2012, 92).

Media is a significant source of information in any society; so much so that “for many people, the media have attained the status of an authoritative source, so people accept the meanings presented there and simply memorize those meanings” (Potter 2012, 25). While researchers focus on the effects of media (Hoffman and Wallach 2007; Madan, Mrug, and Wright 2014; Potter 2012), many also study the role of media in the lived experiences of immigrants and minorities (Browne 2005b; Cottle 2000a; Kanat 2005; Silverstone 2001; Yang et al. 2004). In ideal situations, media is supposed to play a powerful role in bridging the gap between governments, policymakers, and other social
actors as well as ethnic minorities in a multicultural society. Yet the ideal is far from the reality, and some mainstream media, particularly in Western countries, has often been criticized for its complex and unsettled relationship with ethnic minority communities. These criticisms fall into two main categories: first, lack of attention to the issues relevant to visible ethnic minorities and second, misrepresentation, stereotyping, and racialization of these minorities (Chomsky 1997; Fleras 1995; Jeffres 2000; Larson 2006; Miller 1994; Navarro 2010; Rivadeneyra 2006).

Ethnic Media of Immigrant Communities

Canada has national and local mainstream media to provide news, information, current affairs, politics, science, technology, and entertainment content on a daily basis using multiple technologies. Given the ample availability of mainstream media, the growth of ethnic media raises some crucial questions. Scholars report that ethnic media, mostly available in ethnic languages, helps immigrants settle and integrate into mainstream society. Ethnic media also helps immigrants to build initial social capital9, allowing them to obtain information necessary to access resources in their host country. Immigrants also find ethnic media helpful in connecting them with their countries of origin (Lin 2006; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011, 2012; Ojo 2006; Shi 2009; Viswanath and Arora 2000; Yu 2012). These reasons in themselves, however, are simplistic explanations for the growth of ethnic media.

While much of mainstream media serves and represents influential segments of mainstream society (Atton 2002b; Fleras 2009, 2011; Jiwani 2006), alternative media

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9 Social capital is “the existence of established and well-integrated family and community networks, which act as a support mechanism for people in times of difficulty” (Lawson and Garrod 2001, 228).
formats\textsuperscript{10} (also called non-mainstream media), including ethnic media, serve smaller groups within mainstream society using alternative approaches, formats, and objectives. In the extant literature, various terminologies have been used to define non-mainstream media: radical media (Downing 1984, 2001), alternative/online media (Atton 2002, 2003b, 2007, 2009), community and/or citizen media (Halleck 2002; Rodríguez 2001), ethnic media and/or media of diaspora (Cottle 2000; Kanat 2005; Karim 2003; Riggins 1992a), etc.\textsuperscript{11} Each type of non-mainstream media has a socio-political, historical, and circumstantial background, leading to the development of the conceptual framework(s) as well as the defining features of each respective media type. Gordon (2009, 12) argues that differences in alternative media typology “could be regarded as a grading of content rather than a difference of delivery modes.”

Although various terminologies exist to define alternative media, for the purpose of my Ph.D research I will use “ethnic media” as an elaboration of the media of immigrant communities\textsuperscript{12} in the Canadian context. A primary reason for using that term is that “ethnic” and “ethnicity” are currently being used in Canadian immigration and citizenship discourse to explicate transnational immigration processes. For Riggins (1992b, 1), ethnicity “refers to [ways of] people who perceive themselves as constituting a community because of common culture, ancestry, language, history, religion, or

\textsuperscript{10} A major factor that differentiates alternative media sources from mainstream media sources is the format in which they are presented. For example, alternative media could be presented as graffiti, performance art, zines, and other formats that are less typical for conventional media.

\textsuperscript{11} More discussion on types of alternative media can be found in Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{12} I differentiate between “immigrants” and “immigrant communities” (interchangeably used herein with “South Asian communities”). While immigrants constitute an entity in-process of moving from one space to another and still struggling to find their position in the new country, immigrant communities are comprised of a group of immigrants arriving at different times and spaces in their new country. Thus, the group forms a community who share common culture, language, some resources, and social capital, and may obtain Canadian citizenship. Immigrant communities are slightly more empowered and settled as compared to immigrants who might still be struggling to settle in their new environment.
customs.” Historically, race has been identified based on physical and biological characteristics to classify human beings into different groups, but this is an oversimplified definition (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). People from one geographic region could have similar physical characteristics yet have different ethnicities. Defining ethnicity and race is thus a complex and contentious task. Definitions of race and ethnicity pertaining to different groups have been socially constructed to suit the time and location in history in which these definitions are created (Yang 2000), with people in positions of power and capacity (re)defining the identity of marginalized groups in a given society. Thus, people in power craft new definitions based on essential differences and these identities are then forced onto people. State, law, policy, and enforcement all support the process of redefining, imposing, and crystallizing these identities slowly and gradually. For example, immigrants from India or Pakistan who came to Canada thirty or forty years ago might still be identified as South Asians, but their chosen ethnicity might be Canadian-South Asian. It should be up to individuals to decide how they want to be identified; however, the government, policymakers, and mainstream society may be empowered instead to identify them via imposed racial-ethnicizing; this is effected through various means, including the use of mainstream media.

Ethnicization is a process like racialization, whereby people belonging to different cultures are stereotyped and stripped of their rights in subtle or overt ways. In the racialization process, race is used to frame people or groups based on their physical traits, while in ethnicization, cultural practices are used to frame people or groups. Although different from each other in definition, both racialization and ethnicization share common outcomes related to perceptions and policies (Urciuoli 1996). One example would be
religion, used simultaneously as a category of race and ethnicity. Muslims living in the West belong to different countries, nations, and cultures and have diverse racial and ethnic identities, yet their religion becomes the marker for their identity, especially since 9/11. Western media’s treatment of Muslim-inflicted terror activities does not differentiate between white or non-white Muslims belonging to different ethnicities. Thus, religion becomes a central factor in homogenizing and racializing groups of Muslims around the world, irrespective of their ethnic identities and lived experiences. The concept of race and ethnicity is further complicated when class is added to the equation. Better economic performance might enable a racialized person to attain better socio-economic mobility in a particular society, but race and ethnicity differentiation could take away the “social mobility” aspect. Race, ethnicity, and class, along with gender—intersecting but not interchangeable—are capable of pushing racialized people to the very outside edge of society.

Canada is made up of different races and ethnicities, and the difference is celebrated as a multiculturalism policy of the state. Nonetheless, the multicultural policy of Canada is not devoid of flaws. Thobani (2007) considers the official policy of multiculturalism as a tactic of establishing a politics of difference based on cultural differences. She argues that “with this [multicultural] move, race became reconfigured as culture and cultural identity became crystallized as political identity, with the core of the nation continuing to be defined as bilingual and bicultural (that is, white)” (Thobani 2007, 145). As a result of culture and cultural practices becoming the defining feature of immigrants, their socio-political identities also became permanent as “immigrants.” For example, immigrants who acquire Canadian citizenship, even after spending many years
in Canada, would still be referred to as members of “immigrant communities.” Because terminology related to race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism is bound-up with political interests, they keep changing over time in order to suit the changing needs of the state. “Multicultural media” is used as another popular term to define the media of immigrants, yet it could be said to resonate with the official policy of multiculturalism in Canada (defined by people in power) without much contribution from the “multicultural people” themselves (Jiwani 2006). In analyzing the media of immigrant communities, situating their ethnicities, cultures, and histories becomes significant, because these are the major ingredients in the making of their media. Thus, the term “ethnic media” seems more appropriate to describe the media of immigrant communities, and is the term I will be using throughout this research.

**Research Problem**

As the numbers of self-identified South Asians ¹³ increase at a tremendous rate in Canada, and particularly in BC, so does their need for South Asian ethnic media to celebrate and preserve their transforming cultures and ethnic identities, as well as to provide relevant information pertaining to their lived experiences. While there is a need to research the factors leading to the growth of ethnic media, it is equally important to understand what ethnic media sources are offering to their audience in response to their media needs. Settlement and integration is an ongoing struggle faced by most immigrants, but more so by immigrants who carry little or no social capital upon their

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¹³ These include Indo-Canadians, Pakistani-Canadians, Bangladeshi-Canadians, and so on. These may also include Canadians whose parents or ancestors belonged to South Asian countries and who also identify themselves as South Asians.
arrival in Canada. For some immigrants, irrespective of the length of their stay in Canada, a lack of English and/or French language skills as well as income, age, education, and gender could become significant factors impeding their ability to access information and knowledge about their host country (Riggins 1992; Shi 2009; Sun 2006). Ethnic media could fill this gap for ethnic minorities in Canada and elsewhere, especially when mainstream media are not responsive to the needs of immigrant communities. Some of the vital tasks of ethnic media could be availability of media content in ethnic languages, providing information required for settlement and integration, providing connection with the transforming cultures of countries of origin, providing interactive platforms to raise community issues, and—last but not least—providing entertainment for immigrant communities.

The growth and expansion of South Asian ethnic media outlets and products may, however, pose some challenges as well. Most parts of South Asia remained a British colony before their independence, and some countries in South Asia still have troubled and politically unstable relations with one another (Mines 2010)—for example, Pakistan and India, or India and Sri Lanka. Ethnic media provides news and information about countries of origin as well as community events in the host country (Viswanath 2000). Selection, framing, and quantity of the content from countries of origin, as presented in ethnic media, could aggravate unstable political relations. Hence, it is a challenge for ethnic media organizations to keep a balance between content addressing local issues and content related to immigrants’ countries of origin. In-depth analysis is needed to more fully understand the challenges faced by ethnic media in terms of dealing

14 Products refer to content (e.g., news, articles, columns, talk shows, drama, music, etc.).
15 For example, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
with the rifts within and between South Asian communities and maintaining a balanced approach to content.

Ethnic media outlets including newspapers, magazines, radio stations, TV shows, and websites are also facing challenges to their survival, including financial sustainability, lack of trained human resources, and lack of quality content. Most ethnic media products in Canada are either free or available for very little cost. Advertisement revenue generated through the local ethnic business community does support ethnic media growth. Nonetheless, it may also create undue pressure for increased emphasis on business and advertisement content, rather than on news and information content, and eventually this can result in purposeless media products with little focus on the audiences’ media needs. Lack of quality content could result from lack of professionalism and paucity of financial and other resources, as well as unawareness about journalistic ethical standards among ethnic media professionals. Similarly, limited English language skills of some ethnic media professionals could reduce their understanding of the issues raised in mainstream media and/or society and therefore limit their ability to raise their voices on issues relevant to their communities (Zhou 2009). These and other issues and challenges related to the growth and polarization of South Asian ethnic media are ripe for examination.

Interrogation of the role of gender in ethnic media production is also imperative in understanding the role of ethnic media more broadly. Mainstream media outlets lack representation of South Asian women, and hence fail to present their perspectives. Conversely, ethnic media may provide space for women of colour—as journalists and/or audience—to express their issues and concerns. As in most businesses, women are
underrepresented in the media-making business. There are a few women media owners, producers, and journalists in South Asian media raising their voices on women’s issues. Yet the extant literature provides little insight into the role of women media practitioners working in South Asian ethnic media. It is an important project, therefore, to analyze genderized practices in media through the lens of ethnic media practitioners—both female and male.

Karim (1998) emphasizes the need for empirical research on ethnic media’s role in reshaping identities, which could be beneficial for both ethnic communities as well as mainstream society. He argues,

Whereas the maintenance of one culture is sometimes viewed within a zero-sum framework as a loss for another, the gains made by society as a whole through the diversity of perspectives has not been examined adequately... Research in such areas will help us to understand better the effects that diasporic networks are having on nation-states, particularly in the light of the emergence of digital technologies and international deregulation in the communications sector. (Karim 1998, 15-16)

There has been no comprehensive research studying functions, contributions, roles, challenges, and opportunities related to the ethnic media of South Asians in Canada. Given the size and growth of South Asian communities and their media in Metro Vancouver, a comprehensive research study was needed to analyze some of the timely and crucial aspects of the relationship between South Asian communities and their ethnic media.

**Research Questions**

Some empirical research studies related to ethnic media have been conducted in different parts of Canada, but the focus of these studies has been on multicultural media of various
ethnic communities with mostly quantitative techniques employed to measure different
variables of media uses and the numbers of users (Ahmed 2015; Karim 2015). A project
‘The Role of Multicultural Media in Connecting Municipal Government with
Ethnocultural and Immigrant Communities’ was conducted in Ottawa (Veronis and
Ahmed 2015) and included South Asians as one of their sample communities. To my
knowledge, there is no exclusive study being conducted in Canada to investigate the role
played by ethnic media of South Asian communities in the lived experiences of these
communities, with a qualitative research focus. Based on interviews, focus group
discussions, workshops, and media observation, this research study is therefore ground-
breaking in its methodological approach and scope. It investigates South Asian ethnic
media sources, including: their history, growth, and purpose; their technological,
financial, and ethical issues; their impact on the settlement, integration, and civic
engagement of South Asian communities living in Metro Vancouver; and their role in
countering racism against these communities. The following research questions guided
this study in its undertaking to explore and understand the complex relationship between
South Asians and their ethnic media in Metro Vancouver:

1. What are the historical trajectories and challenges related to the development of
   South Asian ethnic media as a significant social institution in Canada? How is
   ethnic media-making done with various formats, technologies, approaches,
   languages, and socio-political-religious orientations in the current scenario? In
   addition, what makes some ethnic media sources/products more popular than
   others? Also, what are the challenges of different ethnic media?
2. How do South Asian immigrants perceive the role of mainstream society and media in terms of providing inclusive, non/hierarchal, in/flexible spaces to settle, integrate, and communicate in their host country?

3. What is the role of ethnic media in the lived experiences of South Asians audiences? Specifically, how are South Asian ethnic media sources empowering their audience with education, information, and entertainment? Moreover, what is the contribution of ethnic media in creating civic engagement, helping with settlement and integration, providing a platform for political activism, and instilling community development perceptions and practices?

**Thesis Outline**

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, context, and questions, as well as the literature review and theoretical framework of the study. This chapter also explains the concepts, terminologies, and socio-political categories used in the study, and discusses critical race theory to contextualize the role of ethnic media. Chapter 2 examines antiracist and critical approaches regarding the media and racialized immigrants. This chapter points out that there is a dearth of literature regarding the significant role of ethnic media for racialized immigrant communities, and explains how this dissertation addresses this gap. This chapter also discusses alternative and ethnic media approaches. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological framework, research techniques, and processes used to conduct this qualitative research study. In addition to examining the study’s limitations as well as my position as a native informant, this chapter discusses challenges encountered during the study’s design, recruitment, and data collection. Chapter 4 elaborates South Asian
communities’ lived experiences in terms of their access to information, their mis/representation in mainstream society and media, and their perceptions and experiences in their host country. This chapter also explores the history of ethnic media, its ownership and coping strategies used in relation to licensing bodies, and different technologies used in broadcasting media. A part of the chapter unpacks the role of religious politics in the development of ethnic media.

Chapter 5 narrates the landscape of ethnic media in Metro Vancouver and offers information about different types of media (e.g., print, TV and radio). It also highlights how the content of ethnic media is conceived and developed and what makes one medium or piece of content more popular than others. This chapter also presents South Asian ethnic media practitioners’ motivations, perceptions, and self-evaluation related to their career choices as media personnel. Chapter 6 investigates the role and contribution of ethnic media in the lived experiences of its audiences. It also explores different roles ethnic media plays in terms of settlement and integration of immigrants by providing information and knowledge about the host society, aiding in the development of social capital and communities, and providing a platform for dialogue and civic awareness as well as political activism. Using narratives provided by ethnic media practitioners and audience members, this chapter details contributions made by the ethnic media in the everyday lives of its audiences. In Chapter 7, media ethics, journalistic skills, financial and operational challenges, governmental support, and growth of the South Asian ethnic media are discussed. The chapter examines issues related to gender balance, as well as racism and other complex dynamics arising within ethnic media organizations. The chapter unfolds the challenges and opportunities for the future growth of ethnic media,
considering issues of equal representation of all South Asian communities and the need to balance content related to local news with content related to immigrants’ countries of origin. Chapter 8 summarizes the findings of the study, and presents recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and academicians for further investigation and action. In addition, future research areas are identified to address existing gaps in the studies of ethnic media.
CHAPTER 2: ANTIRACIST AND CRITICAL APPROACHES: THE MEDIA AND RACIALIZED IMMIGRANTS

Introduction

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon, and with rapid technological advancement and an increasing need for trained human resources and the transfer of goods and services—as well as political and violent conflicts across the globe—migration has been on the rise since the mid-twentieth century. South Asia, being one of the most populous regions in the world, trains hundred and thousands of “human resources” every year and remains a prominent region for exporting human resources around the world. Many South Asians with aspirations and dreams of a better life—especially those whose countries are constantly struggling with poverty and lack of social, health, and education facilities—strive to secure immigration to Canada. Canada has a long history of importing immigrants in all immigration categories (e.g., skilled, economic, family, and refugee) from South Asia. Today, South Asians make up the second largest Canadian ethnic population after Chinese-Canadians (Statistics Canada 2013). Immigrants’ settlement and integration remains a major focus in immigration studies in Canada, and it has been found that communication, along with rapidly changing technologies, plays a crucial role in the settlement and integration of immigrants in Canada (Caidi and Allard 2005; Quirke 2011). Much important work has been done by critical race theorists and activists to analyze and deconstruct the systemic racialization built into the process of immigration,
settlement, integration, citizenship, media, and communication (Das Gupta 2009; Jiwani 2006; Thobani 2007).

Ideologies and practices existing in any society define meanings of things and social relations for us (Hall 2011). Race is an ideology that gets presented through different social institutions, including mass media (Hill Collins 2006; hooks 1992). Ethnic media could be a response to systemic racism, barriers, and socio-economic and political hierarchies in the overall communication landscape of a society (Deuze 2006). Critical race theorists have questioned these socio-economic and political hierarchies, examining the intersections of race, class, gender, communication, and so on. Studying media, especially ethnic media, in the context of Canada requires an understanding of race and race relations. Without this understanding, it is impossible to analyze the emergence, contribution, deep-rooted tensions, systemic barriers, challenges, and potentials of ethnic media in Canada.

This study explores ethnic media sources as emerging entities, and discerns their objectives and contributions in the lived experiences of their audience/communities (i.e., South Asian immigrants). The changing needs of immigrants, along with rapidly changing media and communication technologies, calls for a re-examination of the relationship between the state, mainstream society, and immigrant communities. In analyzing these issues, this thesis draws upon critical media, feminist, and critical race theories to study the need, emergence, role, challenges, and potential of South Asian ethnic media and its impact on South Asian communities’ organization and development in Metro Vancouver. In this chapter, I explore multiculturalism – as a term and policy in the context of Canada and locate the position and situation of immigrant communities in
this discourse. Using existing scholarly work, this chapter also analyzes the relationship of mass media vis-à-vis their audiences, more specifically ethnic communities. In the last part of the chapter, emerging ethnic media as a response to mass media as well as to the changing needs of immigrant communities will be contextualized in modern day Canada. Overall, the chapter provides a critical and analytical lens to contextualize my research project in light of the existing gaps in the literature.

**Critical Race Theory: Implications of Multiculturalism**

In Canada, multiculturalism is a definitive feature of the immigrant-management policy (read race-management) of the state. As such, race has become a challenge for both the state and the community in the historical and present day social organization of the country. As mentioned in Chapter 1, South Asian immigrants were not considered a desired race for Canadian immigration prior to the introduction of the points system in 1967 (Thobani 2007). The task of building the Canadian Pacific Railway, which began in 1881, demanded a large army of labourers, and in this context, men from Asia—including South Asia—were permitted to enter and work in Canada, but only as temporary labourers. This situation arose partly due to the fact that people from Europe—then the most desirable group for immigration to the Canadian state—did not show much interest in immigrating to Canada for the purpose of performing menial labour (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007). While immigrants from Europe and the United States of America

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16 My use of the term “the state” throughout this thesis represents the Canadian nation-state and corresponding federal, provincial, and even municipal governments.
17 It is significant to note that my use of the terms “race” and “racialized” is informed by the fact that these are socially constructed notions; thus, these concepts are not being used as essentialized categories in my thesis. I use these terms for critical analysis of race realities in the social setting of Canada, as a crucial factor that cannot be ignored.
were immigrating to Canada with their families in large numbers, South Asian men, until 1919, were not allowed to sponsor their wives and children (Dua 1999). Family sponsorship was discouraged on the premise that allowing South Asian women to immigrate would encourage the men to stay permanently in Canada. Additionally, South Asian women were considered a threat, as it was supposed they would reproduce their ethnic culture(s) and thus undermine a nation-building project bent on establishing a “white Canada” (Dua 2000b). At base, South Asian racialized people were considered a threat to the Canadian nation-building project because they seemed unable or unwilling to “assimilate” to Canadian culture (Dua 2000; Thobani 2007). The point system of 1967 introduced new standards for immigration based on qualification, work experience, and language proficiency opened the doors of Canada to people from the “third world.” The resultant new and substantial wave of educated, skilled, and qualified immigrants arriving from third world countries signified increased racial hierarchies; thus the Canadian policy of multiculturalism emerged (Jiwani 2006; Thobani 2007).

Critical race theorists argue that the policy of multiculturalism was introduced in Canada in the 1970s specifically in order to maintain racial hierarchies (Bannerji 2000; Gupta 2009; Jiwani 2006; Thobani 2007). Thobani (2007, 145) elaborates the underlying objective of the multiculturalism policy according to which the nation was redefined “as primarily bilingual and bicultural [thus reproducing] the racialized constructs of the British and French as its real subjects.” Using the terminology of “strange bodies” (i.e., immigrants) and “privileged subjects” (i.e., white people), Sara Ahmed (2000) explains that in order to define national characteristics, it is important to have a model of “difference” against which the nation defines itself. The discourse of multiculturalism
gestures to the fact that in the absence of “the other” it would be impossible to recognize who “we” are. It is therefore imperative to keep differences intact in order to take advantage of privileges based on colour politics (Ahmed 2000). Stuart Hall (2000, 209) differentiates between multicultural (as an adjective) and multiculturalism (as a noun), stating that “multicultural” as a term “describes the social characteristics and problems of governance posed by any society in which different cultural communities live together and attempt to build a common life while retaining something of their ‘original’ identity” while, by contrast, “multiculturalism” as a term is “substantive,” referencing “strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multi-cultural societies throw up.”

Jiwani (2006, 11) critically analyzes multiculturalism in Canada, arguing that the policy connoted the French and the British as the two founding nations of Canada, positing these white settlers as the true original residents of Canada and thus erasing the colonial violence against the Aboriginal people in Canada. Furthermore, it converted the discourse of equal rights for all races into equal representation of all cultures. In other words, its introduction fundamentally swapped out the notion of race for that of culture, while maintaining racial hierarchies in a new formulation. The policy of multiculturalism in Canada thus served to “manage” the cultures of racialized immigrants along with Aboriginal cultures. However, what and how to define culture(s) was left to the discretion of the state. As a result, a new definition of culture was crafted under the influence of the multiculturalism policy. Jiwani (2006) highlights that food, (cultural) clothing (excluding religious symbols such as the hijab or Turban), and dance were welcomed as cultural
traits, while socio-cultural values and religious beliefs were discouraged to suit the mainstream cultural system.

Bannerji (2000) explains that, as part of Canada’s multiculturalism policy, cultural groups were tagged under different cultural categories or names without realization or acknowledgement that there might be significant differences in the cultures of minority groups. The example of South Asian immigrants is perhaps the most relevant in this context. South Asia—home to several different cultures, languages, religions, and socio-political systems—is treated as one core group (read: race) by Statistics Canada and other official governmental websites, with no acknowledgment of the existence of longstanding and complex cultural (including religious and political) differences among South Asians. This might have political advantages for the state and policymakers, but as Okin (1999) argues, it has social, economic, and political implications for the members belonging to these “cultural groups.” Thobani (2005, 256) maintains that the Canadian state’s act of defining and accepting certain kinds of cultures while demeaning other cultures has resulted in the favoring of selected cultural groups and communities for government funding and support (e.g., for cultural events) to suit the needs of the state.

Bolaria and Li (1988) and Das Gupta (2007, 1996) argue that while racialized hierarchy has dominated the politics of immigration in Canada, social and economic factors are the true root causes of racial oppression. Skilled and semi-skilled immigrants face challenges in finding employment in their areas of expertise commensurate with their previous qualifications and experience. Immigrants uprooted from their countries of origin are accepted for immigration based on points awarded for their education and qualifications, yet upon their arrival in Canada, this same set of credentials becomes
useless in helping them find appropriate employment. Most of the time, they end up doing menial, labour-intensive, and low-paid jobs for an indefinite period of time (Boyd and Schellenberg 2007; Sakamoto 2007; Sakamoto, Chin, and Young 2010; Zaman 2006). Zaman (2006, 116) analyzes how recognition of the credentials of immigrants can also be gendered, explaining that some of the government’s policies and funds devoted to accommodating immigrants “focus on certain professions and categories of jobs” and “as a result, most government grants . . . benefit skilled immigrants, the majority of whom are male and already trained in the professions earmarked by the government.”

These systemic barriers marginalize racialized immigrants through socio-economic limitations embedded in the system. Difference is thus maintained between superior and inferior classes, upholding the capitalist and racial status quo. Bolaria and Li (1988, 14) argue that this “institutional” effort is aimed at “producing and reproducing” racial groups by creating a distinct and more powerful class of people who control the resources and decision-making in Canada. Critical race theorists thus argue that the discourse of multiculturalism is merely a cover to conceal unwanted differences while still maintaining desired differences in a subtle way. The concept of multiculturalism is acceptable so far as it supports the political economy approach (i.e., to celebrate and accept differences inasmuch as they are profitable based on their material value). Moreover, the concept must cater to the always already established “norm.” Criticizing the concept of multiculturalism as deployed in the Canadian education system, Dei and Kempf (2013, 102) point out that “the multicultural idea works with the notion of tolerating difference” rather than celebrating difference. The fact that there is an “African history month” (presumably every other month is “White history month”) and that
Christian holidays are marked in public schools works to define and establish the norm around which multiculturalism must then revolve (Dei and Kempf 2013, 103).

Gender has a unique and intersectional position in the project of nation-building in Canada, as Anglo-Saxon women have been the signifier of the “mothers of race” (Dua 2000, 55) and, thus, all “other” women—specifically women of colour—have been racialized under the sign of racial inferiority. Many scholars have published studies on the outcomes of multiculturalism, including the exacerbation of inequalities and forms of oppression (ranging from identity crisis to violence) for racialized women (Bannerji 2000, 2011; Dua 2000a; Jiwani 2006; Razack 1998; Thobani 2007, 1999). The experience of South Asian women has been analyzed to contest stereotypes about the “backwardness” of their cultures and cultural practices that take shape against the mainstream’s cultural norms; these stereotypes are also present in mainstream media (Handa 2003). The reference point defining (mainstream) culture is white cultural values, against which all other cultures are evaluated. Scholars (Dua 1999, 2000b; Thobani 2005) highlight that South Asian women’s cultures are seen as imposing restrictions on women’s freedom, while their traditional values are seen as “backward” and overbearing. Handa (2003) studies how young (second-generation) South Asian women feel about their identities and integration in both communities (i.e., South Asian and white mainstream communities), and provides a categorization of various “types” of South Asian heterogeneous groups based on their cultural as well as religious practices. Interviewing young South Asian women, Handa informs us that these young women can relate to some but not all South Asian cultural groups. Ironically, these women’s criteria for judging what it meant to be Indian were borrowed from Canadian mainstream
discourse and national values, rather than from Indo-Canadian communities’ sets of values.

Thobani (2007, 132) argues that the characteristics seen as defining South Asian women (i.e., “passive and highly subservient”) constitute an “insulting” attempt to disguise the racialized immigration policies that are actually perpetuating inequality for these women in their host country. This represents a bid by the state to shift the blame to South Asian cultures instead of taking on any responsibility for ensuring gender and racial equality. Handa (2003) explores the ways in which young South Asian women negotiate their identities across different cultural, ethnic, and historical perspectives. Interestingly, the female participants of Handa’s (2003) study perceive the (racialized) differences as cultural, rather than as racialization based on discrimination.

Like gender-based stereotypes, religion-based stereotypes also create an ongoing discourse against certain immigrant groups. South Asian immigrants in Canada practice different cultures and religions as part of their everyday lives. Muslims from different countries, including South Asia, make up 3.2% of the total population of Canada (Statistics Canada 2011). In the wake of 9/11, religious minorities, specifically Muslims, are portrayed as dangerous and violent, and as perpetrators of gender oppression. Thobani (2007, 221) argues: “the media’s effective gendering of the discourse of the war on terror exalts Canadian (and all other Western) nationals as possessing superior civilizational values, with these values making them the targets of terror,” and declares Muslims to be the inflectors of gender oppression and terror. Razack (2008) highlights that the religions of racialized people, specifically Islam, are presented as cultures promoting gender discrimination through polygamy, female genital mutilation, veiling, and forced
marriages, while Western (specifically Canadian) values are presented as superior, gender-neutral, and emancipating for women. Islamophobia has increased since 9/11, creating negative images of Muslims in the West and presenting “Western civilization as [a] secular and modern” civilization that must “protect itself from a barbaric Islam” (Razack, 2008, 161).

The current discourse of multiculturalism creates “we” versus “they” or “other” groups, expecting others to comply with the standards Canadian norms (Henry and Tator 2002), thus creating a danger of replacing “difference” with “sameness.” The Quebec Charter of Values Bill 60, tabled in 2013 by the then ruling Parti Québécois (PQ), was one such effort to ensure “sameness” and “equality for all” by proposing “secularism and religious neutrality and . . . equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests” (Sep 10, 2013). Essentially, the Bill aimed at creating “equality” by eradicating differences. For instance, the Bill demanded “religious neutrality” for public workers by abrogating their right to maintain external signs of their religious difference. In other words, the Bill proposed that people belonging to different faiths (such as Jews, Muslims, and Sikhs) could not wear their religious symbols (such as the Kippa, hijab, and Turban) while working as public servants in government jobs, including universities and hospitals. Interestingly, the PQ argued that the Bill would ensure gender equality by curtailing the wearing of the hijab by Muslim women, irrespective of the right of Muslim women to chose for themselves; the Bill did not however mention the oppression and gender injustice faced by Muslim and non-Muslim women living in Quebec who did not wear the hijab.

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18 The Bill 60 was tabled in 2013 by the PQ, but with the defeat of the party in elections, the Bill is now suspended until the new government (i.e., the Liberal Party) redefines it.
Linking the hijab with state secularism and neutrality is the direct outcome of the sameness approach, which declares that everything that is different from the mainstream or dominant norm is partial, and thereby qualifying, and substitutes “sameness” to ensure impartiality and neutrality. These attempts to erase differences are often done in the name of antiracism and gender neutrality. According to Thobani (2005, 259), “multiculturalism has become an integral technology of the governance within the Canadian nation-state, and its regulatory practices shape the lives of the young women so that they come to participate in its disciplinary practices by mediating their experiences, and their subjectivities, through this discourse.” The technique, under the guise of human rights discourse, is used to curtail rights of marginalized and often times stereotyped ethnic minorities. Behind these multicultural acts, power politics can generally be found, often fuelled by various phobias such as Islamophobia or xenophobia. Most of these attempts, however, are actually in conflict with basic human rights. For instance, Article 1, Section 1 of the International Convention on the “Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” states:

In this Convention, the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (United Nations 1965)

The Convention, to which Canada is a signatory, defines restrictions on social and cultural rights as racial discrimination. Restricting residents of Quebec from embracing religious identities grounded in their cultural practices is thus an open violation of human rights. This is disturbing for many feminist critical race scholars such as Yasmin Jiwani. Jiwani, at a panel discussion held at Concordia University in December 2013, shared her
frustration with the proposed Bill 60. She explained that a “Muslim Peril” is (again) used to justify the racist practices of the state by “making feminism do its dirty work and the dirty work is the containment of women, but it’s also neutralizing what it sees as a threat” (Sparks, *The Link* 2013). Jiwani argued that the hijab was presented as a threat to gender equality in order to gain acceptance by various segments of society, but that the underlying motivation for Bill 60 was to maintain hegemonic political control through state policies inflicted upon minorities. To address these differences, and achieve a multicultural society instead of multiculturalism according to Hall’s (2000) definition, realization, acceptance, socialization, and socio-psychological training on a very large scale will be required. Jiwani (2006) and Bannerji (2000) criticize “multiculturalism” as a shield allowing the state to celebrate selected aspects of cultures, while ignoring race-based socio-economic and political discriminations against people of colour. The next section of this chapter discusses the ways in which antiracist, feminist, and critical theories provide a framework to analyze mainstream media as well as South Asian ethnic media, and the ways in which ethnic communities feel represented by, linked with, and connected through these media forms.

**Critical Theory of Mass Media**

Critical theory of mass media explains, analyzes, and challenges the representation and positioning of different social and ethnic groups based on the power and hierarchal structure embedded in society (McQuail 2010). The extant literature presents two major concerns about the role of mainstream media vis-à-vis ethnic immigrant communities. Firstly, the mainstream media does not pay adequate attention to the issues of immigrants
(Alia and Bull 2005; Hill Collins 2009; hooks 1992), thereby ignoring their existence in society. Secondly, the mainstream media, particularly media with a conservative orientation, imposes and promotes stereotyping of immigrants and diaspora communities (Atton 2002b; Batziou 2011; Jiwani 2006; La Ferle and Morimoto 2009; Mahtani 2001; Rivadeneyra 2006; Walsh 2009). Hall (2011) notes that the more a society practises systemic racism, the more its media displays racist biases towards racialized immigrant communities.

Media, especially news media, is criticized for not showing racialized people as part of its everyday agenda. Reading, watching, or listening to mainstream media, racialized people hardly ever see themselves, and yet media space is crucial to identify someone’s presence in that specific spatial context/location (Alia and Bull 2005). In the case of North American mainstream media, in general, and of Canadian mainstream media in particular, racialized people do not hold any significant screen space (Levo-Henriksson 2007). Identity formation, in the lives of immigrants, is an ongoing process. Hall (1996) argues that this process is dependent on the dynamics of social discursive practices and their impact on the subject. Mass media and popular culture play a significant role in the identity formation of different social groups, especially among adult youth19 (Currie 1999; Duke 2000; hooks 1992). Adult racialized youth born and/or raised in Canada (also called second generation Canadian) are torn between the cultural values of their parents and those of mainstream society (Handa 2003). These youth constitute a significant population within different social groups and their identity formation is greatly affected by the mainstream media.

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19 All participants in this research were aged 19 and above.
Western media is also accused for creating several stereotypes about Islam and Muslims around the world in the wake of 9/11. Conservative mainstream Western media, including European and North American media, are creating an image of Muslims as being inclined towards “terrorism” and having connections with “terrorist organizations” around the world (Asadulla 2009; Razack 2008; Thobani 2007). The so-called “war on terror” led by the USA was (and remains) in the limelight in Western media; in much of this coverage, Muslim men are portrayed as barbarians and terrorists and Muslim women are presented as victims and passive beings (Razack 2004). Brown (2006) notices a shift in the Western media over the decades from a portrayal of “exotic Islam” to one of “terrorist Muslims,” especially in Britain and France. Before 9/11, Muslims in the UK were blamed as fanatics for their objections and reactions towards Salman Rushdie’s controversial writings about Islam. However, after 9/11, the entire discourse in media around the world shifted to focus on terrorism perpetrated by “Islam and Muslims” (Brown 2006, 310).

Stereotyping in the mainstream media results in retention of this information in the minds of audiences, and can have a bearing on policy decisions as well as the lives and practices of the masses (Hall 2011; Oh and Zhou 2012). Ewoldsen et al. (2009, 188) note that “stereotypic depictions in the media can play a role in whether people use gender or ethnic stereotypes when making judgments of people and policy issues.” Larson (2006) observes that American media stereotypes various groups, most significantly immigrants and those of African ancestry. For example, the media depicts black people as major beneficiaries of welfare while Mexican immigrants are considered poor, criminals, and illegal (Larson 2006, 121). According to Armstrong, the Canadian
Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) (2010, 156), through the “Equitable Portrayal Code,” addresses the issues of “equitable portrayal; human rights; negative portrayal; stereotyping; stigmatization and victimization; derision of myths, traditions, practices; degrading material; exploitation; language and terminology; [and] contextual considerations.” However, given the subjective nature of these issues, it is hard to monitor media unless there is an overt and obvious violation. Thus mass media has the potential to create and inculcate “dominant” ideologies by framing different social and ethnic groups in certain ways (Hall 2011), and it is difficult to establish these depictions as racist act(s) of mainstream media.

Media is not only a source of information and entertainment but also shapes perceptions and creates “realities” through agenda-setting. McCombs (2013) argues that public opinion is formed around the issues made most important through content selection and presentation of selected news. This purposive agenda setting, along with framing, could create and perpetuate dominant opinions about different groups living in a society, including immigrants (Baran and Davis 2008; McCombs 2013). According to Entman (2010), the process of framing in media, more specifically in news media, aims to present selected content as “reality” while obscuring other content that could result in a different reaction among audiences. He argues:

Elites monitor public attitudes because they want people to behave in ways that favor or passively acquiesce in elite choices. Inducing people to think (and behave) as desired requires elites to select some things to tell them about and others not to tell them, and embedding cues on how this little narrative coheres with their prior attitudes and values. (Entman 2010, 392)

Many communication scholars agree that agenda-setting and framing are two main factors through which public opinions are formed in favour of certain (selected) groups,
specifically for political advantage (Baran and Davis 2008; Entman 2010; Fleras 2003; Mahtani 2009a; McCombs 2013; Price 2008). Price (2008) asserts that public opinion is considered as the basis of modern democracy; however, he cautions that only well-informed citizens can create public debate around real issues. Thus, public opinion formed without substantial public debate by informed citizens could “result [in] a citizenry converted into a body that consumes political views disseminated by elites through the mass media, rather than an autonomous, deliberating body that discovers its own views through conversation” (Price 2008, 14).

Racialized people and immigrant communities are more vulnerable to the threat of mass media creating and shaping “realities” regarding them. Ethnic minorities often criticize the mainstream media for tagging them with stereotypes, mostly negative in nature (Fleras 2011; Miller 1994; Thomas 2015). At the same time, critical race and media theorists criticize mainstream media’s failure to include immigrants’ and other minorities’ issues, concerns, voices, and faces as an effort to eliminate their presence from that same society through purposive agenda-setting and selective framing (Boyle and Schmierbach 2009; Fleras 1995, 2003; Hall 2011; Hill Collins 2009; Jiwani 2006; Mahtani 2009a; Thobani 2007). It is a double-edged sword: being presented in a specific frame while simultaneously being virtually eliminated from the media’s landscape.

Media is a significant socio-economic institution of society, reflecting its norms, values, and practices. At the same time, media create certain standards for social groups to idealize and follow. As such, in light of critical media and race theory, especially with regard to the discourse of multiculturalism, examining the impact of media (both mainstream and ethnic) on the lives of immigrant communities is highly important.
Critical media, feminist, and critical race theories inform my research questions as they relate particularly to multiculturalism. As Mahtani (2001, 350) describes, “[media and] journalism [play] a powerful role in the representation and circulation of racial and gender [and class] ideologies”; it is thus important to analyze the lived experiences of ethnic media-makers and users through the lens of feminist, critical race, and media theory.

**Alternative/ Ethnic Media Approaches**

Along with mainstream media, a plethora of research has been undertaken on contemporary alternative media. Many scholars have written extensively about different forms of “non-mainstream media,” commonly known as alternative media, addressing the objectives, motivations, and principles related to its creation (Atton 2002a, 2012; Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2007; Coyer, Dowmunt, and Fountain 2007; Downing 2008; Kozolanka, Mazepa, and Skinner 2012). Coyer, Dowmunt, and Fountain (2007) argue that mainstream media is generally defined as for-profit, usually taking the form of private or group-owned business corporations available to mass audience through their (massive) presence in the form of print and electronic media like TV, radio, websites, etc. Conversely, alternative media are defined as not-for-profit, principle-based, often targeting a specific population, and existing on a smaller scale as compared to mainstream media (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). Alternative media could include news journals, tabloids, community radio, zines, web-based communities, theater performances, etc. Clearly, economic, political, and sometimes cultural differences inform the two models. These differences are reflected in the content as well as the
ideology and practices of the presenters, creators, producers, and disseminators of each. As alternative media sources base their communication on principles of “opposition” to mainstream content and agenda-setting, they are usually not in direct competition with the mainstream media.\(^{20}\) Mainstream media outlets like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), as corporate business entities, face tough competition and are often market-driven. In fact, mainstream media is often criticized for its ideological and operational alliances with the capitalist forces of the societies in which it operates (Boyer 2007; Curran 2002; Hill Collins 2009; McCombs 2013). Scholars identify mainstream media’s adherence to the capitalist agenda of maximizing profits as leading to the exclusion of the marginalized segments of society such as the poor, immigrants, refugees, and women (Atton 2002b, 2003, 2012, 2002a; Castells-Talens 2009; Downing 2001, 1995; Rodríguez 2001).

Scholars argue that due to its range of different formats (i.e., from print to broadcast, weblogs to magazines and even graffiti), and given the variety of its audiences, it is difficult to define what exactly constitutes alternative media (Atton 2002a; Atton and Hamilton 2008; Downing 2001). Downing (2001, ix) suggests radicalism as a defining factor for alternative media, based on the premise that “everything, at some point, is alternative to something else,” and that “to some extent, the extra radical helps firm up the definition of alternative media”; this media challenges the popular culture and agenda-setting of the mainstream media. Downing (2001), influenced by Antonio

\(^{20}\) Here competition refers to competing on the same grounds, and in terms of practices and values. There might be various mainstream media groups in one society competing with each other on the same grounds, following the standard practices and values, whereas alternative media sources would differ from them in terms of their grounds, practices, and values, and therefore cannot be considered to be competing with mainstream media. The definition of alternative media in this particular case is specifically borrowed from Atton (2002), Downing (2001), and Rodríguez (2001).
Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, highlights the hegemonic and fabricated realities presented in mainstream media. He proposes that alternative media is based on a cluster of socio-political movements that takes up a form of radical media. In his scheme, the focus is on radicalism and socio-political movements, for this media is a vehicle to accelerate socio-political movements and their objectives (Downing 2001).

Coining the term “citizens’ media” as a form of alternative media, Rodríguez (2001) asserts the need for democratization of communication to trigger social change. Her emphasis is on community empowerment through the process of media communications. She explains:

. . . the term “citizens’ media” implies, first, that a collectivity is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities and institutionalized social relations; and third, that these communication practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformations and changes are possible. (Rodríguez 2001, 20)

She argues that the term alternative media is binary in its nature, given its oppositional characteristic in relation to mainstream media, and therefore she urges consideration of the theoretical term citizens’ media, which is more inclusive and represents community/citizen power. Citizens’ media, according to Rodríguez (2001), provides an opportunity to create active citizens who portray and represent themselves, their communities, and their cultures, in their languages, breaking away from the legal definitions of citizens and citizenship as (merely) a political identity and invoking instead the concept of citizenship as socially and culturally empowering. The main purpose of this media is to break away from traditional models of media and invent a new format.

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21 Social change is “the process whereby societies or aspects of society move from state to another.” (Lawson and Garrod 2001, 228).
allowing flexibility and freedom of expression that is democratic, inclusive, and participatory.

Atton (2002a), however, prefers the term “alternative” due to the flexibility it offers to encompass a variety of media formats ranging from print, zines, and “hybrid forms of electronic communication” to networks of communication and a multitude of media projects and media interventions (Atton 2002a, 7). For Atton, alternative media should have a broad horizon with an ability to absorb and present either political and/or cultural radicalism in innovative forms. Atton (2004) views this media as not limited to conventional forms, but rather as encompassing all forms of creative production, using modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) deployed by non-professional but active audiences. Atton links alternative media with civic and social responsibility. Explaining the difference between mainstream and alternative media, he argues that “where public journalism seeks to effect change from within current practices and organizational regimes, alternative journalism seeks to do so free of the constraints on the development of social responsibility in mainstream journalism” (Atton 2008, 87).

Atton (2004), like Rodríguez, views alternative media as providing opportunities to laypersons to produce their own media by participating and engaging in the media landscape as opposed to being passive audiences of mainstream media.

Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier (2007) support the use of the term “alternative media”; they delineate the various practices of community radio around the world under the umbrella of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMRAC). These practices could range from “popular radio, educational radio, [and] miners’ radio” for Latin America to “local rural radio” in Africa, or “popular free radio,” “alternative
radio and community radio” in Europe (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier 2007, 7). The authors emphasize that, due to the fluidity and flexibility of its range of practices, alternative media is the most suitable term for non-mainstream media. Contributing to the theoretical debate, Atton (2002a, 7) argues that “alternative and radical media . . . is not limited to political and ‘resistance’ media” and therefore it should be given due space in mainstream media research discourses. He draws from the classical Marxist analysis of media, which accuses mass media of representing the ruling class and suppressing alternative ideas and content for which alternative media provides space. He draws from Gramsci’s cultural hegemony framework, which questions the ideological hegemony of dominant and elite forces enforcing their ideology through capitalist institutions such as mainstream media, and provides justification for the inclusion of alternative or radical media in the dominant discourse of media (Atton 2004).

Alternative media may be called by different names and be subject to various theoretical and operational differences, yet its “alternative approach” undeniably differentiates it from mainstream media. Scholars theorizing alternative media emphasize the role of this specific type of media in creating democratic spaces for pluralistic dialogues, encouraging participation of laypersons in the form of active audiences and producers (Atton 2003, 2002a, 2002b; Castells-Talens 2009; Downing 2001, 1995; Rodríguez 2001). This is done by offering parallel discourse (and content) to challenge the hegemony inherent in the social structure by offering non-bureaucratic, flexible, fluid, and multiple options for the production and dissemination of this media.

Ethnic media, which is a form of alternative media, is at least in part a response to the mainstream media’s systemic neglect and/or misrepresentation of ethnic immigrant
communities (Karim 2003; Howley 2010; Sun 2006). The term “ethnic” is a difficult one to define, however. Within sociology, scholars like Cornell and Hartmann (2007) and Yang (2000) define it as a set of common racial, cultural, historical, and religious characteristics. Riggins (1992) discusses two possible roles ethnic media can play for its audiences: first, it can preserve the cultures, languages, and ethnic survival of its communities/audiences; second, unintentionally, it could push its audiences to assimilate into mainstream society (through its design, construct, and content). It is important to note that ethnic groups might not be minority groups according to their geographic and demographic locations. For example, the demographic profile of the City of Surrey, BC in 2011 was such that 52% of its population was made up of visible minorities, mainly South Asians and Chinese (Statistics Canada 2011). This percentage demonstrates the significance of certain visible minority groups in one specific location in Canada in terms of their economic and political activity and influence.

Riggins’s analysis of the term “ethnic minority media” is useful in the context of Canada. He explains that every group is an “ethnic group” but that adding the word “minority” helps identify immigrants as the “ethnic groups” in question. Riggins (1992b) further explains that the ethnic minority media in Canada is mostly not-for-profit, volunteer-based, run by jack-of-all-trades journalists who are often underpaid and have to wear different hats to run the whole media organization on their own. Yet, he adds, this media is offering much more to its audience as compared to the mainstream media (Riggins 1992). While Riggins’s work provides a useful analysis of ethnic minority media in Canada, nonetheless, it is not an empirical study of immigrant groups living in Canada; moreover, it is a dated work.
Forde, Foxwell, and Michael (2009) and Yu and Murray (2007) suggest that ethnic media, while serving to bridge the gap between ethnic communities and mainstream society, also plays a crucial role in identifying and challenging the mis/underrepresentation of ethnic communities in the mainstream media. Forde, Foxwell, and Michael (2009) argue that ethnic media outlets form a parallel system of representation within mainstream society, which generates dialogue around issues faced by marginalized communities. Because of the parallel representation provided through ethnic media, marginalized communities gain power and space to bargain and negotiate regarding these issues with governments and policymakers. They note, “Indigenous and ethnic community media continue to play a central role globally in offering a critique of mainstream media and its place in the formation of the broad democratic public sphere” (Forde, Foxwell, and Michael 2009, 19).

The growth of ethnic media depends on certain factors in different parts of the world. Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011, 45) argue that ethnic media’s growth depends on three factors: “state policies toward minorities; regulatory frameworks for media; and, market demand.” Community media (another form of alternative media) was legalized in 2004 in the United Kingdom, but there were demands for community media to be brought into media policy frameworks long before that, while in Australia, community media has been functional since the 1970s (Gordon 2009). Alia and Bull (2005, 106) hint that although media landscapes originate from center to periphery in Canada, media “has been [growing from] ‘periphery’ to ‘core’ - with indigenous media originating in the remote Arctic and sub-Arctic communities and moving gradually
towards the urban centers.” Therefore, Aboriginal peoples’ media is given more attention in studies of the media of ethnic minorities in Canada.

Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011) highlight that immigrant-importing countries such as Australia and Canada have more liberal and supportive policies towards the ethnic media industry, especially after the 1960s, when both countries made changes to their immigration policies to allow people of colour and immigrants from third world countries to migrate on a competitive basis. These policies triggered a tremendous increase in the number of skilled and qualified immigrants entering Canada and Australia (Ahmad et al. 2012; Agnew 2007; Lo, Shalaby, and Alshalalfah 2011; Simich 2000). At the same time, family-class immigration from third world countries also increased due to an overall increase in immigrants from these countries. Since the 1960s, therefore, major cities of Canada have received and hosted a large number of racialized immigrants (Zaman 2012), and this growth of immigrant communities has created increasing demand for media and communication in their ethnic languages.

Most immigrants prefer to land and settle in big, cosmopolitan and urban cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, and so on. Collin (2013) argues that increasing immigration combined with other socio-economic factors, specifically under the influence of globalization, will cause urbanization to increase tremendously in coming years. This trend has a spatial significance. Immigrants belonging to a specific ethnicity try to connect with other immigrants from the same ethnicity through social and spatial interaction (i.e., through interpersonal and communal activities). This leads to the formation and expansion of various ethnic communities in specific regions. The bigger and more diverse the community, the greater the strengths
and challenges could be. Demographic changes and expansion are increasing diversity and changing the media consumption of various immigrant communities.

With regards to respecting diversity,

section 3 [of CRTC] says that the Canadian broadcasting system should, “through its programming and employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society.” (Armstrong 2010, 15)

However, policies guiding ethnic media direction and growth are influenced by overall state policies about immigration, ethnic populations, and their rights. Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011) and Browne (2005a) argue that countries with fair and open immigration policies are likely to support preservation and growth of cultural traits and heritage of immigrants through ethnic media, while countries with an assimilation approach pose constraints for the growth of ethnic media, considering it a hindrance to the integration of immigrants into mainstream society. Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011) further assert that Australia and Canada are the two countries providing support for the development of ethnic media due to their multicultural policies, mostly adopted after the 1960s. It is however important to note that ethnic communities had to fight for their cause through social organization and activism to obtain licensing, distribution rights, and satellite transmission for their media in Canada. This was not an easy accomplishment. Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011, 193) suggest “that the state is not truly committed to the long-term preservation of the culture and languages of ethnic minority population” but rather “sees multiculturalism only as a transitional phase, prior to the assimilation of the foreign-born and indigenous population.” Perhaps that is why the Canadian state is blamed for its hidden agenda of “economic model or shallow
multiculturalism” (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011, 193), an issue that needs to be researched in greater depth.

With increased diversity in Canadian society, mainstream media is also making some effort to change its landscape by adding some content related to multiculturalism and diversity. Yet feminist and critical race theorists like Bannerji (2000, 16) contest the very terms that inform the multicultural framework—terms such as “diversity,” “multiculturalism,” “difference,” “visible minority” and, especially, “women of color”—asserting that the creation of such terms has political implications; once they become popular, they can be used as “a source of internal social differentiation and legitimation for various mainstream and official practices which extend from education at home to foreign policy for bombing Iraq.” Multiculturalism in mainstream media is also characterized by such terms. The extant literature identifies several limitations and obstructions with regard to mainstream media’s efforts to incorporate diversity by adding ethnic content to its presentations as part of a multicultural scheme (Johnston and Flamiano 2007; Nishikawa et al. 2009; Shafer 1993). Atton (2002b, 503) considers the “deployment of the occasional ‘radical voice’ as a classic example of a dominant hegemonic practice’s ability to accommodate aspects of an emergent practice” without any real motivation for inclusion of the marginalized groups. Rarely is this narrowcasting intended to serve the purpose of adding a real spirit of diversity.

Some mainstream media use a (flawed) strategy of hiring racialized journalist in order to infuse diversity into their content. Scholars observe that there are several inbuilt, yet misleading, assumptions inherent in adding diversity by hiring journalists of colour to

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22 The term “narrowcasting” is used to describe the segment/portion of content for a specific population in the mainstream media. For example, Shaw’s multicultural channel offers specific time slots to different groups to present their programming on the mainstream cable channel.
work in mainstream media (Johnston and Flamiano 2007; Nishikawa et al. 2009; Shafer 1993). First, it is assumed that diversity belongs to journalists/producers of colour and they can make it happen alone, in isolation from the rest of their media organization. Secondly, they are mostly assigned to cover diversity-related issues and not given significant areas of coverage such as economics and politics. Third, adding diversity as “an additional flavour” to the existing scheme ensures it remains a separate theme, defined against the main content. The fourth assumption, related to the third, suggests that since diversity is one small and separate component of mainstream media, the journalists and producers of colour working on diversity issues are not capable of taking on leadership positions in the mainstream media (Johnston and Flamiano 2007; Nishikawa et al. 2009; Shafer 1993). In order to add diversity, each worker employed in mainstream media must be diversity-sensitive, which means the essential ingredients required for the mainstream media to incorporate diversity as a core value and practice are currently missing.

As discussed above, many studies have found that racialized journalists face multiple issues and barriers while working within the mainstream media (Johnston and Flamiano 2007; Nishikawa et al. 2009; Shafer 1993). In addition to the challenges already mentioned, journalists of colour are put under greater scrutiny compared to their white colleagues, and are expected to give 100% at all times (Shafer 1993, 205). Shafer (1993) further suggests that they might also be facing financial discrimination, being paid less than their white colleagues. Journalists of colour often play a double role, working at a mainstream media outlet and trying to represent their communities: Johnson and Flamiano (2007, 119) found that “in many cases, they occupied a borderland and often
felt responsible for communicating their communities’ concerns to the newspaper and for challenging dominant racial notions and news routines.” Cottle (2000b) echoed this same finding in her analysis of minority programming at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); the producers of colour interviewed for her research admitted that they felt a double pressure: first, to prove that they were equally as capable as their white, middle class male counterparts, and second, to take on the burden of representing their communities. Unfortunately, according to journalists of colour, the “formal policies [adopted by the mainstream newspaper to incorporate diversity] were usually too superficial to deal with some of the critical problems that the newspapers faced in covering their diverse publics” (Johnson and Flamiano 2007, 120). Given the numerous challenges minority journalists face in working in the mainstream media, their skills and performance abilities are hardly utilized and are thus of reduced benefited to both the mainstream media and ethnic communities (Johnston and Flamiano 2007).

A study done by Pritchard and Stonbely (2007) highlights the differences in reporting-content among white and African-American reporters for the same newspaper. The authors analyze how white reporters were dedicated to covering business and government while African-American reporters were focused on covering the issues of concern to minorities. Quoting an editor, the authors explain how minority journalists are considered “experts” on their community issues and that this presumed knowledge became a crucial factor in assigning the minority issues to them, while white journalists, on the other hand, did not cover stories about racial minorities and their content did not have any diversity-related theme. Additionally, “the hegemony of whiteness was such that none of the journalists appeared to have thought about the role of whiteness in the
coverage of the largely white realms of politics and business” (Pritchard and Stonbely 2007, 244). Although there are studies to explicate the experiences of journalists of colour mostly in the context of the USA and some in Canada, there was no study found elaborating the experiences and perceptions of South Asian immigrants working in the fields of mainstream or ethnic journalism and communication in Canada.

Simply hiring racialized journalists also does not guarantee that the media’s content will reflect diversity. Diversity in the content of the mainstream media is compromised when overall hiring practices are racialized, gendered, and class-based. Durham (1998) points out that the mainstream media is comprised predominantly of male, middle class, white people. Johnson and Flamiano (2007) found that the mainstream media studied as part of their research, despite being served by journalists of colour from five to twenty years, was predominantly controlled by white management, and none of the journalists of colour held any top positions in the media. Johnston and Flamiano (2007) reported that it was the opinion of the journalists interviewed for their research that as long as journalists of colour did not hold significant positions in the organizational hierarchy, and the newspaper management did not understand and embrace diversity as a core value, no significant change could be expected. In her analysis of minority programming at the BBC, Cottle (2000b) found that the BBC’s bureaucratic environment sustained “the prevailing corporate ethos of BBC conservatism inhibiting programme ideas, design and production” (Cottle 2000b, 104). She further found that maintaining mainstream “appeal” for ethnic programming became the norm for the organization despite the fact that ethnic programming might not need mainstream appeal to be relevant to its audiences (Cottle 2000b, 104). When Cottle requested that the
BBC provide the numbers of minority staff working on minority programming, the BBC failed to provide the data.

Downing (2001) emphasizes that the boundaries of alternative/ethnic and mainstream media are blurred. Both types of media have some common practices despite having unique styles and different audiences. Elghul-Bebawi (2009, 26), quoting two case studies, demonstrates that oftentimes mainstream and alternative media also exchange their news and information, “reflect[ing] a level of interaction and dialogic relationship at play between the mainstream and the alternative.” No matter how oppositional they might be to each other in their principles and content, the two types of media maintain an ongoing relation for their mutual interest. Hence, the study of any form of alternative media, including ethnic media, is not possible without contextualizing the “inclusion” practices of mainstream media. Downing (1995, 239-40) considers ethnic media “yet another important category of alternative media,” reproducing mainstream media (styles) in some cases, while in other cases it “may have much more antagonistic attitudes towards the power structure.” There are many gaps in the literature on alternative media with regard to its context-specific definition and impact evaluation on communities, as well as on the relationship of mainstream media to alternative media and the role of ethnic minorities in their media.

Antiracist and feminist scholars have been analyzing and criticizing the mainstream (state, society and) media for producing and reproducing hegemony and racism against immigrant and Aboriginal populations, but they have failed to incorporate the role of the ethnic media, specifically immigrants’ media, through empirical research data. In addition, no significant study can be found on the South Asian ethnic media in
Canada that explains the relationship of ethnic media with its audiences. There is independent and scattered research on ethnic media, but it mainly deals with the growth and operational challenges of the ethnic media in generalized terms. Alternative media research mainly deals with the media forms originating against or in response to the hegemony of the mainstream media by providing generalized conditions suitable for the growth of alternative forms of media. Research on different forms of alternative media provides some useful conceptual frameworks, but fails to present case studies on specific populations such as immigrant communities living in the West and particularly in Canada. With the growth of transnational migration, specifically migration based on economic motives, the community organization of immigrants is changing at a fast pace and becoming much more complex. Ethnic media could hold a significant, at times central role in community organization and development, and therefore dedicated and focused research projects are required to study the origin, role, growth, challenges, and advantages of ethnic media of different immigrant communities living in Canada.

Although there are many fundamental differences between ethnic and other forms of alternative media (e.g., community, radical, and citizens), yet there are also many commonalities based on political and cultural grounds. For example, alternative media is a response to the mainstream media’s promotion of the capitalistic objectives of powerful segments of society. Alternative media is thus turned into an oppositional force representing a bigger agenda (i.e., to present alternative views and news). Ethnic media on the other hand has a specific agenda to serve specific ethnic communities and could, really, be called “mainstream” media in the context of these ethnic communities. Secondly, although ethnic media might be fighting against power structures (such as
racial and class-based systemic structures) of mainstream society, it could also be creating certain types of structural barriers for its ethnic communities by reproducing mainstream media norms/appeal. The literature is silent on the nature and nexus of ethnic media vis-à-vis mainstream and/or alternative media. While most of the literature deals with different forms of alternative media, there is not enough significant work on ethnic media—more specifically on South Asian ethnic media, particularly in the Canadian context—to parse these connections. There is also thus far a dearth of research on ethnic media, particularly the media of racialized immigrants, as seen/analyzed from the perspectives of media producers/representatives.

Drawing from antiracist, critical media, and feminist approaches, my research will fill in some of the gaps in the existing literature by addressing the role, contribution, and challenges of ethnic media in Canada. It also provides a case study of South Asian ethnic media in BC from the perspective of South Asian journalists, media producers, and media practitioners in addition to that of its audiences, in part to analyze whether ethnic media could be considered alternative media or whether it constitutes instead the mainstream media of the ethnic population (Downing 2001). The research outlined in this thesis also explores the practices of South Asian ethnic media, its composition, and its contribution in the lived experiences of its audiences, specifically in the Canadian context, for scholars of media and communications, policymakers, ethnic journalists, and immigrant communities.
Conclusion

In summary, antiracist and critical media theories and approaches advocate deep-rooted research into how different ethnic groups have been portrayed and presented in the nation-building project of Canada (Dua 2000a, 1999). Numerous antiracist and feminist scholars eloquently suggest that instead of addressing systemic barriers and racialization present in the social set up of Canada, the concept of multiculturalism is used to manage the differences in various ethnic groups in the country (Bannerji 2000; Dua 1999). In doing so, “culture” is essentialized and displayed as the most significant factor while ignoring racial inequalities inherent in the system (Jiwani 2006). Critical media scholars supporting antiracist and feminist approaches and theories assert that mainstream media has been playing an active role in embedding the images of different ethnic groups—especially minority ethnic/immigrant groups—in certain ways to align with the national multiculturalism approach (Fleras 2009, 2011). The mainstream media’s tendency to frame ethnic/immigrant groups in negative ways, ignore their voices, and fail to represent or involve them are some of the factors in the growth of ethnic media in Canada (Ahadi and Yu 2010; Alia and Bull 2005; Husband 2005; Larson 2006; Mahtani 2001; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). While ethnic media sources are growing fast in terms of numbers and diverse formats, there remains a dearth of research on their role, contribution, opportunities, and challenges working as alternative media for different ethnic groups. This dissertation seeks to address the gap in the existing literature with an empirical research study investigating the ethnic media of South Asian communities—mainly Indo-Canadian, Pakistani-Canadian, and Bangladeshi-Canadian communities in Metro Vancouver, BC.
CHAPTER 3: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: EMPLOYING ANTIRACIST AND FEMINIST APPROACHES

All research…is socially embedded knowledge generated from “somewhere,” located in specific institutional arrangements and relations of power and privilege that structure the social world. (Creese and Frisby 2011, 1)

I have employed antiracist and feminist research frameworks, complemented by qualitative research methods, to explore the role of South Asian ethnic media in BC, including the challenges, contributions, and opportunities it presents. Antiracist research approaches are influenced by feminist (Bannerji 2000; Razack 2008), critical race (Jiwani 2006; Thobani 2010), post-colonial, and queer theories (Ahmed 2000). Feminist research has identified gender biases and discrimination not only against women but also against other disadvantaged/disempowered segments of society (Creese and Frisby 2011); a feminist research approach requires empathy for and involvement with the research project and its participants, to generate knowledge that can help us to understand the causes (and sometime solutions) of oppression and discrimination against marginalized populations (Reinharz and Davidman 1992; Sprague 2005). Critical race research requires understanding and challenging power structures, oppressive practices, and conflicting ideologies in the particular field of study (Merriam 2014). Together with qualitative methods, antiracist and feminist research methodological frameworks can help inform fruitful and responsible inquiries into the issues encountered by racialized immigrants.
Feminist researchers are generally wary of positivism in research, arguing that it does not acknowledge subjectivity and personal experiences as substantial sources of data (Hesse-Biber 2014). In fact, opposing the traditional definition of “objectivity,” some feminist researchers have crafted the new concept of “feminist objectivity” based on the principles of “situated knowledge” (Harding and Norbers 2005; Hesse-Biber 2012). Harding and Norbers (2005) argue that the knowledge produced through conventional models of social research is embedded in the social and political hierarchies of the society. Hesse-Biber (2014) asserts that the contributions made by feminist researchers through standpoint epistemology offer a broader and more comprehensive picture of social reality by challenging social and political hierarchies. Her explication of master/slave and oppressor/oppressed relationships is pertinent to her argument; she suggests that the perspective or understanding of the slave is more complex than that of the master, since the slave must understand the master’s world and perspective as well as his/her own, while the master is privileged to comprehend only his/her own reality (Hesse-Biber 2014, 6). This more comprehensive understanding of the world from the point of view of oppressed subjects provides a broader and more in-depth picture of how marginalized groups understand their issues in the given socio-political arrangement of the society. In other words, knowledge produced through conventional methods (read: positivism exclusively) reproduces the same power structures of a society by maintaining the social and political arrangements of that society. Feminist research approaches emphasize the importance of situating any knowledge within given circumstances rather than viewing it as an isolated phenomenon. It is, however, important to note that feminists do not totally reject positivism as an approach; in fact, many feminist
researchers have effectively used mixed methods to derive inclusive and comprehensive findings “after [analyzing] conflicting results as a way to reveal new avenues of understanding and new research questions” (Hesse-Biber 2012, 145).

Scholars agree that current trends in research call for enhanced collaboration between communities, universities, and other social institutions (Creese and Frisby 2011; Kirby, Greaves, and Reid 2006). This is significant for many reasons; for example, academia and research scholars—the prime producers of scholarly knowledge—are becoming actively involved with communities. Similarly, policymakers are also realizing the significance of connecting with and learning from community knowledge to inform comprehensive and inclusive policy design. While studying race and corresponding intersections such as class, gender, religion, and cultural identities, inquiry into the source of knowledge is important in order to produce knowledge based on shared and commonly accepted realities. In other words, it is important to first locate oneself as a researcher in the community to gain an understanding of one’s knowledge about the community, and to learn what people think and feel about social (and racial) relations and organization. This collected knowledge can then be presented for interpretation, discussion, and dissemination, strengthening the relationship between communities and researchers/academics (Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007).

Dei and Johal (2005, 2) argue that critical race research focuses on “minoritized” populations through their perspectives and lived experiences, and that, in designing the study, the researcher is required to “critically engage his or her own experience as part of the knowledge search.” This task requires a deep-rooted understanding of the historical facts and social realities embedded in the society where the researcher intends to work, as
part of a project of “self-recovery” (hooks 1989, 28). Feminist and antiracist frameworks also provide a critical and inclusive approach to incorporating the voices of communities. Marginalized and disadvantaged groups need to be listened to and included in knowledge production and dissemination systems (Olson 2000). My research design is primarily based on antiracist and feminist research frameworks; hence, I included most segments of South Asian communities (e.g., community representatives; ethnic media practitioners;\(^{23}\) cisgender women and men, and transgender folks; and youth.)\(^{24}\) My goal is to understand and analyze the role of ethnic media in the social organization of Canada from the perspective of South Asian immigrant communities.

The study of intersectionality provides a context to analyze the layers of different factors that are apparently different but are in reality closely interlinked—for example: gender and class; race and gender; race and class; etc. Some of these apparently distinct factors may have more significance than others for certain groups/individuals, but in order to understand the lived experiences of any group, these factors should be seen together (Robinson 2010). In other words, when separated, factors such as gender, race, and class might seem like different pieces of a puzzle but a complete picture can only emerge if these pieces are put together. Analyzing group/community dynamics through the lens of one factor can provide substantial information, yet will leave many blank spaces that cannot be understood without looking through other, intersecting lenses.

Lykke (2010) argues that feminist and women’s studies have made a great contribution to the theory of intersectionality, while McCall (2005) emphasizes the role, women of colour have played in introducing and using intersectional frameworks to study power

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\(^{23}\) “Media practitioner” is a broad term used for this research; it includes journalists, TV and radio anchors, producers, media managers, reporters, media owners, etc.

\(^{24}\) All participants in this research were aged 19 and above.
and oppression in society. Weber (2009) argues that women’s studies is one of the pioneer disciplines to use intersectionality to inform analysis of oppressed and marginalized segments of society.

Intersectional theory primarily focuses on the axes of race, gender, and class. However, in many studies, other factors also become significant, such as location/place, age, sexuality, and/or ethnicity (Das Gupta 2007; Weber 2009). From the beginning of this study, it was clear that factors beyond race, gender, and class—for example, location/place and space—would require attention to understand the lived experiences of South Asian immigrants. Although South Asian immigrants have settled across Canada from East to West and South to North, their presence in large numbers in one specific location (such as Metro Vancouver) can make their lived experiences unique. Consequently, the number of years spent by South Asian immigrants in Metro Vancouver becomes as relevant as race, gender, and class in informing an understanding of those lived experiences. Similarly, when studying ethnic media vis-à-vis audiences, age becomes a crucial factor. As part of this research, I engaged with a large number of South Asians from different age groups, and found their media habits differed according to their age. I will discuss these intersections (e.g. location/space and age) in detail in the following chapters. I will now explain the methods I used to collect data for this doctoral research.

**Methods**

I used various methods, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, workshops, and ethnographic observation as part of my process of data collection and
analysis. As discussed above, qualitative research methods enable researchers to take a flexible, open-minded, and receptive approach to their studies (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011; Merriam 2014; Patton 2002; Rubin and Rubin 2005). By using multiple qualitative methods, one can get a more comprehensive picture (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2010). In-depth interviews are one of the major qualitative research techniques used to obtain information from research participants. deMarrais and Lapan (2003, 45) define interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study.” In-depth, open-ended interviews provide much more information than interviews based on closed-ended questions. While closed-ended interviews tend to be formal, focusing on obtaining only surface knowledge, in-depth interviews provide a chance for the researcher and participant to challenge, rethink, and articulate their thought processes, creating a complex conversation.

Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2010) argue that choosing a qualitative method does not necessarily make you a qualitative researcher; rather there is a whole set of theories that must inform the effective and accurate use of qualitative methods. For example, interviews require understanding and correct interpretation regarding the experiences of the people who are being interviewed. In this process, the social location of the researcher plays a significant role. In my case, being an “insider” or “native researcher” helped in most cases to win the confidence of the participants, allowing me to explore what was on their minds to a point of saturation during interviews. Essentially,

the purpose of interviewing . . . is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories. (Patton, 2002, 341)
With my background as an immigrant, academic, and potential ethnic media watcher, my participants seemed confident and willing to share their knowledge and experiences. A handful of interviews with a carefully selected sample enabled me to gather a few stories. When put together, these few stories, combined with ethnographic observations and data from both primary and secondary sources, provided a bigger picture that assisted me in answering my research questions.

For this dissertation, I interviewed twelve South Asian ethnic media practitioners—three women and nine men. In addition, to include the perspectives of the audiences of South Asian media, four focus groups (with women and men), and one research workshop were conducted. Three of the focus groups with South Asian representatives included mixed (female and male) audiences as well as ethnic media practitioners who immigrated from India and Pakistan. Twenty-two participants altogether attended these three focus groups. A separate (fourth) focus group was conducted in order to include representatives from the Bangladeshi-Canadian community; five members attended this focus group. I contacted ten to twelve potential participants and was able to recruit six to eight participants for each focus group. This was a manageable group size as small groups are conducive to obtaining in-depth information (Reinharz 1992, 222-223). Twenty-five participants attended the research workshop. I spent approximately 218 hours in collecting and transcribing data including twelve interviews, four focus groups, and a research workshop.
Media practitioners interviewed for my study had various educational and professional backgrounds. Some had formally studied journalism, political science, and history, while others had undergraduate and/or high school diplomas with technical training. For the sake of protecting their privacy, I will not provide a detailed description of my participants; however, throughout this dissertation, participants’ profiles will be reflected through their narratives and experiences to substantiate analysis.

Data collection took place from January-June 2013 in Metro Vancouver, mainly in Surrey, BC. Data presented and discussed for the purposes of the present research study are limited to this time period and geographical location. The rapid and exponential growth of South Asian ethnic media means that new dynamics and dimensions have likely arisen since the period of data collection, therefore mindful reading and use of the present data as well as further research in this area is suggested and encouraged. I have
had hands-on experience conducting and transcribing qualitative interview data for many projects. My previous experience working as a Research Assistant on various research projects involving South Asian women and men, and especially the experience of conducting and transcribing interviews with these populations, helped me in recruiting, scheduling, conducting, and transcribing interviews for this dissertation.

A semi-structured interview guide\(^{25}\) was developed to conduct interviews with media practitioners; however, participants were also free to share their lived experiences.

In developing my interview guide, I used both approaches outlined below:

The general interview guide approach involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. In contrast, the standardized open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words. Flexibility in probing is more or less limited, depending on the nature of the interview and the skills of interviewers. (Patton 2002, 342)

My interview guide included sets of questions/Issues that I wanted to discuss with media practitioners. At the same time, I kept the flow of interviews open and flexible to suit the pace and interests of the participants. My purpose was to cover major topics through interviews, yet allow participants to choose their perspectives and answers, since each media practitioner had a different story and experience associated with ethnic media. This way, participants had the flexibility and choice to share their narratives, which maintained the originality of their perspectives while covering most of the topics included in the guide. In addition to describing their own experiences, media practitioners also outlined certain media policies and practices and shared information about the organizations they worked for. Here again, my positionality as an insider was beneficial

\(^{25}\) Please see interview guides attached as Appendix B.
to the process; sharing a common language and culture with the participants enables the researcher to create and enjoy a kind of flexibility which, over time, becomes a skill (Rubin and Rubin 2005, 184-185). I benefited from this juxtaposition of acquired skill and sharing the same cultural background with the respondents throughout the data collection journey.

Focus group discussions can lead to many useful insights as they create discussion in response to the questions posed by the researcher. People have different responses, opinions, and perceptions about the questions posed, and this difference adds new dimensions to the discussion, which is often analytical in nature; such discussion can provide many leads to the researcher, which is usually not achievable during one-on-one interviews (Liamputtong 2011). To understand ethnic media, it was important to interview its practitioners, mainly those who work in, create, and manage ethnic media. However, audiences are also a major stakeholder in the making of ethnic media, and without including the audiences’ voices the research process would be incomplete. I therefore conducted focus group discussions with general audiences and community representatives together with ethnic media practitioners.

Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2010, 136) assert that the “interactive nature” of focus group discussion can create more points of discussion and ideas than a series of in-depth interviews with the same number of participants. Additionally, since the questions are general in nature, the respondents do not feel pressured to share personal information, resulting in open and free discussion from all sides. However, Liamputtong (2011) argues that maintaining confidentiality in focus groups is a challenge for researchers as the members share their information with each other in a public forum. Having realized this
challenge, I reminded the participants at the outset to keep specific information, especially identities of fellow participants, confidential when discussing any topics related to the focus group with anyone outside the group. While individual interviews provided me firsthand information from media practitioners, focus groups addressed my queries about communities’ (dis)engagement and responses to their ethnic media.

I also conducted a research workshop as an innovative method applied in this study. Workshops are generally conducted for training and learning purposes, but they also provide a broader, more flexible, and more open-ended platform for interactions among research participants, and thus create rich data. They provide an opportunity to hold multiple concurrent discussion forums (in the form of small groups). At the same time, all the group members have the opportunity to enter into a larger dialogue with each other as part of large group discussion (usually towards the end). Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2010) explain in the preface of their book how their ten years of giving workshops on qualitative research practices translated into a comprehensive book on the topic. Using examples of participatory action research (as a form of fieldwork approach), they argue that the difference between participatory action research and other research approaches lies in the level of involvement of the community (participants). With participatory action research, the research is not conducted on the people; rather it is conducted with the people: “the role of the researcher is then extended to that of facilitator, an agent for change and the creator of a space for dialogue” (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2010, 51).

The idea of conducting a workshop as part of my research was influenced by the participatory action research approach. It was a unique approach, but seemed a suitable
research activity for this dissertation for a couple of reasons. Firstly, South Asian ethnic media is relatively new, and not as large an enterprise as the mainstream or any other established media industry in Canada. However, there are many types of media (i.e. radio, TV shows, newspapers, and magazines) primarily owned by Indo-Canadians and Pakistani-Canadians\(^\text{26}\) and their equal participation in the study was important to answer the research questions. Secondly, I considered that although interviews would provide rich information from media practitioners, and focus groups would include perspectives and feedback from audiences about ethnic media and their involvement with that media, there would be a need for broader and deeper dialogue between media practitioners and community representatives (audiences). The focus groups helped me partially achieve this goal, through the involvement of media practitioners as well as media audiences. Yet I needed a larger platform where both audiences and stakeholders from the major media outlets (i.e., radio, TV, and print media operating in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, and other South Asian regional languages) could meet, interact, and exchange ideas with each other. This became possible through the research workshop.

My initial research and investigation had revealed that there was no formal forum for South Asian ethnic media practitioners, and they never had a chance to interact face-to-face and discuss ethnic media’s role in Canada. This inspired my interest in creating a forum where South Asian ethnic media practitioners, along with key community members, could come together to discuss and formulate policy recommendations for the improvement of ethnic media. The workshop was planned towards the end of data

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\(^{26}\) The Bangladeshi community, as per interviews and focus groups, did not have any organized, formal media outlets or products in BC. Nonetheless, they have some informal cultural activities including theater and other stage performances in Bangla language. Bangladeshis are a relatively small community in terms of their numbers in BC and this could explain the absence of any formal media outlet or production representing their community.
collection; this timing allowed the participants to develop ideas and initiate discussions in the smaller focus groups. Participants were then able to extend the dialogue in the larger group setting of the workshop, where the participants set the agenda and led the discussions according to their preferences. Although I developed a brief questionnaire for the workshop group facilitators to guide the discussion, in a pre-workshop orientation the facilitators were instructed to keep the discussion open and flexible according to the wishes of the group members. The facilitators and I thus allowed the participants to take charge of conducting the discussions, summarizing points for the larger group and synthesizing the information at the end as suggested by Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2010). The workshop served to provide a comprehensive picture of South Asian ethnic media in BC; it also validated the data collected through interviews and focus groups.

I have cited examples of different formats of ethnic media programming as content elaboration in various chapters of this dissertation; this is different from content analysis. Content analysis is a technique that requires coding of data, use of statistical measurement, and scientific validations, leaving little room for flexible handling of the text. Krippendorff (2012, 27), explaining the advantages of ethnographic content analysis, notes: “Proponents of ethnographic content analysis oppose the sequential nature of traditional content analysis, suggesting instead that analysts be flexible in taking into account new concepts that emerge during their involvement with texts.” However, I did not use ethnographic content analysis as a technique either. In the case of South Asian ethnic media, my purpose is to provide a quick and selective scan of the types of media content presented via radio, TV, and print media. The purpose is to understand what kinds of topics and issues make up the content and central focus of ethnic media, and
what is the agenda-setting order related to news and current affairs as well as socio-political and entertainment content on various types of media. The brief sketch of media content I provide in this chapter 5 of this dissertation was drawn from the narratives of the participants of this study. It is also based on my personal observation of various media where it was possible with my language skills of understanding the media content. The sketch will provide background for readers to understand the nature of the content presented on ethnic media. It will also enable readers to put the forthcoming information, provided by media practitioner and audiences, into context.

**South Asian Ethnic Media’s Landscape: Criteria for Sampling**

My research project dealt with South Asian communities living in Metro Vancouver, BC, mainly originating from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Defining South Asia is a difficult task as the term has multiple definitions and usages. As discussed in previous chapters, South Asia is used as a geographical definition for a region, but institutions vary in their classification of which countries make up the region. Bose and Jalal (2004, 3) explain that “South Asia is a more recent construction—only about five decades old—which today encompasses seven diverse sovereign states of very different sizes: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives.” People of South Asia might have migrated (voluntarily or forced) to various parts of the world before coming to and settling in Canada, and therefore, for the purposes of my research, the focus is on self-identification by the participants27 rather than any other form of

27 Some of the participants have lived in other countries, for example the United Kingdom, Kenya, or Kuwait, before migrating to Canada, yet they identified their place of origin as India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh.
“classification.” My definition of South Asian is anyone who self-identifies as being of South Asian descent, whether first, second, third, or even fourth generation.

I designed my research keeping in mind the nature and extent of the South Asian ethnic media and its audiences in BC. A more specific and detailed account of South Asian ethnic media, including its types, history, and content will be discussed in Chapter 4. Due to time and resource constraints, I had to limit my research to twelve interviews and four focus groups and a research workshop; I had to narrow down my criteria while ensuring inclusiveness. Given the multidimensional and diverse nature of South Asian ethnic media, I chose four main criteria for inclusion in the sampling in order to select research participants:

1) (Commonly spoken South Asian) languages of the ethnic media
2) Nature of production (e.g., Radio, TV shows, Print media)
3) Gender balance
4) Content of the media (e.g., politics, social entertainment, etc.)

While there are a large number of South Asian media outlets (roughly thirty-three in BC according to Murray 2007), I wanted to be as inclusive as possible and include top to middle management as well as working journalists and presenters. At the same time, I wanted to ensure that the selected group represented the diversity of ethnic media, representing Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi communities of Canada. However, there are several culturally and religiously distinct groups within the Indo-Canadian community, such as Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, and Punjabi speaking Indo-Canadians, practicing different faiths such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, and Christianity. Similarly, among the Pakistani-Canadians, there are Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, and Sindhi speaking
groups, each one having varying cultural practices. Urdu in Pakistan, Hindi in some parts of India, and Punjabi (Gurumukhi) in the Punjab province of India are the mainstream languages that are taught at the state/public schools. Currently Metro Vancouver hosts the largest Punjabi speaking Indo-Canadians. Therefore, these languages are considered the language of connection in these communities. Language thus emerged as a central variable; participants’ urban/rural backgrounds also emerged as yet another important insight in the interviews (I will discuss this in more detail later on).

As discussed earlier, my interest in this research project initiated through my involvement in a study with South Asian skilled immigrants (Zaman and Bukhari 2013). It was a study that aimed to learn about these immigrants’ sources of information and support in Canada during their settlement. Ethnic media was identified during that study as one potential source of information. One major finding of the study was related to the role of mentors or social networks in immigrant communities in providing substantial formal and normative information to these communities. We found that South Asian ethnic media practitioners were actively involved in their communities; they shared useful information within their community circles while at the same time having access to mainstream mass media channels which granted them an understanding of their own as well as the mainstream media’s dynamics. In order to understand South Asian ethnic

28 Urdu and Hindi are two different languages in written transcript but in spoken form they are almost identical. Hindi and Urdu speaking populations can therefore understand each other.
29 Normative information, according to my definition, is the “informal” and “hidden” information that is based on the practices of any given society. As compared to formal information, which is generally written and available through print or electronic means, normative information comes via spoken word; it is also a kind of “inside” information, giving access to ideas about what is and is not possible, based on usual practices. For example, it may not be formal knowledge that having a “reference” plays a significant role in everyday life yet, in fact, references do help in many aspects of life in Canada, such as obtaining employment. This and other kinds of hidden, informal, and cultural information constitute a useful asset aiding immigrants’ faster settlement. Immigrants need dependable social networks to provide normative information.
media’s role in the lived experiences of its audiences, it was imperative to involve and understand the perspectives of media practitioners who were creating and distributing information and knowledge through ethnic media.

South Asian ethnic media in BC is produced predominantly in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and English (there are, however, a few small-scale media productions in other languages like Sindhi, Bangla, Tamil, etc.). I interviewed media practitioners of mainstream South Asian ethnic media in BC, which included practitioners of media in Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and Bangla languages. To ensure further inclusiveness, I included minority ethnic language representatives (both media practitioners and audiences) in focus groups, such as people speaking and representing Gujarati, Pashto, and Sindhi languages. Initially, I intended to include Bangladeshi-Canadians as a sample, but to my surprise, I found there was no Bangladeshi ethnic media produced in Metro Vancouver (at least at such time as the data were being collected); nevertheless, I included a small representation of Bangladeshi-Canadian audience members to include their voices and concerns as well.

Current South Asian ethnic media is produced in various forms, including newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, and film. I included media practitioners from all these outlets to get a comprehensive picture of the current ethnic media landscape. In order to be inclusive, I surveyed different types of South Asian (mainly Urdu, Punjabi, and Hindi) media. I read newspapers in Urdu and English, and I listened to radio and watched TV shows in Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi languages, almost thrice weekly from 2006 to 2013. I also scanned the websites of media outlets (where available) to understand their media formats and to familiarize myself with the media practitioners. However, the effort was
constrained by my limited proficiency in all South Asian languages. While I can speak and understand Punjabi very well, I cannot read Shahmukhi, Gurumukhi Punjabi, or Hindi. This restricted me from reading the print media of Indo-Canadian communities.

This study was based on understanding ethnic media through the lens of its producers/presenters and users/receivers; hence, I selected South Asian ethnic media practitioners working in the forms mentioned above (e.g., newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio). There were two reasons for this. First, not all South Asian communities are producing all types of ethnic media. For example, Indo-Canadian ethnic media\textsuperscript{30} has access to TV and radio channels due to its large size and community support, while the Bangladeshi-Canadian community is limited to print media such as newspapers and magazines published in Toronto and circulated in Metro Vancouver. Secondly, media audiences may also have diversified interests, with some being interested in print media while others regularly tune in to radio or TV shows. It was important to design an inclusive sampling method in order to reach out to South Asian producers and audiences of print, broadcast, and telecast ethnic media.

Gender balance was the third issue I wanted to ensure in the sample. Given that this was intended as an antiracist and feminist research project, it was important to have women media practitioners in the sample, for both interviews and focus groups. I was unsuccessful in achieving a 50:50 gender ratio in the interviews, and instead ended up interviewing only three female participants (out of twelve in total). There were several reasons for this. First, more male media practitioners showed their willingness to participate in the research compared to female practitioners. Second, it was easier to contact male participants, as they were quick to respond as compared to women, who

\textsuperscript{30} Indo-Canadians in Metro Vancouver are mainly drawn from the Punjabi-speaking Sikh community.
took longer and at times did not reply to my enquiries. I found female journalists cautious and concerned about sharing information during my conversations with them. Additionally, male journalists held senior and decision-making positions in their media organizations while very few females had such advantages; those who had were relatively easy to contact and responded quickly. The third and most important factor was that male media practitioners held more critical positions in media planning and presenting; hence, in order to get relevant information, it was important to include them in the sample. Nonetheless, to overcome this gender imbalance, I included more women in the focus group discussions. This way, I was able to include the voices of South Asian women from all walks of life—journalists, producers, homemakers, and students. More detail is provided in the sampling section below.

**Sampling and Procedure**

South Asian ethnic media is a small world for people who work in this sector. I had a few considerations for choosing the participants of this study: as mentioned above, I wanted to include women media practitioners; I also had to maintain a balance by selecting members of all three communities (i.e., Indo-Canadians, Pakistani-Canadians, and Bangladeshi-Canadians); additionally, my preference was to include key media practitioners who have gained popularity in their communities. As of today, most of the South Asian media outlets are located in one city of Metro Vancouver—Surrey, BC. This clustering was very helpful for me, as it allowed me to move around in one area for data collection, and I was successful in recruiting the most prominent and popular and key position holders in ethnic media and community for that area.
Since my arrival in Canada in 2006, I have been socially active in different forums of South Asian immigrants including settlement and community development organizations, ethnic and cultural groups and associations, student councils, and other social organizations. This has given me access to a variety of immigrant groups who were involved with their communities at different levels. At the beginning of my sampling process, although I had developed a formal letter/email to be sent to the shortlisted participants, I did not rely solely on this channel for engaging media practitioners. People in my networks helped me connect with one or two media practitioners, and in turn these practitioners then connected me with many other participants. However, I was careful in ultimately choosing the participants, ensuring that the criteria I had set for sampling were met. Personal contacts working in different communities and social organizations also referred me to media practitioners. Some of these people were connected with their ethnic media because of the nature of their work (e.g., community development or settlement work). This also reveals that members of smaller ethnic communities are generally connected with each other in terms of sharing their resources and are quick to identify appropriate spokespersons in their communities, if needed.

It was easier to locate and make interview appointments with the Pakistani-Canadian media practitioners as compared to other participants. Unfortunately, despite my desire to interview one of the editors of a particular leading newspaper (one mostly targeting South Asian Muslim communities), I was not successful in obtaining an interview with him. I contacted this editor several times and although he showed interest in my research, he never committed to an appointment for an interview within the data collection period. As mentioned above, most of the recruitment for this study was done
using a snowball technique. A couple of resourceful and well-connected participants connected me with three other significant contacts through email and phone calls. One of these was a famous media personality in the local Indian-Punjabi community who then connected me with two other participants, and I was able to interview one of them.

![Diagram of recruiting participants sources]

**Figure 2. Sources of Recruiting Participants**

I generally had difficulty contacting female media practitioners, except a woman journalist who produced TV and radio shows. She was also referred to me by another participant and was quick to give me an appointment at her workplace. Despite having problems in including an equal number of women (as men) in the sample, I was able to interview three important female media journalists; the original female journalist’s male colleague (who was also interviewed for the study) referred me to one more female journalist, while two others were contacted through email exchanges. Two women were interviewed in their offices, while one was interviewed in a public library near her house.
I wanted to include at least two Bangladeshi-Canadian media practitioners but to my surprise, there were no print, radio, or TV media productions representing this community in Metro Vancouver. It seems there is no ethnic media outlet exclusively serving Bangladeshi-Canadians in BC; rather they rely on print media published and circulated from Toronto. This does not mean that Bangladeshi-Canadians are not culturally active and vibrant in Metro Vancouver; in fact, they have a few not-for-profit community cultural associations that regularly organize community events and cultural celebrations. Additionally, they have various artists, performers, and producers of art and culture working in individual and group capacities. As I came to know through personal contacts in Bangladeshi community, some of their community members were actively involved in stage performances, filmmaking, and other forms of cultural re/presentations. It was hard to decide how the criteria for sampling and interviewing would be applied to this group who were not producing conventional media. Ultimately, I was able to engage a few community members, along with the personal contacts mentioned above, for an exclusive focus group with local Bangladeshi-Canadians. This was due in part to the fact that the Bangladeshi-Canadians, unlike the Indo-Canadian and Pakistani-Canadian participants, could not for the most part speak or understand Urdu, Hindi, and/or Punjabi. Hence, they could not be invited to mixed focus group discussions held in either Urdu or Punjabi (their focus group was conducted in English). A friend who was herself actively involved in stage performance, poetry, and radio hosting also referred me to a Bangladeshi-Canadian filmmaker, and I was able to conduct an interview with this filmmaker at the public library. While it was somewhat difficult to find media practitioners from Bangladesh, I was ultimately successful in finding some prominent
media practitioners – mainly from non-conventional media types such as hosting coop radio show or performing at theatre – from this community. All these focus group discussants were able to highlight in the some of the issues being encountered by this community with regard to ethnic media consumption.

As part of my recruitment strategy, I reviewed online profiles of media practitioners, mostly available through their websites. Almost all major media outlets have a cyber presence through their websites, which include the profiles of their journalists, workers, managers, and owners. In order to confirm the popularity of the selected practitioners, I used my social networks in the community to get firsthand knowledge of which media outlets have large audiences as well as if their communities considered them popular. My own native researcher’s status also enabled me to base my analysis on my own watching/observing of ethnic media. In at least three instances participants who referred me to other ethnic media practitioners connected me with the most significant media owners. This enabled me to widen the scope of selected participants to include South Asian ethnic media journalists, media managers, and media owners.

I interviewed twelve prominent and influential South Asian female and male media practitioners, including media owners, producers, anchorpersons/presenters, journalists, and filmmakers. My sample included eight media practitioners from India, three from Pakistan, and one from Bangladesh. There were four media owners (radio and newspaper), two reporters/editors, one chief editor, one director/anchorperson, one filmmaker, and two producers/anchorpersons. Notably, all media practitioners played multiple roles: an owner could be a reporter and editor while a producer could be hosting
a show as well. The majority of the South Asian ethnic media is owned and operated by Indo-Canadian (predominantly Punjabi-speaking Sikh) communities. Therefore, this population is represented in larger numbers in the sample. Pakistani ethnic media have been growing as well, but mainly in the print media.

Most of the media practitioners received formal emails from me. The emails introduced the main objectives and ideas of the research, explained expectations from them as participants, and shared the consent form and my contact information along with a request for an interview. My initial list included eighteen potential participants; I was successful in scheduling interviews with twelve of them. Most participants replied very positively and took special interest in the research project. Despite their busy schedules, most participants gave me enough time not only to audio-record the interview but also to engage in social chitchat after the interview. In fact, conversations before and after the interviews, along with my observation of their work environment, gave me substantial added insights into their work and their organizations. Warren et al. (2003, 109) explain that relaxed and open conversation often takes place after the taping of formal interview stops; at this time, participants no longer feel the pressure of being in a formal interview, thus the researcher gets some “politically incorrect” and “free” information. I was fortunate, therefore, to have the opportunity to engage in pre- and post- interview discussions with some of the participants I interviewed. The interviews started with an introduction to the research and the researcher, followed by discussion related to the questions. Each interview was about one and a half to two hours long. All the interviews were audio taped with the consent of the participants.
For the focus groups, I could have chosen people from the community at random; nonetheless, I made conscious efforts to include key community members\(^{31}\) — those with special positions and connections within the community, along with common media audience. This secured a broader perspective from all three communities (i.e., Indo-Canadians, Pakistani-Canadians, and Bangladeshi-Canadians). Recruiting people who held significant positions in their respective communities gave me access to their own opinions as well as their observations about the opinions of their community members by virtue of their connections in their communities. While involving significant personalities from the community, I also tried to include people who work in ethnic media, directly or indirectly, in order to generate useful and in-depth discussions and exchange of information within the groups. In some of the groups, I tried adding ethnic media practitioners from non-mainstream (i.e., other than Punjabi/Hindi/Urdu) South Asian linguistic backgrounds such as Gujarati, Sindhi, and Bangla to include their voices as well. I was successful in engaging people who worked in settlement organizations, in ethnic media, on school boards, and in municipal governments, as well as those who were members of various ethnic and cultural associations/organizations.

As mentioned above, I was not able to include as many female media practitioners in the individual interview process as I would have liked; therefore, to maintain a gender balance, I conducted two focus groups exclusively with women; I also conducted one with only men, and one with both women and men. The groups included people of all ages, including seniors and young adults. The scheduling of focus groups was primarily

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\(^{31}\) These significant members held important positions in the community. For example, some of them worked in settlement agencies and worked with new immigrants, while others were volunteer members of different cultural, business, and community organizations. In other words, they were well connected within their communities and could represent various perceptions and experiences of their communities in general.
based on the availability of space, as well as the availability of community
representatives and ethnic media practitioners. The focus groups with women or men
were held separately with participants from India and Pakistan. The last focus group,
which included both women and men, was comprised entirely of Bangladeshi-Canadian
community members. To create non-hierarchal, inclusive, shared spaces in the focus
groups conducive for producing localized, context-based, and mutually learned
knowledge according to the principles of feminist research (Liamputtong 2011, 20), I
preferred to conduct focus groups with women and men separately to make sure women’s
voices were heard. Unfortunately, despite my utmost efforts, I was not able to recruit
many interested community members for the focus group dedicated to the Bangladeshi-
Canadian community. This left me with limited options, and I ended up conducting a
mixed-gender focus group with that community.

Interestingly, the snowball technique initially used to connect with participants
through social contacts helped create a certain level of trust among focus group
participants, as many were participating alongside friends/acquaintances. An interview
guide was developed to facilitate group discussion but, as in the semi-structured
interviews, it was followed loosely to allow for spontaneous and free discussion on the
topics introduced. The focus groups required voluntary participation and full engagement
from the participants, which was achieved in most cases. Participants were given turns to
share their opinions and experiences, and in this way, I made sure that all participants got
a chance to contribute their voices. The narrative-sharing techniques employed for this
research provided a chance for “silenced groups” to share their lived experiences through
participation in the process, which is part of developing participatory and community
research (Letherby 2003, 84-89). The focus group interviews enabled me to analyze the contrast, conflict, and agreements presented within the viewpoints of representatives of South Asian communities vis-à-vis ethnic media organizations.

Participants in all focus groups were introduced to the nature and scope of the research prior to entering into discussion. Consent forms and privacy conditions were shared, and all participants signed the consent forms before participating. Light refreshments were served towards the end of the focus group discussions, when participants mingled and engaged in social chitchat. As stated, most focus group interviews were conducted in Punjabi and Urdu while the focus group for the Bangladeshi-Canadian group was conducted in English. Once data collection was completed, the content of interviews and focus groups was transcribed and translated. Privacy of all participants was maintained and identity of the participants was disguised with coded names.

The research workshop was held at Simon Fraser University’s Surrey campus, and was well attended by twenty-five to thirty participants.32 This group included media audience members as well as ethnic media practitioners. The participants were recruited through social networks and personal contacts. To ensure gender balance, women and men were invited from both groups (i.e., media audience members as well as ethnic media practitioners). Participants were of Indian and Pakistani origin. Unfortunately, I could not engage any Bangladeshi-Canadians for the workshop. The workshop was about three hours long. In the first part of the workshop, I facilitated an introduction for all the participants. Privacy policy was explained prior to beginning the workshop, and signed consent forms were obtained from all participants.

32 Some participants stayed for the first part of the workshop, while others joined in the last part.
There were four groups, each comprising six to eight participants. Each group had a facilitator who was also a participant and thus took part in discussions to share their point of view and help generate information. As mentioned previously, a pre-workshop orientation with all four facilitators was arranged before the day of the workshop to establish their role. A discussion guide (based on the questions used for the focus group interviews) was provided to the facilitators in advance; however, facilitators were directed to keep the discussion flexible and open in order to accommodate the preferences of group members. Each smaller group in the research workshop was asked to nominate a group coordinator, who would share with the larger group the salient details that emerged from their group’s discussions towards the end of the workshop.

Once again, I received enormous support from my personal contacts working in the community development sector, who volunteered to perform the important task of facilitating the group discussions. I decided not to facilitate any group myself for two reasons. First, I wanted to oversee logistical arrangements to ensure the smooth flow of the workshop. Second, by choosing the facilitators and group coordinators from within the groups, I hoped to ensure a non-hierarchal and democratic composition of the groups and the overall workshop. Not facilitating a group also gave me a chance to get information from the groups’ perspective without my intervention in acquiring any specific information. One of the main roles of the facilitators was to ensure equal and fair opportunities for all the members to participate and contribute. I was available on site to provide any clarification requested by the groups, to remind everyone of the time frame for discussion, and to provide administrative support.
Once the group participants had sat in discussion for roughly one hour, the coordinators were asked to share the major themes and ideas with others in the larger group. The groups were provided with paper and pens to draw, write, and organize their thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences, and concerns. The group leaders shared the main points discussed in their groups with the larger group. The forum was open for debate and discussion based on the concluding points of each group. Sharing and openly exchanging ideas created a rich opportunity for all the group members to engage, and hence the session lasted longer than originally planned. Members took active part in the discussion and many new ideas were generated. I concluded the workshop with a note of thanks and appreciation. All proceedings were audio recorded, with consent from participants.

Notably, the workshop was well attended by both South Asian ethnic media practitioners and community members. Not only did both groups engage passionately in discussion during the formal workshop, but they also continued the dialogue even after the workshop officially ended. I will share my observations regarding the aspirations and challenges the workshop participants discussed in some of these informal forums in the next chapters. The main issue that seemed to arise was that the majority of media practitioners felt they lacked a formal forum for South Asian journalists and that it was the first time they had a chance to get together (in an academic forum) to talk about their issues with each other in great detail. They were even enthusiastic about forming a body of South Asian journalists that could create connection among media workers for the purposes of sharing issues and resources and strengthening the voice of ethnic media journalists.
This model of workshop, usually employed in training sessions and educational settings, triggers a two-way process for participants: learning from other participants, and sharing their own knowledge and perceptions. These processes run parallel, often generating ideas that might be hidden in people’s minds but could be triggered by fellow participants sharing ideas. Discussing issues in small groups followed by an exchange of ideas with the large group enables participants to gain knowledge and confidence regarding various aspects of the topics under discussion (Cordner, Klein, and Baiocchi 2012). The process is also significant because it provides time and space to each participant. Some participants are more vocal than others, but the multi-layered process (i.e., the introduction, small group discussion, summing up of findings within the groups, and finally a large group discussion) provides fair opportunities for shy and reserved participants to take part in the discussions at different points.

Research workshops provide opportunities for learning and knowledge-sharing for both researcher and participants. As observed in the workshop, the participants’ interest intensified throughout the workshop and the last phase of the large group discussion attracted much greater involvement. The workshop generated a great deal of useful information for my study and, indeed, enabled me to validate data collected through interviews and focus groups. Eventually, a saturation point was naturally reached, where it was felt that the most significant information had been collected and a repetitive pattern had started to emerge—then the workshop was at an end. All the data collected in the workshop were translated and transcribed, as the workshop was conducted in Punjabi and Urdu. I translated and transcribed all the data into English.
I have been actively involved in South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver through personal networking as well as through my volunteer work with various community development organizations. I also attended a number of events including social, cultural, and religious gatherings organized and/or attended by South Asians living in BC. During these gatherings, I took notes in my reflective journal, and thus this dissertation has also been informed by ethnographic\textsuperscript{33} observations. My national and ethnic origin as a South Asian (specifically Pakistani) and my ability to speak several South Asian languages (e.g., Urdu, Punjabi, Hindko, Pashto, and Hindi), enabled me to gain easier access to the local South Asian community and provided me with a thorough understanding of their everyday practices. My ethnographic notes also helped illuminate various behaviours, ideologies, and concerns shown by many South Asians in the context of their everyday lives in Canada (and in their respective countries of origin as well). My reflective notes, taken during different community events, while watching ethnic media, and from everyday lived experiences, seemed to be a great resource for filling in the blanks during and after the data collection process.

Prior to my doctoral research, I had worked with my senior supervisor and project director, Dr. Habiba Zaman on her Metropolis-BC-funded project (2009-2011) which was focused on the informational and support needs of South Asian skilled immigrants in Canada, more specifically in Metro Vancouver. The research process and findings of the project triggered my interest in examining South Asian ethnic media as an active and vibrant social institution for immigrant communities in BC. A couple of excerpts of interviews conducted for Metropolis-funded project are used in my PhD thesis to substantiate my data.

\textsuperscript{33} My informal ethnographic notes were taken between 2008 and 2014.
My Role as Researcher

Like anyone, I hold multiple and intersecting social identities. I am a landed immigrant, married, a mother of two young children, an active community member keenly involved in the events of South Asian communities, and an academic. Each of these identities provided me with certain opportunities as well as limitations in the context of this research. My insider role as a South Asian immigrant enabled me to collect data via my re/sources in South Asian communities. I have active social and personal connections in South Asian ethnic media organizations as well as non-profit organizations such as Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS), the Multi-lingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC), the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS of BC), Options Community Services, the Canadian Women Community Network Society, the Pakistani Canadian Cultural Association, the Greater Vancouver Bangladesh Cultural Association, and Sanja Vehra, all of which work with the South Asian population in Metro Vancouver. These various connections were instrumental in recruiting participants for my research.

My ability to speak multiple South Asian languages naturally aided me in connecting with South Asian communities. Additionally, my background as an immigrant from Pakistan, one of the major South Asian countries, helped me understand relevant cultural as well as social norms and practices that also helped connect me with these communities. I am familiar with everyday terminologies, expressions, and idioms from most parts of South Asia. Thus, my insider status and knowledge as part of the South Asian immigrant community helped me collect first-hand information in a conducive and confidence-sharing environment.
Many scholars argue that the “insider” perspective of the researcher, especially when working with their own marginalized community, is a misleading concept. Any “insider advantage,” these scholars suggest, may be compromised or negated by class differences between the marginalized community and the academic—who is often perceived as holding a middle-class, university researcher’s status (Kirby, Greaves, and Reid 2006; Sprague 2005). Nonetheless, in my case, once the interview appointments were scheduled, my native informant position gave me a great advantage for multiple reasons. Firstly, the perception of middle-class, university researcher’s status was not in conflict with that of the media practitioners, many of whom worked in high profile media positions within ethnic media. Secondly, common languages, cultural nuances, and metaphors—along with shared immigration experiences—made it easy for me to connect with the participants and vice versa. Riggins argues that there is a dearth of ethnic media research due in part to the fact that this kind of research requires the researcher to be bilingual (i.e., proficient in English as well as in ethnic languages) to justify the nature and authenticity of the research (Riggins 1992). Due to my ability to share common experience and language with the communities in which I was conducting my research, I was privileged to be able to collect all the research data myself.

My status as an insider also helped me to conduct myself with respect and cultural appropriateness in interview and focus group settings with South Asian populations. While some interviews took place at participants’ work places or at public libraries, in other cases I was welcomed in the homes of participants for interviews. As a South Asian cultural practice, I was frequently offered tea or snacks, which I would accept with thanks, because refusing would be considered rude. Before beginning the formal
interview, I would always start with informal conversation, creating a more comfortable environment for the interview to take place.

Although at the beginning of the research I assumed that I would also have an advantage in recruiting media practitioners due to my South Asian background, this turned out not to be the case in most situations. Indeed, most of the media practitioners were recruited only through the referral of other participants (via the snowball technique mentioned previously); only a few responded to my initial emails directly. Interestingly, the participants who responded to my emails, without any references involved, were generally in higher management positions at the media organizations or were owners of the media outlets. Conversely, all of the middle management, producers, show hosts, journalists, and filmmakers who participated in the study were engaged for interviews through references. This seems to me to speak to the fact that people in the “top” positions at media outlets were able to act as independent decision-makers in regards to sharing information while people in middle management or working media journalists did not want to take the risk of sharing information with an “outsider” without a reference from someone they knew. In fact, some of them told me that they would get back to me after seeking permission from their employers; of these, some did get back to me, while others did not.

It is important to note that being an “insider” has another potential limitation: working within a given community as a member of that community can create a risk of blind spots or “taken for-granted” information (Reinharz and Davidman 1992). My ethnic community membership could have produced unknown biases in data collection and knowledge-production processes. To try and overcome this limitation, I was vigilant in
data collection and analysis; nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge my positionality, and to be transparent about the possibility of unintentional insider bias or blind spots leading to the overlooking of useful and relevant information that might have been addressed by an outsider perspective.

There is a possibility that my positionality as a researcher had some effect on participants’ willingness or openness when it came to sharing information, and perhaps not always a positive effect. While some participants were very open and clear in sharing information and knowledge, it was readily apparent that others were either reluctant to share, or else were painting an unrealistically rosy picture for my consumption. It is my belief that my role as a Pakistani-Canadian academic working on ethnic media at times put me on shaky ground with my Indo-Canadian participants. There is a long history of geo-political tensions between India and Pakistan, and this may have affected my rapport with some participants. At times, Indo-Canadian participants seemed cautious when sharing information that could conceivably portray any negative image of them, their communities, or their media. This was a limitation, which I believe directly resulted from my position as a Pakistani-Canadian academic. As Miller and Glassner (2010, 54) aptly identified: “The issue of how interviewees respond to us … based on who we are—in their lives, as well as social categories to which we belong, such as age, gender, class and race [and ethnicity]—is a practical concern as well as an epistemological or theoretical one . . . when we study groups with whom we do not share membership . . . they may purposely mislead us in their responses.” Indeed, some of the participants would ask me questions about “my” community (i.e., Pakistanis), indicating that they saw me as a Pakistani-Canadian as well as a researcher investigating ethnic media. Despite the reality
of troubled relations between Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, however, most of the
Indo-Canadian as well as Bangladeshi-Canadian participants were open in sharing
information with me, with only a few exceptions. Whatever the reason for reluctance in
those exceptional cases, all participants were asked to share only the information that
they felt comfortable sharing, in accordance with ethics protocol.

My gender also became a factor during data collection, most specifically during
meetings of the exclusively male focus group. As Sprague (2002) argues, being an insider
can at times pose a cultural challenge by dictating the researcher’s dos and don’ts. I felt
this to be true in terms of the pressure I felt to adhere to my “expected” gender role. For
example, the focus group with men was necessarily scheduled in the evening and in
winter, when it gets dark around 6:00 p.m. I was provided with space to conduct the
focus groups in an NGO’s office, as part of their generous support for my research.
However, these offices are mostly empty at 6 o’clock in the evening. Being a lone
woman with a group of men for a focus group would put me in an awkward situation and
therefore, I had to involve my husband as one of the participants since other men knew
him as my spouse. My spouse also provided logistical help, ordering and serving
refreshments for the meeting. While his in-depth feedback during the focus group helped
generate useful data and his help with logistics was appreciated, more importantly, his
physical presence made the group meetings go smoothly. Despite my disagreement with
the gender-specific norms that dictated my decisions in this case, I made the choice to
follow these norms strategically in order to create a culturally suitable environment for
my participants and thus promote a successful research process.
Although many participants lived in Surrey, the commute to their homes took time and effort. Some participants had tight schedules and did not want to commit to a whole hour for the interview. Interestingly, however, once the interview started, almost all participants became very involved and engaged, and consequently almost all interviews were lengthier than expected—on average, roughly an hour and a half. Most participants shared their frustration that research produced on immigrants’ issues was useless, as the government was already aware of their situation but was not motivated to do anything for them. Nevertheless, the majority of them expressed interest in the findings and/or final publication of this dissertation research. They showed interest in seeing a comprehensive research output concerning their chosen professional field in Canada.

Despite certain barriers and complexities that arose during the data collection process, I was able to collect data to a point of saturation, both in interviews and in focus groups. Saturation is reached in data collection (as well as analysis) when no new information is found and the information starts repeating (Liamputtong 2011). In the interview data collected for this dissertation, while I found complex multidimensional information was forthcoming, I also felt that most of the information served to create a holistic picture. This process of working to saturation with a versatile sample has allowed me to claim validity of the data collected through my various research processes.

**Limitations of the Research**

This research does not include all South Asian communities as participants. Due to limited resources, connections, and time, only selected communities (i.e., Indo-Canadian,
Pakistani-Canadian, and Bangladeshi-Canadian) are included. Even within these three communities, there are several ethnic and linguistic groups who are culturally distinct from each other, and so the definition of “South Asian” remains complex for researchers. Since my focus was on South Asian media, I recruited participants based on their media presence with regard to language and South Asian ancestry. In other words, since a majority of the media serves Punjabi speaking communities, I recruited the highest numbers of Punjabi speaking participants. The same reasoning applied to the Pakistani-Canadian media, with a majority of Urdu speaking media practitioners. This justifies recruitment choices in terms of numbers and predominance as represented in ethnic media, but also poses the limitation of excluding the rest of the population belonging to the same South Asian countries but representing different languages and cultures. For example, I could not add participants speaking other regional South Asian languages (e.g., Sindhi, Telugu, Tamil, etc.) due to their lack of prominence in ethnic media. I did however involve (in focus groups and the workshop) participants who were multilingual (i.e., fluent in several South Asian languages), in an effort to include voices from all possible South Asian communities from the three selected countries.

A gender-balanced sample for interview participants would have been ideal, but this target could not be achieved as planned. In terms of media practitioners, I ended up interviewing three female journalists/owners and nine male journalists/owners. There were several reasons for this selection—mainly their backgrounds, media experience, popularity, and most importantly, their willingness and availability for interviews. In terms of the focus groups, I ensured gender balance by holding two focus groups
exclusively with women, one with men, and one with both men and women (with Bangladeshi-Canadian community representatives).

Choosing one particular form of South Asian media (e.g., radio or print), would have been ideal for an in-depth and detailed media analysis; yet I chose representatives from all ethnic media forms (i.e., radio, TV, and print). South Asian ethnic media is expanding across different technologies and media formats, and ethnic media sources are small and interconnected. For example, a TV show host might also host a radio show, while a radio show host might work in print journalism as well. After collecting and compiling data, I recognized the importance of further in-depth study of ethnic radio as an exclusive medium because most of the audience talked about it as an influential medium among all types and formats of South Asian media. Future research may therefore focus on an in-depth analysis of South Asian radio shows.

The snowball technique used for recruitment of participants helped me obtain some “hard-to-reach” participants for the focus groups. Initially, a few participants from within the desired group/community were identified, and they were then asked to identify more participants from similar backgrounds (e.g., South Asian media practitioners, skilled immigrants, young adults, immigrant women from South Asia, etc.). Each member of a focus group was requested to provide more contacts, and thus the size of the sample increased. While this was an advantage in some ways (in terms of helping to grow the number of participants available to me), I had to rely on the information and selections/referrals of other participants, and did not therefore have complete control in choosing all the participants for the focus groups. Thus, the voices and perspectives of
some of the most hard-to-reach media practitioners and other important community members might have remained excluded.

One of the major limitations of this study arose from the use of language and terminology during the research process. For example, there is much controversy and debate over the definition of concepts like “cultural” association or “ethnic” media. This is perhaps the biggest challenge in ethnic and immigration studies—to reach a consensus on the definition of such contested terms (Zaman and Bukhari 2013). The dictionary definitions do not adequately cover the extent of meanings that a common person might perceive or experience. In order to address this issue, I kept the discussion questions very broad, and continually explained my use of terms to my participants to ensure clarity between us. Thus, various terms were explained from my point of view; for example, participants were told what “ethnic media” meant for this research. This arose as a major limitation and challenge during the study, requiring consistent clarification. Terms such as ethnic/multicultural/diasporic media are commonly used in academic discourse, but people in the community at large may not be able to comprehend the theoretical or practical differences between all these types of media as explained in academic discourse. For example, TV channels produced in ethnic languages for ethnic populations and transmitted through satellite might be enjoyed by participants, but were not the focus of this research. Since this research was focused on the ethnic media produced locally in ethnic and mainstream languages by Canadian-South Asians, it was important to clarify regularly what I meant by ethnic media for my participants to respond accordingly.
Ethics: Security/ Storage of Data and Privacy

Since this research involved human subjects, approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Ethical Review was obtained. Participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of the research, and their informed consent was obtained. Assigning code numbers and pseudonyms in place of identifying information in all parts of the write-up maintained the privacy of all participants. Since the range of South Asian ethnic media under study is not very broad in terms of size and spatial location (being mostly concentrated in Surrey), it was anticipated that participants’ narratives could conceivably identify them. I asked media practitioners about this limitation but all of them (except for one female journalist) candidly said in the recorded interviews that they would not even mind if I published their real names. Nonetheless, their identities are disguised as effectively as possible given the circumstances described above. All data collected during this research (through paper-based questionnaires, and audio taped interviews transferred onto DVD) are stored in a personal locker.

Conclusion

The data for this dissertation were collected between January-June 2013. All the data were recorded, transcribed, and coded. NVIVO 10 (a form of qualitative research software) was used to code the data. The coding started as descriptive coding, in which participants’ narratives were tagged under different topics. At this stage, data from all

34 The historical struggle and efforts to introduce and maintain ethnic media by these practitioners are revealed in upcoming chapters. Their efforts demonstrate their resilience to socio-economic, political, and systemic barriers; hence they lacked any fear of being identified in their positions as participants of this research. Indeed, they took pride in whatever role they have played in the growth and development of ethnic media for South Asian communities in Canada.
sources were tagged under the same codes. There are various ways to code data in NVivo but I chose to read each transcript and break it down into appropriate coding categories. This required back and forth reading of the transcripts as going through transcripts, new codes would emerge. In the second stage, descriptive coding informed categorical coding, defining different categories for the data. In the last stage, analytical coding facilitated understanding, interpretation, and analysis of different themes emerging from the data. By using NVIVO, I was able to look at the frequencies of the coded narrations, along with the source, quality and depth of the content. Being able to analyse data in multiple windows opened in NVIVO gave me an opportunity to compare and contrast different themes and threads of data, minimizing the chance of “impression analysis” which could often happen due to “the lack of detail and scrutiny” (Welsh 2002). Data are organized according to timeline (i.e., following the growth of ethnic media historically to present day) as well as clustering of significant and similar themes to form a comprehensive analysis of the data. In the following chapters, the same scheme will be reflected in organization and presentation of data analysis.
CHAPTER 4: HISTORY OF SOUTH ASIAN ETHNIC MEDIA IN BC:
ORIGIN AND OWNERSHIP

at the same shore of the ocean
where once stood Komagata Maru
and went back
without kissing the shore sand
shrieking like a hungry elephant
facing the guns

now sitting amidst
the scattered boulders
the driftwood, the gravel, the sand
maybe someone could tell me the story?
I wonder how they witnessed
the scene
and silently listened
to the voices of our grandfathers

I try to enjoy the music of the waves
but only the angry Punjabi voices
from the Maru reach my ears
I ask the walking stones
about the heart-breaking incident

they laugh
turn their faces and walk away
(Sadhu Binning, “The Heart Breaking Incident”)
Introduction

Since 2006, every year, approximately a quarter of a million people immigrate\textsuperscript{35} to Canada under different immigration policies and plans. In major cities, such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, some of these immigrants prefer to live in closed ethnic enclaves, and have developed close-knit, sometimes exclusive socio-cultural and (in many cases) business ties with each other (Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell 2010). In Metro Vancouver, South Asians make up almost 11% of the total population, and Punjabi\textsuperscript{36} is ranked as the largest non-official spoken language in British Columbia (Statistics Canada 2011).

![Pie chart showing language distribution in Metro Vancouver](image)

**Figure 3.** Percentage of Major Non-Official Languages in Metro Vancouver (NHS 2011)

A large number of lower mainland South Asians reside in the cities of Surrey, Abbotsford, and Delta. In Surrey, East Indian\textsuperscript{37} is ranked as the most frequently reported

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\textsuperscript{36} Canada’s two official languages are English and French. Punjabi language is spoken among people originating from both India and Pakistan; the region of Punjab was divided between India and Pakistan when the two countries became independent in 1947. Although the official languages of India are English and Hindi, and those of Pakistan are English and Urdu, Punjabi is spoken widely in different parts of both countries as well as among South Asian communities living in diaspora.

ethnic origin, standing at roughly 26% of the total population, and one-third of the East Indian population reported speaking Punjabi at home (Statistics Canada 2011). With the gradual but steady growth of South Asian communities, these communities’ ethnic media needs have also grown and, as a result, Metro Vancouver has a small yet rapidly growing ethnic media industry serving South Asian communities. South Asian ethnic media sources/products throughout BC have different histories of origin, ownership, growth, and distribution rooted in the geo-political and socio-cultural ideologies and practices situated in both local and global settings. Their origin and present day composition depend on the context of immigration of their audiences. In other words, immigration context has been changing for ethnic media users since their immigration to Canada began, hence the media content and production of South Asian ethnic media outlets have also been changing accordingly. Along with the changing needs of South Asian communities, external factors have also influenced the shape of ethnic media over time. These factors include: systemic racism, settlement, and integration challenges; the representation and portrayal of South Asian communities in mainstream media; and hierarchies in other socio-economic-political institutions related to these communities.

This chapter begins by analyzing the role and space provided (or not provided) by the mainstream media, as seen through the lens of South Asian research participants living in Metro Vancouver. A critical analysis of the historical as well as the present day role of mainstream media in making and unmaking realities, and the impact of this on South Asian immigrant communities, will be analyzed through the narratives of these

38 The term “South Asian ethnic media audiences” refers to people who immigrated to Canada as first, second, third, or even fourth generation immigrants and are active or passive users of ethnic media. For this particular study, my use of the term “ethnic media user” means persons who consume locally produced ethnic media including print, radio, TV, film, theater, etc.
participants. Immigration and settlement policies targeting South Asian immigrants in Canada and particularly in BC have gone through various phases; scholars have analyzed this shift in identity for South Asian immigrants from “not-preferred immigrants” before 1967 to “qualified and skilled immigrants” under the points system (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007; Zaman and Bukhari 2013). These transitions in immigration and settlement policies have also affected the lived realities for South Asians. The first part of this chapter will outline systemic and racial barriers faced by South Asian communities in their lived experiences vis-à-vis mainstream media—ranging from challenges accessing this media, to its lack of coverage of their issues/communities, to stereotyping and criminalization of these communities whenever such coverage does take place. Narratives of South Asian journalists will be used to elucidate their racialized encounters with white media spaces. The “failure” of these journalists to obtain fair, equitable, and justified professional positions in the mainstream media—despite years of professional training and experience working in mainstream and leading English media in their countries of origin—will also be examined.

The analysis of mainstream media’s racialized treatment of South Asian communities will establish the context in which to trace the historical developments leading to the emergence of ethnic media produced by and for South Asian communities. My research participants include a selection of South Asian media practitioners who were pioneers of ethnic media in Metro Vancouver, and their narratives will be central to an analysis of the context and relevant factors relating to the origin, development, and growth of ethnic media. While the first part of the chapter focuses on the mainstream media and its treatment of South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver, the second part
will highlight the technical, political, religious, and ideological conflicts surrounding the initial phase of the development of ethnic media of South Asians in Metro Vancouver. Karim (2003) argues that diaspora communities’ general need for ethnic media products encourages them to create leading technologies in order to cater to the scattered population in their host countries. Given the technological as well as bureaucratic limitations faced by those seeking to establish ethnic media, ethnic media owners often find unique ways to establish multiple media outlets, as is made clear by the narratives of my research participants. Specifically, these media professionals’ experiences and challenges related to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission’s (CRTC) regulations will be discussed in detail.

Unsurprisingly, diverse historical events have interacted with and shaped the development of the ethnic media under discussion. For instance, this dissertation study found that Indian politics of the 1980s dominated the ethnic media’s landscape and still had some influence to this day. Additionally, religion-related political tensions in immigrants’ countries of origin (i.e., India and Pakistan) affected ethnic media’s inception, content, financial sustainability, distribution, and circulation. Elaborating upon the contents of this chapter, a discussion of South Asian communities and their ethnic media development contextualized along a historical timeline will be set forth in the next chapter, illuminating the reasons for the current construct of ethnic media production and its changing trends.
Mainstream Media and South Asian Communities

Issues of Access and Barriers

South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver are diverse populations comprising people of various backgrounds. Although the numbers of skilled immigrants have risen in recent years, a considerable number of people continue to immigrate to Canada in the family sponsorship class. People immigrating in this class are mostly spouses, children, and/or parents of the sponsoring immigrants, and many of these family members may face specific challenges. Kloppenborg (2010) reports that South Asian seniors make up 21% of the total visible minority senior population of Metro Vancouver; researchers confirm that most senior immigrants from South Asia lack literacy and/or English language skills, making their everyday lives challenging in some ways (Koehn 2009). Koehn (2009, 593-94) argues that limited English language skills and/or “low levels of literacy in some communities combine with cultural norms to increase the dependency of seniors on their families and hence limit independent access to services.” Participants of this study also identified language as a major barrier for most of their community members in communicating and accessing services within mainstream society. For example, lack of English language skills among some immigrants lead to an inability to access services offered by settlement agencies. As Farooq, an immigrant from Bangladesh explained to me:

Actually, we are a minority community. When my wife went for a job at the NGO [immigrant service agency], there was no Bengali speaking counsellor. There were many Punjabi or Chinese workers. The problem is our language is not spoken by a majority [immigrant group].

The majority of mainstream Canadian media is offered in one of the two official languages—English and/or French. Lack of language skills therefore makes much of
mainstream media a “no go area” for immigrants. Participants confirmed that seniors in particular came up against language-related barriers in accessing mainstream media (and other services). Sujata, a senior female participant who was a regular ethnic media user confirmed: “We have a problem with English; we want to know what’s going on here [in Canada] but we don’t know much English so our sources of information are Punjabi newspapers and radio.” Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011, 59) likewise argue that “immigrants with limited English language proficiency are more likely to connect only with ethnic media outlets.” Media practitioners, along with focus group participants, agreed that South Asian immigrants, especially seniors, had limited or no access to mainstream media and/or other sources of information available in English, and therefore ethnic media specifically targeted them as its audience. Sandeep Singh, an ethnic media practitioner working in radio and TV who was interviewed for this study, confirmed, “You will receive many callers to comment on the issues of Punjab because the majority of your listeners are seniors, living a retired life.”

It is also important to note that mainstream media—for example, newspapers, magazines, and TV channels—are generally expensive options. For example, the *Vancouver Sun* delivered in print form six days a week costs $24.99 per month. Mainstream TV programming is accessible through cable/broadband/TV network provider companies who have expensive monthly packages for TV and/or Internet, making it difficult for some immigrants to access mainstream TV channels. A CBC report (Evans 2014) mentions that the average Canadian pays about $191 per month for their communication services, and that “the average bill for cable or satellite television went up by $1.54 per month to $53.56 [in 2014].” A great deal of mainstream media is
accessible through internet technologies (i.e., computers and/or smart devices and even cell phones), yet many people still do not have access to this technology and/or do not possess the literacy and skills to use it (Salinas 2008). Additionally, while print media may be available online, most TV channels are offered through cable providers and are not available for free online viewing. In summary, all these barriers, including lack of language proficiency, lack of computer and technology literacy, and expensive mainstream media, hinder access to mainstream media for certain immigrants, specifically those with limited language skills and/or seniors and immigrants who are struggling financially.

No Coverage, No Representation!

Reflecting the reality described in the literature (Ahadi and Yu 2010; Alia and Bull 2005; Browne 2005b; Cormack and Hourigan 2007; Cottle 2000a; Fleras 1995, 2011; Jiwani 2006; Waldman 2011), most of the participants in this study confirmed that minority communities lack appropriate coverage in the national mainstream media in Canada. The participants, especially those who attended focus group discussions, had different profiles and backgrounds, ranging from highly educated to little formal education, skilled immigrants to family class immigrants, and seniors to adult youth. Irrespective of their diverse backgrounds, there was a general consensus about the blackout regarding ethnic minorities in mainstream media in Canada. Participants expressed their desire to stay connected with news related to their communities, both in their countries of origin and in their diaspora communities. News and information ranging from sports of interest (e.g.,
cricket\textsuperscript{39}, to currency exchange rates, to positive news about their community members and successful stories of immigrants living in diaspora were deemed relevant by the participants; however, they asserted that they could not find these news items in the mainstream media. “I have noticed that they don’t give us any coverage,” said Bano, a focus group discussion (FGD) participant who holds a doctoral degree from Australia and was a regular user of both ethnic and mainstream media. “There is hardly any news about us. That is the reason we watch ethnic media to get news related to our community.”

Participants in general shared their frustration regarding this lack of representation in the national mainstream media. Mainstream media’s lack of coverage of issues relevant to South Asian immigrant communities understandably created a narrative of “us” versus “them” among participants, who felt ignored in the mainstream media landscape of their adopted homeland. Ethnic media, on the other hand, served to provide them with both mainstream and ethnic community-related news and information.

It is a grave—and potentially harmful—failure of mainstream media not to capture the diversity and complexity of different ethnic communities living in the society they are meant to be serving. Levo-Henriksson (2007, 220) explains, “Insufficient representation views indicate that mainstream media representations are considered to provide very thin and rather disturbing material for identity construction.” A complaint expressed by many participants concerned the fact that pets—more specifically dogs—get more representation/coverage in mainstream media than South Asian immigrant communities do. “They [i.e., the mainstream media] have portrayed a very negative image about us,” complained Shani, an FGD participant, “while if their dog turns twenty, 

\textsuperscript{39} Cricket is one of the most popular sports in South Asian countries. In fact, almost all major South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have their own national cricket teams who play matches throughout the year.
it makes a big news for them but they don’t give us coverage for any positive news in our home countries.” Coleman and Ross (2010, 42-45) assert that “mediated publics”, including minorities, become vulnerable due to a lack of proper coverage in national mainstream media. It is considered a failure of mainstream media that it seems unable to capture the diversity and complexity of different ethnic communities living in the same society.

Naseem, an FGD participant who also worked as a radio show host, criticized the Canadian media landscape for not providing appropriate and sufficient coverage of South Asian ethnic minorities, saying:

Well, I think BBC has done more . . . South Asian stuff in the UK than the media in Canada in terms of the type of programming and things like that. In terms of true representation, it’s really not there [in Canadian mainstream media]. The multicultural channels are also owned by mainstream media and what do we get from their programming? We get Punjabi music, Chinese music, and their whole programming revolves around that. So it’s very limited and also the ethnic [programming presented by national media outlets] is controlled by the mainstream media. . .

His comments reflect the fact that multicultural channels owned and operated by mainstream media outlets are using cultural frameworks suitable to the national discourse of multiculturalism, which primarily focuses on food and entertainment aspects of the culture. As a result, “the exotic dimension is captivated and becomes a focal point of attention in the coverage devoted to ethnic festivals and ceremonies” (Jiwani 2006, 40).

Hartej Singh, a talk show presenter at the South Asian ethnic radio station blamed mainstream media for not only ignoring ethnic minorities but also siding with the government when framing news reports:

Mainstream media only picks up the bigger stories [related to immigrants], things at higher [levels]. [In terms of] their own focus and perspective . . . They will present the news from the government’s point of view; they will never add how it
will affect immigrant communities. Ethnic media however will look after the interests of . . . immigrants by presenting their side and how they can be affected.

Policies regarding immigration management in the last few years of the previous Conservative government at the federal level have taken many turns; immigrant communities, specifically South Asian communities, have not looked favourably on most of these policy shifts. Some of the issues viewed with concern among these immigrant communities include: tightening of immigration laws around family reunification (Ferrer, Picot, and Riddell 2014); “law and order”-related concerns raised specifically for immigrant communities (Tator and Henry 2006); and Islamophobia (Mosurinjohn 2014; Razack 2008). Mainstream media plays a role in heightening these concerns. McAndrew and Bakhshaei (2012, 942), writing in the context of Quebec, say that “front-page stories usually cast a negative light on Muslims and religious minorities, while in-depth articles in weekend editions [tend] to give balanced and complex coverage of these groups.”

Their point speaks to how news is framed as well as where it is placed, both of which can work to control the impact of the news. Although some of the national media outlets present content related to how these policies affect immigrant communities, the majority of them present a governmental viewpoint only, which was cited by the participants of this study as disturbing.

Mainstream media was also criticized by participants for the fact that its agenda-setting seems to have been fixed in the same pattern for decades. In other words, media outlets do not update their content to suit the needs of growing immigrant populations. In addition to news, sports and entertainment are also significant aspects of media, and many audiences watch, listen, and read media products for these specific reasons;
however, mainstream media was criticized for ignoring immigrants’ choices in these areas as well. Aalim asserted:

I came to Canada about twenty years ago and still the media has the same agenda. If you turn on [ABC, a major national news channel in Canada], the first news item is international and that means it’s about the USA, and the news bulletin will end with news from within Canada. Or, if someone went against Israel, they will give counter news against that [i.e., biased news favoring Israel’s policies]. That’s what puts me off about mainstream media and so I turned towards ethnic media. Also, I like sports news, specifically cricket news, but the mainstream [media] will never give news about cricket—forget about it. Unless there is a cricket world cup, they will give brief news about who won and that’s all. So these were the two reasons that I was put off by mainstream media.

During the data collection for this research, the BC government announced and hosted the Times of India Film Awards (TOIFA) in Vancouver. According to a news report by Global News, the BC government invested $11 million in the TOIFA to strengthen political and economic relations with India. However, criticizing the outcomes, the report asserted, “As many as 400-million viewers are expected to tune in to Bollywood’s equivalent to the Academy Awards Saturday night, but the kick-off event didn’t generate as much interest as anticipated” (Tam 2013). Participants of my research used the example of the TOIFA to demonstrate the mainstream media’s role in engaging and representing South Asian communities’ cultural interest, specifically in relation to Bollywood cinema. They seemed unsatisfied with the coverage of the event. Naseem, an FGD participant, expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that there was no live telecasting of the event:

The coverage they [i.e., the mainstream media] had was not informed; like a mainstream TV channel reported that “millions of people are watching [live] right now” and I am like, no they are not. In fact it was taped and they are going to show it on the TV in June [2013]; it wasn’t live.

Anju, a young female FGD participant, added:
TOIFA was such an amazing event and it needed as much [live] coverage as possible because not everybody could afford the tickets . . . some people rely on the TV, but [the coverage] was not there. The South Asian media will relay that but weeks later, and it wasn’t covered by mainstream TV channels. I was like, are you kidding me?

According to the narratives of the participants, despite the BC government’s decision to invest $11 million and host the awards ceremony—which was attended by the Premier of BC along with her team members—mainstream media failed to give it adequate coverage. Instead, they reinforced their practice of ignoring South Asian communities living in Canada.

Anterpreet, a female journalist working for the multicultural media branch of a mainstream media group in Canada, defended the mainstream media’s overall non-inclusive policy:

It’s possible that they might not give enough news [about immigrant communities specifically] because they give news about Canadian mainstream society and that includes our kids too; our kids don’t understand Punjabi, they are good with English so that is their media. I think we [i.e., multicultural channels] give more in-depth news because our focus is Punjabi and South Asian communities.

The above quote is riddled with many intersecting ambiguities. While Anterpreet’s TV channel had a few specific hours dedicated to Punjabi news broadcasts every day, the issue of access to this news channel (audiences have to pay for this channel for it to be included in their cable package) could be a hindrance. Secondly, this specific channel serves the bigger minority groups, for example Chinese, Italian, and Punjabi speaking communities in different regions of Canada, which also means that not all minority communities have access to or are included in its content. Thirdly, the idea that mainstream media should be targeting second or third generation immigrants who were born and raised in Canada presents a controversial notion, implying as it does that first
generation immigrants do not have or deserve space in mainstream media as equal
canadian citizens. Last but not least, ethnic media offered by mainstream media groups,
although useful for some immigrants, is not an adequate substitute for fair representation
throughout mainstream media. This widespread inclusion and representation in
mainstream media is necessary for immigrant communities to feel included and
integrated as part of the mosaic of society (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpenter 2007);
unfortunately, according to the narratives of immigrants, this is not happening at the
moment.

“Criminals,” “Illegal,” and “Terrorists”: Stereotyping Immigrant Communities

With each step taken
my soul burns
the darkness assures my absence
I am shade creeping
along the crevices
a transposed life
appearing and disappearing.
(Dulai, “Going Home”)

Mainstream media is criticized not only for lack of coverage of ethnic minorities in
Canada and elsewhere in the Western world, but also for portraying negative and
stereotypical images of ethnic minorities (Batziou 2011; Fleras 2009, 1995, 2011;
Mosurinjohn 2014; Walsh 2009). Alia and Bull (2005, 71) warn that “representation can
be a double-edged sword”; this is particularly true if it remains in the hands of people
who “contrary to the outright rejection of difference . . . [accept] hybridity insofar as it
still displays the characteristics of the dominant race/culture” (Siapera 2010, 139-140).
While positive representation can empower ethnic minorities by reinforcing a positive
image in mainstream society, negative and slanted coverage and representation can create
stereotypical and damaging images of these minorities. Downing and Husband (2005, 34)
theorize the process of stereotyping, saying that stereotypes reduce the “complex flux of social reality” to “bi-polar categories,” and thus are easy to stamp into human psychology and memory. Stereotypes like “the Arab woman with her head veiled” may “scrape against a certain reality” but they “appear to lock on to a kernel of self-evident truth” (Downing and Husband 2005, 34). Dangerously, however, it is a “fragmented reality” which is contained in these stereotypes, and “not only is the reality fragmented, but very often a negative interpretation of the fragment hangs in the background without needing to be explicitly stated,” thus the Arab woman “[appears as] powerless and repressed, and somewhere between contemptible and pitiable” (Downing and Husband 2005, 34). Of course, stereotypes can change over time, from negative to positive or negative to more negative (Downing and Husband 2005).

Overall, almost all participants agreed that whatever little coverage of South Asian communities they witnessed in the mainstream media was largely limited to negative portrayals of South Asian communities. Mainstream media was blamed on two accounts for negatively portraying ethnic minorities: first, in some cases, mainstream media presented negative news by picking one piece of negative news from the immigrants’ countries of origin and then creating hype based on that, and second, in other cases, immigrant communities living in diaspora were tagged with negative stereotypes. Jiwani (2006, xx) argues that “how race is represented in the dominant media is indicative of the place accorded to racialized groups in the symbolic landscape of the nation, and further, of how they are perceived in terms of belonging to the imagined community reflected by the media.” The participants of this study quoted coverage of the
Delhi\textsuperscript{40} rape case and the case of Romana Monzur\textsuperscript{41} repeatedly. Drawing on these examples, participants expressed concerns regarding oversimplification and overgeneralization of the issues by the mainstream media, which according to them was quick in “coloring the entire [country and population] with the same brush [as if] this is something happening day and night over there and everywhere” (Arun Verma, a male ethnic media practitioner in Metro Vancouver).

The case of Romana Monzur, a student of the University of British Columbia from Bangladesh who was ruthlessly tortured by her husband, was brought up in a focus group discussion. Fahmida, an FGD participant provided a well-rounded analysis of the news coverage:

There was news about a Bangladeshi student, Romana; it was covered pretty widely and it’s interesting how they [i.e., the Canadian mainstream media] pick up issues. Sometimes I see bias. On the other hand, there are a lot of happenings in Bangladesh politically; I don’t see anything [about that] in the news.

When I asked Fahmida how, in her view, the mainstream media depicted Romana’s case, she responded:

Well, generally speaking, [the coverage emphasized] how great Canada is towards South Asians or people from third world countries. When they covered Romana’s case, it was like how a South Asian or Bangladeshi woman who was a UBC student was violated by her husband; it was a negative depiction of Bangladeshi culture but on the other hand, it’s a great image for Canada. They are saving a victim; they probably never used the word “victim” but . . . it’s easier for Canada to present as a saviour. Of course, I see a problem in this depiction. Another problem is how the East is depicted in the media, especially on TV.

\textsuperscript{40} The Delhi rape case came into the media spotlight when a twenty-three year old girl was brutally raped by five men on a bus in the capital city of India, New Delhi (Harris 2013). The girl later died due to severe injuries.

\textsuperscript{41} Romana Monzur was a Bangladeshi graduate student at the University of British Columbia (UBC) who was brutally maimed and blinded by her husband when she was visiting Bangladesh on vacation in 2011. She was brought back to Vancouver for treatment; her case received widespread coverage in the mainstream media (Ryan 2011).
Edward Said, deconstructing the idea of the “East,” criticizes mass media for creating “an enemy” to facilitate the political interest of the West in the East. The easiest way to gain the political interest is to launch modern warfare through the media. However, in order to do so, Western states have to win the confidence of their public at home. Mass media provides them the space and language; hence “both the electronic and print media have been awash with demeaning stereotypes that lump together [for example] Islam and terrorism, or Arabs and violence, or the Orient and tyranny” (Said 2003, 346). During the last decade or so, gender discrimination and lack of women’s rights in Islam are used as a major discourse to justify the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod 2013). In the post 9/11 scenario, Muslim women, adhering to their cultures, have become “the site for the waging of the clash of civilization” and “ascribed with the potential to bring death to the nation by their cultures” (Thobani 2007, 237-38). The gender stereotyping of Muslim women being oppressed and Muslim men being oppressors is used as a pretext to intervene and invade Muslim-dominated countries rich with oil, gas and other resources.

Participants mentioned several times that along with negative news about their countries of origin, mainstream media sources were circulating negative news related to South Asian communities living in Canada. They specifically mentioned their concerns regarding the media’s tendency to connect religion with criminality or negative news, especially related to Sikhs and/or Muslims living in Canada. They contended that criminal activities perpetrated in this context were not reported as crimes simply instigated by a single individual; instead, by mentioning a religion such as Sikhism or Islam attached to the person who committed the crime, the media implied that religion was an instrumental factor in the criminal activity. Martikainen (2013) argues that in the
post 9/11 era in Europe, discussion has shifted from cultural to religious and/or ethno-
religious identities and practices of immigrant populations, hence, religion has become
the central factor in managing immigrants. Additionally, in the wake of 9/11, mainstream
media outlets have rigorously followed Islamophobic policy, affecting Muslims around
the world (Kumar 2012; Razack 2008; Thobani 2007). The crimes of Muslims living in
the West are often seen as directly linked with their religion. Aalim, a Muslim FGD
participant, expressed:

In my opinion, the mainstream media badly bash [South Asian communities],
whenever they get any news about Muslims, not only from within Canada, but
from overseas. In Toronto, a Muslim man killed his three daughters. Very bad
incident, but when a Harry, John, or Tom does this, they are just referred to by
their names but here the Muslim aspect gets exaggerated; this is a bias. Killings
do happen, people do commit crimes but for Muslims, it shows as if their religion
guided them. But when someone else commits a crime, they never mention their
religion.

Mukhtar Singh, a Sikh FGD participant, agreed, adding:

With Muslims, they do it little more because there is an international campaign
against Muslims so it’s part of that bigger campaign to show Muslims genetically
inclined to crimes, but they do the same with other minorities.

With reference to representation of youth and/or second-generation immigrants,
participants criticized the agenda and content of most mainstream media. Nirmala, an
FGD participant, offered a useful critique of “selective inclusion of youth” and its effects
on South Asian youth. She blamed the mainstream media for lack of coverage of positive
events in her community:

Let’s say if there was a shooting in the South Asian community . . . that becomes .
. . very important news…I personally think that the things they show on TV
influence the youth of South Asian communities because I have seen it from my
personal perspective that they are targeting these kids from Surrey, [saying] that
they are South Asians, they are God knows from where, and they are shooting
people. Okay, but if the same things happen in Vancouver [within the white
population], are they highlighting that too? Not much. They will highlight one
guy got killed but something positive [that took place within an immigrant community] is not going to get coverage.⁴²

Elvis Lal had experience working in the mainstream media in Canada as well as India, and is currently working for an English ethnic newspaper serving South Asians. Elvis explained how different mainstream media groups, due to their policies, could present different angles of a story that could entirely change its meaning:

You have to know what’s going on in mainstream media because mainstream media is not one organization—there are several groups and sometimes they are against each other. The [XXX] and [YYY] are two different papers;[and] even [judging from] the way they both covered the Air India trial you would think there were two different cases going on. Because [XXX] was totally objective while on the other hand the reporter at [YYY] was twisting and tailoring the news because she [the reporter] wanted to become a hero who exposed these issues in South Asian communities. She would only give negative [coverage] that would go particularly against this South Asian group while the [XXX] was giving both sides of the story and also how the police [were] screwing up. The police never had the evidence—it was destroyed at that time.

Lal’s narrative is significant in terms of understanding the complexity of the location, demography, and history of the region in which the mainstream media is operating. The newspaper I am referring to as YYY is a popular English newspaper in Metro Vancouver with a large audience drawn mostly from the mainstream white English-speaking population, by its construct. Interestingly, almost all leading media practitioners interviewed for this research mentioned a reporter of this particular media group who is assigned to cover South Asian communities; they all agreed that this particular white reporter had a bias against South Asian communities living in Metro Vancouver and was always looking for negative news regarding their communities. They also blamed the reporter for having connections with the specific community members who were associated with mainstream power groups and provided “negative and biased” inside

⁴² Surrey is referred to as an ethnic enclave of South Asians while Vancouver is seen as representing the white population in this quote.
reports to the journalist, who then presented these in the mainstream media to defame the community.

Lal’s accusation that the reporter mentioned above was trying to “become a hero” by portraying negative news about South Asian communities supports the theory of uses and gratification. Uses and gratification theory, as part of media effects theory, centers on the dependence of audiences on media for gratifying their needs “with messages about everything from identity to dress codes, together with the resources to satisfy personal goals” (Fleras 2003, 77). Lal’s quote asserts that not all mainstream media outlets are biased in terms of reporting on ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, this particular reporter’s negative coverage of the South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver alludes to the “needs and desires” of the readers of this particular newspaper. South Asians, whose numbers are increasing in British Columbia, have historically caused unrest and concern among conservative white populations who never supported immigration inflow, especially from third world countries in the early twentieth century (Thobani 2007, 86). In the twenty-first century, neo-racism has replaced overt anti-immigration policy, and different unwanted racialized groups are discouraged from immigrating via strict immigration policies. For example, fears, that South Asian parents and grandparents could be a burden on the socio-economic system of Canada, led to a recent cutback in the family sponsorship program (VanderPlaat et al. 2012).

According to “journalistic standards,” media have to present both sides of the story when presenting a news item. Nonetheless, how news is framed (Entman 2004), the tone of the presenter, and who is invited (or not) to comment on the story can greatly affect the connotation of the content. Anterpreet emphasized the importance of inviting
members of minority communities to comment on news related to their communities, adding that the mainstream media controls who is selected to discuss the issue at hand:

If they [i.e., mainstream journalists] need information about South Asian community, they will contact a person from the community; they cannot talk on their own. It’s up to that person how they present the issues so eventually your own community has to represent you.

Siapera (2010, 114-15), extending the theory of stereotyping advanced by Allport (1979), suggests that “constant confrontation with negative stereotypes may cause people to become obsessed with their self image” and “this may lead to a rejection of one’s own group—an endorsement of the negative stereotype to the extent that one despises one’s own group.” Thus, constant and persistent negative news about an ethnic community creates a stereotyped version of certain communities that can become internalized.

Sometimes the people who are invited to speak (negatively) on behalf of their communities in the mainstream media are potentially already so affected by stereotyping and internalized racism that they confirm the media’s negative spin of these stories.

Anterpreat confirmed Siapera’s argument in the context of violence against women in Sikh communities living in Canada, saying “when so many incidents take place [and are reported in the media in a negative way], the image starts to become real or permanent (Anterpreat).”

_South Asian Media Practitioners: Experiencing Racialization in Mainstream Media_

If racism tends to recede from social consciousness, then it appears as if the ones who “bring it up” are bringing it into existence. A recession is possible if we make a concession. To recede is to go back or withdraw. To concede is to give way, yield. People of color are asked to concede to the recession of racism: we are asked to “give way” by letting it “go back.” Not only that: more than that. We are asked to embody a commitment to diversity. We are asked to smile in their brochures. The smile of diversity is a form of political recession. (Ahmed 2012, 162-163)
Some participants of this study, especially those who had previous journalistic and media experience prior to their immigration to Canada, initially tried finding employment in the Canadian mainstream media. Like many other skilled immigrants, they went through difficult, tiring, and frustrating experiences trying to find appropriate jobs in their field of experience. Participants with previous experience and professional education in media mentioned the problems they faced in the process of first seeking employment in the mainstream media, and then, in the event that they obtained it, performing and maintaining their jobs. Not all were successful. Preetam Kaur, who worked for leading print and broadcasting media outlets in India and the UK before immigrating to Canada, could not secure any job in the mainstream media in Canada. Sandeep Singh eloquently illustrated his experience:

When I came here, I wanted to go into journalism here too, because I had experience in both electronic as well as print media. So, I wanted to go for some big newspaper, but things didn’t work out. So I started with [XXX] channel; they were starting [to offer some] Punjabi news and since I had experience with ZEE news, I joined them, but could not work with them because the environment was such where anybody, who had no knowledge, was trying to dictate you what everything was. So I worked about 9 months with them and then left.

Sandeep Singh’s frustration at the situation in his workplace illustrates the systemic barriers encountered by most skilled immigrants who are unable to secure a job in their respective fields. He had to face the frustration of being “dictated” to by his colleagues who did not consider him as skilled as they were (Shafer 1993). The same experience was shared by Elvis Lal, who managed to get a job in one of the leading mainstream newspapers in Vancouver but was not satisfied with his working conditions and eventually had to leave the job. He blamed the management of the newspaper for
maintaining and reproducing racial hierarchies in the organization, as a result of which he was treated unfairly, and not in a manner commensurate with his skills and experiences.

He elaborated:

The problem with [XXX newspaper] and [YYY newspaper] was that they were very restrictive and they wanted you to suck up to them, which I was not doing, so we had this tension going on. I always did good stories but I didn’t like the idea that I was like a token brown guy. Both of the papers were totally white [in terms of team members], it was just one or two [brown guys] here and there, and they [i.e., the white team members] would tell you what to do. However, if you told them what to do, they would get really upset about it. And, for me, coming from [a leading English newspaper of India], this was very insulting, you know. [sarcastic laugh].

Throughout the interview, Lal was highly critical regarding the treatment of minority journalists by mainstream newspapers. He repeated several times that his South Asian periodical (published in English) follows the same rules and standards as those of mainstream print media, yet mainstream journalists often looked down on his work. Lal was a well-recognized journalist both in ethnic and mainstream society for his investigative journalism, and he broke many stories about corruption, nepotism, racialization, and other issues affecting ethnic minorities. In general, participants agreed that it was difficult to obtain employment and then continue working in the mainstream media due to pervasive, racialized ill treatment of minority journalists, irrespective of their previous credentials and employment experience. Sandeep Singh summarized the situation aptly:

I sent my resume to a mainstream leading newspaper and [all] they offered me was to work as a subordinate, as an intern. I did not go; I did not like it! I said to myself that I have been published in Time Magazine, [and you don’t value my experience] so I did not work with them.

Mainstream media’s restrictive and over-scrutinized policies for hiring minority journalists closed the doors of opportunity for these journalists, indicating these
mainstream media outlets’ failure to reflect diversity in their organizations. Rahim (2014, 78) reports that “in 2006 only less than 6 percent of CBC employees were visible minorities.” This lack of diversity in mainstream media teams is eventually reflected in their journalistic content, especially content related to ethnic minorities (Cottle 2000b). It is significant to note that a small number of South Asian journalists do work in the mainstream media in Canada, though to my knowledge their roles and contributions, and the challenges and limitations they face at work are not documented in any empirical research. Overall, participants of this study were not satisfied with the role of mainstream media with regard to representation of their ethnic communities. The next part of this chapter will focus on the growth and development of ethnic media designed to serve ethnic minorities living in diaspora who are not adequately represented in mainstream media.

**History, Origin, and Ownership of South Asian Ethnic Media in BC**

*Ownership, Technology, and Licensing*

The history of South Asian ethnic print media, specifically newspapers, dates back at least to the early 1900s. In the early 1900s, Dr. Sundar Singh, who came to Canada in 1909 as an illegal immigrant, co-owned the only Punjabi newspaper published in British Columbia, *The Sansar* (Thorner and Frohn-Nielsen 2010). In 1968, he started a tabloid-sized newspaper in Punjabi and English in partnership with Visva Malhotra; the paper was called *Punjab Weekly* and later changed its name to the *Punjab Times* (Bains and Johnston 1995). The initial Punjabi press laid the groundwork for the expansion of South Asian ethnic media in British Columbia. According to the narratives of three pioneer
South Asian ethnic media practitioners and owners interviewed for my research, most of their ethnic productions started in Metro Vancouver (and elsewhere in BC) during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Initial forms of South Asian ethnic media included hourly and weekly programs on multicultural radio and TV stations, and local community newspapers/journals. Multicultural media channels and community radio stations offered air time to different minority/ethnic communities to initiate their programs; hence, the programs were produced and hosted by South Asians living in BC. Media owners who initiated ethnic media in BC had a mix of previous professional experiences. Some possessed professional qualifications and/or had experience working in mainstream media before initiating their media careers in Canada. For example, Leela—a renowned woman journalist serving South Asians for the last three decades—immigrated to Canada to join her husband under the family sponsorship program. She received her professional training and had experience working as a broadcast journalist in the UK. Nadeem Khan, now a managing editor of an Urdu weekly news journal published mainly for Pakistani-Canadians in Metro Vancouver, was a qualified botanist with extensive reading experience and interest in Urdu literature before and after his immigration. He also worked as a radio broadcaster in the 1970s, hosting one of the community radio shows targeting Hindi and/or Urdu speaking residents of Metro Vancouver.

On the other hand, Sher Singh and Satnam Singh, both of whom have owned radio stations in Canada for more than two decades, informed me that they did not possess any previous professional qualifications or background in media when they came to Canada. Satnam Singh had a college education in electronic and technology, which he
later utilized to develop a radio station serving his community, while Sher Singh started
his TV show for South Asians in a small community in northern BC after completing
high school. Sher Singh shared his story and reasons for initiating ethnic media for his
South Asian neighbors:

In 1980, I joined the media. We lived in...the north of BC. There were about
300 to 400 South Asian families but there was no means of entertainment and no
Punjabi grocery store so I started a TV program. I also established a grocery store.
There were certain cable companies who provided you free air time for
community programs on their community channels, like Shaw cable. So we
started a Punjabi and Hindi program, which was free of air time charges. We
would edit it ourselves, mix cut pieces from Hindi and Punjabi films; we would
also add songs, a few Hindi and Punjabi and some Pakistani too, as we had a
couple of Pakistani families living in the area as well. We would also add news
items gathered through the past week’s Indian newspapers. It was a one-hour
program.

Sher Singh recalls that his motive for starting work in ethnic media was to provide
entertainment to his community, rather than to embark on a profitable career trajectory.
According to him, no one would consider ethnic media as a career option back then,
because there were no advertisers or financiers who could sustain and grow the ethnic
media industry. Some of the multicultural channels offered free air time, while others
charged a nominal fee. The affluent people of the South Asian community would offer
limited sponsorship, for example $100 at a time, to keep the program team motivated to
continue their production. It was only much later that ethnic media started gaining
financial sustainability, with the growth of local ethnic communities and businesses:

By that time, the number of Punjabi businesses had grown as well; we had
grocery stores, clothing stores, lawyers, and notaries public around the 1980’s, and
they started helping us. Those programs were more popular and successful than
programs today. The reason was that there was no other program, no competition,
so we would get the whole share of advertisement. The Hindi-speaking woman
journalist would also run her program but since it was on community TV, their
time slot wasn’t fixed for each week, while we had a commercial program so it
came at fixed times on weekends; therefore, ours was successful.
The narratives of the pioneers of South Asian ethnic media in BC revealed that multicultural channels, broadcasting for diverse communities, played a major role in the growth of ethnic media. Leela recalled:

I started a locally produced TV program in 1976 with a local TV station [XXX TV]. In 1979, a multicultural channel was born which still exists and we still have programs on it. There was another channel airing few hours of multicultural programming [channel 0] but this was the first of its kind with programs for 6 or 7 communities . . . Japanese, German, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Greek, Scandinavian, and South Asian were given programs then.

As mentioned in Sher Singh’s narrative, TV shows were produced locally but the content was imported from India and Pakistan. Leela also imported Pakistan Television’s drama shows (equally famous in India as well) in 1982 to air them for South Asian audiences living in BC. Ethnic media produced for South Asians was initially focused on entertainment content, which did not require the latest up-to-date content but could consist rather of a show which had already aired or clips of various old content repurposed to create a show for local audiences. With the increasing demand for current news from India, however, Satnam Singh, Sher Singh, and Leela soon branched into full-fledged news media productions focusing on South Asia, particularly India. Leela ventured into radio, and started airing the latest news about India. She explained:

Keeping this [increased demand] in mind, I thought of going back to my radio background and so I sent an application to CRTC for an independent twenty-four hour channel where we could broadcast daily news from India and that would come through independent news sources. We started that programming in 1987, and people had to buy a box\(^{43}\) to listen to our transmission exclusively on that device. . . . We would present twenty minute news bulletins about India; the news would come from India, we would make news bulletins and would air them here and they are still aired to this day. This was the first ever station in the world, outside of India, to broadcast 24/7 [Indian content].

\(^{43}\) The box was a subcarrier attached to the main radio stations to broadcast additional service to their subscribers.
Sher Singh also introduced South Asian content into his media productions in innovative ways. He eloquently elaborated upon modern technological transformation and his role as a pioneer of Punjabi ethnic media in BC:

There was one other Hindi program and an Indian, Hindi-speaking woman journalist would run that show. It was popular in the Hindu community, while I started the first ever program in Punjabi on commercial TV. I also started making and distributing colour videos of Punjabi songs for the first time in the world. On the radio, we would have tapes available so it was easier, but for TV shows, we only had songs from the films. We initiated the trend of picturing independent music videos in India and we would bring them here into Canada and would also send them to other parts of the world; they became really popular. People would watch the programs while at work.

Satnam Singh launched his first Punjabi newspaper in 1986. In 1992, he planned to set up a radio station specifically for South Asian communities. After launching the newspaper, he stayed in California for a while where he started a radio station on an AM frequency. He described his media expansion journey:

In 1992, I came back [from California] and we did some research and decided to start a satellite radio because of its range. So after one year of research [and hunting for investors], we were able to design and manufacture our own small satellite radio with a built-in receiver. At that time, there was only one South Asian radio station broadcasting on chip [a special device], by a female journalist. We got the device manufactured in Taiwan. Then later we sold that radio channel to Khalsa School and they still run it [for religious programs]. Then in 1994, we launched another radio station [XXX] on FM for which people had to buy a special, small radio receiver. We were regulated under FCC and CRTC. We launched the same radio in nine cities of California and also in Seattle, in Alberta, and also in Winnipeg. It was relaying same transmission to all these areas. The focus of the station was multilingual—Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, and English. Then we thought we needed more air time to reflect different issues so we started another radio [EFG]. So on the first radio channel, we had only music, and on the second we had talk shows and news. We were associated with BBC and VOA at that time so we had the content copyright and [could] rebroadcast their stuff. BBC broadcasted in Hindi and Urdu so we would get their feed directly from London. In 1996, we launched a newspaper and also we changed the name of the radio. So, [after changing the name] in 2001, we were the first ever company to broadcast twenty-four hours of service in Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. We operated [the radio station] through Blaine, Washington.

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44 The Federal Communications Commission of the United States of America
This lengthy quote from Satnam Singh’s interview illuminates significant historical facts. For example, the growth and development of ethnic media took on a new “business approach” in the 1990s, shifting away from the previous volunteer approach to ethnic media. This was the time when Satnam Singh was expanding his ethnic media group from Metro Vancouver to California on the West coast of North America, and from Alberta to Winnipeg on the Eastern side of Canada. At the same time, he was also focusing on developing the content and type of media, including print media as well as broadcast media, producing both news and entertainment content. Sher Singh also followed the same model:

In 1997, I was trying for side-band\(^{45}\) AM channels; main AM and FM channels were very expensive; we also didn’t know how to get them approved by CRTC. So we found low frequency, side-band radio channel options, which would run on low frequency; a special radio device was required for that, it wouldn’t run on regular radio. We leased this low-frequency FM from USA. I have a partner who was an engineer, he took care of the technical side to make it feasible and I took care of the investments. Once it was aired, we later got two radios—he owned one while I owned the other one.

These media owners revealed that they had to use low frequencies for radio, requiring an additional device\(^{46}\) to be attached to regular radios, which would then transmit the services. Satnam Singh’s background in electronics and his business approach helped him develop satellite and “device specific” radio stations for South Asian immigrant populations. Leela also initially offered radio services using this same technology. With the development of new technology to relay radio programming around the world, however, licensing became a significant yet controversial issue.

\(^{45}\) AM radio that required an additional adapter installed with the radio to catch the frequency.

\(^{46}\) Subsidiary Communications Multiplex Operation (SCMO) is a subcarrier attached to the main radio stations to broadcast additional service to their subscribers.
The CRTC reported in 2014 that there were twenty commercial radio stations (eleven FM and nine AM stations) operating in the Metro Vancouver area; among these, five were serving ethnic communities—three for Chinese and two for South Asian listeners (CRTC 2014). However, some participants of this study, especially those producing local media and competing for a share of the advertisement, raised the issue that some of these radio stations were aired from Blaine in Washington State, USA. Theoretically, radio stations operating in Canada are supposed to get their licenses from the CRTC. On the CRTC’s website, it clearly states that “you need a frequency from Industry Canada as well as a license from the CRTC to operate an over-the-air broadcasting station in Canada” (CRTC 2012). Nonetheless, there were a few radio stations serving South Asian communities, mainly the Punjabi speaking community, broadcasting from the neighboring state of Washington, USA. Instead of the CRTC, they had acquired their licenses from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of the USA. Because of the geographical proximity between Metro Vancouver and Washington State, these stations aired their programs easily and conveniently for Vancouver audiences. It is interesting to note that while they were transmitting their signal from Blaine, Washington, they operated from Metro Vancouver, BC. In other words, their physical presence and their staff, including reporters, anchorpersons, etc., were all in Canada. When Sher Singh was asked to explain his reasons for going through the FCC instead of the CRTC, he said:

The Canadian government didn’t have the availability of radio frequency. Secondly, if we could get some, it would be very expensive. Then we thought, we had to make a special radio or a chip so we started radio service in 1997 [from Blaine]. . . . FCC has slightly different guidelines and they are relaxed as well, as compared to CRTC. CRTC is stricter; you cannot talk about many political issues here in Canada but you can do so in the USA. Social discussion rules are almost
the same. The main reason was availability though. This [current] radio channel came later in 2000; this is now main AM channel. In Canada, we couldn’t get any channel, even at that time.

Satnam Singh expressed his resentment toward the CRTC’s lack of response to the need for licensing of South Asian radio channels. He said:

We . . . approached CRTC [about the needs of the] Indo-Canadian community—that’s what we called it then, [funny] how things and terms change with the passage of time; we call it “South Asian communities now,” before that we were called “East Indian”— and they would say that we didn’t have a large enough population. We had conversations with them. Finally, they realized that there was a need, then, they issued two licenses to South Asian radio stations.

At the time of the interview, Satnam Singh had not been successful in obtaining a license from the CRTC and was still operating under the regulation of the FCC.

The “restrictive policy” of the CRTC has both pros and cons. While it can monitor media outlets to maintain quality, standards, and ethics requirements, it can also lead to unnecessary restrictions in terms of content, language, and format. Like Sher Singh, Satnam Singh also mentioned the flexibility the FCC offered as compared to the CRTC in terms of the content the radio station could broadcast:

There is much more freedom of speech in the USA; secondly, there is no red tape, you can buy a radio station one day and switch programming the next day, in any format. In Canada, you cannot do that. . . . Say for example you buy a Canadian radio station—they have a certain set of rules and guidelines that you have to follow no matter what; in the USA, you can broadcast in any language, any time, 24/7, without any regulation, meaning you don’t have to go to FCC to change the language. In Canada, you know, it’s quite difficult.

Nonetheless, many participants, mainly media practitioners, expressed concerns related to the content and quality of the radio stations operating under FCC regulations. They mentioned that since these radio stations did not come under the purview of the CRTC, they misused their freedom by producing contentious and low quality programming.
These stations were also blamed for siding with political parties and giving them space on air to “defame” their opponents. Sandeep Singh explained:

There are two radio stations that are not working under the purview of CRTC, so they have the liberty to talk about anything they want and do anything they want on the air; there have even been occasions where people have been abused or the journalists have been abused while on air. They are USA-based radio [stations] and they don’t come under . . . Canadian regulation. They [FCC] have their regulations but it’s . . . South Asian programming, [and FCC] don’t have a dedicated staff who can translate for them; the radio [stations] have bought that time so they can speak anything they want; they are not regulated by CRTC. For example, one of these radio stations’ monthly lease is $90,000 and if you add salaries, it will come up to $100,000. How will they manage the finances? They don’t get any grants so what would they do? Either they would charge their guests money, or they would focus on ads. The advertisements also come from our own business community. But how many businesses do we have? So there is a lack of professionalism.

There are two sides to this controversial issue of obtaining licenses from the FCC instead of from the CRTC; one side expounds the virtues of the flexible and convenient approach of the FCC, while the other side blames the same flexible approach for letting owners produce low quality and politically biased programming. Satnam Singh, operating under FCC elaborated his management style and journalistic approach:

We have had several famous radio hosts on our radios at one point, now most of them are working on other radios . . . They got their starting from here; I gave them time [training] to express themselves, what to say and what not to say [on air]. Now all of these journalists and I get together on different occasions and they tell me that they don’t have the same feeling working on the different media outlets, they are so controlled. This is because of different management [style] and different thinking whereas I would always give them a chance to think free, cover the issue according to how they see fit, instead of telling them, you can’t cover that story, I never did that.

This conflict between the media practitioners could not be dismissed as competitors in the same market strategizing to maximize their profits, because it is evident from the narratives of participants that these radio stations are operating within the same economic
system (of Canada) and therefore have the financial and management capacity to sustain their stations. However, they are not legally absorbed in the Canadian broadcasting landscape. With an increasing South Asian population in Metro Vancouver and increasing demand for relevant ethnic media, there may be a need for the Canadian government to adopt a more flexible and inclusive approach to licensing so that South Asian communities may have access to quality ethnic media operating under the regulation of the CRTC instead of the FCC.

**Religion and Politics: Content and Historical Controversies**

**Indian Politics Dominating South Asian Ethnic Media in Canada**

The current study reveals that the ethnic media of South Asians was initially created to meet the entertainment needs of South Asian communities living in BC. However, with the passage of time and changing political scene, the need for news and current affairs relating to immigrants’ countries of origin grew. Sensing this need, ethnic media producers responded by adding content related to news and current affairs, mainly from India. Along with news about countries of origin, immigrants were also interested in immigration-related news. Sher Singh spoke about the audiences’ needs at the dawn of South Asian ethnic media in BC:

Gradually, Punjabi media started to gain popularity. People started getting information about India; this was about 20 or 25 years ago. People were more interested in news related to India; a second area of interest was . . . immigration-related news, so we would provide coverage on these issues. For local news, people were only interested in the weather . . . nothing else. The reason for this lack of interest was that most immigrants were in a struggling phase; no one was interested in [Canadian] politics, and neither did they think that they could take part in [Canadian] politics so they were more interested in Indian or Pakistani news. In BC, majority of South Asians belonged to the Punjabi community, with a very small Hindu community at that time. People wanted to sponsor their families
and were interested in . . . immigration-related development; I still remember there were a couple of very renowned and dependable immigration lawyers and people would often ask for their contact numbers.

Political tension resulting in violence between the Indian government and the Sikh communities of India (State of Punjab) was on the rise during the 1980s and beyond. Sikh communities blamed the then Prime Minister and ruling political party of India for anti-Sikh politics, while the Indian government considered Sikh separatists’ Khalistan movement a threat to the democracy and strength of the country. The political tension between the government and the Khalistan movement reached a pinnacle when the then Prime Minister ordered Operation Blue Star in 1984. The operation targeted armed separatist Sikhs inside the Golden Temple at Amritsar, and killed hundreds; among those, most were pilgrims to the shrine. This major development at home also caused unrest and agitation among the Sikh immigrants living in diaspora communities (Fair 2005; Grenville 2005).

Nayar (2004) reports that Operation Blue Star aggravated the sentiments of the Sikh immigrants living in Metro Vancouver, many of whom became involved in religious politics, including the Khalistan movement. Many groups supported the Khalistan movement, for example “Babbar Khalsa International (1981-2003), the International Sikh Youth Federation (1984-2003), and the World Sikh Organization (1984-present)” (Nayar 2004, 162). Narratives collected for this study also indicate that this conflict affected Sikh and Hindu immigrant communities living in diaspora, specifically in Canada. Sher Singh explained the sentiments of the Sikh community of Metro Vancouver in his interview:

People didn’t like the Indian government, so they turned pro-Khalistan. Even people who didn’t fully agree with Sikhs and were more of human right activists .
also condemned the Indian government’s attack on the religion. Sikhs didn’t feel safe then. The contention is still ongoing. The Indian government says to forget the event but they themselves don’t forget it; many Sikhs still cannot go back to India because they are banned.

The inception of ethnic media in Metro Vancouver during the 1980s coincided with the rapidly changing landscape of Indian politics related to the Sikh community and Operation Blue Star. The Sikh community protested loudly against the Indian government’s attack on their most important place of worship, and ethnic media played a crucial role in representing their views and emotions. Sikh communities living in diaspora had relatives and friends in India, and they blamed the Indian government for violating the human rights of the Sikh population still living back home in India. At the same time, “some of the Lower Mainland [of Vancouver] gurdwaras were taken over by pro-Khalistan organizations, which collected funds for the Khalistan movement in Punjab and lobbied Western governments concerning alleged human rights violations there” (Baker, Overmyer, and DeVries 2010, 56). Along with other social ethnic institutions, the ethnic media of South Asians, particularly Indo-Canadians, was heavily influenced by these political developments and religious ideologies during this period.

Throughout my conversations with them, pioneering ethnic media owners 47 in BC spoke openly about various conflicts and issues that have arisen between them in the past (even extending in some cases into the present). It is difficult to name these tensions as mere “religious tensions,” because they are rooted in the politics of India; in order to analyze the complexity of the conflict, therefore, we must differentiate between politics and religion. Different immigrants have different relationships with the state on regional, political developments and religious ideologies during this period.

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47 South Asian ethnic media owners, I spoke to, belonged to different religions: for example, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Islam. I did not come across people practicing Buddhism or Jainism, or any other religious minority media owners or users during this study.
national, and transnational levels. Religion, language, class, caste, and many other factors form the basis of these relationships with the state. Religion may not be the cause of a given issue, but religion nevertheless often moves to the forefront of the tension; this notion of religious conflicts sometimes serves to mask the real issues, which can include regional, national, and international political conflicts. The mainstream media’s portrayal of certain groups—for example, its portrayal of Indian Sikhs in the context of Operation Blue Star or of Muslims in the context of 9/11—can play a significant role in solidifying negative stereotypes about these (religious) groups. When religion is played as a card against certain groups, it affects their identity politics, not only locally but internationally as well. Dordi and Walton-Roberts (2016) argue that the anti-Sikh riots and the assault on the Golden Temple turned many Canadian Sikhs against India; as a result, they refused to identify themselves as Indians, instead they chose Punjabi Sikh as their new identity (Chikanda et al. 2016). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into detail regarding the reasons for the tension between the two major Indo-Canadian religious groups (i.e., Hindu and Sikh) living in diaspora; instead my focus is on the impacts of this tension on the ethnic media of BC (and elsewhere).
In the beginning, South Asian ethnic media was owned by Punjabi and Hindi speaking Sikh and Hindu entrepreneurs. With the increase of Pakistani immigrants living in Metro Vancouver, Pakistani ethnic media also began to appear as part of the media landscape. The narratives of the media owners I spoke with showed ongoing conflict between media owners in the context of Operation Blue Star. Leela described her difficulties being a “Hindu woman journalist” in the 1980s, and stated that these difficulties were still affecting her professional life today. She shared that in 1984, on a visit to India, she interviewed the then Prime Minister for her TV show, which was presented on a multicultural TV channel in Canada. As a result, she said, she lost her job due to the reaction and anger she received from the community who were against Indira Gandhi’s policies:

So being a woman in a power position in the media and interviewing and showing Indira Gandhi on TV here was something that people were not very interested in watching. It created backlash against me and I lost my job. When the subscriptions went down to 900 from 3000, the program was not possible to sustain. . . . I saw that there was a big rift in the community; whatever was happening in India and however people here were getting information were all misguided. Government and the political groups, all were propagating against each other in a negative way and people didn’t know what the reality was.
Satnam Singh offered his point of view regarding the insufficient and problematic media representation of the Sikh community at that time—a lack that triggered his interest in starting his own media enterprise:

What happened was, there was only one [South Asian ethnic] broadcaster in western Canada at that time, a female journalist. I approached her several times to request her to keep her programming unbiased but she refused. She was very negative towards the Sikhs and the Punjabi community. That was way back in 1986 and then I realized that I needed to set up a medium where people would not differentiate between Pakistanis and Punjabis, or Indian and Punjabi, or Hindu, Sikhs, Muslims. So I thought why [don’t] I start something, where every community, every organization feels comfortable dealing with us? Yes, my coming into ethnic media was a reaction [to the existing ethnic media] because our community was not served properly. I mean Sikh, Punjabi, Pakistani, all the communities.

Sher Singh’s decision to overtake a newspaper publication was also motivated by political and religious considerations. He explained:

In 1984, during and after the government attack on the Golden Temple, people mostly liked news related to the Khalistan movement; there were two leading local Punjabi papers, one was pro-Khalistan while the other was moderate—it was kind of pro-government. The moderate papers started receiving threats from the local community so I bought the paper from them. I ran the same paper for many years. I changed . . . strategy by publishing mixed news, both related to Sikhs and to India [i.e., the Indian government].

The Khalistan movement called for separation from the Indian state to establish an independent country in the states of Punjab and Haryana (Aspinall et al. 2013). Some Sikh groups living in diaspora developed emotional linkages with the movement that was flourishing in India. These groups exerted pressure on ethnic media outlets in BC who were taking a neutral or somewhat pro-Indian stance (Baker, Overmyer, and DeVries 2010). Sher Singh also reported that he had to shut down the publication of his paper because of the backlash he faced from the Khalistan supporter groups:

We had to shut down the paper because we ran into many court cases. . . . We wanted peace in Canada and did not want the problems from back home to follow
us here, so we supported non-violent protests against the Indian government. The conservative [Sikh groups], who had control and funding of most Gurduwaras, did not like this and we had . . . arguments with them; they dragged us into many court cases.

When I asked him if he experienced pressure from the community, he responded:

No, you cannot say “community,” but rather “group” pressure. The group gained lots of power because the Khalistan movement became so strong at that time.

Sher Singh’s differentiation between the concepts of “community” and “group” refers to the fact that he saw the community as a larger but rather silent and indifferent group while the smaller group that existed within the larger community was exerting pressure and was considered a real threat. Leela, who claimed to present “objective news” on India, also faced threats and pressure from the same groups. As mentioned previously, she had to shut down her program after airing Indira Gandhi’s interview around the time of Operation Blue Star due to the negative reaction from Sikh subscribers. She was facing two intersecting challenges in this situation: first, she was Hindu, and thus considered to be pro-Indian politically; second, she was a woman entrepreneur with the power to tell stories. According to her narrative throughout the interview, her gender posed a threat in terms of occupying the knowledge sharing and producing forum (i.e., ethnic media), which was essentially considered a male domain. I asked her why she did not receive support from her own Hindu community when the trouble arose. She explained:

They were scared of the Sikh community that they would also have to face the same backlash that I had to face. I will share an event with you. Back then, I was told one day that I shouldn’t go to Main Street [in Vancouver] that day because I would be beaten up, but I had to go shopping with my mother for my brother’s wedding. It was the time during 1984, 85, or 86, it was a very difficult time for us, and it was difficult for all of our community. For me to be in a power position and not take sides, a handful of people would really dislike that I wouldn’t take their side but I couldn’t; I was a broadcaster, I was supposed to be impartial. Being Hindu, I never talked about Hinduism [on air].
The narratives that emerged in my conversations with media owners indicated that Operation Blue Star and its aftermath among Punjabi speaking Indo-Canadians created conflicted relations between Sikh and Hindu media owners in Metro Vancouver. Sikh media owners blamed an anti-Sikh campaign that they said was launched against them by some of the ethnic media outlets owned by Hindu journalists, while Hindu media owners considered their news media approach objective and impartial, offering the Indian government’s perspectives as well as those of Sikh separatists. Media owners on both sides of the issue claimed that, during the 1980’s conflict and escalating tension in India, they had been objectively serving their communities living in Metro Vancouver. Both sides also independently claimed that they—rather than the other side—had been the first to adopt a policy of representing all religious groups among South Asian communities. In other words, media owners on both sides asserted that they had been the true representatives of South Asian ethnic media, meeting the needs of the community, while the other side lacked objectivity.

The resulting rift between Hindu and Sikh media owners led to the growth of more ethnic media in BC. Within the Sikh population, polarized ethnic media grew in a matter of few years. This polarization contained two groups: the first group represented traditionalist ideology in ethnic media, mainly focusing on religion as well as the conflict between the Indian government and the Sikh population in India; the second group focused on current socio-economic aspects of Sikh diasporic life experiences. Leela claimed that due to her Hindu identity, she faced a lack of interest from the predominantly Sikh business community in purchasing advertising in her ethnic media products. She considered this a biased reaction, and one that is responsible for the
precarious financial situation she has suffered all these years. Yet this divisive media landscape would be oversimplified if it were reduced solely to religious and political biases; conflicting narratives could also be attributed to market competition.

Cunningham (2012), explaining the work of Barth (1969), theorizes that differences in economic performance and political ideologies among the same ethnic groups set the boundaries for competition. The competition is less “when groups inhabit separate, spatially-distant, or complementary niches in labor markets and political systems”; on the other hand, “when competing groups occupy similar positions, thus exhibiting considerable niche overlap, ethnic solidarities intensify and contribute to increased competition-based conflict” (Cunningham 2012, 507). In the case of ethnic media in BC, most organizations operate in parts of the Lower Mainland (Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, and Abbotsford). The fact that ethnic media competitors thus share economic and geographic resources cannot be ignored as a subtle reason for conflict among them, given that economic resources (e.g., advertisement revenue) are scarce and limited in these communities. Critiquing the process of regulating licensing for ethnic media, Leela blamed the Canadian government for pitting ethnic groups against each other as part of broader Western policy:

CRTC issued licenses according to their understanding of the community but, in fact, now they have erected four competitors fighting with each other; this has created a further rift in the community. The reason behind the division of India and Pakistan was the fact that they [i.e., Western governments] knew that if these nations remained together, they would become a superpower in the future because their people are really hardworking, so they thought of creating rifts among them and religion was the only thing which could divide them and so they did it. The same ideology is still continued.

Writing in the context of the USA, Cummings (2001, 54) argues that the policies of affirmative action could pit different groups against each other: “Pressing for more
affirmative action for itself, each demographic interest group zealously carries favor with the controlling elites while envying other groups’ successes.” In the case of Hindu and Sikh media owners, on the one hand they had to deal with Indian political elites creating rifts in their communities back at home, while on the other hand they had the CRTC giving licenses to one group and refusing them to the other (already operating in the market under FCC licensing). Based on the narratives of media owners, it seems that both factors created a contentious relationship between these owners—a tension somehow tagged exclusively and reductively according to their religious identities. Clearly, the conflict has its roots in political and economic issues as well as religious issues, a fact which gets ignored when it is generalized merely as a “religious divide.”

**Media and Religious Politics**

Religion-related controversies in the historical development of ethnic media did not influence only Hindu and/or Sikh ethnic media; Muslim media owners also experienced their share of issues. Amin Rahman, a filmmaker producing ethnic cinema, was interviewed for this research. He focused on Islamic Sharia\(^\text{48}\) law as a central theme of his second documentary film made in Canada. Although it was a well-researched film, he also feared backlash from the community once the film went public, saying he fully expected “lots of criticism from the extremists when the movie [was] made available on YouTube.” Nadeem Khan also expressed some limitations imposed on his publication due to his religion. For example, he said that his news journal could not publish Bollywood and/or other “spicy” news to attract readers because a large number of copies of the paper would be circulated after the Juma (Friday) Prayers in the local Mosques.

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\(^{48}\) Islamic Sharia law translates as Islamic Jurisprudence.
Anything published against the wishes of the management of the Mosques could jeopardize their circulation, a shortfall that the paper could not afford. Nadeem Khan considered it a challenge to maintain a balance in his newspaper content:

The challenge is acceptance by everyone. Sometimes people on the religious outskirts don’t like some of our stuff. For example if you publish something, which does not please a Mowlana [an Islamic priest], the newspaper gets thrown out in the garbage of the Mosque.

Presenting religious content by a journalist or media group belonging to another religion could also create a backlash. The reason for this backlash revolves around one central point: who has the right to decide what content makes for suitable or appropriate religious information, and who gets to decide this? Sandeep Singh shared his experience of including women’s voices in the spiritual part of his TV show:

I brought a Muslim woman on my show and we talked about something related to Islam and—oh my God—so many Muslim clerics called me . . . [demanding to know] how I dared to invite her and how could she talk about Islam; so, unfortunately, there are zero women’s rights. I wanted to bring in women’s [perspectives] on Islam too; I cannot give my judgment on religion but I can bring someone to give their opinion and I am not saying it’s right or wrong, I am just presenting the views—that’s my job.

Interestingly, one investigative journalist—a Christian—shared with me the fact that his religious identity benefited him in his work. This particular journalist is known for his investigative and aggressive stories challenging corrupt practices and policies in both South Asian and mainstream communities. “I had this advantage of being Christian,” he shared. “I’m even Christian by a strong belief, I would expose them on the basis of Christianity; the others would be scared because they could be tagged, oh, you are a Sikh, these guys couldn’t tag me that I was a Sikh or Hindu while I turn around as Christian.”

Manifestly, religious identity creates different meanings and outcomes in the world, depending on the religion with which one identifies. Lal derived power from his religious
identity by associating it with the religion of the mainstream in Canada (i.e., Christianity). He saw an opportunity to challenge the mainstream by revealing his religious identity as a Christian, which could, despite his ethnic identity as a South Asian, work to win him credibility and acceptance in mainstream Canadian society. Any source of alignment with mainstream society—positioning oneself even partially as an insider—can be significant in gaining this credibility and approval. Conversely, Zameer Ahmad’s religious identity as a Muslim worked against him when his journal faced huge backlash after re-publishing an article about the Holocaust in his bi-lingual Urdu/English newspaper. He explained:

Actually, the reason for their [i.e., the mainstream media’s] bias is that at the international level, mainstream [Western] media is suffering from Islamophobia and they cannot see Islam grow as a religion. Muslims are also victims of supremacy [i.e., imperialism] and everyone knows who owns and controls the Western media. The problem is there is no one to stop them. We published an article written by an American author about the Holocaust and as a result the entire state and the media turned against us. They pressurized us for two years, surveilled our activities and our offices. You can understand how a small-scale ethnic media is under surveillance and have to face penalties if they publish unwanted content.

In summary, religion has played a significant role in ethnic media-making and remaking, and in creating associated controversies. The narratives of the ethnic media practitioners I interviewed for this research demonstrated clearly that these practitioners were influenced or challenged by issues related to various religions (e.g., Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism), and while some overcame these challenges and maintained successful media productions, others could not. The role of religion in ethnic media will be continued in the next chapter, which will delve in more depth into how and what religious content is included in ethnic media.
Conclusion

This chapter presented perceptions and experiences of South Asian audiences regarding the mainstream media’s treatment and representation of their communities. Mainstream media was criticized for its lack of coverage of positive news stories about the South Asian population. This criticism—along with barriers related to accessibility and language—makes ethnic media a preferred choice for South Asian audiences living in Metro Vancouver. The chapter also related some of the highlights of the growth and development of ethnic media in BC, along with related challenges such as licensing, technology, and religious/political tensions among various communities. It was revealed that political unrest in India in the 1980s—especially the anti-Sikh politics of the then ruling party—redefined Sikh identity, and that this was an instrumental factor in the setting up of innovative broadcasting models. The licensing policy of the CRTC for ethnic media emerged as a challenge, mostly for ethnic radio stations; it was explained that, in order to overcome this challenge, some of the radio stations were airing under the licensing of the FCC, USA. The chapter demonstrated that, although not all ethnic media owners had journalistic experience and/or education prior to beginning their careers in ethnic media, they were able to use their entrepreneurial and/or technological skills to develop and offer services to their audiences. Irrespective of their professional qualifications or length of stay in Canada, most of them faced racialization in their lives, including workplaces, in Canada.
CHAPTER 5: MAPPING THE TERRAIN: ETHNIC MEDIA IN BC

Somebody said that it couldn’t be done,
    But he with a chuckle replied
That “maybe it couldn’t,” but he would be one
    Who wouldn’t say so till he’d tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
    On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
    That couldn’t be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: “Oh, you’ll never do that;
    At least no one ever has done it”;
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
    And the first thing we knew he’d begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
    Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
    That couldn’t be done, and he did it.
(Edgar Guest, “It Couldn’t Be Done”)

Introduction

Ethnic media in the USA has grown exponentially over the decades (Johnson 1976; La Ferle and Morimoto 2009; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011; Ross and Playdon 2001; Shi 2008, 2009; Tayash 1988; Viswanath and Arora 2000). Deuze (2006, 262) notes that “forty-five percent of all African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American and Arab American adults prefer ethnic television, radio or newspapers to their mainstream counterparts.” In Canada, ethnic media studies are still an emerging field. Unregistered ethnic media in Canada currently occupies a significant place in the media landscape, but it is difficult to accurately map its numbers, circulation, distribution, and
ratings. In BC, for example, there has only been one comprehensive report published so far mapping the ethnic media of BC (Murray, Yu, and Ahadi 2007).

There could be two key factors for the growth of ethnic media in the West. First, as explicated in previous chapters, ethnic media provides a crucial, alternative means of communication and representation in the public sphere to minorities who are largely ignored or stereotyped by mainstream media (Ahadi and Yu 2010; Cottle 2000a; Cunningham 2001; Fleras 2009; Husband 2005; Karim 2003; Mahtani and Dunn 2001; Ross and Playdon 2001). Second, ethnic media has become an independent media industry and a social institution due to the demands and opportunities generated by ethnic communities living in one geographical area. Contesting the link between immigration flow and the growth of ethnic media, Deuze (2006, 263) argues, “the growth of ethnic media must also be attributed to global market forces, stimulating the proliferation of relatively small-scale, special-interest ventures targeting a wide variety of niche audiences.” If one wants to understand what role ethnic media is playing in the lived experiences of South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver, one must first understand the construct, types, content, making, and makers of South Asian ethnic media in Metro Vancouver.

This chapter provides an overview of various types and usages of South Asian ethnic media (radio, television, and print media), with a focus on their linkages with their audiences. Thus, I explore how ethnic media audiences are engaging with their media, which media they are engaging with, and with what levels of interest. While the role of ethnic media will be discussed more specifically in Chapter 6, this chapter provides an overview of existing ethnic media content, practices, and paraphernalia, including a
discussion of how content is developed and by whom. In studying the constructs of ethnic media, its producers, practitioners, frontline workers, and makers could not be ignored. Hence, ethnic media practitioners’ perceptions, self-appraisal, and a review of services provided to ethnic audiences will be analyzed to understand what and how they think about their roles in the making of ethnic media in Metro Vancouver. This chapter also provides an overview of the relationship between media practitioners and their audiences and communities to explore the uses, preferences, popularity, feedback mechanism, and importance of ethnic media in the lived experiences of South Asians in Metro Vancouver.

**Current Ethnic Media Landscape in Metro Vancouver**

There are several ethnic media outlets and products available for different ethnic groups living in Metro Vancouver. So far, there is only one comprehensive research study being conducted in the context of ethnic media of BC (Murray, Yu, and Ahadi 2007). The study reported useful information about numbers, types, languages, and constructs of different ethnic media, finding that there were about “24 magazines, 80 newspapers, 15 radio stations, and 15 television stations operating as ethnic media in Vancouver” (Ahadi and Murray 2009, 596). Asians in Canada, including Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Indian, and Pakistani populations, are emerging as a critical mass with increased purchasing power, and this is giving a boost to their ethnic media. Interestingly, South Asian communities had a greater number of ethnic media outlets than their Chinese fellows (Murray, Yu, and Ahadi 2007). There are no data available on the ethnic media consumption of South Asians in Canada; however, the following chart, illustrated on the website of *Marketing*
"Mirror," shows the overall media consumption habits of South Asians in the Greater Toronto and Vancouver areas.

**Figure 5. Media Usage: GTA + GVA**

Scholars argue that ethnic media, by opening up alternative communication spaces, becomes “mainstream ethnic media” for ethnic minorities (Karim 2003; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). Currently, ethnic media is offered in almost all media formats, including radio, TV, print, theater, and film as well as Internet media. The focus of this study, due to limited resources and time, is on print and broadcast ethnic media. The following section of this chapter explores different media types and their makeup, based on the narratives collected for this study; in the absence of current, up-to-date information regarding distribution numbers and other details, most of the information in

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this chapter has been gleaned by interviewing media practitioners, and by drawing on secondary data (where available) and personal experience.

**Types of South Asian Ethnic Media**

**Ethnic Print Media: Maintaining Quality and Changing Technology**

Currently there are several weekly newspapers, bi-weekly journals, and monthly magazines in Metro Vancouver. Most of these are in Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu languages. To make the publications relevant to larger audiences, some publishers are publishing either in English or bilingually; for example, some newspapers are published half in English and half in Urdu/Hindi/Punjabi, while others are published solely in English. What defines them as ethnic print media is their focus on South Asian communities as their target audiences. My study revealed that print media was facing the most difficult situation in terms of sustaining financial viability and maintaining circulation.

Surprisingly, I still found many forms of print media available for South Asian audiences, including weekly/bi-weekly newspapers and magazines such as the *Asian Journal*, the *Indo-Canadian Voice*, the *Link*, *Chardikala*, the *Miracle*, the *South Asian Post*, the *Urdu Journal*, and *Darpan Magazine*. There are no aggregate data on the number of ethnic publications or audiences. According to a report generated in 2007, roughly thirty-three newspapers were being published by South Asians at that time (Murray, Yu, and Ahadi 2007). At the time of my research, many print media products in different languages could be seen displayed at local ethnic grocery stores around Metro Vancouver. For formal numbers, however, researchers have to rely on the circulation and distribution numbers quoted by print ethnic media sources themselves (Oh and Zhou 2012, 265).
This dissertation research reveals that South Asian print media is more popular among seniors, that is, sixty-five years and older. A large number of South Asian immigrants prefer to sponsor their parents for permanent immigration and stay living with them (Galdas et al. 2012). Between 2005 and 2009, about 86% of the seniors who immigrated to BC did so under the family sponsorship program, and more than half of them reported “no official language ability” (WelcomeBC 2010). A large number of these seniors provide care services to their grandchildren (Koehn, Habib, and Bukhari 2013b) and/or work in low-paid jobs (e.g., berry picking in the summer on farm land around Metro Vancouver) (Berggold 2011). The majority of these seniors are reported as active audiences of ethnic media, including print media. Participants in this study confirmed that the senior population regularly consumed ethnic media, since they were either retired and/or had free time to do so. The Internet also allows immigrants to read online newspapers from their countries of origin. Parveen, an FGD participant, related her senior in-laws’ habit of reading such online newspapers, adding, “I also read an Indian [English] newspaper online as per my childhood habit; it’s updated online at 2am in the morning in India, so I must read it here as soon as it’s updated there.”

Zameer Ahmad, responsible for publishing a newspaper in Vancouver for Pakistani-Canadians, explained that not only was his paper popular among seniors, but most of his regular contributors were also seniors:

Majority of my readers are seniors, although I go to youth events too but I have more interaction with seniors due to my age and also because the writers of my paper are mostly seniors. I also have some young writers but they give little time. So I do write extensively about seniors, their issues and their experiences.

Ahmad mentioned that the focus of his paper was on promoting the social and civic development of his readers. According to Ahmad, the senior population contributing to
his paper as writers had taken on the role of “socializing” the families and community that formed their readership. The presence of seniors in South Asian families and communities is considered a benefit, as “children can learn the value of family and tradition” from the older generation, who serve to “bind the family together and create an atmosphere of heritage culture” (Rahim 2014, 107). In contrast to the interest seniors took in reading and contributing to his newspaper, Ahmad confessed a lack of interest in ethnic print media among youth, and reported constant struggle to engage young people through other socio-cultural activities such as youth talent shows or community forums. Aware of the fact that print media was diminishing due to the increased influence of online and Internet media, he also chose to make his journal available online. Nonetheless, some participants considered printed newspapers and journals a useful reference to find information about ethnic businesses and events. Feroz, an FGD participant said:

> With newspaper, the advantage is that if you miss news on the radio or TV, you can read it in the paper when you have free time. Then newspapers also provide useful information, like about community events, or even ads—like ads for travel agencies and competitive fares for India and Pakistan—so they are safe in the newspaper as a reference.

With regards to print media, issues of financial sustainability, technological advances, and lack of resources, especially an absence of professional team members (Abernathy 2014), came up repeatedly during the data collection process. Zameer Ahmad informed me that his family performed a variety of different tasks related to the production of his bi-weekly newspaper, while community members contributed articles. He explained, “I have my daughter, my wife, they take on a lot of headache [i.e., responsibility] without being paid; they know it’s their father’s passion so I am able to run this paper due to their

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50 Zameer Ahmad informed me that most of the contributors to his newspaper were not paid.
support." Other print media producers also related the “one-man-show” nature of their jobs. Nadeem Khan listed a number of activities he performed for his paper:

> My job is to set graphics, find news and articles from the Internet, set news and layout, and I send them as a picture format and I charge them [i.e., the newspaper owner] for this job. There are about five or six local writers who write Urdu columns; they sometimes send me their copy in handwriting and I type it. . . . I set the agenda for the Urdu section and so far no complaints.

Sandeep Singh presented another potential reason for the ongoing struggle of ethnic print media. According to him, since most of these print media products were available free of cost, their value and quality were compromised, with many print media producers struggling to financially sustain their products or improve their quality, quantity, or frequency. He said:

> Chinese [immigrants] have their daily newspaper but we don’t have any daily newspaper as yet. We have weekly or monthly newspapers and they are good for nothing, I would say. Why? Because except for the front page, where you can find some local news, the rest is all cut and paste. Because of the daily newspaper of Chinese [immigrants], they have more influence; they sell their paper too, our papers are free. We have only one newspaper, which sells but that is associated with one school of thought and it caters to one [segment of the South Asian community].

Singh was not the only one to suggest that lack of resources affected the quality of ethnic print media (Zhou 2009, 145), which was criticized several times by participants for cutting and pasting most of its content from online sources to fill up pages. Those who were developing their own reports and stories considered this practice unfair competition.

Some media practitioners faced pressure in competing with both mainstream and ethnic English media while maintaining quality and meeting deadlines despite limited resources. Lal said:

> My biggest frustration with the ethnic media is that I try to be honest and do my own stories but I see all the other ethnic media just copying and pasting and I find it very unfair competition because if I tried the same thing, the mainstream media
will come after me because I am very well known. . . . Here, a last minute story comes in, I sometimes have to ignore it because of the paper’s deadlines, the other guys will copy it, paste it, and put it there, they will give a courtesy title and whatever but they don’t care. I never do that kind of stuff so that’s a big frustration; it’s not honest journalism. Or, they are trying to favour someone because the guy gives them ads from within their community.

Interestingly, ethnic print media in English was perceived among some participants of this study as having greater credibility and quality as compared to ethnic language print media. Sunny, an FGD participant, explained his preference for English print media, saying “I think English ethnic papers are slightly different [read: better] as compared to other ethnic newspapers.” Social class seems to play a role here, with participants who came from an educated class and were well-versed in English tending to express a preference for ethnic media published in English rather than ethnic languages. Lal explained that his English language paper was widely read by South Asian audiences as well as different governmental bodies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), municipal government representatives, and mainstream media journalists:

The paper is still being read in the families; because of the joint family system, it is still being picked up and as more of the better classes are coming in, because immigration patterns are changing, we are getting more and more educated class who are more into [reading the] newspaper.

A preference for English language ethnic media can also be generational. According to Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011, 109), “a 2005 study on Asian-Americans found that Asians who are second generation and beyond consume far more English media (i.e., newspaper, radio, and TV), than the first and ‘1.5 generation.’” In reference to the increased emergence of Latino ethnic print media products published in English in the USA (to serve a Latino population increasingly fluent in English), the authors argue that the proliferation of such media might “negatively impact Spanish-language media”
but “not Latino media in general” (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011, 108). In other words, the increasing use of English in ethnic media does not jeopardize ethnic media’s existence—in fact, quite the opposite may be true. In the case of South Asian ethnic media in Canada, for instance, increased use of English could expand audiences to include second and third generation South Asians. Across the board, however, media practitioners and readers agreed that print media’s future is uncertain due to rapid changes and advancements in technology, and perhaps that is why the focus of my participants’ narratives remained on radio as compared to print media or even TV. Sher Singh said:

Mainstream print media is also in trouble, even 100 and 150 years old mainstream print media is closing down because of lack of revenue; no one prefers to reads newspapers anymore, everything is on the Internet. The [mainstream] media that will survive now is Internet, TV, and . . . radio.

Zameer Ahmad also sensed the technological shift jeopardizing the future of print media, and has therefore worked hard to adapt to the latest technology. At the time of data collection, there was no radio station owned by Pakistani-Canadians. This population also had a very limited presence on the TV landscape compared to their Indo-Canadian counterparts. Because Zameer Ahmad could not expand his media organization to radio or TV productions, his only hope was to sustain his print publication, thus he was forced to keep up with technological advancements in that field, in spite of his worries that changes in the format of print media would come with some limitations. He explained:

My paper is . . . one-click now. I would be happy if someone could prove it to me that whatever they read online, do they even remember one line of it? No, they won’t. It is a privilege of print media, like a book, you read one page of the book before you go to sleep, you will remember it. It is a kind of memory, which acknowledges that you have read it. It is because you read print material in a relaxed mood on your easy time. . . . But the trends are also changing and we will make our website more attractive to create more business and cliental through
web presence instead of print media, this will be one way to survive. We have our paper online available right now but we have to educate people about this option. Ethnic print media is increasing its presence online (Browne 2005b), and the power to make technological changes lies in publishers’ hands. Nonetheless, as Ahmad pointed out, how the readers of ethnic print media—especially those resistant to new technology—respond to these changes will determine how successful this shift could be.

**Ethnic Television: Narrowcasting versus Broadcasting**

Ethnic media is gradually developing a presence on the TV landscape of Canada. TV is an expensive medium, and this study revealed that South Asian ethnic media TV productions were still dependent on multicultural channels. Currently, there are two ways to telecast ethnic programs. Some multicultural/community TV channels provide time slots for privately produced ethnic TV shows/content, and some mainstream media outlets have dedicated multicultural TV channels producing their own ethnic content. For example, Joy TV and Shaw Multicultural Channel provide time slots to various ethnic communities to air their shows, while OMNI TV presents ethnic news bulletins using their own resources in ethnic languages, with news and current affairs sections for both Chinese and Punjabi populations in Vancouver as well as Italian and Arabic populations in Montreal. These TV channels provide a vivid example of “narrowcasting.”

53 Elaborating on the work of Naficy (1991), Cunningham and Sinclair question the validity, purpose, and implicit aim of narrowcasting. According to them, there is an

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51 Joy TV’s website states: “Joy TV serves Surrey & the Fraser Valley, Vancouver and Victoria, offering quality contemporary/classic entertainment and local information with a strong community focus, for a spiritually and culturally diverse audience of all ages” (Joy TV 2015).

52 OMNI TV’s website states: “OMNI Television provides free over-the-air television service to ethnic communities in Toronto, London, Ottawa, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Victoria. As an ethnic broadcaster, OMNI is committed to reflecting Canada’s diversity through ethnocultural and third-language programming at a local, regional, and national level” (OMNI TV 2015).

53 Narrowcasting is defined as “Special interest programming designed for niche audiences” (Chandler and Rod 2016, 290).
implicit oppositional notion inherent in the construction of mainstream broadcasting versus narrowcasting, whereby “[mainstream] broadcasting [acts] as the heartland of nation and family, and narrowcasting as the space of the migrant, the exile, the refugee” (Cunningham and Sinclair 2001, 44). The narrowcasting approach runs into further challenges when mainstream media groups fail to provide adequate financial and professional support to their ethnic programming, leaving all the responsibility to produce and financially sustain this programming on the shoulders of ethnic media producers. As a result, quality, quantity, and viewership of this programming could be negatively affected, especially as compared to mainstream “broadcasting” in the same social system.

Commenting on narrowcasting of South Asian content, Sunny said he considered OMNI TV more professional because of the type and size of resources they had as compared to other ethnic media: “Talking about professionalism, if you compare OMNI TV with radio, it also has Punjabi TV programming, but it’s more professional. With radio, they do not have enough resources to send their reporters to cover all events, but OMNI news is there.”

It is a fact that, with limited resources, independent ethnic media cannot be compared with mainstream media organizations that narrowcast South Asian content in terms of quality and coverage; yet the production quality of programming by OMNI (and other similar channels) forces ethnic producers to elevate the quality of their programs, which is an undocumented advantage of mainstream media’s narrowcasting. It is noteworthy that team composition of mainstream media outlets that are narrowcasting ethnic content can greatly affect how information and content is framed. For example, in
the case of OMNI TV’s Punjabi edition, the majority of the team was based in Metro Vancouver and belonged to the Punjabi-Sikh South Asian community. Because they could afford to pay market-based salaries, they were able to engage better qualified and more skilled journalists than they would have had they not been able to offer competitive (or any) compensation for work performed. Additionally, they could provide on-the-job training, which, again due to limited resources, was not possible for ethnic media productions in most cases.

At the time of data collection for this study, very little TV content was locally produced by South Asian media producers; their focus remained mainly on radio and print media. Audiences also did not show much interest in the few locally produced TV programs that did exist. Sunny questioned the “originality” of the TV productions, given the nature of pre-recorded content:

> If you compare radio with TV, the difference . . . also comes down to community participation. Your participation on TV is only budgeted for two hours per week [while on the radio it’s much more]. I also find much more originality in radio content versus TV content, which looks artificial to me. [On TV] things are presented in a made-up form.

It is widely assumed that ethnic media is mostly produced by immigrant and migrant communities living in diasporas (Ojo 2006; Riggins 1992; Viswanath and Arora 2000). Shi (2009) challenges this notion, pointing out that most of the materials ultimately consumed are produced in immigrants’ countries of origin. This study revealed that some media practitioners were privately producing TV shows containing locally developed entertainment and information materials. However, these producers were struggling financially, grappling with the production and air time costs associated with broadcasting on mainstream multicultural TV channels. Sandeep Singh, who was paying for air time

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54 OMNI TV offers a Punjabi edition for different cities in Canada, for example Toronto and Vancouver.
on a multicultural TV channel, admitted he often felt trapped between the pressure to create quality programming and the struggle to sustain financial viability:

So, jumping from once a week to daily [programming] was a big decision for us because we had to pay for the air time. I spoke to some people and friends and they said it would be hard to sustain the daily program but I said let’s try it . . . Running a daily program on [a small community] channel is not easy . . . because we are competing with [a national level] ethnic TV station. But we were able to get established within 6 months; people started talking about us because my focus was to educate, inform, inspire, and empower the community and that’s why I started bringing [forward] those issues, which matter. . . . Now it’s a daily program but I don’t do daily recordings; I have the studio for one day so from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., we do recording for the whole week. There is so much pressure that in a week, we sometimes do recordings for 7 or 8 shows.

Finding free time slots to screen locally produced ethnic content was not considered an easy task. Amin Rahman shared the challenge of finding a multicultural TV station that would air his locally produced film free of charge for South Asian audiences. He also pointed out that multicultural channels did not provide any real financial support for the production of ethnic programming. According to Amin Rahman,

The multicultural TV channels do not pay . . . the producers of the movie. They would rather charge money for the air time or they give it to you for free. I gave them the movie, they watched it and they said they liked it, they reviewed it, they said they will play it, but if I wanted to find some sponsors that would be my job to bring in the money. They would show the ads of the sponsors during the movie and they would take a share of the sponsorship. But if I wouldn’t want to bring commercials, they would run it for free but they would not pay [me], no.

The growth of locally produced ethnic TV programming was described as slow and expensive by ethnic media producers. Given financial constraints, it seemed that it would take a while before South Asian ethnic media and its audiences grow and develop to the point where local ethnic TV programming is being produced on any significant scale for local audiences.
Ethnic Radio: The Most Popular Medium

Radio turned out to be the most popular media format among ethnic media practitioners as well as its audiences. Although my research sample included journalists who were producing TV shows and/or working in print journalism, many of them were engaged in radio programming as well, and radio remained the central point of discussion in interviews as well as focus groups. The majority of the participants I spoke to confirmed that they were active listeners of South Asian radio stations operating in Metro Vancouver. Senior participants informed me that they listened to different ethnic radio stations from the early morning all the way into the evening. Sujata, an FGD participant, said: “I wake up at five in the morning and then I turn on the radio; I listen to various religious programs and then I start my sewing work alongside . . . the radio.” Middle-aged participants said that they listened to different ethnic radio stations when they were driving to and from work. Perveen, an FGD participant, shared her routine, saying, “I listen to a lot of radio but definitely when I am driving; I do enjoy radio but I don’t find time at home to listen to it.” Radio programming provided participants a convenient way to keep in touch with news, current affairs, and even entertainment (e.g., music) in their language while they were doing other work. Many of them said that listening to ethnic radio allowed them to multitask, combining their radio consumption with tasks such as driving, cooking, or chores around the house.

The majority of the ethnic radio stations in Metro Vancouver air hourly news bulletins, current affairs programs/talk shows, and music and entertainment shows, as well as live call-in shows on different topics. These radio stations also update their listeners regularly as to weather, traffic, and other relevant news such as currency
exchange rates. Participants also confirmed listening to various radio stations during the
day, which revealed their interest in and engagement with a variety of different program
formats offered by different stations. Interestingly, while audiences confirmed listening to
multiple radio stations, media practitioners did not follow the same pattern. Those who
worked for a particular radio station rarely listened to other radio stations. FM radio
stations were more popular compared with AM stations, due to the perception that FM
stations tended to have better sound quality and the fact that some playback devices such
as cellular phones have FM access but not AM. Nonetheless, the sound quality factor did
not prevent many participants from following the programming of stations broadcasting
on AM frequencies. Different formats (e.g., live, solo, guest, and/or commentary shows),
various schools of thoughts, and specific show hosts were some of the significant reasons
participants gave for regularly tuning in to their favourite stations.

Radio talk shows remained at the center of discussion for the majority of
participants, this format seeming to have a significant influence on listeners. Currently,
ethnic radio stations offer talk shows related to social, political, and current affairs. As
Satnam Singh explained,

If somebody wants to listen to songs or programs, they go online and watch it or
go to iTunes and listen to latest songs. I consider that the role of the media is to
present more community-based talk shows, which they cannot get on iTunes and
elsewhere.

Talk shows specific to politics and current affairs were aired mostly in the morning
hours, and seemed very popular among listeners. The majority of the talk shows are call-
in shows where listeners can get on the air and share their views (Nayar 2004). Sameer,
an FGD participant, expressed his opinion that radio is more engaging compared with TV
partly because of the prevalence of this type of community-based call-in show:
Because radio is live, people call during the programs, each caller adds something to the content, while TV program content is pre-recorded, edited, and planned; TV shows are controlled by anchorpersons. . . . In a radio show, anchorpersons do not have control over the comments of their audience, so that’s the difference.

Amjad added:

I think the live talk shows with phone calls from audience are very rich programs. These shows have a self-corrective mechanism; if someone is saying something wrong, some other person will call and correct them, stop them from spreading wrong information. That’s the best thing. The programs include opinions from many people and it feels like the community participates in such shows.

Mukhtar Singh, another participant, confirmed the significance of radio, especially talk shows, but criticized the quality of some of these shows:

Radio is doing better than newspapers because the shows are current and they raise issues related to community, yet I would say that there is a great dearth of trained journalists on radio. Often they do not do their research and homework for their [talk] shows. It feels that they talk very superficially about several issues just to pass two hours of their show time.

Narratives obtained from ethnic media producers suggest that radio talk shows created active competition among radio practitioners and talk show hosts as they vied for their share of popularity. Perspectives shared by listeners and practitioners about these talk shows revealed multiple interrelated facts:

1. Radio talk shows were equally popular for people with diverse backgrounds and had a considerable influence on audiences in terms of spreading information and knowledge about their areas of interest.

2. Popular talk shows received phone calls not only from other cities in Canada but also from around the globe, giving ethnic radio a transnational edge by engaging people of the same ethnicity living around the world through live online
broadcasting.\textsuperscript{55} In my personal experience, people from Canada, India, USA and even Australia called in to live shows to share their opinion about different issues. These issues were mainly connected to immigration, citizenship, and politics in these populations’ countries of origin.

3. Talk show hosts realized their role and popularity in the ethnic media community, and immediate feedback through live phone calls from audience members kept the pressure on the hosts to remain competitive and relevant for their audiences.

At the time of data collection, about five full-time radio stations were offering services for South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, some of these radio stations, although serving South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver, were licensed and regulated under the FCC and broadcasted from Washington State. Since the inception of ethnic radio programming in North America, ethnic media practitioners have developed innovative ways to circumvent regulation-related restrictions and offer radio services to their audiences. It could be said that these long-standing efforts on the part of ethnic media practitioners to overcome restrictions and develop innovative methods of broadcasting created the space for radio to emerge as the highly active medium it is today for South Asians living in Metro Vancouver.

\textbf{Making of Ethnic Media: What and How Content is Made}

Mass media, such as print and broadcast media, generally has standard prototyped beats/sections, which it follows in order to produce consistent patterns over the years. Fortunato (2005, 71-72) argues that these patterns could simplify decision-making in

\footnote{Almost all ethnic radio stations in Metro Vancouver offer online streaming of their content through their websites.}
terms of selection of stories and how they will be presented in order to “attract an
audience and, subsequently, advertisers, selection and framing are conducted in some
consistent pattern so that audiences have an idea what to expect….” For example, a radio
station could have news and current affairs, business and economics, entertainment,
and/or socio-cultural sections. Sometimes particular radio stations offer only one specific
type of content, for example music or news and current affairs (Pleszczynska 2007). In
the Metro Vancouver area, for example, Radio 1130 is dedicated to regularly updated
traffic news while TSN Radio 1040 focuses on sports news. By contrast, ethnic radio
stations (and other media formats) must often offer audiences a unique and
comprehensive blend, creating a basket carrying all the elements through a single
channel/medium (Echchaibi 2002). In other words, ethnic media has to be all-inclusive
when it comes to articulating its contents. Cunningham (2001, 139) explains the factors
involved in the making of ethnic media:

The information-entertainment distinction—usually maintained in the abundance
of available media in dominant cultures—is blurred in the diasporic setting. As
there is typically such a small diet of ethno-specific media available to these
communities, they are mined deeply for social cues (including fashion, language
use and so on), personal gossip, public information as well as singing along to the
song or following the fictional narrative.

A close observation of South Asian ethnic media sources—particularly those producing
in print and radio formats— reveals that they are offering diversified content to meet the
demands of their audiences as well as advertisers. Yet, as has been acknowledged
previously, ethnic media outlets and productions are generally small to medium-sized
enterprises with limited resources, which does not allow them to follow the standard
operation management models of some of the biggest mainstream media. For example, in
bigger and more well-established media organizations, there are dedicated teams devoted
to specialized operational tasks, and the decision-making is carried out through standard operating procedures (Fortunato 2005). In the case of mainstream news media outlets, there are generally reporters, editors, multiple newsrooms, and a hierarchal structure to decide what content is going to be included in the news agenda of the day. On the other hand, ethnic media productions are likely to operate with limited work forces and resources to generate almost the same amount of content/text—or perhaps more—for their audiences (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). Larger media organizations also imply that decisions and considerations will sift through multiple minds and hands, while in smaller or medium-sized media organizations, it is likely that decision-making will be more informal and centralized. Therefore, although ethnic media sources often offer diversified content, there remains a crucial question: how and by whom is this content decided upon? While the following chapters will elaborate the role and challenges of ethnic media as well as the expectations of its audiences, it is important to understand who is behind the making of ethnic media, and how ethnic media is shaping its content/texts. To help elucidate this information, I specifically asked the media practitioners I spoke with about how the content included in their media productions was decided.

My interviews with media practitioners revealed that the content being disseminated via radio and print media was diversified in nature, divided for example into news and current affairs, entertainment, social and cultural news and information, and religious sections. A brief overview of media content and how this content was decided upon follows below. For the sake of clarity, the content was divided into popular media content sections (i.e., news and current affairs, entertainment, religious content, and
content related to countries of origin). These sections also emerged in the thematic analysis of the data.

**News and Current Affairs**

My study informs that generally, current local issues and events were featured heavily in the news and current affairs section. Issues relevant to immigrant communities living in Canada (e.g., 9/11 and natural catastrophes in India and Pakistan) also featured prominently. Other than breaking news, media practitioners related that they reported on various issues relevant to their communities, such as settlement, drug issues, seniors’ challenges, health-related news, local politics, and social issues. News from countries of origin formed a significant part of all ethnic media content. In print media, news from countries of origin took a larger share of the overall news coverage, as compared to radio and TV; nonetheless, radio and TV also utilized content about and/or produced in immigrants’ countries of origin, such as music, news items, and video clips.

In terms of how content was decided, Anterpreet revealed that her channel had a more systematic and bureaucratic style of deciding upon content compared with other ethnic media. She confirmed that her team, which operated according to a hierarchal decision-making structure, decided news items and reporting style. She said:

*The assignment desk assigns the reporting duties of each reporter. In a meeting, we also suggest that we should cover certain issues related to community and the management encourages us. We discuss in detail who could be the appropriate guest for correct information on the issue so we do proper discussion about it.*

As mentioned earlier, Anterpreet’s multicultural channel was owned by a mainstream media group with more resources than other ethnic media outlets. Conversely, three other media practitioners confirmed that they had limited reporting and editing staff and a couple of people working for the paper did most of the decision-making and legwork.
Sandeep Singh described the role of such practitioners as “Peon cum GM,”56 meaning that they had to wear multiple hats to ensure timely preparation and distribution of their media products; this could sometimes present challenges, as one or two people struggled to develop sufficient content in time to meet deadlines for publication and circulation.

In some cases, print media practitioners explained that their contacts in community and government circles allowed them access to relevant information helpful for content development. For example, Elvis Lal shared how content was decided upon for his English-language journal:

It’s everything, I decide what I have to decide, I have my own ideas then people call me up you know like in journalism you have your intelligence network, where people call you up or you phone them to ask what’s going on, what’s new. Then other people also give you information that this guy writes like this so they give me stories. Even though we do other’s stories but I have my own angle like the other ethnic papers copy from the mainstream papers. I try to find my own stuff, interview people within my time limit.

I asked Lal how he keeps his content up to date and relevant for South Asian Communities. He responded:

It’s very complex, like I read, people tell me, I keep my lines open but I don’t always take it because I don’t want to be influenced by other people because when you get too friendly with someone then they try to influence you. But as I told you, due to my years of experience, they contact me if there is an issue.

When I went to interview Lal, the owner of Lal’s news journal also met me at the office. In an informal conversation with him, he informed me that he did not interfere in Lal’s work because he trusted Lal as a professionally trained, well-respected journalist in Metro Vancouver’s media landscape. Lal’s stories were generally very well received by audiences in both community and governmental circles. The conversation with the owner confirmed that Lal was mainly responsible for reporting, managing, and editing the paper.

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56 Peon refers to a person doing petty and unskilled labour at a workplace while GM refers to General Manager, normally a skilled and high-ranked position in any organization.
with few support staff. Zameer Ahmad also said that he was the only one deciding most of the content for his newspaper. Ahmad did not have a journalistic background in the past, and confirmed receiving training on the job from the previous owner of his publication. At the time of the interview, Ahmad, with help from his family, was the sole decision-maker at his paper. Nadeem Khan, who also decides independently the content for publication in his newspaper, explained:

I regularly read news and articles on the Internet, and whatever I feel would be beneficial for our community, I choose that item for our paper. I also assess the articles sent by . . . local writers and then select the best-written articles. I choose items based on their significance, whether local or from back home, whatever is more significant, we publish that.

Ethnic print media organizations, specifically those publishing in ethnic/minority languages, often rely on volunteer contributions from community members. Ahmad and Nadeem Khan both confirmed their dependency on their volunteer contributors for content. This way of doing things, when it works, can be beneficial for community contributors as well as newspapers: in a round table discussion at the workshop, a regular contributor to ethnic media said that writing content on a volunteer basis had helped her discover her writing ability to the extent that she had been enabled to write and publish a couple of books in Urdu in Canada. However, when contributions and feedback do not come in from audiences, newspapers begin to run into problems. Ahmad related encountering difficulties in getting feedback from his audience (in the form of letters to the editor, submission of articles, or sharing of news items):

People’s cooperation is . . . an issue. We want feedback from [our] audience; we want them to write on different issues. I am sorry to say, their interest [and feedback] is . . . zero. Hardly 1% will get back to us. Radio stations do not face this problem but newspapers have this as a major challenge.
Ahmad also complained about a lack of “supportive involvement” on the part of the local municipal government with his newspaper, saying that despite the fact that different governmental departments subscribed to his paper, he was never given any share in the city’s advertisements except for “a small amount of ad [space], about $50 or $60 . . . on August 14th.”

Participants working in radio confirmed greater access and penetration into governmental as well as community circles through engaging their representatives for live/talk shows, which facilitated the tailoring of their content to the preferences of their audiences. Along with feedback from callers (Moylan 2009), radio practitioners also used their observation and judgement to select topics for discussion for their radio shows. Preetam Kaur deemed the careful selection of her radio content to be a social responsibility:

When you are doing a music program, you talk and then the focus is music, but when you are doing a news or talk show, it is a bigger responsibility. For a talk show, how do you choose a topic, what is the level of involvement of the listeners, all this you come to know through their feedback, and it feels that our role is being responsible.

In terms of what news would be relayed to communities, fresh and time-sensitive items took priority. As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, news about South Asian communities living in Canada was also a top priority across ethnic media of all types and formats. In addition to current affairs talk shows, radio stations (and Omni TV channel) aired news bulletins in Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu focusing on mainstream as well as South Asian-related news items, while newspapers included news stories, articles, columns, and editorials on local issues affecting South Asian communities. Almost all media

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57 August 14th is Pakistan Independence Day and is widely celebrated among Pakistani-Canadians living in Canada.
practitioners mentioned their roots in and connections to community, explaining that a close and ongoing relationship with their communities was necessary to maintain what they identified as their own vital role in those communities. For example, Jabarjang Singh—a renowned media manager, journalist and radio/TV show host for South Asians—said:

I have been running a hotline/open line talk show/program for the last 10/11 years, where people from different countries such as India, Pakistan, and South Asians, Fiji call and tell me about them. I have a few dedicated programs for immigrants as well, other than that I live among them, I talk to them, and I interview them. In this regard, we promote and inform about new programs for immigrants. I speak to government representatives, ministers at the provincial as well as federal level; from there too I come to know about various things.58

Jabarjang Singh’s show was popular for political and social issues, while Preetam Kaur’s call-in show was purely dedicated to everyday social topics. She explained her strategy for selecting topics, which would be meaningful for her audiences:

I have segments, like I definitely want to talk about health, that is very important; then I talk about social issues, they could be any types of social issues. Then I do deliberate program planning for women’s issues that is related to social issues too. Although I do programs about women . . . I try to focus on family rather than women in isolation. So in family, I include kids too, we talk about schools too. So health, kids, women, family, and social issues are my main areas of focus. I rarely pick up current issues unless they revolve around these issues. I don’t pick up political issues, again, until they are related to these issues.

Currently, most of the time slots allocated to Urdu radio shows (for Pakistani-Canadians) are devoted to shows based on music and entertainment news only. For example, Radio RedFM has a late night show that runs between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m., Monday to Friday,

specifically targeting Pakistani-Canadian community. Media Waves Radio\(^{59}\) also hosts a similar show for Pakistani-Canadian audiences. Because these shows do not take live callers, they are not able to connect as directly with their audiences. Farhan Mehmood, who was working for an ethnic radio station as a reporter and anchorperson, explained his strategy for involving audiences given these limitations:

> I cannot talk about politics on my show, I cannot talk about religion on my show because that’s not the requirement of the show, it’s a musical show. . . . I also had to do news segment during these hours, which would include selecting news items . . . [and] presenting that news. All this news has to be Pakistan-related news; it can’t be local news, because local news is being handled by a news department here. In twenty-four hours of air time, Pakistan gets one hour, which is music and you can add news related to Pakistan; you can add some international news too but I would choose international news which was related to Pakistan in some way.

Nevertheless, Mehmood mentioned that whenever he discussed community-related issues on his show, he received several off the air phone calls from Pakistani-Canadians. This made him realize that the Pakistani-Canadian community “doesn’t get a platform where they can discuss their inner [feelings].” Bangladeshi-Canadian participants also pointed out that they lacked a media platform to raise and discuss issues related to their community.

To summarize, in spite of various limitations or challenges faced by ethnic media producers in developing content related to news and current affairs, community and/or audiences remained the biggest source of information for ethnic media of all formats, and the demands of the community were taken into consideration by producers making decisions regarding the content and agenda for their ethnic media.

\(^{59}\) At the time of data collection, Media Waves was using AM 1600 frequency, operating under an FCC licence. This frequency was previously used by Radio India; they had to close down their on-ground transmission after losing their case with the CRTC in Metro Vancouver.
Entertainment Media

Mike Cormack (2007) argues that if minority media wish to create an impact on their audiences through news and current affairs, they have to first attract and engage audiences by offering entertainment content. According to him, “If minority language media are not entertaining enough to attract a large audience, then no other impacts are possible” (Cormack 2007, 60). South Asian countries have long been producing multicultural and multilingual entertainment media in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other countries of the region. In fact, India is known for its more than one hundred year old film industry—the second largest in the world (Ganti 2013)—an industry which plays a central role in providing entertainment not only for South Asia but also for South Asian diasporic communities around the globe. Similarly, Pakistani drama has always been and remains very popular among large audiences across South Asian regions where Urdu/Hindi is understood (Thomas 2005).

Both Indian and Pakistani media share some common cultural norms also shared and practiced throughout the South Asian region. Both countries produce most of their media in Hindi/Urdu; the two languages share a huge amount of common vocabulary, and both are commonly understood languages in the region. Punjabi is another commonly understood language among South Asians, making Punjabi media comprehensible to large audiences on both sides of the border between India and Pakistan. Many scholars confirm usage of the media of counties of origin by immigrant communities living in diasporas, for both news and entertainment purposes (Hirji 2010; Menon 2009; Lay and Thomas 2012; Sherry and Catherine 2007; Shi 2009, ). Media practitioners, especially those who played pioneering roles in the creation of media for South Asian communities
in BC during the 1980s, confirmed that they initially provided entertainment content, keeping in view the needs of immigrant communities. Arun Verma recalled,

> When I came in 1978, things were not very certain for the South Asian community; it was a very struggling community. There was not much, as far as . . . entertainment was concerned, for the South Asian community to look forward to. There was a little bit of programming on the radio and on television which was very primitive. . . . The reasoning for my coming to the media was to provide entertainment because I thought that was something that the community was lacking and in those days, it was not provided.

The narratives of media practitioners as well as audiences commonly confirmed the need for production and consumption of entertainment media through ethnic channels. Whereas ethnic media’s news and current affairs sections were focused on a combination of local news and news from countries of origin, the vast majority of entertainment content such as music came from countries of origin. The local ethnic entertainment media industry is still in its infancy, but media practitioners mentioned working to create fusion-based entertainment media products by involving local youth. Anterpreet confirmed receiving entertainment content from India as well involving local youth, saying:

> Our news has Bollywood content that we get from India. Then our entertainment journalists connect with Bollywood artists so they cover arts and entertainment . . . locally as well adding youth from here. It has more impact . . . if there is a song of Jazzy B, it would be more popular in India but youth listen to him here too so it has an impact on both societies.

In the absence of locally produced news and current affairs media for the Bangladeshi-Canadian population, Amin Rahman decided to produce entertainment content rooted in the everyday realities of Bangladeshi immigrants in Metro Vancouver, by creating feature and documentary films as well as theater shows tackling issues relevant to his community. He informed me that his locally produced films engaged local artists who

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60 Jazzy B is a popular Punjabi singer.
mostly worked as volunteers for his first feature film; he did not have enough funds to pay his team members. He said:

The movie represents life over here. Actually, they [immigrants] established the culture that they are coming from and now they are staying here, and trying to maintain that culture and cannot cope [with the tension between two cultures] at the end, because we came here at a certain age . . . [and it’s hard to change]. This is what is shown in the movie and after we come here we cannot give up the culture that is built-in inside, and that is sometimes good for us and sometimes difficult for us.

In summation, unlike in the case of news and current affairs, most of the entertainment media content of local ethnic media was reproduced from South Asian entertainment industries. At the time of data collection, local entertainment media was still struggling to establish its brand identity by introducing local artists and content.

Religious Content

Religion remains a central institution of most South Asian communities living in diasporas (Tran, Kaddatz, and Allard 2005). Almost all media practitioners mentioned religious content and its central position in their media products. For example, at the time of data collection, all radio stations were airing live Gurbani (Sikh prayers) from the Gurduwaras in the early morning. Senior Sikh participants confirmed that they listened to religious content, which was aired by most of the ethnic radio stations in the early morning. A senior participant confirmed that she was an active listener of religious content on ethnic radio, saying:

My radio was on for twenty-four hours in India and here too, my radio is on all day until they go off the air. My morning alarm is set to [ethnic] radio’s morning Gurbani program; after that I listen to all religious scholars hour after hour.

Leela divided her radio station’s programming into three components: entertainment, news and information, and religious content. She mentioned several times that she
believed in secularism, and the content she selected was designed to give equal representation to all dominant religions of South Asian communities.

We added daily religious programming directly broadcasted from the Gurduwaras for people who wake up early in the morning and prefer to listen to holy scripts. We also had programs for the Hindu community everyday; for Muslims, during the month of Ramadan, we would air Adhaan [i.e., the call for prayer] while for the Christian community, we would do a program . . . every Sunday. So the radio station had all these components involving all the community members.

Sandeep Singh claimed that religious content was used for moral training, to create social change by changing attitudes and behaviours. He was producing a show for a multicultural TV channel, which would include a special segment on religion. Like Leela’s, his content aimed to include all dominant religious groups in South Asian communities. His goal was to generate discussion related to significant topics affecting South Asian communities by contextualizing them according to religious teachings. He explained:

For example, if there is a case involving domestic violence, then I bring in a preacher and s/he discusses . . . the scriptures [that relate to that topic]. We bring it to a point [where we explain how to take the] information that our scriptures are telling us and incorporate that into our daily life; so we incorporate . . . spirituality with our daily life.

Radio and TV were not the only media formats where religious content was given importance. Print media and filmmaking also incorporated themes emerging from religious practices among South Asian communities. For instance, one of Amin Rahman’s documentary films took up religion as a central theme. The film’s crew, from writer to director to actors, were all Bangladeshi-Canadians, and Rahman considered creating social change as a major goal for his film. He said:

All the wrong things that we are doing in the name of Islam are well referred to in the movie. The movie questions where are these things . . . written in the Quran, in the Hadith, or in Islamic books? Why no and why yes to different
misinformation, for example if someone utters “divorce” three times, the divorce never happens; but there’s a misconception that this happens. The writer [of the film] gave documentary evidence of each and every thing. The movie is made in detail and it will change the thinking process of the viewer.

The data collected for this study show that religious content was included in almost all forms of ethnic media, promoted and presented as part of the social life of communities. Thus religion is shown to be a defining and inclusive component of ethnic media content—particularly as compared to mainstream media, where many of the world’s religions are either unrepresented/absent or else “misrepresented by public figures and [mainstream] media representatives, most of whom will have at least a passing familiarity with Christianity, but likely none with the minority religions” (Bramadat and Seljak 2009, 5). There are however, issues and challenges associated with presenting religious content in ethnic media, and these will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

**Countries of Origin versus Local News and Information: Changing Trends in Ethnic Media**

The literature suggests that one of the central functions of ethnic media is to connect its audience, mostly people living in diasporas, with their countries of origin through sharing information and current affairs from these countries (Alia and Bull 2005; Echchaibi 2002; Hirji 2010; Husband 2005; Jeffres 2000; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011; Lay and Thomas 2012; Ritva 2007; Shi 2009). Ethnic media creates a bridge between immigrants and the everyday life of the people back in their countries of origin, erasing time and distance limitations (Viswanath and Arora 2000). With the technological advancement of satellite media, hundreds and thousands of broadcast and online print media products from many countries are now accessible to people living all around the world (Moylan 2009; Sakr 2008). In Canada, for example, South Asian communities can
access TV channels from India and Pakistan through various sources (Thomas 2005), including cable providers, special devices, and live streaming. South Asian communities can also access all leading newspapers from their countries of origin online. In general, participants in this study emphasized the significant role ethnic media played in connecting them with news and information from their countries of origin. Mukhtar presented reasons for remaining connected with one’s country of origin:

There is a psychological side to it as well. People who come here as immigrants, their bodies are living here but their souls still reside in their country of origin. Whenever they refer to “my country,” they mean either Pakistan or India; they don’t mean Canada. The reason is that we did not break the ties with our countries of origin when we came here. Some people have their families there; some have their land and properties there so the happenings in their countries of origins do affect them and their financial standing here. That is why they are interested in currency conversion rates. Some people bring their investments to Canada from their countries of origin and some invest in their country to strike a [financial] balance in their life. That is why their interest [in their countries of origins] never vanishes.

Overall, participants agreed that first generation immigrants and/or senior immigrants had more interest in news from their countries of origin, while youth, especially those who were born and/or raised in Canada, were not as interested in the news from their parents’ countries of origin. Mukhtar Singh, a participant shared that, in his experience, the great majority of listeners who tuned into radio shows that focused on news related to countries of origin were seniors:

I have worked with all media here and realized . . . you will receive many callers to comment on the issues of Punjab because the majority of your listeners are seniors, living retired life.

A main reason for immigrants’ consumption of news from their countries of origin seemed to be that it made them feel connected to and part of the socio-political happenings of somewhere with which they could associate themselves. Some also felt their countries of origin were in the limelight internationally and felt compelled to follow
developments, since they felt themselves to be implicated. Fozia, an FGD participant said, “I watch Pakistani news because unfortunately,\(^6\) we [i.e., Pakistanis] have become very important in the world and there is always something going on in the news which is relevant to us.” Nonetheless, some participants criticized the poor quality and excessive sensationalism of the media from their countries of origin, saying this sometimes put them off. Irrespective of the need for, quality of, and benefits associated with news about countries of origins, both media practitioners and audiences criticized ethnic media for providing more than enough news related to countries of origin. The following is an overview of the shifting trend in the focus of ethnic media, from an overemphasis on news from countries of origin to a more balanced presentation of current affairs that includes local news as well; a more detailed discussion about the balance between local news versus news from countries of origin can be found in Chapter 7.

Amita Handa (2003), challenging the understanding and making of culture, undertakes an examination of the definition of “culture” as a constant and unchangeable cluster of fixed ideas and practices. She maintains that the culture “back home” in countries of origin has significantly changed due to socio-economic shifts, but perhaps for some people living in diasporas, their cultural memories have frozen at their exit point from their countries of origin (Handa 2003, 130). Some media practitioners blamed their colleagues in ethnic media for focusing too much on news related to the politics of immigrants’ countries of origin almost to the exclusion of local news. They argued that, for their colleagues, culture remained a rigid and static concept that did not change over time. They suggested that their colleagues were not socially integrated into mainstream

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\(^6\) Pakistan has been in the international media mostly for terrorism related news due to its geostrategic location neighbouring China, India, Iran, and Afghanistan as well as its alliance with the American led war against terrorism.
society and therefore reproduced news from their countries of origin to an excessive extent. Nevertheless, there was an agreement among participants that news from immigrants’ countries of origin filled the gap for first generation and/or senior immigrants facing social isolation from mainstream society (Koehn, Habib, and Bukhari 2013a) by creating a transnational connectivity for them.

My study revealed that the political situation in India in the 1980s established a trend in news and information agenda-setting for ethnic media, which focused largely on news and politics from the Indian Punjab region. With the passage of time, however, the social demographics of South Asian immigrants changed, and the number of second and third generation immigrants who were equally interested in local news and information increased (Nayar 2004). Sunny, an FGD participant who was attending college in BC, explained that his career prospects were here in Canada and therefore he was more interested in local news than news from countries of origin:

I watch mainstream media because I have to stay in Canada and I have my future career here. I am studying here so I have to know what changes in policies and laws are proposed and how they are going to affect the job market because I have to get a job in Canada. For news about back home, I just want to know what’s going on. I have my parents, my family there so it affects me. But at the end of the day I don’t know if I want news about Surrey, Abbotsford or Delhi, because you are right that our souls are there [in our countries of origin].

Some media practitioners, realizing the changing needs of South Asian communities, took bold steps and introduced different formats, including shows mainly focused on local news. Sandeep Singh indicated that initiating locally produced content focusing on local news and events was a bold decision and he had to face challenges in successfully changing the taste of his audiences:

Unfortunately 90% of the programs here on the radio are focused on [the issues of Indian] Punjab which has no relevance to the people living over here, except for
spending two hours and just talking [aimlessly]. When I started my program 
[focusing on local news], I had to do three or four hours of preparation because
you needed to prepare for a program yet the number of calls I used to get were
two or three or maximum four because people were not aligning to that kind of
programming. My friends used to advise me to focus on issues of Punjab so
people would listen. . . . The majority of our people here are from villages, and
radio here has not brought up these kinds of program focused on local issues . . .
so that was a major challenge for me initially.

Media representatives as well as FGD participants expressed their expectation that ethnic
media sources create a balance between local content and content related to countries of
origin. In particular, South Asian ethnic media audiences demanded local news which
would reflect and affect their lived realities as immigrant communities. Kabir a
Bangladeshi-Canadian participant expressed a wish for local print media to connect
community members with different resources available for new and skilled immigrants:

Ethnic print media should provide more objective news and information for
newcomers, to get them connected, build their access to resources, so they can get
acquainted with the people [of the community]. Media should provide
information about settlement and integration, information that newcomers require.
When I came to Canada, I started working and am continuously working, it’s like
I am blind, I don’t know anything else. It’s like I am going to work, coming back
from work, again going to work and coming back, it’s not a life at all. I am getting
money, that’s all right, but still a man’s psychology, and his . . . [family’s as well]
is . . . damaged by this kind of routine. They don’t have any information about
available resources so my opinion is that whatever the paper is, they need to
incorporate the information so new people get connected.

The metaphor of being “blind” effectively describes a situation wherein people are
socially isolated or challenged, lacking access to the information and resources that exist
all around them. To extend the metaphor, in the above narrative, ethnic media is being
asked to provide sight to immigrants, to help them identify the layout of their host
society. Sandeep Singh confirmed that, despite various initial challenges, his team was
successful in engaging audiences in new, locally focused programming within a very
short period of time, which indicated to him that there was indeed an increasing need for local news and information:

We were able to establish within 6 months; people started talking about us because my focus was to educate, inform, and inspire, and empower the community, and that’s why I started bringing [forward] those issues which matter. I am not interested in what’s happening in Punjab and India except for if something major happens. I focus instead on the issues that affect us, like domestic violence, alcoholic behaviors, mental health, or social issues. Entertainment is .001% of the show. If there are some songs in the show, these are sung by local artists. For example in [light of] the recent ... rape cases in India, some people worked here on [songs related to the] empowerment of women so we picked up those kinds of songs. The aim is to empower the community. So I always pick locally produced stuff, we play nothing from DVDs. We have a one-hour program daily with repeat telecast.

Jabarjang Singh, an experienced ethnic journalist, also confirmed that the former trend of prioritizing news from countries of origin in ethnic media was shifting:

I feel from the last 10 years that initially we only used to have discussion about internal and political set ups of India and Pakistan but now the direction of discussion has changed. We now talk about the future and current issues of BC, we talk about political upheavals, educational systems, good or bad universities, social [systems], employment issues like why Pakistani and Indian men in the RCMP are not given promotions; all these issues are very current now. We hardly talk about India or Pakistan’s internal [issues] unless there is a big event; we mostly talk about BC and Canadian issues.62

Leela elaborated on the changing media needs of South Asian communities:

Twenty-five Indian [satellite] channels are available here; Pakistani [satellite] channels are also available ... but we still have local issues ... that’s why people tune in to our channel, to know about their surroundings, their weather, their traffic news, etc.

Many media practitioners in my study reported aiming to increase local content a great deal, even prioritizing it over news and information from immigrants’ countries of origin.

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Preetam Kaur shared an example of a caller on her live show who made a resolution to change his media habits, switching to local news as compared to news from India:

A caller on my show shared his views that . . . local radio should share local news and discussions. . . . Other SA radio stations talk a lot about issues and news in India and very little about local issues, and he had become addicted to this [coverage about India]. He . . . said that he made a resolution for this year that he has to cut down on consumption of news from India and add more local news, because he lived here and local issues were connected to his daily life. So we . . . want to focus on local news for our listeners.

Many participants demanded local and quality news as compared to news from their country of origin, reflecting their communities’ changing needs. To summarize, the changing ethnic media content needs of South Asian communities—including an increased demand for local news and information content—reflect the fact that South Asian demographics are changing. The changing needs of these communities create pressure for ethnic media to provide local, high quality, and accurate content to meet the demands of their audiences. The changing needs of South Asian communities also reflect their desire for social inclusion, and the failure of mainstream media and other institutions in incorporating ethnic minorities into the core of society, as some South Asians still remain on the margins according to their socio-economic class. The responsibility of ethnic media to serve as a voice for ethnic minorities and improve their access to resources is therefore increased, and will likely continue to increase in coming years. A detailed discussion of the role of ethnic media in creating civic awareness and inclusion among audiences will follow in the next chapter.
Passion or Profession: Empowerment, Recognition, and Satisfaction

In spite of challenges associated with working in South Asian ethnic media (more of which will be discussed in Chapter 7), numerous professionals are currently pursuing careers at ethnic media organizations. As explained in Chapter 4, this study revealed that professionally trained journalists with previous work experience in their countries of origin had a hard time finding appropriate jobs or suitable working environments at mainstream media outlets (Ojo 2006); according to participants, shifting to work in ethnic media afforded them increased space, opportunity, and respect. Yet ethnic media is not a well-paid industry (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011), and its potential for future growth is uncertain. The question then arises, why do media practitioners in Canada choose ethnic media for their full- or part-time profession? The majority of media practitioners I spoke with reported that in return for their often-underpaid work, they received empowerment, recognition, and job satisfaction. Most took pride in their work and showed satisfaction on their current roles in ethnic media. The following narratives highlight some perceived positive outcomes of work in ethnic media as related by ethnic media practitioners.

The majority of the media practitioners interviewed confirmed that, due to their work, they earned recognition within and even outside of their communities. They often spoke about the importance of community service and their sense of social responsibility towards their communities (Johnston and Flamiano 2007). Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2011, 237) argue that “for ethnic media journalists, the definition of social responsibility goes beyond adhering to a sense of objectivity, and the roles they are expected and choose to perform are frequently re-negotiated, debated, and prioritized in
the newsroom.” The media practitioners interviewed as part of my study considered their hard work, honesty, passion, and community service to be the factors that led to recognition of their work. Arun Verma proudly shared:

I think over the years since I [started out] in this business, more and more people know about . . . what I do, and also because of my write ups and concert promotions they have sort of [started] calling me “Mr. Bollywood” in a nice way. [Like they think], “If there is something to know about Bollywood this guy would definitely know.” Also, the image that I have created is based on absolutely being honest and not indulging in anything wrong or illegal activities . . . So when it comes to honesty and personality, people always call me first or ask me first and that is something beyond money which I will cherish forever in my life.

The above narrative reflects the fact that ethnic journalists are concerned about their “reputation” in their communities as well as in mainstream society. South Asians, specifically Indo-Canadians, Pakistani-Canadians, and Bangladeshi-Canadians, are increasing in numbers in Metro Vancouver, yet they make up a relatively small world within larger mainstream society. As such, prominent persons from these communities are generally well known within their communities. Franklin (2008, 107) argues that earning a positive reputation for trustworthiness, powerful interpretation, and insightful analysis is an important aspect of journalists’ work, and one which gives them “privileged access to key players.” Thus, the media profession is about more than simply performing “standard” job functions; it is also about earning a reputation that allows one access to powerful segments of society and sets one up as a trustworthy purveyor of information.

Like Verma, all of the media practitioners I interviewed identified service to their community as their core objective and chief reward. Jabarjang Singh explained:

Ours is a commercial radio station. We sell air time but along with meeting expenses we are trying to create awareness in society and our community. We have been through all these [settlement and integration related] difficulties as
immigrants. The owner of this radio channel has worked in the berry farm, plucking berries and getting scolded by white owners. The educated guy never got a chance to show his skills so we want to help the educated, qualified, and skilled immigrants because not only they will prosper with the right kind of help, Canada will also develop. (Zaman and Bukhari 2013)

Some developed the goal of serving the community over time, while others said that they had this objective in mind even before getting involved in ethnic media. Satnam Singh explained:

I always wanted to do something, which nobody was doing. Everyone was in other businesses and nobody was touching the media side, and media was a field where you could help yourself and the community so that was my passion. Like you said, you could be anything, I have a [realtor’s] license . . . for so many years, but my passion has been in media, right from high school. I saw a gap that nobody wanted to serve, or maybe they didn’t have the knowledge of how to do it. Maybe it was God’s way for me to serve the community. I didn’t have knowledge of how to acquire radio stations . . . but with time, I was given an opportunity to learn and have some experience. At the end of the day, I think your faith really helps you a lot. I wanted to serve my community, I was able to do it; not many people in Canada are able to do it.

Singh’s narrative reveals a number of relevant facts: first, he identified the potential to use ethnic media as a tool to serve and connect with his community (Ojo 2006); second, despite his lack of professional, journalistic, or production experience, he educated himself to become a media entrepreneur; and third, he considered his achievements in the media to be “God’s chosen way” for him to serve his community. Like Satnam Singh, many other media practitioners who took part in this study also referred to their faith and spirituality, identifying it as a key factor in their ability to obtain success and satisfaction in their work. As a professionally trained journalist, Sandeep Singh had worked for leading mainstream media organizations in India, but was not welcomed into the mainstream media profession upon reaching Canada. Singh created a show for multicultural TV channels in Punjabi language, focusing on the needs of South Asian
communities in Canada. His show revolves around issues relevant to South Asian communities, such as health, immigration laws, settlement issues, integration challenges, and spirituality. Sandeep Singh shared his reasons for remaining motivated and committed to his profession in spite of challenges along the way:

I am not depending upon this [job only], as I told you before . . . you cannot survive on [the money you make in ethnic media]; you want to have something else. I have my realtor’s license and now of course I do my own program, though it’s not a money-minting machine. But yes, my satisfaction is my passion. You know, being in that kind of atmosphere from where we came, it’s a passion and I am just spreading it out to the community that yes, we can have something good also, if you want to. I feel that the ripples I am creating are enough for me when I receive phone calls in the morning from the elders and the blessings I get because this kind of program has never ever been seen and it’s the only program in North America where every day we talk about spirituality.

Some media practitioners I interviewed identified their work in ethnic media and service to their community as personally empowering (Franklin 2008). Anterpreet shared:

Frankly speaking, when I came to this profession it was not my choice, it was my need. But now it has become my choice and my passion. This is the only profession which gives you a lot of knowledge. I came to Canada about five or six years ago but I have much more knowledge than [other South Asian] people, who [have been] living here for the past fifty years. Every day, I meet new people, from the Prime Minister to an ordinary person. I have interviewed many politicians, Premiers, Mayors, corporate officials, and . . . ordinary people, so we learn new things.

Anterpreet spoke of her acquisition of knowledge and access to resources through her work as a “powerful” experience. Her profession provides her, and other ethnic journalists, access to powerful segments of society (e.g., politicians, government authorities, and business executives), a benefit which most other occupations and professions do not offer. Thus, serving communities through their work in ethnic media often brought prestige and an elevated social status for media practitioners who would
otherwise still be struggling to regain the kind of social status they enjoyed in their countries of origin prior to their immigration. Sandeep Singh explained:

See, we [in ethnic media] all have to earn our livelihood from this profession but there is usually a cause that we are committed to and that pushes us to improve the quality [of our work]. Prestige is another angle that is associated with this profession. . . . To earn that prestige, we even invest in our media from our own [pockets].

Like Verma’s narrative, Singh’s narrative above alludes to the important matter of reputation, and the desire to make responsible ethnic media which will earn one a good name and respect in the community. For most skilled immigrants, choosing a profession after immigration is like starting from scratch; the central quest is usually to acquire economic stability and sustainability (Lo, Shalaby, and Alshalalfah 2011; Li 2003; Zaman 2006). Singh’s narrative indicates that he also had a desire to start a career that would prove economically sustainable, yet “prestige” is mentioned as a motivating factor above and beyond livelihood. The prestige and respect associated with his work in ethnic media earned him more than financial gain (i.e., self-esteem and a positive outlook regarding the contribution he makes to his community).

Producing quality content emerged as a factor in gaining prestige and respect through a career in ethnic media. Franklin (2008, 108) correctly points out that “the journalist is [like] a pundit (from the Sanskrit term for wise man or village elder), a sage, a secular priest, licensed to tell us, from the pulpit provided by the newspaper (and in broadcast journalism, from the radio or TV studio) what things mean, and, where appropriate, what should be done about them.” Participants’ narratives demonstrated that they were conscientious about the quality of work they produced, since producing quality work was associated with increased respect from the community and pride in their
profession. In other words, South Asian media representatives’ positions of respect and prestige in South Asian communities have largely been achieved though the very passion and dedication that motivate them to continue to produce quality work in service of their communities.

**Conclusion**

This chapter aimed at mapping the current South Asian ethnic media terrain in Metro Vancouver, BC. The data revealed that ethnic media in South Asian communities is popular and is expanding exponentially. At the time of data collection, all kinds of ethnic media were being produced, including radio, TV, film, theater, and online and print journalism. Larger community groups such as Punjabi speaking Indo-Canadians were dominating the ethnic media landscape, and the majority of ethnic media productions were owned and presented by them. Although South Asian ethnic media was available in some of the major languages of South Asian countries such as Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu, minority South Asian communities did not have the desired level of representation. Radio turned out to be the most popular medium, and other than entertainment content, talk shows about local issues, politics, and immigrant-related policies and issues were most popular among participants. First generation immigrants and/or seniors constituted a large portion of ethnic audiences, yet print media particularly was more popular among seniors.

South Asian ethnic media products, irrespective of medium/format, covered all possible beats/sections for their audiences, for example: entertainment, news and current affairs (both local and relating to countries of origin), and religious content. Religious
content was a significant feature of all ethnic media (e.g., print, radio, and TV). It was also revealed that, although the majority of the media practitioners interviewed for this study were educated and had professional experience in other fields as well, they opted to learn about and practice ethnic journalism as a result of personal motivation and as a strategy to counter systemic racism. An overwhelming majority of ethnic media practitioners were satisfied with their roles and confirmed that, despite financial challenges in their current jobs and roles, they earned respect, prestige, knowledge, and empowerment through their professions, and that this mattered more than financial success.
CHAPTER 6: ROLE OF ETHNIC MEDIA IN SETTLEMENT, INTEGRATION, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS

Enter the booth
and become invisible

. . . Punjabi, Ismaili, Chinese,
Tamil, or Ethiopian
a reserve labour pool
of poor Bengalis
Somalians and Fijians
with a few
bohemian anglophiles

I know
I always know
how to be part
of this machine.
(Dulai, “The Booth”)

Introduction

Before addressing the role of ethnic media in the lived experiences of South Asian communities, it is important to outline and analyze the demographics and challenges of these communities in Canada. The demographic composition of immigrants from South Asia has changed over the years. Although the number of immigrants from India and Pakistan declined during 2003 for several reasons, including India’s booming economy and the fact that Pakistanis had to face restrictive immigration policies in the wake of
9/11 (Zaman 2006), Statistics Canada\textsuperscript{63} reported that India and Pakistan remained among the ten top source countries for exporting skilled immigrants to Canada between 2006 and 2011. The majority of South Asian immigrants come to Canada either as skilled immigrants or under the family sponsorship program. With the gradual increase in the number of South Asian immigrants settling in Canada over the years, challenges related to settlement and integration of new and old immigrants have become diverse and complex. For example, immigrants’ time of entry into Canada, the category under which they immigrated, and their gender, socio-economic profile, and time spent in Canada all led to different settlement and integration challenges, both for immigrants and for policymakers and the settlement sector (Ali et al. 2012; Baird et al. 2008; Chien 2005).

Settlement and integration are two different yet interconnected concepts. While the settlement process requires facilitation and provision of services in the initial phase soon after immigration, integration is a long-term process that includes acquiring social inclusion and equal rights in mainstream society. J. W. Berry (1986) discusses the influence of integration, assimilation, and acculturation on immigrants’ social and psychological well-being; according to him, assimilation is a method of integration generally imposed and/or demanded by mainstream society. Berry asserts that, as part of a melting pot strategy, the non-dominant group (read immigrants) is often forced to adhere to and “get in line” with mainstream/dominant cultural values and norms. Analyzing the process of integration through the lens of longitudinal studies, Berry maintains that during the initial phase of settlement, immigrants are kept busy learning the new language and searching for housing and sources of income, making this initial

phase difficult and at times frustrating; therefore the pace at which integration is 
attained—if it is attained at all—during this phase is very slow. His main thesis is that in 
order to attain fast integration into the host society, it is important that new immigrants 
have positive adaptation experiences, which help to form their perceptions about the 
new/host society.

In order to understand the role of ethnic media in creating different adaptation 
experiences and outcomes for immigrants, it is important to understand these immigrants’ 
existing social realities in their host countries. The first part of this chapter focuses on the 
overall context of settlement and integration challenges faced by South Asian immigrants 
living in Metro Vancouver. After giving a brief overview of these challenges, 
highlighting the most central/crucial issues being faced by South Asian immigrants, the 
chapter sets forth an analysis of the role of ethnic media in facilitating the settlement, 
integration, and acculturation of South Asian immigrants. Qualitative analysis of research 
data brought up some significant themes regarding the contributions of ethnic media to 
the process of immigrants’ settlement and integration. For example, ethnic media’s role 
in knowledge dissemination, community development and resource building, creating 
space for dialogue and political awareness, and influencing mainstream media’s policy 
towards South Asians are some of the significant themes discussed in the second part of 
this chapter. Ethnic media’s potential to provide an alternative communication space for 
South Asian communities is also considered. Last but not least, ethnic media’s 
contribution to cultural promotion, the preservation of ethnic languages, and re-
establishment of ethnic identities both individual and collective is analyzed towards the
end of the chapter. Overall, this chapter examines the role of ethnic media in creating a sense of integration and civic engagement among immigrants at all levels.

**South Asian Communities: Challenges and Barriers in Settlement and Integration**

*Access to Information and Employment*

Numerous studies confirm that immigrants encounter several interlinked challenges in the process of settlement after their immigration to Canada. Lack of information (Caidi and Allard 2005), equal and timely access to resources (Bolaria and Li 1988), labour market integration, and racialization (Das Gupta 2007, 2009; Zaman 2006, 2012) have been identified as some of the major issues South Asian immigrants face after their arrival in Canada. The majority of the participants in a research study (Zaman and Bukhari 2013) confirmed that they lacked “adequate” information to facilitate their settlement and integration after their arrival in Canada. They criticized mainstream institutions and systems for not providing structured and guided information to help them start their lives in Canada. Surinder Kaur said,

> When you come to Canada, at the airport they give you a smile and say welcome to Canada but no one gives you . . . [structured] information [about settlement]. They give you informational brochures, but who reads them?[^64]

Information requirements change with the passage of time, and according to the length of stay of immigrants in Canada. Mwarigha (2002) illustrates three stages of settlement for immigrants in the Canadian context. In the first stage, immigrants are looking for settlement information, preferably in their language, which they will require to start their lives.

lives in Canada; this includes information about housing, health, transportation, and necessary documentation. The second stage usually revolves around economic integration, employment-related skills, training and development options, and labour market integration. In the final stage, when residency is established and employment needs are met, immigrants strive to achieve equal participation, civic engagement, and socio-cultural, political, and economic integration into mainstream society. At all three stages, immigrants require different levels of information according to their different needs. Immigrants coming under family sponsorship programs might have family support available, but depending on their language proficiency, professional skills, age, and gender, they will also have different sets of information needs. Immigrants generally use different sources to obtain information related to their first and second stage of settlement—for example, the Internet, friends, family, and government as well as non-governmental organizations (Caidi and Allard 2005; Zaman and Bukhari 2013).

News and information related to economic integration, employment, and skills development are identified as a major need among a majority of immigrants (Kumar and Wong 2013; Lo, Shalaby, and Alshalalffah 2011; Li 2003; Simich 2000; Thomas 2012; Türegün 2013). South Asians, like other skilled immigrants in general encounter difficulties in finding appropriate jobs in their relevant field of experience, and are often asked to provide Canadian experience or credentials before they have been given a chance to enter the Canadian job market; as a result, a majority of them end up working in low-paid and labour-intensive jobs (Samuel 2009). Ali Khan explained:

You should have examples from the community. But we don’t have many positive examples; most of our community members are either working in grocery stores or driving cabs, so how will you set your goal? All of them were [in] good positions back home—bankers, directors, and managers—and are now working as
window fitters, pesticide workers, gas station workers, [so there is] no good example [to model yourself after]. So this discourages you, that if they didn’t get [a good job] how can I get it?65

To facilitate the settlement of new immigrants, settlement agencies are funded by the federal and/or provincial government, yet not all immigrants benefit from their services for several reasons, including lack of awareness about their existence, relevance/usefulness of their programs, time and travel constraints, and language barriers (Ali et al. 2012; Esses et al. 2013; Garang 2012; Omidvar 2001; Thomas 2012). Fahmida, considered the settlement polices racialized; she criticized the government for absenting themselves from the settlement process of immigrants, leaving the burden on the shoulders of immigrant individuals and communities themselves:

It is interesting how it is deemed the responsibility of the immigrants to help themselves. People who have immigrated here have taken the responsibility [to help other immigrants]. It is a very racialized and ethnicized sector, the settlement service. [Immigrants in need of settlement help] are mostly . . . people of colour . . . so it is not a part of the mainstream culture to give help to the newcomers to settle, it is on the immigrants to settle the [newer] immigrants.

Many participants criticized the government for outsourcing their responsibility regarding the economic integration of immigrants. They criticized the fact that skilled immigrants were originally recruited to fill the human resource landscape of Canada but lack of information, guidance, and opportunities led most of those immigrants into low-paid and precarious jobs.

The participants revealed that after the initial settlement phase, the information requirements of immigrants change. Immigrants begin to show increased interest in information related to social inclusion and access to mainstream resources, for example

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parenting styles, health management, upgrading of credentials, the housing market, and mainstream events and social life (Livianna 2012). Bano, an FGD participant who served as a community and family counsellor at a settlement agency, illustrated how social pressure and cultural practices of mainstream society also push immigrant parents to begin to learn about new parenting skills. She said:

> When Immigrant parents come here with their values and try to practice them here, they face lot of problems; the media highlights these examples and newcomers learn through these examples. The discussion surrounding these problems brings new solutions, like creating a model which is based on values of both cultures; parents also realize that they will have to retain a few things and learn a few new things, and by being flexible they can create a new model which is applicable for them. Old immigrants after a while, like ten to fifteen years, do change and so do their parenting [styles]. It’s not like they change 100% and become Canadian but they become more flexible, they adopt something from here and keep something from there [i.e., their country of origin] and create a new style of parenting which works very well.

The above narrative reveals that, with the passage of time, the priorities of immigrants change according to the practices and norms of the society in which they are living. Bano asserted it was necessary for immigrants to form a connection with mainstream society through reliable and appropriate sources of information in order for them to understand the dynamics and practices required for gradual and successful integration into that society.

While settlement is considered a major challenge for immigrants of all categories in Canada, participants confirmed that the majority of mainstream media sources did not provide news or information related to settlement. If there was a major shift in Canadian immigration policy, it would form a news story, but there was no regular or specific news or information content designed to guide immigrants through the settlement process. In
other words, mainstream media content in Canada seems to be presented solely by and for “settled” mainstream communities.

**Racial Discrimination**

Racial discrimination is a systemic barrier that socially, economically, and psychologically hinders the settlement of immigrants (Agnew 1996; Bolaria 2000; Bolaria and Li 1988; Das Gupta 2009). Many participants experienced overt and/or covert racial discrimination after landing in Canada, experiences which affected their lives in different ways. Numerous participants shared frustration that they had to face such discrimination in spite of anti-discrimination laws meant to protect them against such treatment. Ali Jaffery replied to a question about his experience about discrimination in Canada:

As to whether I have experienced discrimination in an expressive way, my answer would be no, but in a subtle way, I would say every day. For example, couple of times we were waiting for the bus, the bus came and they refused to let us on board. . . . One thing is for sure that no matter how long you live in Canada you can never be a first class citizen; that is my perception, that’s my belief, you will always be a second class citizen, you will never be equal to white Canadians.

While Ali Jaffery experienced discrimination in a covert or “subtle” way, some immigrants faced overt discrimination in their daily life. A participant shared her husband’s experience working in the medical profession in Canada:

My husband works in the medical field, he is respiratory aid provider; he faces this problem [of discrimination] a lot. People often refuse to be treated by him because he is brown. When he calls the patients for their appointments, they don’t pick up the phone because they see a Muslim name on the caller ID; if they do, they treat him as if he is selling them something on the phone. Yesterday he called a [white, English speaking] female patient for her appointment confirmation and she told him to go back to his home country; then he called his supervisor and refused to visit this woman.
The considerable majority of research participants asserted that they had encountered discrimination at their workplaces as well as in public places due to their ethnicity, religion, language, and/or cultural practices. Saira, who worked at a fast food chain, shared the repeated discriminatory comments she received at her workplace:

They say we smell, maybe because we eat garlic. People have their dietary habits, but if they smell like beer or coffee, we can’t tell them because we have to work, so we have to tolerate [the racist remarks].

In the case of the above narrative, the very fact that Saira blames her coworkers’ remarks on her own eating habits reflects the self-internalizing nature of this kind of racist discourse. Muslim women participants who wore the hijab experienced discrimination in a different way; in their case, discrimination was connected with their religious identities as opposed to or in addition to their racial identities. They encountered difficulties in finding jobs, and/or did not feel welcome at workplaces or other public places (Persad and Lukas 2002). Securing even a white-collar job in a professional organization did not ensure that immigrants would not face racialization at work. Bano said:

I used to think that it’s Canada and women wouldn’t face problems with [wearing the] hijab. But one of my clients who is highly qualified from a Canadian university was refused a job [after] at least . . . fifteen interviews. Finally, someone advised her to remove her hijab before the interview and that time she got the job. It could be a coincidence or maybe it was discrimination, but with the hijab she couldn’t find any job.

Fozia, another participant, whose daughters went to a local public university and wore the hijab, said:

I don’t work so I never came across this situation but my daughters are university students and they face the same problem. One was lucky that she found a job, but she was apprehensive before getting the job that due to her hijab, she would not get the job. I told her to go for the interview without the hijab and once she gets the job, she could put it back on. She strongly rejected my idea, saying that she wouldn’t want to do a job on this condition. Because these kids are raised here . . .
we don’t force them to wear the hijab; this is their own choice so it’s their decision.

Muslim women who were able to get jobs even with the hijab also felt social isolation at their workplaces due to their religious identities. Bade shared,

It is the religion [that is used as a basis to deal with immigrants]. For example, I cover my head at my workplace and different people comment sometimes—good or bad. There are good and bad people in all societies. I think this religion is new for them. Just imagine where I am working, there are thousands of employees, and I only know or am friends with two people, that is, one lady from Fiji and a boy from Pakistan.

Social inclusion in public spaces, such as the workplace, is one of the core requirements for achieving faster settlement for immigrants. Bade’s narrative reveals the challenges faced by some Muslim women immigrants who, because of social isolation connected to their religious or racial identity, do not feel part of the organization where they work.

Overall, the culture of discrimination described above created negative experiences among participants, which in turn affected their perceptions about mainstream society. In light of the narratives shared by participants, it could be argued that experiences of discrimination not only created negative sentiments among South Asian immigrants, but also left them feeling like helpless victims lacking a platform to raise their voices against subtle or overt discrimination. As mentioned in Chapter 4, some mainstream Canadian media tends either to be silent on issues of racial discrimination against immigrants, or else to align itself ideologically with the very entities and narratives imposing racialization and discrimination on immigrant groups in Canada.
Ethnic Enclaves of South Asian Communities

Canada has different ethnic groups residing in smaller to larger cities, but the composition of Metro Vancouver is unique in terms of ethnic demographics. Todd (2014) reports in an online community blog,

Forty-three per cent of Metro Vancouver residents have an Asian heritage. The only major cities outside Asia that come close to Metro Vancouver for their portion of residents with Asian backgrounds are San Francisco (33 per cent Asian), London, England (21 per cent), Metro Toronto (35 per cent), Calgary (23 per cent) and Sydney, Australia (19 per cent).

Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell (2010) argue that present day ethnic enclaves are different from twentieth century “ghettos” in terms of the connotations attached to them. The term “ghettos” typically refers to poverty-stricken areas, segregated on the basis of race, colour, or other discriminatory markers. In light of skills-based immigration policies and improved purchasing power on the part of immigrants, immigrants now have more choices as to which geographical areas they prefer to settle in—and those choices can be based on various factors. Findings of a research study revealed that most new immigrants initially rely on their family or friends for information (Zaman and Bukhari 2013); this might include medical/health related information (Galdas et al. 2012; Koehn 2009), housing information, and/or employment-related advice (Rahim 2014). Ethnic communities are dependent on each other for support and social networks (Tran, Kaddatz, and Allard 2005, 22), thus it makes sense for South Asian immigrants to develop social and business networks in the same geographical area where their friends and family reside. As of today, South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver have developed cultural, business, and industrial paraphernalia (e.g., Gurdwara and Mosques, restaurants, retail outlets, religious schools, and ethnic media outlets), often in
convenient geographical proximity to one another. As mentioned previously, the majority of South Asian ethnic media organizations in the Lower Mainland are in the municipality of Surrey, although their products are accessible to audiences living across Metro Vancouver.

The ethnic concentration of South Asians in specific locations of Metro Vancouver affects these communities in different ways. By living in large groups and developing ethnic enclaves, South Asians become a critical mass demographically. As they develop economically and create a local market of their own, these communities begin to amass economic power. Scholars (Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell 2010; Thomas 2012; Truelove 2000) confirm that ethnic enclaves provide socio-economic ease and comfort to new immigrants who might otherwise face exacerbated levels of poverty in the initial years of their settlement in Canada. Yet there is a perception among some South Asian immigrants that the physical distance between them and mainstream society affects their everyday lived experiences, and not always in positive ways. Participants of this study had mixed opinions about South Asians’ concentration in selected municipalities, with some of them challenging immigrants’ decision to live in concentrated ethnic enclaves. Amin Rahman explained the reason for his criticism of the practice:

Well, one thing that I understand is that people in our communities who come here, they love to stay within their own community. They do not go much to the mainstream community unless it is unavoidable. They go for... work only, other than that staying inside their shells or capsule, where only their own community people are around and they love to stay that way. They don’t like mixing up like interracial relations or interracial marriages, which are not too much accepted by the people maybe because of the religious sentiment or maybe because of the community sentiment. ... This is fortunate sometimes but unfortunate sometimes. ... People are not going to the mainstream too much.
Amin Rahman’s desire for the South Asian communities to “mix up” and make a connection with mainstream society reflects a hidden desire for greater integration into that mainstream society (the problematic issues associated with the expansion of South Asian communities in concentrated areas will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the fact that he is blaming South Asian immigrants for not assimilating better into mainstream society might be the result of influence from stereotypes and myths about immigrants living in Canada (Rahim 2014). As mentioned in Chapter 4 during a discussion of the effects of stereotyping, Siapera (2010, 114-15) argues that “constant confrontation with negative stereotypes” may lead to “an endorsement of the negative stereotype to the extent that one despises one’s own group.” Indeed, it has been observed that South Asians tend eventually to “move away from (or avoid) poor neighbourhoods where their own group has a strong presence when their economic resources improve” (Hou 2006, 1206).

Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell (2010, 318) explain the complex “push and pull” factors that contribute to various ethnic groups choosing to live in ethnic enclaves, saying that “push factors (housing opportunities, discrimination, etc.) and pull factors (shared identity, desire to live near friends, access to ethnic services)” become instrumental in the decision-making process for immigrants. Clearly, these “push and pull” factors reflect a search for comfort and community on the part of immigrants—things they often do not find when living in more mainstream neighbourhoods. Preetam Kaur further elaborated the reasons for this spatial segregation:

I think they [i.e., the mainstream white population] look at South Asian communities as foreigners, aliens, they don’t own [recognize] them as citizens here; they don’t own them. When I look around Surrey, I feel that most of the people now living in Surrey are our own communities, same with the businesses,

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the mainstream communities are moving away from here; it’s a sign that they
don’t want to interact with us. You look around at businesses in Surrey, there is
no mainstream left, it’s all our people and they keep supporting each other.
Similarly, if four or five Sikh families start living on a street and there is one
mainstream [white] family living in the middle of them, [the white family] would
sell off their property and move away. To some extent, [they don’t like us].

As Kaur’s narrative reflects, due to racist segments of the mainstream society’s everyday
“othering” policies targeted towards ethnic communities (Ahmed 2000), immigrants are
forced to remain within ascribed boundaries inside the larger society. Strategies of
avoidance and moving away like those described by Kaur dominate the politics of
difference between mainstream and ethnic communities, further cementing boundaries
between these communities. Citing Audre Lorde, Sara Ahmed (2000) analyzes skin,
colour, and the concept of the stranger as a symbol or interchangeable variable that
produces hate based on difference. Ahmed (2000) writes that historical accounts—mostly
produced by “privileged subjects” (read: white subjects)—have exaggerated the
presentation and character of “strange bodies” (in this context, read: immigrant bodies,
especially bodies of colour). Her antiracist theory illustrates the historical errors and
prejudices surrounding “strange bodies” that tend to be portrayed and understood as
threatening, incomplete, dirty, and agents of contamination; these traits of the potential
contaminators of the place/space negate their potential to become subjects at all, let alone
theorizing of otherness and also draws attention to the contributions of ethnic
communities in Canada, which are often ignored by mainstream society:

Let’s face it: we are still called outsiders even though [our] people have been
living here for more than one hundred years. But somebody has to tell [these
people] . . . “You also were outsiders. You came a bit earlier than us and now that
we have come, with our hard work, our labour and with our intelligence, we have
reached a [certain] position.” Why not [say nice things] and point fingers
[positively], “Wow, this guy really has done something”? . . . If that awareness [of the contributions of immigrants] is created, I think that would be . . . beneficial.

Studies (Lewis-Coles and Constantine 2006; Samuel 2009; Steve 2002) confirm that acculturation pressure and socio-cultural differences lead to social isolation for many immigrants, and can create anxiety, stress, and long-term depression that affect the everyday life of racialized people. Zameer Ahmad also explained how systemic racism works to isolate immigrants from mainstream society:

There is a problem with our community that people don’t want to go out of their families; they don’t take active part in . . . social and public events. There is a reason for that too. People in our community who came to Canada during the last ten or twenty years are mostly educated and skilled. Being an architect, I am not working in my field here. Similarly, a doctor is not doing a job in medicine, and instead skilled immigrants are doing menial jobs, graveyard shifts to fight for their survival. The bottom line is, the skilled-immigrant community lives in stress and tension because they don’t get work in their fields; rather, they are either serving as security guards or driving cabs and that’s why all their energy is consumed . . .

In the face of multiple challenges created by lack of resources and systemic racism, family and/or friends provide support to ease the challenges of settlement and long-term integration for many immigrants (Zaman and Bukhari 2013). Living in close proximity brings immigrants together; they form vibrant, modern, well-developed ethnic enclaves, with thriving housing and business infrastructures. By the same token, ethnic media is also emerging as a strong and unavoidable social institution for South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver. In this context, it becomes significant to analyze the role of ethnic media—including its offerings and strengths—as a public communication space for South Asian communities.
Role of Ethnic Media in Settlement and Integration

*Ethnic Media: Empowering through Creating Knowledge*

Ethnic media practitioners and audiences agreed that ethnic media sources were disseminating knowledge about issues affecting immigrants’ lives in Canada (Ahadi and Yu 2010; Karim 2003; Matsaganis and Katz 2014). Media practitioners claimed that irrespective of the type of media (i.e., radio, TV, film, or print media), settlement and integration-related news, information, and content remained at the top of the agenda for ethnic media; indeed, the importance of creating and disseminating information about immigrants’ new environment emerged as the most significant theme in the narratives of media practitioners. This study revealed that the focus of ethnic media was more on long-term integration-related knowledge rather than immediate settlement-related information.

Nadeem Khan considered the integration of immigrants into mainstream society crucial for both immigrants and mainstream society. He said, “If the integration [of immigrants] is not taking place, it is not a problem for us only; it is a problem for Canadian [mainstream society] as well.” Hence, media both mainstream and ethnic was seen as responsible for prioritizing the integration of new immigrants into their host country.

Many participants pointed out lack of knowledge about their host country as a problem. For example, seniors, people with little or no English language skills, newly-arrived immigrants, and/or immigrants with little or no formal education were all considered vulnerable in terms of their lack of knowledge about Canadian systems and ways of life (Caidi and Allard 2005). Arun Verma pointed out some areas where he found immigrants lacking in information and knowledge, irrespective of their number of years and/or profession in Canada:
I would do my show from various places of interest [in BC]. Just to give you an example . . . I did one show from a garden in Chinatown and I got a call from a taxi driver asking, “Brother, where were you [on the show]?” and I told him about the garden and he was asking, “Where is it?” I told him about the location, he told me that he [had been] driving a cab for the last fifteen years but he never saw this [place] before. I thought, “Wow, if you haven’t seen this and you are driving a cab for fifteen years, you should go and see this place at the first available time.” Then I got another call from a woman . . . and I told her that I was . . . downtown and she asked me where that [was]. She had lived in Abbotsford for the past ten years but never saw the downtown of Vancouver . . . So the whole idea was, while providing entertainment, educate the people as well about the services that they can use being the residents or citizens of this city and country, and that is how it [the show] started.

In the above narrative, it is worth noting that there are several intersecting factors that might contribute to these immigrants’ lack of knowledge about the society in which they had already been living for years. For example, gender, profession, language skills, access to resources, and previous background could all affect their ability to access information and obtain knowledge. The cab driver might not know about all the potential places to spend leisure time in the same town where he drives his cab because most of his weekly hours are spent in long driving shifts and he has little or no time for recreational or social activities. Similarly, an immigrant woman from a third world country, who has not had much exposure to life outside the home and who is struggling with language skills, becomes vulnerable due to lack of information and knowledge and so becomes increasingly isolated (Samuel 2009). Ethnic media filled information gaps for people like these two immigrants by creating a bridge across which to convey knowledge about local life and resources. This information also helped immigrants compare and contrast the lifestyles of people in their countries of origin with the lifestyles of people in Canada. Jabarjang Sing emphasized the importance of conveying information about immigrants’ new country and its systems; according to him, dissemination of knowledge was crucial for everyday life in Canada:
In my three hours of daily [Monday to Friday] talk show programming, one hour is dedicated to this issue only, and the focus is to give maximum information to the new immigrants to understand the systems of Canada. We inform listeners about education, [politics], social life, and even [mannerisms] in . . . Canadian society; whatever we tell new immigrants for their settlement, we then do online discussion. We discuss how to maintain our cultural values while understanding the structure of Canada, so every day we discuss this for one hour. We also get into hot discussions, religious issues, Canadian systems of education, business and social values; we also talk about taxation system of Canada, whether it is helpful for the working class or not.

Knowledge about their host country could provide “existing social codes” to immigrants, which could minimize challenges related to their settlement (Shi 2009, 607). Ethnic media audiences confirmed gaining knowledge about their host country (i.e., Canada) through ethnic media sources. A participant related the experience of learning new information in the transnational context and practising it at home:

I often think that back home we had never heard of bullying but here it’s a serious issue in schools so we need to be aware of it, in order for our children to remain safe and media provides that awareness. The other day, my four-years-old son came back from pre-school in a bad mood and because I have heard about signs of bullying, I paid more attention to his behavior; this is because I have learned [about bully] through [ethnic] media.

For some, ethnic media provided relevant information by translating technical details into a comprehensible framework, especially regarding legal matters in Canada. Paramjeet, an FGD participant, said, “Sometimes there is a court judgment and the [ethnic] radio stations present it in a very concise and easy to understand way so it’s very convenient.”

In order to provide reliable and clear information, media practitioners, especially radio and TV show hosts, engaged experts from health, education, and other social sectors to disseminate up-to-date information in these fields. Arun Verma and Preetam Kaur informed me that they had hosted various shows conveying cancer-related information,

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especially examining and identifying breast cancer signs in women, while Jabarjang Singh and Sandeep Singh related that they had hosted several shows on education-related topics.

Many immigrants from South Asia work in non-skilled, precarious jobs with health hazards and yet they might not know about their rights at workplaces in Canada (Zaman 2012). Often, employers do not inform these immigrants about their rights in order to avoid the costs they would have to bear to ensure the safety of their employees. Ethnic media, especially radio, was appreciated for creating knowledge about workers’ rights in Canada. One FGD participant, Sujata, shared:

If something wrong [like an accident] happens at your workplace, and you inform the [ethnic] media, they support you a lot. They bring your issues into a public forum so that’s a big support to the community.

Another FGD participant, Harjot, confirmed:

There was this South Asian person who fell at the workplace but his foreman did not call an ambulance for him. The guy somehow called his wife and got to the hospital, after which he approached the ethnic media and that’s how his case was highlighted; media helped him a lot.

Paramjeet added that ethnic media kept her family and community informed about taxation, travelling, and other news and information related to daily life. She said:

We listen to the radio and we get leads and phone numbers to find work and to find jobs. Like, if you want to get an Indian visa, the radio gives you information about how to get a visa. Same with tax information, they tell you when to file your taxes and who can help you.

Overall, participants and media practitioners agreed that ethnic media was providing relevant and useful information to its audiences, and that the information was making a difference in their daily lives by helping them to understand the Canadian way of life and integrate into it. While the majority of participants agreed that ethnic media sources were
providing useful information, however, some audiences—especially skilled and professional immigrants—complained that, ethnic media did not provide adequate information about their immediate needs (e.g., employment, housing etc.). For instance, some participants criticized ethnic media for failing to provide them with adequate information and support to help them obtain appropriate employment in their professional fields. It is important to state at this point that researchers have criticized immigration and settlement policy for failing to enable newly arrived skilled immigrants to find and obtain employment in their respective fields of expertise (Bolaria and Li 1988; Boyd and Grant 2007; Das Gupta 2007; George and Tsang 2000; Sakamoto, Chin, and Young 2010; Zaman 2012, 2006; Zaman and Bukhari 2013). In this situation, when the system is failing to resolve the burning issue of employment for skilled immigrants, ethnic media alone cannot be blamed for not providing solutions for the problem. Clearly, however, there is a contrast between what media practitioners are claiming and what audiences perceive. There are several reasons for this mismatch in the supply and demand of settlement-related information.

As discussed, settlement and integration are two different, yet interconnected, phases in the life of an immigrant. Settlement needs are generally immediate and start soon after landing in Canada—for example the need for housing, employment, education for children, and access to health services (Chien 2005). On the other hand, integration is a long-term process through which immigrants eventually (likely) achieve social equality in mainstream society (Liviana 2012). Smooth settlement leads to smoother integration, therefore information and guidance during the first phase is crucial. However, it seems
that ethnic media were focusing more on integration-related issues and topics by addressing primarily the needs of more “settled immigrants.”

Initial settlement needs are diversified because of the diversified backgrounds of immigrants coming to Canada from South Asian countries; hence, it is not possible to provide specific information tailored to all people’s specific needs. The findings of this study revealed that in the initial days/weeks of settlement, many people looked for information at public places instead of non-governmental or private organizations such as ethnic media. In this regard, public libraries as well as Service Canada offices and settlement agencies, rather than ethnic media, were expected to provide more structured settlement information (Zaman and Bukhari 2013). Nonetheless, participants felt that ethnic media could provide more structured and planned information to newly arrived immigrants.

Community Development and Resource Building

In addition to access to information, immigrants’ successful integration into life in their host country is also linked with their access to services and resources (Lin 2006). Some immigrants face social isolation if they are not connected with services and resources and with the rest of the social system (Choudhry 2001; Koehn 2009). Scholars argue that some immigrants belonging to ethnic groups experience oppression and marginalization in mainstream society, influenced by intersecting factors such as gender, immigration status, education, previous experience, and poor economic performance (Agnew 2009; Das Gupta 2009, 2007; George and Chaze 2009; Razack 1998; Shi 2008). This study found that ethnic media was connecting audiences of various backgrounds with service

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67 “Settled immigrants” in this particular context means immigrants who have landed a few years ago and whose initial needs related to housing and employment (etc.) are met.
providers, agencies, and institutions by engaging their representatives as well as experts and prominent personages to create specialized media content. Although service providers such as public health organizations, settlement agencies, and community development organizations have their own formal institutional structures through which they offer services, many immigrants might not know about them, and obtaining information about these organizations and the services they offer could be a complicated process—one often further complicated by language barriers. Ethnic media connects people with information that is direct and relevant for both sides (i.e., audiences as well as service providers) (Jeffres 2000; Lay and Thomas 2012; Shi 2008). One of the advantages ethnic media possesses in this regard is the mass media format itself, which allows messages to travel immediately across large audiences. With the interactive model adopted by many ethnic media organizations—such as radio talk shows, which often welcome live phone calls from their audiences—ethnic media provides public communication spaces to their audiences. Nirmala, a participant working for a settlement agency explained how ethnic media was connecting service providers with each other:

People who are working with community development or settlement organizations . . . come to know about the programs of other organizations. Although we work in the same area and same community . . . at times, we don’t know about programs of other organizations, so media provides information about their programs and their activities in the community, which is helpful.

Studies show that ethnic enterprises generally have ethnic customers from the same ethnic groups and that is one of the reasons for developing ethnic business communities and expanding their visual presence (as businesses) in specific locations—for example, Chinatowns in North America (Lay and Thomas 2012; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011; Shi 2009). Many participants confirmed their use of ethnic media, both broadcast and print, for searching for and utilizing local businesses and their services. At
the same time, community development organizations also used ethnic media to promote their work and connect with people. Ali, an FGD participant, said:

I have a very limited connection with . . . ethnic media; it’s mainly when I go to mosque, I read [ethnic print media] to see what’s going on, particularly when you have to contact some business like you want to buy some tickets and you want some services from the people of your community, then I make use of these newspapers. Ethnic media is making a connection between you and your community; for the news part, I think they are mostly repeated [old news]. (Zaman and Bukhari 2013)

Zameer Ahmad took pride in the fact that, because of his role in ethnic media, he had acquired a central position in the Pakistani-Canadian community for providing hands-on information and connecting people with resources. He asserted that he even provided personalized help to community members—something he was able to do due to the small, one-man, family-oriented nature of his ethnic newspaper as well as his active role in the events and happenings of his community. According to Ahmad,

People call me for . . . informal information too, like which restaurants to go to, how to navigate in the city, etc. The community now calls me the midwife of the community68. . . . My role has become connecting people; anyone who requires any phone number or contact of a community person, they call me and I consider it a privilege.

Satnam Singh, along with many other media practitioners, also mentioned his ethnic media group taking the lead in community resource development, both for countries of origin and in Canada. Ethnic medias’ fundraising for natural catastrophes in South Asian countries as well as for local causes came up repeatedly in the interviews with media practitioners. Satnam Singh detailed his own ethnic media organization’s contribution to such efforts:

Lot of the organizations [i.e., settlement agencies] were struggling to build an auditorium for the last ten years; I said “Okay, let me promote you guys, let me do

68 “Midwife of the community” (or Dawa in Urdu) refers to a person who is well grounded in the community and has extensive knowledge about happenings and changes taking place in the community.
fundraising for you,” and we raised money for them. We also raised money for the Cancer Society and Heart-care Foundation. In the event of an earthquake somewhere, we would support the affected people, and when there was a fire in Kelowna, we supplied truckloads of supplies, so there are lot of community events and functions that we support.

Interestingly, ethnic media not only connected people and resources within the same community, but also across ethnic communities. Many media practitioners emphasized the need to connect and collaborate with other ethnic minorities to create dialogue and understanding about commonly faced challenges. Sandeep Singh elaborated:

This week’s [TV] program hosted a guest from a Chinese settlement agency and a South Asian school counsellor. We discussed how Chinese and Indian pioneer immigrants contributed to Canada and . . . what kind of challenges they faced; what have we learned from their sacrifices and their contributions. So we bring in people from different communities to discuss these issues so our people [i.e., South Asians] should know specifically that if we say we are facing so many challenges, other communities are also facing similar problems.

While creating connections came up as a significant function of ethnic media, however, most media practitioners confirmed they lacked connection with their own peers. Most of them did not follow ethnic media produced by their colleagues in the same city.

Moreover, despite a considerable number of personnel associated with the South Asian ethnic media (in different roles), they did not have any formal or informal forum to connect with each other, to share and discuss their issues and become an interest group (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011 ). The narratives of ethnic media practitioners reflected inter-media conflicts among most of them. When asked in the research workshop about the need for a formal forum to discuss issues and conflicts and to share experiences and lessons learned, many of them appreciated the idea and said that they would consider forming their own forum to connect with each other.
Creating Space for Dialogue and Civic Awareness: Giving Voice to Communities

Ethnic and community media could work as a public sphere for minorities in any society, enabling them to raise their collective consciousness as well as their voices for their rights, and engage with the democratic process (Atton 2003; Kong 2013). Quoting Jürgen Habermas (1974), Cunningham and Sinclair (2001) theorize public spheres as an open space for debate by citizens, within which they can speak out against oppressive regimes and state forces. Emerging as a subset of civil society, these public spheres could create a parallel discourse against the powerful hierarchy of the state and become part of the struggle to achieve democratic equality in the system. The authors further explain that while many see the Western public sphere as challenged by the encroachment of commercial media, others suggest that media is now the central vehicle through which public debate is generated in the Western world (Cunningham and Sinclair 2001). The commercial interests of media organizations could lead them to produce slanted and partisan representations of the facts, while non-commercial interests could bring forth the real issues of the communities (Fleras 2011); in both cases, however, media occupies a crucial role in today’s modern world. According to Coleman and Ross (2010, 78):

One of the key differences between alternative and mainstream media lies in the determination of what constitutes news and which voices should be represented in describing, explaining, and commenting upon the social events of the day. Alternative media politicize the otherwise hidden stories which lie beneath the surface of news items covered by the mainstream.

There was a general consensus among all participants of this study that mainstream media did not give importance and space to the issues confronted by South Asian communities. In some cases, the mainstream media ignored important news items initially, but when they were brought forward by ethnic media sources, specifically on
ethnic radio, the mainstream media then picked up the same issue. Saleem, a settlement worker shared the following example:

A skilled Pakistani guy came to Canada in 2007 and brought traveller’s cheques with him. He went to a bank and they misread his information and called the police. The police kept him under arrest for a few hours then released him. He came to us and we sent his information to all the media. The very next morning he was on the live morning show of one of the leading ethnic radio [stations]. From there on, mainstream media also picked up the story and the bank had to apologize to him.

Ethnic radio stations remained politically active media as compared to all other media in terms of providing quick and useful access to public communication space (Downing 1990; Isaksen 2012). Many radio stations held prime-time talk shows with open phone lines during morning and evening hours, discussing issues pertaining to the lived experiences of immigrants. In my personal experience, talk shows focusing on issues relevant to South Asian communities receive a large number of phone calls from audience members. In addition, the format of some talk shows would allow hosts to bring in guests—for example, people in power such as policymakers and politicians—and ask them direct questions raised by the audience. In such cases, the hosts of the shows worked as translators as well, providing all audiences with access to the information, irrespective of their language skills or knowledge about the issue. The host would then summarize the answers of the guests and the audience could take part in the discussion that followed. This generated considerable interest and excitement among audiences who felt connected, represented, and empowered through their ethnic media offering services and information in their languages.

Ethnic media, in “facilitating a sense of community cohesion” (Lay and Thomas 2012, 376), could provide a space for South Asian audiences to raise issues that matter to
Manjeet, a senior FGD participant, wanted ethnic media to speak on her behalf and help her claim her right to a fair pension. She said:

People who come from other [i.e., European] countries . . . get old age benefits within two to three years, but we [i.e., South Asian immigrants] don’t get it; the question should be raised in ethnic media, why don’t we get it within the same time frame?69

Harjot, an FGD participant who was struggling to find appropriate employment was angry about governmental policies and considered ethnic radio the right platform to ask tough questions. She demanded that the immigration minister should come on a radio talk show to explain why skilled immigrants were suffering and failing to find work when they came to Canada through the proper channels. With the growth of ethnic media, federal as well as provincial ministers along with many other government representatives have started actively engaging with ethnic media forums, mainly radio stations, including answering live calls from audiences. A senior participant considered radio to have more freedom in Canada as compared to India, bringing them the inside news:

The radio here has more freedom, they talk about whatever they want to, but back home, they could talk after approval from the high ups. Here, people get all the inside information but there, people don’t have access to inside news, they don’t get all the inside news. While our [Canadian] Prime Minister went to India yesterday, the media has reported that the cars to drive them around in India also went along with them. The military plane carrying them is costing $22000 per hour [so the news is out].

The majority of ethnic media practitioners I interviewed proudly claimed their roles as representatives of their communities. They considered their medium a public forum, open to their communities and reflective of their communities’ issues. Preetam Kaur asserted:

69 All immigrants are eligible for the old age security pension after ten years of residency in Canada, except for those coming from the countries with which Canada has signed the International Social Security Agreement. Immigrants coming from these countries do not have to wait for ten years and are eligible after three years of residency in Canada. Most of these countries are rich countries, mainly European countries. Immigrants from South Asia, China, the Caribbean, and some African countries do not have the same facility available. George (2013, 65) argues that the old age security system in Canada “reproduces coexisting relationships of power and dominance.”
Yes, I think radio is a platform; people talk on my show as well as on other shows. Because it’s an open talk show, people call in during live shows where the shows are related to local topics or community or whatever. They express their views, whatever they think is right, and because it is an open talk show, it provides a platform. It is very rare that we disconnect calls; if we do, it is always because of the time constraint otherwise we do not disconnect without reason.

Ethnic media, specifically radio, thus provided a public sphere for otherwise unheard voices to be raised, speaking in their own languages, and where community members could find people agreeing with them, eventually creating connections based on shared knowledge (Francq 2011). According to Cunningham (2001, 138), ethnic media “[operates] to create a space where political and cultural identities can be processed in a self-determining way, where voices other than the official, but constitutive of community sentiment, can speak.” The active engagement of the community in ethnic media is essential for the existence and growth of the media as well; thus it is a win-win situation for both ethnic media and communities.

While ethnic media provides a forum for communities to voice their concerns and issues, active audiences provide content through their feedback and engagement. In other words, commercial ethnic media outlets (at the small/independent level) while necessarily safeguarding their commercial interests also managed to take up the cause of creating a public sphere in which their communities would be empowered to raise their voices. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, small ethnic minorities such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Gujarati communities did not feel the same way about their representation in ethnic media. Instead, they reported a lack of adequate representation in their ethnic languages, particularly by ethnic broadcast media outlets which were licensed on the condition that they would give representation to all “South Asian groups” in the Metro Vancouver area.
Political Activism and Awareness through Ethnic Media

The growth of South Asian communities and ethnic enclaves in some parts of Metro Vancouver has had two important effects: firstly, it has resulted in more demographic power being held by South Asians as a critical mass in specific locations. Secondly, a small number of second and third generation South Asians have begun to assume a presence in public and private sectors, occupying low to medium level positions. These facts have had a significant impact on the socio-economic and political realities of these communities. Sher Singh explained:

In BC, Punjabi [Sikhs] are about 80% of the South Asian population; initially, we used to vote in a bloc, [but] now we have created so much awareness through [radio] talk shows that people know about their rights. We have now about one hundred years of history in this country and we have made a major contribution to the economy and development here. Previously, they would call us Indo-Canadian or Pakistani-Canadian or Bangladeshi-Canadian, but now our new generation doesn’t like this identity; they make a point that they are Canadian Sikh or Canadian Muslim.

The South Asian Post (2011) reported that twenty-three Indo-Canadian candidates participated in the election in 2011, and eight of them made their way to Parliament. This count does not reflect MPs of other ethnic groups of South Asian ancestry, such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, etc. However, in 2015’s federal elections, twenty-two South Asians were elected as Members of Parliament, thrice the number of last election of 2011 (The South Asian Daily 2015). Black (2013, 21) notes that in the federal elections of Canada in 2011, 9.1% (roughly twenty-eight) visible minority Members of Parliament (MPs) were elected, as compared to 6.8% (roughly twenty-one) in 2008; yet “it would have taken the election of 59 visible minority MPs to completely eliminate the [political] representation deficit.” Despite the lack of proportionate political representation, South Asians, along with other visible minority groups have been
struggling to increase their numbers at policymaking forums (Rahim 2014). Ethnic media practitioners interviewed for this study took credit for creating increased political awareness among their communities in Metro Vancouver. They claimed that locally produced ethnic media in ethnic languages created enough political awareness to result in expanding political space for South Asian communities. Jabarjang Singh said:

We tell people in Punjabi and Hindi what English media is saying about us. The politicians would say something [different in] our media [versus] in the mainstream media—their statement would be different [in each place]. With the development of our ethnic media, the situation is changing now. With our greater understanding of languages and [mainstream organizations and their] systems, English media now need us because we are the newsmakers now. As a result, we have eight to nine representatives in . . . Parliament now; our people do vote in elections because we give them awareness about the power of voting. (Zaman and Bukhari 2013)

Fernando (2006) argues that in order to win seats in different ridings, candidates need financial and moral support. Lack of such support becomes “a barrier to further political participation and makes it almost impossible for racialized minorities to win”; moreover, “systemic racism . . . reduces racialized minorities to a token presence or compels their co-optation into existing hierarchies that preclude structural change and anti-racist goals” (Fernando 2006, 65). Ethnic media, especially radio, provided structural and communicative space for South Asians to discuss and reflect on issues that could politically affect their communities. Many radio shows were hosting morning and evening prime-time call-in talk shows discussing socio-political and economic issues. Participants also confirmed ethnic media’s active participation in political activism and creating awareness. News about local and regional issues provided in ethnic languages disseminated information and knowledge to those who were not well versed in mainstream languages (e.g., English). Manjeet, who could not speak English, revealed
her knowledge about the historic election in which the first ever African-American President was elected in the United States:

Ethnic media gives you information about . . . your city, Canada, USA, Pakistan, and India . . . it gives you information about everywhere. Like it’s all about the US election and US President nowadays.

Another participant expressed her concern about how the Canadian Prime Minister was spending citizens’ tax money on expenses incurred during international trips—something she had learned about through ethnic media. In general, there was a consensus among participants that ethnic media played a significant role in creating political awareness among disadvantaged groups who would have trouble accessing news through mainstream media sources.

In addition to offering standard political media content, media practitioners, especially owners of ethnic media organizations, spoke about organizing open public forums during election time where they would invite candidates of all parties to answer questions from their communities. Satnam Singh claimed that his ethnic media organization connected communities with politicians through interactive sessions, where people from all around the world could ask any question of the invited politicians. He said:

We organize political debates during . . . election times and we rent space outside [the office building] to invite all the candidates of political parties for the debate and get . . . feedback. We have open line talk shows so a person from anywhere in the world can call in and express their views [because the radio programming is broadcasted online as well].

Despite overall agreement among media representatives and audiences about the vibrant role ethnic media played in creating political awareness, ethnic media was also criticized for increased politicization. This criticism took several forms. First, media practitioners
and some audience blamed ethnic media groups for taking sides with political parties and thus not embodying the ethical journalistic principle of impartiality. Sandeep Singh said:

> It all depends what directions management has given [to journalists]; it also depends on the inflow of sponsorship money. Very few journalists will dare to ask tough questions to politicians; only the media siding with one party will ask tough questions from [representatives of the] opponent party. . . . Independent journalism is not there, I am sorry to say.

While Sandeep Singh mentioned “sponsorship money” as one of the reasons for ethnic media’s partiality, Anterpreet’s narrative highlighted the role of class in hampering the equal participation of all groups. She shared how “experts” are often selected based on their language skills:

> With special emphasis on gang-related or violence-related news, we engage English-speaking experts intentionally. The problem is all of our people are not educated enough so we are not always . . . able to find experts in [our ethnic] community, so then we are helpless to engage English-speaking experts.

One way for ethnic media practitioners to broaden the scope of civic engagement and create resources is to collaborate with other ethnic journalists/media. As mentioned previously, there was no active ethnic media forum safeguarding the interests of the ethnic media producers in Metro Vancouver. As far as collaborating at the personal and professional level was concerned, efforts were made on a limited scale, without any major breakthroughs. Zameer Ahmad related his efforts to collaborate with other ethnic groups to create harmony and mutual understanding in regards to commonly faced challenges:

> We have organized many media forums of ethnic media such as Korean, Chachenian, Iranian, and Indian. We still are part of an ethnic media network, which includes Korean, Iranian, Croatians, Afghans, and Fijians. So we exchange our news for mutual benefits. Culturally we are different but we do participate in cultural festivals held at mainstream community events.
It is significant to note that none of the other media practitioner interviewed for this research mentioned these forums; it thus seemed that awareness of the initiative was lacking at a mass level within South Asian ethnic media. There are different ways to measure the impact of ethnic media in creating civic and political awareness among different communities. While some media practitioners were adamant regarding the active and successful role of ethnic media in creating political change, others did not agree. For Sandeep Singh, real political change should have been reflected in the life of South Asian communities, and not by how many of them were elected every term. He said:

As far as . . . political impact is concerned, we find a lot of lip-service and we are not fully integrated so media has been mostly used as a mouthpiece of the politicians, rather than creating an awareness among the people to make up their own minds. . . . As I told you . . . most listenership is from a rural background and [middle-aged] population; youth don’t listen to [ethnic] radio as much, they might listen to some music programs but talk shows, not at all, I doubt it.

While Sandeep Singh contested the notion of ethnic media’s political impact, various media practitioners confirmed different public service departments utilizing ethnic media forums to connect with South Asian communities. For example, Anterpreet spoke about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s (RCMP) connection to her media:

We got a license because we had a large . . . Punjabi population in Vancouver. Now, for example, if the police department wants to start any program to create awareness among youth, they will contact us, not the mainstream media, because they want to reach out to our community, to parents, and children. Whenever there are elections or any government policy change, they always contact ethnic media. This is a big sign of influence and impact. . . . We are invited for meetings with the police department and other government officials. We are also invited for lunch programs by the police department to seek our suggestions and advice regarding projects for the [community’s] betterment. So it’s a big indication that we have a major role and influence through our media.

To summarize, while there was an argument both for and against ethnic media’s impact on the political landscape, in general, there was a consensus that: a) ethnic media has
been effective and successful in attracting and engaging political and public decision-makers and policymakers, and b) it has also engaged audiences of various backgrounds, irrespective of their gender, age, educational profile, etc. Ethnic media sources have provided an active forum for South Asian communities to learn about political developments and issues affecting their lives, as well as raise their voices in connection with these issues. There is, however, a need to conduct an in-depth study to evaluate the strategies, strengths, limitations, and political impact of ethnic media with regards to creating political change for South Asian communities.

Changing Trends in Mainstream Media: Influence of Ethnic Media

The majority of participants experienced racialization at different points of their life in Canada. These experiences had a bearing on their perceptions about mainstream society and media, and on their expectations of ethnic media. Nadeem Khan, who immigrated to Canada in 1969, reflected on some of the changes between how discrimination was practiced then and now:

I see it very interestingly because when I came here, there were very few non-Canadians, so the local people saw different ethnicities with interest . . . but when the population increased, there were two issues; first, the job competition increased and secondly the supposedly ethnic white superiority was being challenged. This brought us to street level issues like fighting, violence, racial suppression, and there was a reaction too from minority communities. However, gradually, with the passage of time, the . . . ethnic population increased and they became a political and consumer force. Then white mainstream society and the media started doing racialization in subtle ways . . . otherwise, their political system and their consumer markets would be affected.

Khan’s narrative reflects the changing nature of systemic racism, which most of the other participants also confirmed. Ethnic media practitioners claimed responsibility for creating a change in the mainstream media’s portrayal of South Asian communities. They argued that they kept a close eye on the content published or aired about South Asian
communities and challenged negative reporting whenever required. As a result, they claimed a change in policies and political systems reflected in society. Elvis Lal saw the change taking place faster than he would have expected:

It’s been a great change and that’s what I was fighting for and that’s what I predicted too... It’s happening faster than I thought it would... and it has changed so much... When I came from California, there I have seen Spanish people and I predicted in the 1990s that... American politics would have to change to multiculturalism... Now the Republicans are telling each other that we have to take Spanish people into account, we can’t have only English or only this and that and the same argument goes here... People [i.e., politicians] who wouldn’t enter Gurduwaras now enter Gurduwaras, Mosques, and Temples; this was below their dignity [before].

Participants generally agreed that South Asian ethnic media in Metro Vancouver created constant pressure on mainstream media and played a powerful role in engaging different social actors in mainstream society (e.g., mainstream media, politicians, and policymakers). Due to this constant watchdog role played by ethnic media (Ojo 2006; Shi 2009; Viswanath and Arora 2000), in some cases, people who made racially biased remarks against South Asians on air had to apologize; Mukhtar Singh, an ethnic media practitioner presented an example of such a case:

This is where ethnic media’s role kicks in, and I don’t think ethnic media has been non-responsive to this issue of racism. Ethnic media fights [on behalf of] minorities with... full force to the extent that people [in the mainstream media] have apologized due to pressure. One of the guys who sat on the [Winter 2010] Olympics committee made a racist comment and then due to ethnic media’s pressure, he had to step down from his role.

Increased purchasing power (i.e., positive economic growth) was also mentioned as a significant factor in granting a new image to South Asian communities. Arun Verma argued that educated and/or young affluent South Asians have changed socio-economic reality for these communities, even in the eyes of mainstream society. Verma said: “For example, if you go to nightclubs or vegetable stores you see so many apnas [people from
the same community i.e., South Asians] shopping there, and that has brought about a new image of the community that this community has money and they can spend.” He further added that the corporate sector was also noticing the change in potential clientele and hence was investing in South Asian communities through advertisements directed at them. Sher Singh considered the rapidly growing educated class within South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver instrumental in creating change in the way mainstream media views these communities. Due to the hiring of professional journalists, he claimed that changes in the landscape of ethnic broadcast media have been evident in the last ten years. At the same time, ethnic audiences’ levels of awareness have increased, leading mainstream media to begin to take ethnic media more seriously. Singh said: “The mainstream media now contact us to get news about South Asian communities; they confirm and verify news from us; now they quote our channels in their news reporting.”

Elvis Lal encouraged the community to become aggressive in highlighting any discriminatory experiences. Citing the example of an argument he had with an editor of an English newspaper, he explained his strategy for fighting back against racism in mainstream media:

Just expose their names; when they write something wrong, write their names and mention the stuff [they said]. . . . I had a fight with editor in chief [of a mainstream newspaper] . . . [regarding] this issue where [they reported] two Sikhs arrested. I said, “What do you mean by ‘two Sikhs’? Would you write, ‘two Christians arrested’?” And she said, “Oh, you see racism but there is no racism.” Then we had a big fight and then I published all her stuff and when she couldn’t argue anymore, she said, “Oh, you are trying to get a job [with us].” She said, “You talk about racism because you weren’t able to get a job with us,” and I said, “When did I ask you for a job? Did I ever ask you for a job?” So she made fool out of herself because when I published the whole conversation, what she said and what I said, she really felt stupid; she must have regretted that she did that.
The above exchange was only one of several in which Lal demonstrated his resilience and his commitment to fight against the racial bias displayed by some mainstream media sources. In most cases, according to him, he won the battle. Due to the influential role of ethnic media at a regional level (i.e., in Metro Vancouver), politicians have also started taking ethnic media seriously. Almost all media representatives I interviewed confirmed that the connection and collaboration between political parties and governmental authorities and ethnic media outlets increase during election time—whether the election is municipal, provincial, or federal. Satnam Singh explains:

> When we started our radio station, lots of Mayors, Councillors, MLAs, MPs, Premiers, and Prime Ministers visited our office here and have been on the air from our station. All of the Premiers have been to this office in the last fifteen years. . . . Now you know every government has a cell, monitoring all the ethnic media to find out what exactly is going on in the ethnic media. So when they set up their policies, they know exactly what is been discussed and how they should focus and target their issues that they are facing as a community, and this has never happened before.

It is significant to note that ethnic media practitioners claiming success in creating change in mainstream society and its media had years of journalistic experience in Canada. Additionally, they had contacts and networks in the halls of power, which enabled them to stay abreast of insider news and raise objections accordingly. Moreover, they had roots and connections within and were supported by their communities. Last but not least, some of them had associations with bigger and more established media groups, mostly radio stations and/or print media published in English. Small level ethnic media organizations did not seem to have access to and influence on policymakers. Zameer Ahmad, for instance, complained about the lack of interest displayed by mainstream journalists who, according to him, would never attend the media forums organized by his media organization. A desire to connect and collaborate with mainstream media was
evident in the narratives of these smaller level media practitioners. This desire is in line with the narratives of participants in Lay and Thomas’s (2012, 380) research (i.e., black and minority ethnic media producers), who also showed a desire to “get closer to the mainstream.”

Overall, demographic changes in and increasing size of South Asian communities as well as increasingly high levels of education among recent immigrants and professional hiring by media organizations played a significant role in influencing mainstream media’s portrayal of South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver. Nevertheless, media audiences from South Asian communities still raised their concerns about mis/representation of their communities in mainstream media.

**Ethnic Media Connecting with Ethnic Culture(s)**

*Celebrating and Promoting Ethnic Culture(s)*

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Canada is known for its official policy of multiculturalism. Although the word “multiculturalism” has a democratic ring to it, sounding as if it must be based on social equality, as a policy, it has received much criticism from scholars (Agnew 1996, 2005; Jiwani 2006; Karim 2007; Razack 1998; Thobani 2007, 2005. Fleras and Kunz (2001, 3) contest the official policy of multiculturalism, which according to them works simultaneously “to make society safe ‘for’ diversity, yet safe ‘from’ diversity.” The policy initially was created to settle the differences of two self-proclaimed founding ethnic groups of Canada (i.e., English and French settlers), while at the same time conciliating visible minorities as well as Aboriginal groups; it mainly focused on differences in cultures (Jiwani 2006). With
changing demographical realities of Canada, the policy later aimed at “[creating] a cohesive society in which differences are incorporated as legitimate and integral without undermining either interconnectedness or distinctiveness” (Fleras and Kunz 2001, 7). However, this description is oversimplified compared with the reality of lived experience under multicultural policy.

The “ethnic nationalism” of Canada gives the state the right to define what makes one Canadian (or not); this “ethnic nationalism,” defined through the lens of multiculturalism, is “not only racist, but centrally patriarchal [as well]” (Bannerji 2011, 111). Recent examples of the policy of multiculturalism working against visible minority would be the Anti-Terrorism Act (Bill C-51) and The Quebec Charter of Values (Bill C-60), tabled (and defeated) in 2013 by the then ruling Parti Québécois (PQ) (Kelly and Tucker 2013). Although both Bills were apparently presented with the aim of creating “enhanced security measures,” “freedom,” and “gender justice” for Canadians, in reality they threatened the freedom and challenged the loyalty of certain groups, more specifically Muslims living in Canada. Karim (2007, 279) correctly points out that “it is interesting that among the only cases in which government policymakers discuss transnationalism and diaspora seriously are those related to security issues, whereas governments have the necessary task of preventing terrorism, they do not seem to appreciate the need to understand better the nature of diasporas.” He adds that with multilayered communication avenues such as satellite and the Internet, communication channels of people living in diasporas cannot be controlled; hence government and policymakers need to rethink their strategies for understanding these groups and their needs.
The desire of the state to control immigrant and diaspora communities, under the guise of diversity management, is reflected in the national mainstream media (Jiwani 2006). The danger lies in the fact that the media is then given the power to decide the cultural correctness (or wrongness) of different ethnic groups, approving some parts of them while refusing others. Naseem, who represented a minority media organization within South Asian ethnic media, contested the notion of mainstream media offering cultural connection for all communities:

I think knowledge [on the part] of mainstream media about our cultures and celebrations is limited. For example, recently we had Diwali; it became a big thing but what about Eid? In India, Eid and Diwali are celebrated with the same spirit. There are many Muslims here celebrating Eid but no coverage for them. I think this [points to the fact that the coverage] is superficial; they are trying but they are not trying hard enough. Yet I would say major changes have [happened].

Mainstream media becomes instrumental in framing how different cultures (and religious groups) are presented; stereotypes are created when not enough media space and participation rights are grated to minorities to represent their cultures and their voices (Fleras 2011). As discussed previously, stereotyping of certain groups emphasizes selective images and ideas that coalesce into a negative perception of these groups (Siapera 2010), not only in mainstream society but also within the group itself, especially among younger generations born and/or raised in the host country (Sidhu 2013). As is emphasized by the above narrative, the mainstream media also often failed to provide culturally specific news of even major events of significant ethnic communities living in Canada (Ahadi and Yu 2010).

A large number of participants shared a fear of losing their culture; they were especially concerned for their younger generations, whom they thought were assimilating
slowly into mainstream culture. Nirmala, a young female participant raised in Canada explained the tension over cultural norms between herself and her parents:

When I turned nineteen, I moved to Vancouver [from northern BC] for studies on my own; my parents told me one thing only that “We trust you,” and I got it. But, I agree that the peer pressure thing [is a factor] here, and I lied to them several times. The reason was that my parents came from a different social set up; they were raised differently and they did not know what was going on outside their realm of experience . . . and I don’t blame them for that. I was resisting their values; they would say that girls are defamed if they have an open style of living and I would disagree; I think that girls and boys should be treated the same way, but that created such a struggle between me and my parents.

Perveen, another participant, an adult female from India who also came to Canada to study, had a different experience. She not only resisted all the “peer pressure” to conform to the social values of her host country, but also expressed a desire for her daughter to adhere to her cultural values. She said,

I came as a student from India; my father told me that no matter how much pressure you must endure, don’t let go of your values, and I did not accept any pressure. I want my daughter to be raised like me that’s why I regularly take her to India so that she remains connected with her cultural roots. So you don’t want to lose your culture; it’s part of you, and that’s the fear, fear of losing it.

In both of the above cases and so many other cases like them, immigrants’ socio-economic background, education, age, gender, number of years spent in Canada, family structure (joint or nuclear), and so on could be deciding factors in terms of how many cultural changes immigrants are willing to make in their lives after immigration. As explained by Bano in an earlier section of this chapter, many immigrants change their cultural ways of living with the passage of time, mixing and creating a fusion of cultural values based on the values of mainstream society in their host country and those of their countries of origin (Yang et al. 2004).

Both media practitioners and audiences challenged the notion of culture as a static phenomenon, arguing that culture in immigrants’ countries of origin was also changing at
a rapid speed, mainly influenced by “Western cultural values.” Overall deterioration in
traditional ethics and value systems was worrisome for many of them. Elvis Lal said,
“Even in India values are breaking up . . . [and] unfortunately I don’t see them here,
among kids, like respect for elders, proper manners.” Preetam Kaur, on the other hand,
shared her visionary approach to what she sees as the inevitable evolution of
communities and social values. She said:

Imagine fifty years from now, how flexible people will become. These
discussions about history, culture, and heritage will be over [irrelevant], it won’t sustain; everything will become one bigger culture. Of course, my thinking is reflected in my [radio talk] shows, and people also agree with this, that we have to change in order to accept the change. We talk about openness; “communication” is one of the most frequently used words in my talk show; people confirm that we don’t have the desired level of communication in our families, and even among our communities, we are not expressive.

Overall, participants expressed their desire to retain their cultures and embraced selective
cultural practices of their host society. Ethnic media was recognized and celebrated for
preserving and promoting both sets of cultures and values within their own groups, as
well as for mainstream society. In general, media practitioners and audiences agreed that
ethnic media was connecting them with the cultures of their countries of origin in many
ways. Culturally specific coverage of festivals, religious events, and cultural traditions
was most commonly reported by the participants as a salient feature of their ethnic media
in Metro Vancouver. Tahira highlighted the importance of ethnic media in keeping
different cultural events alive for immigrant communities:

It is ethnic media which reminds us about and celebrates all the cultural
festivals—occasions like Eid, Vaisakhi, Diwali, mother-daughter festival, and so on. The social and cultural part played by ethnic media is very strong.

Cultural and religious festivals and events were big news items for all ethnic media
sources. Additionally, journalists’ own interest in various cultural productions motivated
them to take initiative and set the trend of widespread cultural coverage. Nadeem Khan explained:

I think we have a role in cultural promotion; our newspaper puts emphasis on this. I try to promote multiple cultures . . . here, as well as Pakistan. One example is that I started a series using a writer from Pakistan about different cultures of different provinces of Pakistan like Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhuwa, or others so that was an effort to show different cultures of Pakistan. As regards . . . mainstream culture, write-ups are published in the form of stories. Since I lived at a border city between two provinces in Pakistan, I had a chance to view both cultures so I had that interest in linguistics and cultures from the beginning, so wherever I get a chance, I try to highlight that too.

Music, poetry, and literature were identified as major components of culture, and the majority of participants asserted that ethnic media was promoting culture through these art forms. Satnam Singh said:

Nowadays almost 99% [of the Indian Punjabi population] listen to Punjabi music such as Bhangra music. Only music and entertainment can keep them intact and attach them to their culture. . . . News they can watch in English but music will keep them in touch with their homeland cultures.

In this context, fusion-based music was referred to as a main contribution of ethnic media, especially radio and TV. Many journalists took pride in the fact that ethnic media has given rise to the trend of fusion-based music, which has resulted in attracting not only regular audiences, but youth as well. Naseem, a music show host on a community radio station shared:

Some of our ethnic media and myself, we play local South Asian artists for young people so that they know who our local artists are. Then this [music] is also part of integration, I mean [through] art and culture.

Ethnic media research indicates a knowledge gap in terms of understanding ethnic media’s role in allowing ethnic communities to make intercultural, inter-community connections. Research on ethnic media indicates that some ethnic media practitioners

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70 The term “homeland” refers to countries of origin here.
might not even know about the existence of intercultural ethnic media platforms in Canada (Yu 2012). My dissertation research also revealed that some South Asian ethnic media practitioners in BC were trying to connect both within and outside of their ethnic groups on a limited scale. As related in the previous section of this chapter, Zameer Ahmad asserted that his media group was actively involved with other ethno-cultural media groups, organizing different forums where media representatives of other ethnic communities were regularly invited. When asked about connecting with mainstream media, his response revealed his frustration:

We invite mainstream media too but unfortunately, they don’t feel comfortable to attend our events. No, they never invite us to their events. Although I used to send them reports of major events in our community, I saw no response from them. . . . They don’t even publish letters of Muslims, many people told me they sent letters but mainstream media practitioners don’t care.

Like Zameer Ahmad, Sandeep Singh also confirmed inviting members of other communities onto his TV shows for discussions on commonly faced socio-cultural challenges. However, as described in the narratives of media practitioners, the intercultural connection between different communities through their ethnic media is limited; it is either based on sharing information and knowledge about cultural and religious events and festivals, or discussing common challenges on a limited scale. There was no substantial plan or action in place to create meaningful joint ventures to promote minority cultural heritage; instead, everyone seemed to be trying on their own, in their own capacities, to preserve their own cultures. This type of individualized effort could benefit bigger groups, but small minority groups seemed disadvantaged in this respect, according to the narratives.
One of the unique contributions of ethnic media in terms of creating cultural connectivity within and among South Asians communities was its aim of promoting and fostering knowledge about different South Asian cultures and religious festivals. South Asia itself is a heterogeneous region with diverse cultures, religions, languages, and landscapes. Against a backdrop of political unrest and historical animosity between different counties of South Asia, this effort on the part of South Asian ethnic media helped yield community cohesiveness. In my experience, many Pakistani-Canadians and Indo-Canadians attend each other’s religious and cultural festivals. For example, a large number of Pakistani-Canadians attend the Vaisakhi parade held every year in Surrey and Vancouver. Similarly, an increasing number of Indo-Canadians are attending Chaad-Raat\textsuperscript{71} and Eid celebrations organized by the Pakistani Canadian Cultural Association of BC. Ethnic media’s widespread dissemination of information about these festivals could be considered as one key factor in this increased cross-cultural participation, hence aiding in bridging the gap between different communities with diverse religious and cultural identities coming from the South Asian region.

\textit{Ethnic Media Re-establishing Identity}

One of the important recognized functions of ethnic media is maintaining and reinforcing the individual and collective ethnic identities of transnational immigrants (Husband 2005; Jeffres 2000; Yu 2012). Ethnic media does this by retaining and promoting ethnic languages as well as by offering cultural translations of local news for their ethnic communities within their host countries (Yu 2012). Scholars (Fleras 2011; Jiwani 2006) confirm a lack of appropriate representation of ethnic minorities in mainstream media,

\textsuperscript{71} The last evening of the month of Ramadan, culturally celebrated to welcome Eid the next day in different Muslim countries.
hence “watching channels targeted specifically at black or Asian [ethnic] youth could often be a more satisfying experience than seeking out sympathetic programmes in the mainstream media” (Lay and Thomas 2012, 377). Henry and Tator (2002, 4) argue that media products “help shape our sense of self, our understanding of what it means to be male/female, and our sense of ethnicity, class, race and national identity”—in fact, “they help us understand who is us and who is them.”

Identity formation takes place in stages during different periods of life, in multiple contexts (Phinney 1989, 1996; Romero et al. 2014; Zaidi et al. 2014). Phinney (1989) explicates three stages of identity recognition and adaptation among youth. The first stage is characterized by total acceptance of culturally and socially transferred norms and values; this “received identity” is usually characterized by unchallenged notions of identity. The second stage explores ethnic identity by enabling inquisitive and analytical modes and exploring the cultures of other ethnic groups vis-à-vis a person’s own cultural values and practices. The third stage of “achieved ethnic identity” is then based on critical appraisal of different cultural values and practices followed by a process of choosing and blending these values and practices to form a new, hybrid identity. Romero et al. (2014) argue that youth could begin to perceive discrimination and prejudice at an early age, causing stress and eventually leading to depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem.

Many participants in my research confirmed that they and/or their children have faced identity crisis in various forms. For example, senior participants expressed their concern for loss of cultural identity, specifically for the younger generations. Amin Rahman made a commercial film focusing on this identity crisis among youth. He said:
In terms of an identity crisis . . . when we come here, we face it; when our children grow up here, they also face it. Inside the house, they are Bangladeshis, they watch Bangladeshi TV, they eat Bangladeshi food, but when they are outside the house, they are Canadians. . . . They have a wall between the house and the outside world; they have to go back and forth and it is really very tough for them. They are in the middle of nowhere—inside they are Bangladeshi, and outside they are Canadians. This is what is called identity crisis.

Ethnic identity is characterized by complex factors, including commitment to and involvement with the shared norms, values, practices, and knowledge of the ethnic group to which one belongs (Phinney 1996). While youth experienced identity crises of a certain nature (i.e., practicing two contrasting cultures in such a way that these cultural practices came to form two separate identities for them), first generation immigrants had a different set of worries. Fahmida, raised the point that, as a first-generation immigrant, her choices around identity were limited to an insufficient set of fixed options:

Oftentimes, we . . . want to keep a certain identity, but maybe not always, because identity is always context specific, right? There might be some times when a Canadian whose ancestors came from India might want to call themselves Indo-Canadian, you know it depends. But as a Bangladeshi, I also want to be integrated [into Canadian society], so there might be some places where I want to identify myself as a Bangladeshi and there might be some places where I want to be called . . . a Canadian, but my problem is that I am often not given that choice to call myself just a Canadian. I always have to be a Bangladeshi-Canadian.

The dilemma of national identity is itself a problematic one as it brings us back to the policy of multiculturalism, under which it is in the power of the state and the structural hierarchies of mainstream society—of which mainstream media is a part—to set the norms and conditions for who is considered fully or partially Canadian.

Mainstream media, specifically “print media often place ethno-cultural minorities outside the national vision of Canada, and exclude them from the mainstream of Canadian society” by ignoring their voices, or misrepresenting them or omitting the historical contexts of their efforts in their journey (Henry and Tator 2002, 232). Conversely, ethnic
media was celebrated for keeping these contexts alive and giving a voice to minority communities through sharing common cultural heritage among its audiences.

Language is one strong component of ethnic identify (Archer, Mau, and Francis 2009; Henry and Tator 2002). Immigration enhanced the desire among many first generation immigrants to remain connected with ethnic languages as a source of identity affirmation and connection with the cultures of their countries of origin. Participants of my study emphasized that their ethnic language was a representation of their identity, sometimes even more so after immigrating. Harjot, an FGD participant, explained it:

One thing I have felt after coming to Canada is that in India, it was a common trend that you had to talk in English. You were considered more modern if you spoke English. However, after coming here, I feel more attached to my mother tongue. In fact, I want to talk in Punjabi and Hindi. I feel like English is okay, everybody can speak it, but my language, only I can speak it. I have tried learning more about my language here than [I did] in India.

Language is a signifier of culture, hence different ethnic groups try to protect and preserve their ethnic languages. Some participants considered the simple act of listening and talking in their own languages a process of re-establishing and reclaiming their ethnic identities. Retaining language was considered one of the key functions of ethnic media towards preserving cultures and identities (Echchaibi 2002, Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). Ethnic media provided public spheres for participants to engage in this process of communicating in and listening to their ethnic languages. Bano, an FGD participant said:

Well, people immigrate and settle here, but they have spent several years in their countries of origin, so they have roots there. So here, if you find someone who can speak your language, you feel connected with them. To overcome that homesickness, just listening to that language, someone talking on the radio . . . talking about your culture, you feel very good. It’s not only a language barrier; many people can speak and understand English, yet they watch and listen to ethnic media.
Media practitioners interviewed for this research considered language as a strength or key feature of their ethnic media products; however, they seemed aware about the limited usage of their ethnic media by South Asian youth. Still, despite limited access and usage of ethnic media by younger generations, media was considered an effective tool to help retain ethnic languages for these younger generations. Significantly, this role was specific to broadcast media; print media had no real part in this process, as most second-generation youth, according to participants, could not read or write their ethnic languages. Yet “nearly half (45%) of Canadian-born South Asians with at least one foreign-born parent, and 13% with two Canadian-born parents . . . first learned to speak a language other than, or as well as, English or French when they were growing up” (Tran, Kaddatz, and Allard 2005, 22). Ethnic media were thus helping youth preserve their listening and speaking skills in these languages through radio and TV. An FGD participant, Nirmala, who was born and raised in Canada, felt ethnic media helped to reconnect her with her parents’ culture through the medium of language. She said:

> When I moved here [to Vancouver] for . . . university, I had this desire to learn Punjabi, but all my friends were mostly English speaking, some Punjabis, [some] Urdu speaking as well. Now I can read and speak Punjabi, so I have been listening to radio, [XXX] FM and sometime [YYY] radio for music. I know the timing of different shows and listen to them all day; it has become a habit now. I think I wanted to learn about my culture, that’s why I learned the languages.

Proficiency in the language of one’s host country is considered a major factor for assimilating into one’s new society. According to Berger (2004, 207), however, mere linguistic skills are not adequate to help one learn “the cultural codes by which to process the meaning” of the words one hears. As an example, Berger (2004, 216) explains that the immigration of women “from collectivistic cultures, in which the family rather than the individual is the basic unit of the society” to highly individualistic Western culture is
much more complicated than is often perceived. She argues that cultural shock often shapes women’s experiences related to their new society—the worse the experience, the worse the feelings. The narratives of the female participants of Berger’s study illustrated that lack of proper understanding of new cultural norms caused stress to immigrant women trying to integrate into their host country. Ethnic media was celebrated among the participants of my study for providing cultural translation in their own ethnic languages of information pertaining to their host country. In other words, the “untold” notions of the mainstream and other cultures were decoded and made available through ethnic media for South Asian immigrants. There is however a danger of subtle acculturative pressure being exerted thorough these translations of untold notions. Shi (2008), highlighting the identity negotiations of Chinese working women in San Francisco’s Bay Area through their use of ethnic media, argues that ethnic media could be forcing acculturation onto their audiences by upholding the “dominant values” of the society. Sharing the narratives of her participants, she illustrated how they felt anxious and offended when ethnic media told them to “pay attention to how you dress in the U.S.,” warning that “some dominant cultural values are communicated through . . . ethnic newspapers” which might be challenging the cultural identities and practices of immigrants in a negative way (Shi 2008, 148). My own research data do not, unfortunately, provide further insight on this subject.

**Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed the role of ethnic media in South Asians’ lived experiences in Metro Vancouver, BC. The chapter began with the profile of South Asian communities
living in Metro Vancouver, and outlined some of the issues and challenges faced by these communities. Among many factors, access to information, appropriate employment (specifically for skilled immigrants), overt and subtle racialization, and geo-demographic factors emerged as significant. For immigrants with limited or no language skills, more specifically senior immigrants, accessing required information was more challenging. Irrespective of their length of stay in Canada, many immigrants, specifically from third world countries, faced racialization in overt or subtle ways. This chapter revealed that ethnic media became a visible and significant institution for immigrants, providing long-term settlement and integration-related information rather than addressing short-term and immediate settlement needs of new immigrants. Ethnic media was considered an important source of community development and resource building.

Media ethnic media practitioners argued that as a result of their organized efforts and the increasing South Asian population in Metro Vancouver, they have gained significant political strength for their communities. They asserted that by playing an active watchdog role, carefully and critically scanning mainstream media for racialized news items about their communities, they were able to counter racialization in many ways. Ethnic media was acknowledged for celebrating cultural and religious festivals through exclusive programming and content all year round. Ethnic languages as the main medium of communication for ethnic media were deemed the most important vehicle for preserving cultural heritage. Participants confirmed that ethnic media positively reinforced their lost, nostalgic, and fragmented identities through culturally sensitive content and programming.
There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
    There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
    The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
    Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
    That “cannot be done,” and you’ll do it.
(Edgar Guest, “It Couldn’t Be Done”)

Introduction

Ethnic media is growing as a vital social institution as well as a consumer industry, yet it is still in a transitional and transformational phase. Many factors, including availability of and access to resources, technological advances, skill levels of media personnel, distribution and circulation, and generational gaps vis-à-vis the preferences of diversified audiences, are consistently affecting the making and transitioning of ethnic media. Thus, this chapter analyzes some of the major and crucial issues and challenges raised by the consistent and rapid growth of South Asian ethnic media in Metro Vancouver.

A large number of media practitioners, whether owners or employees of ethnic media enterprises, expressed apprehensiveness about the continuity, growth, and development of ethnic media in the future. While some of them seemed hopeful for a brighter future, others voiced frustration and hopelessness for various reasons. This
chapter will specifically examine operational, financial, and other factors seen by media practitioners as hampering the growth of ethnic media.

Along with ethnic media’s operational and growth-related challenges, its role and influence in either integrating or further socially isolating its audiences must also be analyzed. There are several studies that support the theory of ethnic media assisting with the integration of immigrants into mainstream society (Jeffres 2000; Katz, Matsaganis, and Ball-Rokeach 2012; Kong 2013; Lin 2006; Murray, Yu, and Ahadi 2007; Sherry and Catherine 2007; Shi 2009; Ojo 2006; Yu 2012). Nonetheless, concerns about the potential for ethnic media to create or exacerbate social segregation of its audiences from the rest of mainstream society are also found in the literature (Hafez 2013; Karim 2002).

In addition to these issues, ethnic media’s preferences and choices regarding content must be considered—for example, the balance (or imbalance) created between news and information from countries of origin versus news and information relating to local and mainstream communities. Moreover, how and to what extent gender-related content is selected and presented via ethnic media remains a significant theme. South Asian communities are accused of patriarchal practices, while on the other hand antiracist and feminist scholars criticize the Canadian state and policies for inculcating and reinforcing patriarchy among immigrants from third world countries (Bannerji 2011; Razack 1998; Thobani 2007). In this context, ethnic media vis-à-vis gender will be analyzed in light of the data from the interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study. This chapter will include the voices of female media practitioners along with their ethnic communities’ concerns about gender issues in BC’s South Asian ethnic media landscape.
Chapter 4 demonstrated the historical influence of religion in South Asian ethnic media-making. In the post 9/11 context in Canada and the USA, religion has become a central discourse in both public and academic discussion. Hence, religious influence is also analyzed, and its pros and cons for ethnic media organizations and audiences considered. Overall, this chapter highlights some of the challenges and limitations faced by ethnic media, as well as indicators of its future growth and development.

Quality, Ethics, and Professionalism in Ethnic Media

My research reveals that ethnic media’s role in the integration of its audiences depends on the quality and resourcefulness of ethnic media. Although there is no formal forum to monitor the quality of ethnic media (Lindgren 2011), participants raised many concerns about originality, quality, and ethics related to ethnic media content. Print media sources were criticized for copying and pasting content without contextualizing the information, while some broadcast media sources did not observe professional ethics in regards to live programs. Some of the radio talk shows and their hosts were criticized for taking sides and presenting content with an opinionated or biased slant. They were also blamed for presenting programs on sensitive topics without undertaking the appropriate amount of research and homework. Moreover, emotionally charged audience members in live call-in shows were seen as presenting a threat to the overall quality of ethnic media. Some of the talk show hosts were reported as unskilled non-professional journalists who lacked the skills to control and mediate the show in an unbiased way. Arun Verma shared his experience of some of these radio talk shows:

It has happened . . . where the ethnic radio stations were sort of at war with each other and they were really throwing choice [i.e., curse] words on the radio, which
CTRC should have censored. But they didn’t because of the lack of knowledge . . . of the language. But, I guess sometimes in the name of ethnic radio stations [ethnic languages] these people cross boundaries, which they shouldn’t.

In contrast to the above criticisms, ethnic media groups and outlets equipped with knowledge, experience, resources, up-to-date technology, and trained personnel were considered credible and popular among their audiences. Both media practitioners and audiences pointed out quality of content and professionalism as interrelated and significant factors for the growth of ethnic media. When asked about the reasons for poor ethics among some ethnic media sources, research participants identified lack of education, skills, and resources, as well as political affiliations as major contributing factors. Sandeep Singh identified the kind of multitasking usually performed by the owners of small media organizations as a major factor hampering the quality of their productions:

[In the case of small media organizations, the] editor also performs as reporter, salesperson, and distributor. It’s [a] peon-cum-GM [job], so their span of attention is short. They have to prepare the paper or the show while running around [soliciting] for ads from the ethnic business community. Due to multitasking by one person, it is not possible for them to focus their attention [on quality] so they just do the [bare minimum] necessary to keep going in the business.

Many ethnic media practitioners interviewed for this research were qualified and skilled, and had many years of professional experience in the field of journalism; a large number of these ethnic media practitioners pointed out lack of journalistic training and background as a significant reason for lack of quality in ethnic media. Media practitioners emphasized the need for training and education of journalists, especially those conducting live shows on radio stations. Arun Verma explained:

If they [ethnic media practitioners] are not educated themselves how can we expect them to educate the community, which is relying on them? Pay scale is not the issue, I know there are some people in . . . ethnic media who are making much
more than the people working in mainstream media but they need to educate themselves.

Contrary to Arun Verma’s above argument, Sandeep Singh asserted that financial challenges were partly responsible for deteriorating or low quality ethnic media. According to him, many South Asian radio stations were charging their guests for conducting interviews with them, which he considered unethical. He feared that having guests who have paid to come on ethnic media could lead to partial and singular perspectives, thus compromising the quality of the content. As related in Chapter 5, Singh also considered that the fact that many ethnic print media products were available free of cost had a negative impact on their quality, since lack of financial resources made print media producers more likely to rely on copy-and-paste journalism. This problem of poor quality content associated with copying and pasting news from other sources were reported as being worse among print media sources as compared to broadcast media sources. In the case of broadcast media, lack of research and poor presentation skills on the part of talk show producers and presenters rather than lack of originality in terms of content were identified as core issues.

Some media practitioners, like Elvis Lal, mentioned the potential encroachment and in/direct influence of the South Asian business community on ethnic media as a potential issue that might compromise media ethics and quality. Predictably, the gradual and steady financial growth of ethnic businesses has benefited South Asian ethnic media. Arun Verma asserted that the overall economic growth of South Asian communities has earned these communities increased respect and acceptability in mainstream society, and as a result, mainstream corporate companies as well as local ethnic businesses were gradually beginning to invest in ethnic media by advertising their products in ethnic
languages. Yet (as in the case of mainstream media corporations) ethnic media’s nexus with the business community was considered a growing challenge, at times hindering impartiality and fairness in media content; Lal shared his opinion that some journalists at times seemed to be “favoring someone [in terms of coverage] because the guy gives them ads from within their community.” Preetam Kaur elaborated:

If we have any news against an advertiser, the management sometimes gets pressure to skew that news. Management would know that the news is correct, still they would ask us to re-verify the news or omit the name of the person or business or twist the news or air it one time only, not to repeat it, that kind of things.

Small ethnic businesses in particular seemed to rely on ethnic media for their growth and expansion, resulting in a different kind of relationship than bigger businesses had with ethnic media. Khizar, an FGD participant, elaborated on the nature of this relationship, saying mutual reliance on one another for financial stability resulted in “mutual ties” between ethnic media and small businesses. Many media practitioners confirmed the potential influence of advertisers, the business community, and prominent members of their communities on ethnic media. Elvis Lal asserted that he would “keep [his] lines open” to get news stories but he would not mingle with the general public or attend big social events to avoid encountering any external pressure related to his newspaper’s content and agenda. Zameer Ahmad felt the influence and pressure of his community in subtle ways; according to him, his media content, including advertisements, had to be in line with the teaching of Islam, hence he could not advertise any non-Halal businesses. To do so could jeopardize his circulation, given that he circulated the majority of the copies of his paper in one of the Central Mosques of Metro

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72 Actions that are taken according the principles of Islam are considered Halal. For example, the slaughtering of animals in a specific, prescribed way would be Halal, while consuming alcohol would be non-Halal.
Vancouver. Satnam Singh, Leela, and Sher Singh also confirmed the historical influence of Gurdwara on ethnic media due to the Gurdwara’s active financial support of ethnic media; according to these practitioners, this influence had gradually changed/reduced because of the new influx of financial support from the expanding business community and also because of polarization\textsuperscript{73} in the management of Gurdwaras.

Small ethnic businesses also seemed to rely on ethnic media for their growth and expansion, thus making for a different kind of relationship than bigger businesses have with media. Khizar, a participant, elaborated on the co-dependent nature of the relationship: “The small businesses of South Asian communities are also relying on ethnic media and they are connected as well, they have mutual ties with each other.”

Clearly, there was a need-based relationship between ethnic businesses and ethnic media; the challenge was balancing the relationship to maintain quality and media ethics. Overall, concerns of research participants about media quality and ethics revealed that in order for ethnic media to grow and gain respect in the communities they serve, they need to improve their quality. Almost all ethnic media practitioners confirmed having mechanisms in place to collect feedback with the goal of improving their services.

Leela’s narrative below exemplifies what most media practitioners shared:

\begin{quote}
We have our website; we are also present on social media, through which we know how many listeners we have, what . . . they like, and what they want to listen to. We have a marketing manager in our office who watches this feedback continuously. She researches, she studies, and she also sends our street teams [out] to inquire from the people what they like and what issues are in demand.
\end{quote}

To ensure quality productions, Leela and Satnam Singh asserted that they hired professional staff to perform various tasks at their radio stations. Leela explained that her

\textsuperscript{73} “Polarization” in this context refers to the diversity in ideas and practices among people of one religious group.
radio station hired graduates of The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT),
and Anterpreet followed the same practice at her TV station. In general, quality,
professionalism, and media ethics seemed to be major concerns among media
practitioners as well as audiences. Participants demanded active yet supportive
involvement of the CRTC for the growth and overall maintenance of the quality of ethnic
media. Anterpreet demanded ethnic media follow the guidelines of the CRTC—the central
and exclusive body for regulating media in Canada—to avoid non-professionalism:

I think all the radio stations should be answerable and accountable to the CRTC
and to their communities for presenting professional journalism [even if they are
technically answerable to the FCC]. . . . [I would like to say to] South Asian
media that we work in Canada now, so we should adhere to journalistic ethics
here; [ethnic media sources] can give news from their community perspective, but
should give perspectives from everyone, it shouldn’t be a one-sided story.

In general, ethnic media practitioners and audiences both seemed aware of the
community’s demands that ethnic media present balanced news, quality content, and
relevant and timely information. These demands imply that South Asian ethnic media
audiences rely on their media with a growing hope for it to become a bridge between
their communities and mainstream society.

**Ethnic Media and Gender**

*Gender and Mainstream Media: Insensitivity or Oversensitivity?*

There seemed to be a profound connection between issues such as violence against
women, honour killings, and cultural practices, and the negative portrayal of South Asian
communities in the mainstream media (Jiwani 2006, 2004; Thomas 2015; Zaidi et al.
2014). During this study, as soon as a question relating to women’s issues was asked,
participants would start or end their discussion around the issues of violence and honour
killings. This fact clearly revealed that the concept of honour killing is solidified as a fixed notion in the minds of both media practitioners and their audiences. Agnew (1996) argues that the nature of violence and the response to it should be redefined according to the cultural settings in which women are situated. Antpreet raised the issue of different cultural interpretations of “honour,” and criticized the mainstream media for linking honour in South Asian communities with gendered violence, when the media lack contextual and cultural knowledge of what honour means to these communities:

I think the issue of honour killing in our community is complicated... like we feel very bad when our children do not obey us, our prestige and ego gets hurt. But they [mainstream media] don’t even know what “honour” is. That’s the difference. When it comes to honour killings in our communities, it is a big blow because there is an image of our communities that we kill our women.

All too often, public and state policies are not supportive of women’s specific needs; rather, they inculcate further patriarchal beliefs and behaviors against women. The narratives of participants in this study suggested that the mainstream media’s portrayal of South Asian women as oppressed, docile victims of violence was part of a larger campaign of misrepresentation. Historically, South Asian women have been portrayed as passive, submissive victims in Western literature as well as media, and nothing much has changed in that regard (Dua 2000a; Handa 2003; Jamal 1998). As discussed in Chapter 4, national mainstream media’s coverage of Romana Manzur’s case allowed Canada to present as a saviour, stepping in to help South Asian women figured as victims. Razack (1998) highlights an interesting and thought-provoking argument about racism embedded in the handling of refugee cases of women. Criticizing the production and control of knowledge about the first world versus the third world with reference to Edward Said’s work, Razack argues that the way sociological and anthropological knowledge has been
produced has led to the concept of two separate worlds and dictated their interpretation. The first world is portrayed as civilized, developed, and sophisticated, while the third world is presented as ignorant, uncivilized, and underdeveloped. One of the crucial issues in third world nations is patriarchy and violence against women. Razack’s work deconstructs the nexus of gendered persecution and racialization by examining refugee cases filed by women from third world countries, according to which the women’s right to apply for asylum is based on an imperialist notion (or condition). These women must prove they are suffering under their nations’ patriarchal and “uncivilized” conduct—conduct by definition foreign to the Western first world. This condition racializes policy and process to grant gender-based asylum rights to women, while at the same time allowing Western nations to play a saviour role (Razack 1998).

Another recent example of this narrative is the demeaning of the hijab and/or niqab as worn by a selective group of Muslim women, which figures Muslim women as a homogenous group who are not aware of their rights and cannot fight for them and thus justifies state intervention and establishment of a dress code for Muslim women (Jiwani 2004; Thomas 2015). Challenging the legitimacy of the hijab and niqab reinforces the notion of Western supremacy and by extension the right of Western states to intervene in and take control of the cultural practices of the Other. Mainstream media has played a central role in portraying Muslim women living in Canada as homogenous, victimized, and “unproductive,” and hence in need of reforms to rescue them (Abu-Lughod 2013; McAndrew and Bakhshaei 2012; Razack 2008).
Ethnic Media’s Response to Gender-related Issues

South Asian immigrant women’s experiences of patriarchy after their immigration remain an under-researched topic. As explained by Anterpreet above, another pertinent question is whether mainstream media appropriately understands the intricate cultural codes affecting different communities while presenting “expert opinions” on the issues. Ahmad et al. (2004, 263-264) argue that “despite growing numbers and rigid patriarchy in the culture of origin, South Asian immigrant women remain under researched from a feminist perspective at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, culture, and residency status.” Their study suggests that if women do not perceive or understand their abusive situations, it is less likely for them to seek help for themselves or for their abusive partners. Yet participants of my study, especially female participants, questioned and challenged patriarchal notions and ideology, demonstrating awareness and resilience.

Intersecting factors such as women’s beliefs, age, educational level, employment status, language skills, years of stay in Canada, identity as South Asians, and personal experiences were critical in affecting their perceptions about patriarchy. Although some senior women did not agree with the “open lifestyle” of young South Asian women, Sujata, a senior woman participant, shared her experience of taking it upon herself to challenge a radio advertisement reflecting the patriarchal tradition of dowry:

I called the radio station once to suggest they change their ad. The ad was about a public storage facility. In the ad, the husband teased the wife that “Your dad didn’t give me a big piece of land in dowry. How do I arrange a big place for storage?” I told them that no one talks in such a rude manner with their spouses nowadays and they need to change the ad. I think they removed that ad later because I haven’t heard that ad anymore.
Sujata’s narrative reveals that the interactive nature of ethnic media, which allows for the reception of feedback from audiences, could provide an opportunity to challenge traditional patriarchal values.

One consequence of mainstream media’s tendency to stereotype South Asian immigrant communities is the potential to generate a climate of denial in these communities (Siapera 2010). In other words, mainstream media’s negative portrayal of South Asian immigrants could inculcate a defence mechanism among these communities, who—under the weight of societal pressure and the fear of increased isolation and persecution—might understandably be tempted to deny the gender injustices in their communities. Lal’s narrative explicates how this vicious circle of stereotyping, denial, and further stereotyping has played out in Canada over time:

[Historically], if you were not white or Christian, you were a bad person. It was [Canada’s white] tradition, “Oh, all these people are bad,” stereotyping, but what made it worse in the community was the denial [of violence against women], so when these communities deny it, people say “Oh, see he is denying [violence]” [i.e., linking this denial to his color/race].

With regard to how best to address violence against women, and ethnic media’s role, participants had mixed responses. While the majority of them agreed that ethnic media should highlight and prioritize violence against women as a major part of their content, some of them were anxious to emphasize that this issue was not specifically associated with their communities. They emphasized that women of all communities and cultures were encountering violence as a significant issue. This identification of violence against women as a mainstream issue clearly indicated participants’ fear of exclusively stigmatizing their own communities. Nevertheless, ethnic media’s presentation of gender-related issues received criticism, as shared below.
A 2011 news story by Aulakh reported partial and biased framing of a marriage fraud case on ethnic radio in Toronto, claiming the majority of coverage favoured the male spouse. According to her, ethnic radio coverage seemed to blame the sponsored bride who left her husband within a few weeks of her arrival in Canada, accusing him of domestic violence. The media, including newspapers and radio, sided with the husband without consulting and seeking the wife’s point of view, which Aulakh (2011) reported as a partial, biased, and patriarchal practice in ethnic media. Raising media practitioners’ understanding and sensitivity in regards to gendered issues was considered among research participants to be a crucial step for ethnic media to become egalitarian and responsive to their communities’ needs in terms of gender-related content. Arun Verma said:

For example, there have been a few cases where some elderly gentleman or some people have raised objections about our girls being too liberal here. Well, first of all, who gives them the right to be the judge? So when these issues are raised I think they are very naively handled [in ethnic media] and people who raised these issues are also not qualified enough [to deal with these issues in a non-biased way].

Saman, an FGD participant, shared her experience of having her phone call cut off while she was taking a pro-woman stance during a live call-in talk show on ethnic radio. She emphasized the need for increased gender sensitivity for ethnic media practitioners in Canada:

I . . . had this experience twice; the hosts were talking about domestic violence and I called with research data to show that there was domestic violence issue in our community. Both of them cut off my calls because they didn’t agree with me. Only one radio station with a female journalist invited me to talk about this issue; she even offered me the opportunity to do a program on domestic violence every month. I find a lot of bias against women, especially South Asian women [among ethnic journalists]. I find there is a lack of education among [radio] talk show hosts and an unawareness of how to correct their callers’ information. Professionalism is a huge issue.
It is evident that lack of professionalism supplemented by lack of gender sensitivity could create negative effects, specifically in broadcast media. Yet a considerable number of participants stated that they would consult ethnic radio for detailed news about ethnic issues in their communities, including violence against women. Bano pointed out that this was partly due to the silence of ethnic newspapers on issues of violence against women, saying, “Domestic violence against women is highlighted very well on [ethnic] radio, but I don’t see newspapers highlighting it as much as they are supposed to.”

Female journalists who participated in this study expressed that women’s issues are a top priority in terms of their selection of media content. Female media practitioners who worked as frontline journalists—reporters, talk show hosts, and editors—confirmed taking specific interest in and highlighting issues relating to women. It was also revealed that these female journalists had close linkages with female community activists, and often engaged these women as part of their programming. Mukhtar Singh shared that female journalists were quick to respond to issues pertaining specifically to women, saying “some female journalists do these kinds of social programs to educate women.”

When asked why only female journalists had this as their priority, he responded that it was culturally more suitable for female journalists to connect with female audiences, as women would feel safer and more comfortable sharing with female journalists as compared to male journalists.

While news related to women remained a central point of discussion, research participants were silent in general about ethnic media’s representation of LGBTQ people and issues. Only one of the ethnic media producers, Naseem was vocal about the lack of representation of LGBTQ issues in ethnic media, saying:
There is a big void there. I think there isn’t much representation of LGBTQ issues on ethnic media. But, it is changing slowly. There are people like [Mr. Singh], who often calls me and raises LGBTQ issues on ethnic media.

Naseem asserted that, in general, South Asians still stigmatized LGBTQ identity and did not feel comfortable talking about and accepting the existence of LGBTQ people in their communities. As an example, he explained that while a film with LGBTQ content was shown in Vancouver, he and his team were unsuccessful in attempting to release the same film in the City of Surrey—a city with a high ethnic concentration of South Asians—due to pressure from South Asian communities. It is worth mentioning that while media practitioners with a modern outlook mentioned women, youth, seniors, and even refugees as marginalized groups in their communities, none of them (aside from Naseem) mentioned the LGBTQ population or their issues. Naseem identified the reasons for this lack of representation of LGBTQ people as stemming from religious groups, mainly Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim conservative groups. He mentioned subtle resistance from religious institutions when it came to bringing up LGBTQ issues in South Asian communities. It is significant to note that LGBTQ of color are reported to face racism when reaching out for support outside of their communities (Burtch et al. 2015, 158), thus making situations even tougher for them as a marginalized group. Though criticizing the failure of ethnic media to incorporate LGBTQ voices, however, Naseem seemed hopeful for slow and gradual change in communities’ attitudes. He considered youth—along with LGBTQ activists—as catalysts for social change, and believed in the possibility of increased non-judgmental and neutral treatment and representation of LGBTQ populations by ethnic media in the future.
In order to understand the response of ethnic media to gender-related issues, the starting point was to gather information about gender dynamics within ethnic media organizations. It was revealed that while a considerable number of women were working at ethnic media organizations, very few owned ethnic media organizations. According to the informal information gathered at the time of data collection, only a few women owned ethnic media organizations including radio stations, TV shows, and newspapers. The vast majority of ethnic media organizations were owned and managed by men. It appeared that, in the case of small level media organizations, such as newspapers, women of the family would help the male owner to run the business. For example, Zameer Ahmad confirmed that his wife and daughter worked as editors and designers for his paper; he also added that his daughter had significant influence in his topic selection for editorials. His daughter was raised in Canada and had gone to both high school and college in this country. Conversely, in the case of another newspaper published in Urdu, a woman served as the owner but was not involved in editing or newspaper compilation directly.

The majority of the media practitioners interviewed agreed that equal gender representation in ethnic media was necessary, but the extent to which this was practiced varied. Media owners claimed to have a considerable number of women involved in their respective media organizations as employees, while other media practitioners confirmed putting gender-related issues at the top of their agenda. Elvis Lal stated that he was the first one to raise the issue of violence against women in South Asian communities at the
time when no other ethnic media “had the guts to write about these issues.” According to him:

Still there is a lot of bias against women [journalists], still there is a gossip about women in media which I hear and which I don’t encourage, like if a woman does well, they start spreading rumours against her: “Oh she is flirting with so and so, she does this, she does that.” That’s really horrible in this community and it’s also present in the white [media] community, but out here, it’s just too much. That kind of bias, they can’t see a successful woman, that’s the problem.

The narratives of female media practitioners were richly illuminating in terms of gender dynamics in the landscape of ethnic media. According to Leela, being a woman in a male-dominated profession had posed serious challenges for her ever since the beginning of her career in the 1970s, especially as a media owner. These challenges included the constant pressure to demonstrate competency at a hyper-competitive level due to (gendered) double standards. She stated, “Because you are a woman, you have to work double or triple as compared to a man, to raise your voice, to convince people to listen to your point of view.” As explained in Chapter 4, Leela’s interviewing of Indira Gandhi during the politically tense 1980s had a particularly negative impact on her media organization; not only did she lose advertisements for her radio and TV productions, but she also watched her community support evaporate. She felt her identity as a Hindu woman journalist played a significant role in the way the South Asian community responded to her during this time:

There are two kinds of species in this community: male and female. Females have a lot of support for me because I have a special feeling for them and I work for them so I always got their support. . . . People did support me . . . my own community [Hindu] didn’t support me, but the rest of the communities did help me. Because they [i.e., the Hindu community] were scared of the [conservative] Sikh community that they would also have to face the same backlash that I had to face.
The above quote illuminates numerous intersecting realities for Leela as a journalist, a Hindu, and a professional immigrant woman. The fact that she was able to gain support from women during this crisis in her life and career reflects her connection with the women in the community. This support could reflect a desire on the part of women for women to progress and flourish in South Asian communities, irrespective of political and religious divisions. Anterpreet, a female journalist who had entered ethnic media more recently, asserted that it was a requirement to work “like a man” in order to gain success in ethnic media. She said:

If you work in media, you have to be as strong, intelligent, responsive, proactive, and brave as men; otherwise as a woman you cannot work in journalism. Women who are not smart and strong, they cannot survive in the media.

Anterpreet also encountered resistance and negative feedback from her community in regards to her career choice. According to her, many people condemned her decision to join the media as a profession and warned her she might lose respect in the community. Persevering in spite of this negative feedback, she was able to prove her abilities and establish herself as a professional journalist, and seemed content with her career choice. She shared:

I know that there are still some people in my community who do not consider my job respectable. They have the . . . mentality that, “Look at this woman, she’s wandering around day and night [for her job].” But there are also people who are educated and they are in big numbers now; they appreciate my work and my job. My family and my husband are very supportive; without their support I wouldn’t have been able to excel to this point in my career.

In general, female journalists faced issues of a different and distinct nature compared with their male counterparts. Anterpreet received criticism for joining ethnic media at all as a woman, while Leela had to fight for survival against her South Asian (male) ethnic media competitors. Preetam Kaur shared another challenge she confronted as a female
journalist. According to her, selective audiences within South Asian communities criticized her for organizing frequent radio talks shows focusing on issues relating to women; this resulted in her facing pressure from her management. She explained:

My bosses will receive phone calls [criticizing me] and they would tell me, “Preetam don’t do too many shows on women’s issues.” Or sometimes my bosses would be told in their social circles . . . gossip about my shows that “Preetam was again doing a show on women today” so they would tell me again, “Don’t do too many shows on women’s issues.” I couldn’t get it . . . [I was thinking], “Then what type of shows I should do?” I do not do shows on fashion or clothing or makeup. I realized that people might be taking it wrong so I twisted my approach. I still talk about the same issues but now from a different angle.

Interestingly, all of these three women were highly educated, living an affluent lifestyle, and elaborated for their work in their communities, yet their experiences captured various challenges that came along with their identities as racialized female journalists. All three nevertheless vowed to maintain a commitment to producing programming on issues pertaining to women, and working to transform the perceptions of their communities. Notably, Anterpreet identified the relatively low level of participation and feedback from female audiences as part of the problem, contributing as it does to the overall lack of representation of educated and vocal South Asian women in ethnic media:

I would say that our women have low levels of participation in the ethic media. More women should participate in media; until they raise their voice, no one will be able to advocate for them.

In general, although women journalists and media practitioners existed in significant numbers in the South Asian ethnic media landscape, they did not hold decision-making positions. Anwar raised an interesting point with regard to gender balance in the ethnic media ownership. He elaborated: “It is important to note who owns the media. Apart from a few female journalists, all the South Asian ethnic media is owned by South Asian men.” Very few women owned ethnic media outlets, the majority working as employees
(e.g., reporters, editors, or talk show hosts). Women working in small, family-oriented media outlets had more influence on content selection as compared to female journalists working for established (mostly broadcast) ethnic media organizations. Nonetheless, these findings cannot be generalized given the small sample of female journalists interviewed for this study (i.e., three journalists in total). A comprehensive and dedicated research study could productively explore the issues confronted by female journalists in more depth.

**Future of Ethnic Media: Challenges and Opportunities**

**Representation of Youth**

The future of ethnic media depends on various interconnected factors. Of these, permanent and loyal media audiences, quality services and products, and financial sustainability comprised the most significant themes emerging from the data. Lay and Thomas (2012, 380) argue that “if language is preventing a new generation of users from accessing BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) media content, then it seems likely that this important aspect of the staging of difference will become obsolete.” Media practitioners admitted their general failure to attract and retain South Asian youth as audiences of ethnic media. Almost all practitioners showed a concern for this lack, and shared some of the challenges they faced in engaging youth as their consumers as well as the strategies they undertook to address these challenges.

Before analyzing the challenges and strategies associated with engaging youth with ethnic media, I would like to begin by presenting the perceptions of participants, specifically media practitioners, about issues being faced by South Asian youth in Metro
Vancouver. Understanding their perceptions could be helpful in assessing their preparedness to strategize youth involvement. The majority of FGD participants also presented their perceptions and experiences on this subject, as community members as well as parents. In general, all media practitioners raised the issue of gang violence among South Asian youth in Metro Vancouver. Satnam Singh identified the increasing number of South Asian youth involved in drug-related activities as a growing concern:

Gang violence and domestic violence are two of the major issues [in our community]. Well, ethnic media could do better [in terms of dealing with these issues]. Now, most of the drug-related violence is committed by an age group between sixteen and twenty-eight. So most of the killings of youth are happening there. I think we need to focus on youth oriented programs and that will help to deal with drugs and violence.

The majority of media practitioners emphasized the need to incorporate interesting and attractive content for second-generation youth in order to engage them with ethnic media. Zameer Ahmad asserted that ethnic media could play a role in clearing up the “misconceptions” youth might have about their communities—misconceptions these youth have internalized from watching mainstream media. He said, “The youth who came here during and after [the] 90s don’t read [ethnic] newspapers and that is the reason that they have many misconceptions about our community.” Nonetheless, ethnic media seemed to struggle with the goal of engaging young audiences. There were many reasons for the failure of ethnic media in this regard, and language appeared to be a major constraint.

Young FGD participants confirmed their inability to fully comprehend their parents’ ethnic languages. While some of them were able to understand spoken ethnic languages, the majority of them lacked reading/writing skills. There were some ethnic newspapers printed in English, which could provide a substitute for ethnic language print
media; however, young participants were not satisfied with the quality of these newspapers. Saleem reported that his children would often point out English language and grammar mistakes in a bilingual newspaper. Participants also emphasized the need to publish better quality, coloured storybooks in ethnic languages for South Asian children in Canada, as a strategy to attract youth to reading in these languages. Nonetheless, participants acknowledged financial and technical limitations might hamper this project.

In light of challenges related to writing and reading in ethnic languages, broadcast media could become the potential access point for youth within ethnic media. Yet participants argued that second-generation youth were not necessarily well versed enough in their ethnic languages to benefit from ethnic broadcast media. Some participants reported that second-generation youth depended on their parents as a source of information to translate and transmit ethnic news. Faizaan, born and raised in Canada, explained:

My mother reads and writes in Urdu. She is exposed to the local media in that sense. I will scan the ethnic media because she is attached with it. So I am familiar with what’s going on because of her but I am not getting my information from there unless I really need something; then I go there. By default I am using the mainstream media because that’s what is familiar to me, that’s more accessible to me.

Participants also asserted that youth were accessing news and information through smart technology (i.e., mobile devices) and hence were generally not interested in engaging with conventional media. Elvis Lal elaborated on the changing media priorities of youth:

The thing with the kids is, it’s not the paper but the Internet where they go. The problem even with the mainstream media as well is that youth just want [news] flashes; they don’t want to get into depth unless it’s interesting for them. What is more interesting for them is like some scandal or some teenager like that [Justin] Bieber guy. It’s like something very vague.
Despite limitations associated with lack of understanding of ethnic languages or changing technology in ethnic media, media practitioners and participants agreed that ethnic music was popular with and regularly consumed by second-generation youth. Radio show hosts played fusion music to attract youth, and almost all ethnic radio stations were offering youth-specific music programs. However, this was not considered sufficient. Feroz said:

“We have assumed that youth is only interested in music and songs. We never consider talking about their issues or about their future challenges. We just play music for them, create dancing beats for them but we never talk about their issues and problems.”

Some of the media practitioners, especially owners, outlined their strategies to attract youth to ethnic media. Leela and Satnam Singh used the strategy of creating ethnic radio stations operating in English to provide ethnic content in a mainstream language and thus attract the interest of South Asian youth. Leela summarized the reasons for having youth-specific radio programming:

“Our radio is only for youth, our spoken word is in English. This was a 100% planned effort. My son asked me, “Why don’t you look at the generation who was born here, the generation that speaks English but . . . are connected to their culture because of the music. Why don’t you cater to that generation?” So this station caters to new immigrants, to those who are not coming from [Indian] Punjab, they come from elsewhere from India or Pakistan and those who speak English but want to be connected with their culture. . . . Our listenership and audience are totally different, totally youth.

Sandeep Singh realized the need to connect with youth and thus made some strategic changes to his TV show, telecasted on a national TV network as well as on YouTube:

“There are no youth-based programs, despite the demographic changes. I have a youth counsellor talking about youth issues and how to address them and also how we need to talk to them in their language. I have a specific day in a week on which we talk in English and even the interpretation of religious scriptures is also done in English so we touch the nerves of the youngsters. Youngsters also come as guests in our program and we talk about expectations of elders from youth and also what do youth want and what are their challenges, why are they not fitting in the system.”
Another way to involve youth was to hire them as management and policymakers as well as content specialists such as reporters, editors, or anchorpersons. Leela, who has established an exclusive radio station offering services in English for South Asian audiences living in Metro Vancouver, has brought young leadership into the management of the radio station as well as hiring English speaking South Asian youth as frontline program presenters. Preetam Kaur expressed a wish to involve youth in policymaking at her popular radio station, though her organization faced some challenges in that regard:

Youth have very little role in programming . . . but the management is trying to fit a couple of them into programming and youth are also being targeted to enter programming through volunteer work. We want youth to join us; I will share one example with you that we wanted to hire a Punjabi/English speaking reporter who could speak both languages but we couldn’t find any and we had to hire a Hindi/English speaking reporter.

It is important to note that not all multilingual Punjabi youth would be targeting ethnic journalism as a career due to the size, income, and work culture (i.e., performing multiple tasks at a time) prevailing in ethnic media.

To summarize, it was revealed that the majority of ethnic media practitioners found it difficult to engage youth in their ethnic media productions, except in the case of music, and that too with limited scope. While ethnic media seemed to possess the potential to provide interactive space for South Asian youth to raise their issues in a safe, non-racialized, and non-judgmental environment, engaging youth as active audiences as well as ethnic media-makers emerged as a major challenge threatening the continuity and growth of ethnic media.
Fear of Diminishing: Future of Ethnic Media

While the owners of ethnic media were optimistic about the growth and expansion of South Asian ethnic media, frontline journalists seemed concerned about the future of their respective media organizations. Owners of established media organizations, especially radio stations, seemed satisfied with the growth rate of their organizations, both professionally and financially. They shared plans for expanding their media productions, both in terms of territorial expansion and in terms of offering media in an increasing variety of formats and languages. Elvis Lal emphasized the need to advance all three forms of media (i.e., print, broadcast, and Internet) to achieve comprehensive growth of South Asian ethnic media:

I see the future in all three: radio, television, and newspapers. I think the South Asian groups try to do all three components because that’s what the mainstream media is trying to do, is having all the components together, the Internet, the newspapers, the radio station, and television stations if they can manage it; they are trying to get all of it.

Leela and Satnam Singh acknowledged the need to develop ethnic media content targeting South Asian youth. According to them, presentation of content demanded by youth was different from conventional media presentation, and the development and delivery of youth-specific content needed to be on the agenda. Singh shared:

We recently got another FM station and instead of calling it [Punjabi name], we named it [English name] FM. That is going to be a mainstream radio [station], with talk shows, music, and programs all in English; that will be live on the Internet. We will do some programs targeted towards South Asian youth and population in English. The reason for listening to our station is the content. For example, a DJ in India or talk show host in India cannot understand the issues in Canada, so our hosts are local. . . . It’s the only way to get local information, from a local station.

Leela’s approach of engaging youth in the management of her English language radio station has also given her a rich opportunity to reach young South Asian audiences by
offering content that is relevant to them. While offering content of interest for South Asians in English was seen as a necessary approach to engage South Asian youth with ethnic media, retaining ethnic languages was also considered important for the growth and continuity of ethnic media. Participants expressed that as long as new immigrants were coming to Canada from South Asian countries and could understand the languages of ethnic media, ethnic media content delivered in ethnic languages would be relevant in Canada. In other words, one school of thought within ethnic media viewed presenting South Asian content in English as essential to create and grow new audiences, while the other school of thought encouraged designing specific content for youth in ethnic languages so that youth could be connected with their ethnic languages as well. Farhan Mehmood explained the concern of many ethnic media representatives:

I think one of the basic things is that we have to secure our [ethnic] language too and if we cannot do that then the ethnic media will not benefit our next generation; they will not stick to this media. The ethnic media will benefit only those who will be immigrating at that time [i.e., the next first generation of immigrants].

Technological advancement was identified as another challenge to the continuation and growth of ethnic media, specifically print media. The majority of media practitioners agreed that the access to media through smart technology (e.g., smart phones) has become increasingly popular in recent years; all the latest mainstream news and information are available online. Research shows that ethnic media sources have not been able to adapt to new technology at the same pace as mainstream media sources (Lay and Thomas 2012). Nonetheless, media practitioners seemed aware of the changing technological reality, with owners aiming to make their media accessible and available using smart technology. To this end, most of the radio stations were airing their
broadcasts online and their content was readily available on their websites. Preetam Kaur confirmed having her radio talk shows archived on her radio station’s website. Zameer Ahmad and Elvis Lal informed me that their newspapers were also available online, with some archived issues accessible as well.

**Financial Survival**

Financial survival and sustainability came up as one of the biggest challenges for South Asian ethnic media organizations, specifically small level media outlets. Print media seemed especially vulnerable, with many organizations struggling to maintain their operational costs. Radio stations, on the other hand, seemed to be performing well in terms of revenues and financial growth. At least one of the radio stations’ top managers informed me that they had more advertisers than available commercial time slots; as a result, their commercial slots were booked for many weeks in advance. Other radio station owners also showed satisfaction regarding their stations’ financial performance.

At the time of interviews, at least two South Asian radio stations were aired from Blaine, Washington, and were paying heavy transmission fees to the FCC. Their main source of income was through advertising revenues. Radio, being an interactive medium, is an effective and quick source of advertising for local and corporate businesses. I have observed that large corporate entities as well as government organizations (e.g., Fido, TELUS, Rogers, the RCMP, BC Housing, etc.) seem to have realized the advertising potential of ethnic radio, and have therefore begun purchasing ad slots on South Asian ethnic radio stations and airing ads in ethnic languages.

While radio stations were thriving, however, it was revealed that print media and TV productions were struggling to maintain financial growth. Small-scale newspapers,
mostly family-owned media organizations, were in a financial crisis, without any backup plans. Small media producers confirmed investing from their own pockets to maintain and sustain their media initiatives. This investment included money as well as unpaid time and services contributed by family members.

Newspapers serving the Muslim community were also bound by the advertisements of “Halal” products only, which limited the scope of financial growth for them. Zameer Ahmad mentioned that he could not “publish any non-Halal business advertisements in this paper, horoscopes, or any Bollywood [Indian cinema] stuff because this paper was distributed in the Mosques.” Circulation of newspapers was the major factor in establishing each paper’s share in advertising: the wider the circulation, the greater the chance of getting advertisements. Here again, Zameer Ahmad confronted exacerbated circulation-related restrictions. He explained that because his newspaper contained Quranic verses and religious materials, it could not be distributed at public places such as sky-train stations. He feared that people would throw the paper on the floor or to the roadside after reading it (a common practice among many readers) and this would be disrespectful to the religious material published in the paper. He found Mosques to be the most suitable and appropriate locations to distribute his newspaper, given that the majority of the community would gather for Friday prayers and it was easy for him to distribute a large number of copies within a few hours. He stated:

Due to lack of proper spots, it’s really hard to distribute even five hundred copies at the Muslim businesses; but in the Mosques, we easily distribute twenty-five hundred to three thousand copies in a few hours. We have about three thousand circulation; but when it’s Eid or some special event, our circulation is higher on those days.

Some media practitioners contested the circulation numbers claimed by print media owners. Due to the lack of any authentic and professional source verifying these
numbers, ethnic print media seemed to be exaggerating their circulation and viewership numbers (Karim 1998). Elvis Lal said:

Our circulation is fine; it’s more than the other papers but again the thing is, they [the other papers] lie. Whatever our circulation is, we say this is our circulation. The other papers say, they have five thousand circulation [laughing]. We could have told people we have fifteen thousand and twenty thousand, but ours is . . . ten thousand. We had to cut it down by one or two thousand because so many papers are not being picked up; people don’t pick up English papers that much, right.

Financial constraints negatively affected the ability of journalists and other workers to depend on ethnic media as a full-time career option. It seemed that the majority of ethnic media journalists, especially those hosting radio or TV shows, were working more than one job. Sandeep Singh confirmed that he had obtained his realtor’s licence as a second option for part-time work, while Mukhtar Singh, who hosted a radio show, worked simultaneously as a full-time community development officer at a community organization. Nonetheless, there were some media practitioners who worked for ethnic media organizations as full-time employees. They considered their income not competitive within the market but also realized the financial limitations of their ethnic media organizations. Preetam Kaur shared:

When it comes to pay scales, we are happy when we compare ourselves with other South Asian media. But if we compare our salaries with those of mainstream journalists, we might not be happy. This is one reason as well that many professional people feel frustrated in the South Asian local media after a while when they remain underpaid. I still think our media organization is much better; but we are not paid overtime even if we spend two or four hours extra. Our personal level relationship with our management becomes a problem; they also expect that we could work extra hours without any overtime payment.

It is significant to note that Preetam Kaur’s radio station performed well financially as compared to other ethnic media organizations. Sandeep Singh shared a few numbers and called the income incompatibility “an abuse” of ethnic journalists:
You get maximum $1500 to $2000 [a month] as a salary or the established journalist would get maximum $4000. These are the top-level journalists. You cannot manage a household on $1500 to $2000, so money is a major factor. Maybe in a few years the financial situation will improve in ethnic media. But for now, the media workers are fully abused.

Overall, financial challenges emerged as a growing concern for ethnic media practitioners, and it seemed that except for radio station owners, a great majority of the people connected with ethnic media were struggling financially. Participants felt that in order to maintain steady growth of ethnic media, a clear and inclusive financial policy was required.

**Representing “South Asian Communities”: Smaller Communities, No Voice, No Representation**

In Canada’s immigration scheme as well as in governmental policy debates and discussions, South Asia is indicated as a single region. Statistics Canada uses “South Asian” as an ethnic group. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC; French: Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes) awards licenses to ethnic media organizations using different terminologies and categories. The CRTC, a representative body of Canadian government, considers “South Asians” as a homogenous group, having somewhat similar cultures and backgrounds. A licensing policy document of the CRTC identifies “South Asian” as one ethnic entity (Commission 2014). This unified version of South Asia provides an easy and convenient way for the state to maintain uniform, inflexible, and monolithic policies towards all South Asians as one core group.

The policy approach described above ignores many factors that could create challenges for South Asian communities. South Asia is made up of many political systems, cultures, languages, histories, geographies, and religions. Even within South
Asian countries, there is a significant socio-economic class and caste divide which affects the perceptions, attitudes, and cultural practices of people living in rural areas versus urban areas. With a population of almost 1.67 billion\(^74\) in 2013, South Asia has a rich cultural and political heritage.

While India and Pakistan have ongoing serious political and military tensions between them,\(^75\) in terms of culture they share many similarities and often collaborate productively. For example, media productions, film, music, drama, poetry, and other art forms are consumed, celebrated, and at times co-produced on both sides of the border. This brief overview of the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan is included to provide historical context to the narratives of the participants regarding representation of all South Asian groups living in BC.

In general, participants agreed that South Asian ethnic media were currently being dominated by the Punjabi-Sikh\(^76\) community, both in terms of ownership and in terms of audience numbers. Hence, the media focused more on issues related to this community. Representatives of smaller ethnic communities reported a lack of representation of their communities in ethnic media, more specifically in broadcast media such as radio and TV. Criticisms related to lack of representation of smaller ethnic minorities was rooted in the fact that almost all ethnic broadcast media obtained their licenses by claiming to represent the “South Asian population living in Metro Vancouver,” as per the CRTC’s requirements. Amin Rahman shared:


\(^75\)More discussion and details on this subject can be found in the introductory chapter.

\(^76\)Punjabi-Sikh refers to the cultural and religious identity of immigrants from the Indian province of Punjab. I am using this term “Punjabi-Sikh” to reinforce the cultural and religious allocation of ethnic media and also because participants used this term frequently to identify this group.
In fact, what I see is that ethnic broadcast media focus on one particular language [i.e., Punjabi] and so they are serving one crowd only. But then there are other people too who are also South Asians. For example, they have seven days of programming; there should be some pockets for people of other languages like Bengali or other languages of South-Asian communities. When they submit their application [to the CRTC], they tell them that they have these communities to represent. But when they get their license, they only focus on Punjabi language.

The lack of representation of smaller ethnic minorities took multiple interrelated forms. Language was one important factor, with some participants feeling there did not seem to be enough media space for the many languages of minority South Asian groups such as Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Sindhi, and so on. Smaller ethnic minorities contended that either they were not given representation on mainstream media, or they were given time slots only for entertainment content such as playing music in their languages. Participants of Pakistani-Canadian descent complained about the negative portrayal of Pakistan by some media sources due to historical and political tensions in the South Asian region, arguing that in the absence of ethnic broadcast media owned by the Pakistani-Canadian community, they were vulnerable to this negative portrayal.

With regard to language, Bangladeshi-Canadian participants seemed the most disadvantaged group, given that their country of origin has been an independent nation in South Asia since 1971, yet they had very little representation in South Asian ethnic media. Bangladeshi-Canadians lacked resources to initiate and sustain their ethnic media on their own (Lay and Thomas 2012). Rozy, an FGD participant, shared that with the help of a fellow community member, she used to do a one-hour radio talk show on a community radio station; however, due to lack of resources, they first had to cut down the show’s duration to a half hour, and later to discontinue the program. Another
Bangladeshi-Canadian participant, Irum, expressed a desire to produce a program for radio or TV but was not sure about generating resources. Amin Rahman added:

Small communities’ media programs cannot run without government support if they have to pay from their own pocket. They can do it maybe once or twice, but they cannot run it through the whole year.

Urdu and Gujarati speaking participants mentioned that, other than the availability of time slots on broadcast media, type of content was also a huge factor restricting their participation in ethnic media. Urdu is a national and commonly spoken language in Pakistan. At the time of data collection, only a couple of Pakistani-Canadian anchorpersons produced and/or hosted radio shows; these shows were mainly presenting music and entertainment content. These anchorpersons could not talk about geo-political, economic or community issues, although Farhan Mehmood asserted that during his dedicated air time, he would try to boost the image of his country and community in a subtle way:

The management gave me a free hand to do the show but they informed me about the limitations and regulations. . . . In twenty-four hours of air time, Pakistan gets one hour, which is music and you can add news related to Pakistan. . . . I would discuss two personalities and two places from Pakistan on my show, in a positive manner. In news section too, I tried adding positive news, but important news will come first of course.

Farhan Mehmood’s emphasis on “positive news” revealed that there was a general sense of the negative portrayal of Pakistan in ethnic media. Hence, given a small window of opportunity, Mehmood tried to bring forth positive news about his country of origin.

Bano shared Mehmood’s opinion in this regard. She asserted:

As a Pakistani, I know that the Pakistani community is really annoyed with ethnic media for spreading wrong and baseless news about Pakistan. Even if there is small negative news related to Pakistan, the ethnic media would definitely highlight it so many times. We question: is it our media or is it our enemy’s media? There are many positive items of news related to Pakistan too, like the
woman filmmaker who won the Oscar or Pakistanis winning medals in games. Yet ethnic media wouldn’t give any news about these items. But if there is small negative news, they will make it big by highlighting it a lot. Sometimes they would organize a special talk show on that [negative news item, which] really hurts.

Arun Verma interpreted the issue as “lack of professional training” among some radio journalists. He blamed some anchorpersons for failing to undertake appropriate research before broadcasting information, saying:

The majority of the South Asian media personnel [working in the ethnic media] are not educated enough. That’s why they are unable to handle such sensitive issues. The majority of them don’t even know the geography of Pakistan for that matter; how could they be expected to say something about Pakistan? They don’t even know who the leaders are, so they have to educate themselves.

When media practitioners were asked about lack of representation and stereotyping related to Pakistan-related issues, they cited lack of participation from Pakistani-Canadian audiences/listeners in live programs as part of the problem. Media practitioners, especially live radio show hosts, asserted that they barely received phone calls from Pakistani-Canadian callers while the forum was open for all callers irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, or language. Yet some FGD participants who did call in to various radio shows pointed out that their calls were not entertained in a proper way. A frequent complaint was that they were not given appropriate time to complete their arguments, instead having their call cut off prematurely by the host—especially if they were addressing sensitive issues or women’s issues. As shared previously, Saman mentioned that her phone call was disconnected twice in a live show because she was challenging the host with research data.

Like Arun Verma, Saman complained that some radio hosts lacked professionalism and failed to do adequate research before addressing sensitive issues on air. This lack of homework could alienate different groups of listeners/audiences who did
not feel represented or included in the discourse. Farhan Mehmood’s narrative suggested that offering inclusive and positive reporting and content could welcome otherwise passive audiences to participate. According to him:

The station . . . realized that the number of Pakistani callers were much higher in shows where issues of Pakistan were discussed. I realized that there is . . . patriotism hidden in each Pakistani but they don’t generally get a platform where they can discuss their inner feelings.

Shi (2009) also questions the ability, interest, and qualifications of media practitioners to speak on behalf of their audiences across the board. She writes, “It is questionable to what extent the editors, producers and writers can speak for the audience, especially in a commercial outlet where the personnel often has close connections to elites and advertisers in both local and transnational settings” (Shi 2009, 599). Indian-Canadians, who have a huge presence in Metro Vancouver, have media hegemony in the South Asian region and as such have been criticized for “disproportionate representation of minorities, unfair professional practices, proliferating obscenity, and upper-caste and -class bias in both print and broadcast media” (Silverblatt and Zlobin 2004, 183).

In addition to the availability of time slots, professionalism, and a balanced approach to content and research to ensure equal representation, economic and commercial factors also played a crucial role in who got more air time. Both media practitioners and audiences asserted repeatedly that broadcast media required revenue via advertisement to run their operations. Since the majority of sponsorship and advertisement revenues were coming from the Punjabi-Sikh community, they were getting more prime air time on broadcast media. Naseem said:

Maybe it’s a numbers game. . . . Guajarati, Bengalis, Marathas, and Tamils are not represented on ethnic media. In terms of ethnic media representing all South Asians, they failed; they do not represent us all. Most of the Punjabi speaking
businesses advertise in the ethnic media; so ethnic media organizations do not see any benefit serving the smaller communities. They are serving the advertisers and the majority of the population is either Punjabi or Hindi speaking.

Interestingly, some media practitioners and audience members expressed the sentiment that ethnic media were not charity organizations having the responsibility to cater to the needs of all ethnic groups. They asserted that these organizations were business operations motivated by the need to maintain and grow their financial sustainability; hence, it was justified to guard their sources and means of profit. Hameed said:

An ethnic media organization is not a charitable institution who will give time to everyone regardless of profit, it’s a business. Also, people like me who feel comfortable in English, Urdu or Punjabi, we wouldn’t understand anything in other languages. So there should be some commonly spoken language for media programming.

The above argument raises an important question: do ethnic media in fact have the responsibility to cater to many ethnic groups within South Asian communities? The answer to this question seems to be twofold. On the one hand, since CRTC regulations require broadcast media to provide appropriate time slots to ensure representation of all ethnic communities in a given category, these media organizations are bound by the existing regulations to provide a fair and equitable chance at representation to all ethnic minorities. On the other hand, ethnic minorities need governmental support to sustain their ethnic media productions through not-for-profit, flexible, yet accessible mediums, (e.g., community radio stations and TV channels). As many participants of this study asserted, smaller communities cannot initiate and sustain ethnic media programs on their own; they would require governmental or non-governmental support to ensure continuity and quality of their productions. Without viable support from government and/or non-governmental organizations, it is not possible for all ethnic minorities to create a platform
where their voices could be heard and celebrated to strengthen their communities and their role in the larger society.

**Local News versus News from Countries of Origin**

In ethnic and multicultural media research, balance between content from immigrants’ countries of origin and content related to their host country is the subject of significant debate (Lay and Thomas 2012; Lin 2006; Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 2011). Oh and Zhou (2012) report that out of all the ethnic communities in Canada, Canadian Chinese are the biggest group consuming news about countries of origin as compared to local news. My study revealed that creating an appropriate balance between news related to countries of origin and local news seemed to be a growing concern among South Asian media practitioners as well as audiences. The participants generally acknowledged the importance of immigrants maintaining ties with their countries of origin; their relatives, extended families, physical assets, emotional bonds, and any political tensions in their countries of origin could affect their media use practices. For example, any natural catastrophe, political change, or pressing issue in countries of origin remained at the top of the agenda for most media practitioners, who confirmed devoting content and time slots especially to these issues. Most live talk shows airing on the radio in the mornings and evenings included live broadcasts from Indian Punjab to update the audience about major developments on any given day.

While a large amount of media content revolved around news and information related to countries of origin, however, many media practitioners and audience members also expressed a growing need for local news. Chattarjee, a college student, asserted that he watched mainstream and English media for local news and did not have much interest
in news from countries of origin. Yet the concept of “local” is subjective rather than
definitive. Lin (2006, 365) writes:

Locality is . . . a dimension of social value that is realized in material facts and
has potential for social reproduction. The “local” is thus seen as a fluid and
relational space. It is often referred to as a community, a village, a town, or even
a city.

Participants who immigrated to Canada with young children wanted their children to take
an interest in ethnic media as a “relational space,” a source of connection with their
cultures. Alam explained that he would often offer the local Urdu newspaper to his
children so that they could read about his culture. Sonia found that her children would
often question her practice of watching news from her country of origin. She said:

My daughters ask me, “If we don’t live there then why do you watch home
media?” We tell them that no matter wherever you live you have to watch news
about back home and news from around the world to know what’s happening.

Bano offered a reason for children’s lack of interest in ethnic media. According to her,
the mainstream media has destroyed the “image” of many immigrants’ home countries;
hence children do not take an interest in their parents’ country of origin. This interesting
suggestion points the way for more concerted research into how images and impressions
created and circulated by mainstream media shape perceptions among immigrants’
children about their parents’ countries of origin.

In general, all media practitioners asserted the importance of increasing content
about local life and happenings as opposed to focusing on news from countries of origin.
Sandeep Singh cautioned that lack of deeper absorption of local news into ethnic media
could jeopardize the very reason for and existence of ethnic media. For him, ethnic
media’s survival and future was dependent on increasing coverage of news from all
around the host country. He also linked immigrants’ lack of local knowledge and
resources with lower levels of local news and higher levels of media content from countries of origins. According to him, it was easier for journalists to present news about countries of origin because it did not require as much research whereas presenting local news and issues required a greater amount of deliberation, knowledge, and resources. Sherry Yu (2012), in her thesis on Korean ethnic media in California and Vancouver, also reported that media practitioners found it easier to copy and paste news from Korea in Korean than to grapple with text originally in English.

Many media practitioners seemed aware of the demand to increase local content, and claimed to be making changes in their content, giving greater priority to local news and information. With technological advancement, the majority of media including print and broadcast from countries of origin was accessible through Internet and satellite. Indeed, some participants shared their habit of regularly scanning the media of their countries of origin online. Some participants also confirmed watching live TV from their countries of origin through satellite channels. Given the increased accessibility of this online and satellite media, there is little need for local ethnic media to present excessive news and information from immigrants’ countries of origins. As mentioned previously, in the case of entertainment content, ethnic media in Canada is still dependent on content mostly produced in countries of origin. The development of the local South Asian entertainment industry to the point where it was in any way comparable to the entertainment industry in South Asian immigrants’ countries of origin would be an expensive and long-term project which would span far more than a few years or even decades. However, creating a balance between local news and (largely redundant) news
and information about countries of origin remains a challenge South Asian ethnic media must address.

**Religion and Ethnic media: Limitation or Opportunity?**

Religious content in ethnic media was found to be in high demand, yet it remained the most sensitive type of content. The production of religious content in diasporas led to two different outcomes for ethnic media producers; either it earned them dedicated audiences, or it created animosity against them. For example, in some situations, media practitioners felt pressured to remain consistent with “commonly acceptable” religious notions in their productions. In cases where they tried to offer a different perspective, they had to face consequences. Participants shared experiences wherein presenting content or hosting guests presenting a non-conforming point of view created difficulties for them. For example, as related in Chapter 4, Sandeep Singh experienced intense backlash from Muslim clerics after bringing a woman onto his show to talk about the “women’s perspective” on Islam. The South Asian Sikh population also had their share of religious media content-related issues. For example, Jabarjang Singh mentioned that Gurduwaras were becoming more politicized, and that people, especially those who were not practicing Sikhs, had little faith in Gurduwaras’ role in community development. This polarization also affected ethnic media’s impartiality, with an increasing number of journalists taking sides with either traditional or modern ideological groups. Lal said:

There is so much division of the [South Asian] society like [in the case of] the Air India thing. There were so called modern Sikhs and conservative Sikhs, there were like wheels within wheels. It was very complicated.
Lal believed that this division was still persistent in the Sikh community and that it had an influence on ethnic media.

The influence of religion on ethnic media included increasing polarization among South Asian immigrants in terms of their understanding of their religion. As Jabarjang Singh and Elvis Lal pointed out, not all South Asians considered religion as a public domain; instead, for many of them, religion was a personal matter. Yet some audiences would look critically on ethnic media for their published/broadcasted religious content. It was also revealed that ethnic media had to remain extra careful because their economic base and standing were not as strong as those of mainstream media. Even a small group of angry audience members could jeopardize their existence. The difference in the levels of caution adopted by mainstream versus ethnic media organizations in regards to content thus varied according to their respective size and resources. While the narratives of the ethnic media practitioners interviewed for this study revealed that they faced instances of backlash in response to religious content presented on their respective media, yet these findings should/could not be generalized in terms of their scope.

**Ethnic Media: Creating Integration or Social Isolation?**

One of the most significant debates concerns the role ethnic media plays in either integrating or isolating its audiences from mainstream society. While ethnic media is acknowledged to help develop social capital for new immigrants and their communities, it could also be investigated to socially isolate its audiences (Hafez 2013; Karim 2002). Ethnic media’s providing information about the host country in ethnic languages while meeting the entertainment and social media needs of immigrant communities entails a
danger of creating a cocooned environment in which all other communication spaces are ignored or not utilized. The habit of consuming *only* ethnic media could have some possible negative outcomes. For example, audiences might get a narrow or tunnelled view of their host country through the lens of their ethnic media, thus missing out on the viewpoints expressed via various mainstream media sources.

Before detailing my argument regarding ethnic media’s role in either promoting integration or socially isolating its audiences, I will present some of the discourses and practices of civic integration in different parts of the world. According to Kostakopoulou (2010, 2), “In official discourses at the national and, increasingly, at European levels, civic integration is presented as the required antidote to the alleged failures of multiculturalism and the alleged creation of ‘parallel worlds’ within societies owning to increasing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity.” The same practice is evident in North America, with “integration” becoming a popular substitute for assimilation. Sunera Thobani (2007, 112) argues that, historically, the concept of social integration was synonymous with “social control, which was a major function of the bourgeois state” to maintain patriarchal notions of family as a central unit and women’s racial purity as part of the nation-building project. Theories of assimilation and the “melting pot,” popular specifically in the US, were criticized for their unfair demands that immigrants be forced to adapt to the socio-cultural norms of their host countries. Hence, to replace these theories, the concept of integration was introduced.

Integration is a concept that implies a fair and equitable process by which to achieve social inclusion. However, there is a discrepancy in how the term “integration” is viewed and used among different stakeholders. It could be used to describe an approach
and policy guideline designed to help immigrants and marginalized populations gain social inclusion in any society. However, how this approach is translated (or not) in policy discourse determines the success, failure, or even redefinition of it. Literature on immigration suggests that immigrants struggle for years to get settled in Canada and in most cases they do not feel part of mainstream society even after several years of stay in Canada (Garang 2012; George and Chaze 2009; Li 2003; Qadeer, Agrawal, and Lovell 2010; Sakamoto 2007; Sidhu 2013). Clearly, there is a disconnect between how the concept of integration is used and understood in national discourse versus how it is implied and practiced in everyday life.

I suggest that integration is a substitutive term, used in reality to describe the assimilation, control, and management of immigrants. The term has different meanings for policymakers and implementers as compared to its potential beneficiaries (i.e., immigrants and disadvantaged groups). The narratives of research participants regarding the emergence of modern and South Asian ethnic enclaves in Metro Vancouver, as related in Chapter 6, provide a convincing example to support my argument. The majority of the participants agreed that with better economic performance, South Asian immigrants were able to buy properties in different areas of Metro Vancouver (e.g., the cities of Surrey or Abbotsford). Preetam Kaur exhibited insight about the process of integration when she observed that, looking around Surrey, she saw mostly South Asian people and businesses, and contended that “the mainstream communities are moving away from here; it’s a sign that they don’t want to interact with us.” Kaur noted that increased numbers of South Asians in cities like Surrey created an invisible discomfort for their white neighbours who preferred to sell off their properties and move out of the
area. Frazier (2001, 216), in the context of experiences of West Indians in New York, puts forward the analysis that racialization “for West Indians, [has had] many negative impacts, from residential steering and white flight that changes mixed-race to all-Black neighbourhoods, to lower quality schools and diminished services” and has impeded their socio-economic upward mobility. It was evident in the narratives of my research participants that immigrants had the desire to integrate both economically and socially; however, economic performance did not guarantee them access to social integration.

Let us discuss the meaning of integration in the context of Canada. Though integration is a problematized notion in the discourse of multiculturalism, it is still a commonly used term in academic discourse in regards to understanding and contemplating the notion of social and economic inclusion for immigrants. Civic integration is commonly understood as a process whereby immigrants and marginalized segments of society can become part of mainstream society. This simple definition draws many conflicting ideas and raises a number of questions. For example: who decides the strategies and steps of this process; how and to what extent can immigrants and marginalized populations participate in policymaking and the implementation of the process of integration; is there some measure for how mainstream society would be evaluated in their efforts to facilitate the integration of newcomers. And, lastly, are the expected outcomes of civic integration the same for all stakeholders? To effectively deconstruct the notion of integration from the perspectives of different stakeholders, these are some of the questions that must be answered. Suvarierol (2015), in the context of the Netherlands and Europe, explains the difficulty I also encountered in reaching a comfortable understanding of the term. He writes:
Civic integration trajectories have…become a tool of disciplining migrants so as to inculcate the virtues and skills that are desired of them as Dutch citizens. Dutch civic integration is contractualised in a way that is similar to workfare contracts in that the integration contracts call for individuals to take responsibility for themselves.” (Suvarierol 2015, 708)

The threads of integration are thus bound up with the grand theory of multiculturalism, essentially managing immigrants as a “different category” in the nation-building scheme.

Regarding the role of ethnic media, my argument is that, if integration is viewed as a process whereby immigrants and marginalized groups can have access to information and thus the means to gain social inclusion and build social capital, then according to my research some South Asian ethnic media sources are serving to aid in the integration of their audiences. Both media practitioners and audiences unanimously agreed that ethnic media sources were creating bridges between immigrants and the available resources in their communities. Their role became especially significant given the fact that mainstream media sources were neglecting or failing to respond to the informational needs of immigrant communities (Fleras 2009; Mahtani 2009b).

Conclusion

This chapter presented some of the main challenges and opportunities related to South Asian ethnic media’s future growth in Canada. Improving quality, originality, and journalistic ethics of ethnic media was considered a key factor in the positive integration of its audiences. Almost all participants agreed that only an ethnic media organization committed to professionalism and quality could represent their issues in an effective manner. They also criticized the role of mainstream media in homogenizing South Asian groups, portraying cultural practices in a negative light based on some selective cases.
from countries of origin and/or local communities, and remaining oblivious to the
cultural complexities of ethnic minorities living in Canada. The chapter revealed that
women were working as frontline journalists as well as editorial and management staff
and broadcast presenters, but very few of them were part of the top decision-making tier
of their organizations. Women had more influence in the making of media products by
small level, family-driven media organizations, but this involvement was at the personal
level. The sentiment was expressed by the participants that male journalists needed to be
trained to handle gender-related issues with greater proficiency and sensitivity.

As far as the future of ethnic media was concerned, several interrelated issues
were analyzed in this chapter. For example, increased participation of youth and female
audiences, financial support from governments and national level businesses, a balance
between news from countries of origin and local news, and minimizing external
influences in the making of ethnic media were highlighted as major factors affecting the
growth and survival of ethnic media. In order to make ethnic media a viable industry,
financial growth was also deemed a major challenge. Some of the smaller South Asian
communities like Bangladeshi-Canadians and Gujarati-Canadians demanded direct
support from government or non-governmental organizations to initiate and support their
ethnic media productions, which were almost non-existent due to lack of resources.

The chapter also analyzed ethnic media’s role in either integrating their audiences
into mainstream society or pushing them further into social isolation by restricting their
use of available media options. Participants showed a desire to be accepted as Canadians
without being judged for their selective characteristics. In this regard, South Asian ethnic
media seemed to be filling the vacuum to provide relevant information for settlement as well as integration strategies for immigrants.

Overall, participants expressed the view that South Asian ethnic media needs to ensure that it is meeting impartial ethical and professional media standards to support its growth and increased credibility in the future. In the absence of any professional, democratic, elected body of ethnic journalists, it is impossible to ensure quality checks as well as increased education and sensitivity training of journalists on various issues, including gender-related issues. The future of ethnic media thus lies in increased access to resources and better policymaking by and for ethnic media.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

“When you reach the end of what you should know, you will be at the beginning of what you should sense.” (Gibran 1967, 69)

Introduction

This research study was designed to gain an understanding of the role and relationship of South Asian ethnic media vis-à-vis its audiences, mostly South Asians living in Metro Vancouver, BC. The main objective of this research was to map out the range of South Asian ethnic media and ascertain its overall contribution to the lived experiences of South Asian immigrant communities. The qualitative study was based on in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and a workshop. The first part of this conclusion details key findings and responses to the stated research questions. This study is not devoid of limitations, and thus the following section elaborates some of these. The last section contains suggestions for future research as well as policy recommendations for ethnic media practitioners, government officials, and policymakers.

Key Findings

One of the crucial research questions sought an understanding of how South Asian immigrants perceived the role of mainstream society and media with regard to provision of non/inclusive, non/hierarchal, un/safe spaces to settle, integrate, and communicate in their host country (i.e., Canada). In general, participants including media practitioners as
well as audiences perceived a lack of inclusive, non-hierarchal, and accessible channels for communicating within mainstream society. Communication is different from information in that it is a two-way dialogue. It is an interactive process whereby the senders and receivers of messages have available channels and opportunities to interact with each other and give each other feedback. Most of the participants of this study found mainstream media linear and non-inclusive in its nature and design, specifically for South Asians communities. In other words, they asserted that they did not see themselves as part of mainstream media-making, either behind the screens or on them.

Mainstream media was criticized for being oblivious to the existence of ethnic minorities living in Canada, instead focusing mainly on the representation of Canada’s white population and their cultures. Some participants expressed concern that structural racism, fuelled by the effects of the “war on terror,” has played out against their communities via mainstream media. Participants blamed mainstream media for portraying negative images of their communities by highlighting selective negative news or events from their countries of origin or from their communities living in Canada. They asserted that the mainstream media did not give any coverage to positive achievements of their community members that could transform public opinion in their favour. In a way, lack of representation or negative presentation of South Asian communities in the mainstream media was in and of itself regarded as structural racism against South Asian communities living in Canada.

Access to and effective use of mainstream media was also hampered by the language skills of some members of South Asian immigrant communities. Participants explained that people, especially seniors, with limited English skills could not use
mainstream media. Despite a considerable number of growing ethnic groups, such as Chinese and South Asians, limited multicultural mainstream media was available in Canada. There were a few multicultural TV and radio channels allocating time slots to different ethnic groups for presenting programs in their ethnic languages. Not all of these were publically funded channels; media practitioners confirmed that they had to buy time slots for their privately produced shows. In general, the narratives of the participants revealed that mainstream media seemed indifferent to the needs of the growing population of South Asian communities in Canada.

This study, in response to the question of origin and history of ethnic media revealed that South Asian ethnic media initially sprang up due to the need for entertainment content, mainly Indian cinema and Pakistani drama. Religious institutions such as Gurduwaras also employed mass media technologies to broadcast their religious content in Greater Vancouver. Entertainment and religious content remained the central driving factors for the growth of ethnic media for South Asians during the 1960s and 70s. The changing political scene in India, including the increasing, at times violent, clashes between the Sikh community and the government of India as well as the rise of the Khalistan movement, increased the need for news and information from countries of origin, giving impetus to the proliferation of different formats of South Asian ethnic media.

Print media remained a popular source of information; however, radio—due to its rapid, live supply of news and information—quickly gained more popularity among South Asian communities. As a result, owners of print media shifted their business interests to initiate 24/7 exclusive radio stations. Some of the South Asian ethnic radio
owners claimed that due to the overall growth of South Asian businesses, radio stations have become self-sustaining entities, yet they faced challenges in acquiring licences from the CRTC. South Asian broadcast media owners claimed that increased market capacity demanded an increased number of licences for radio stations. Unfortunately, the CRTC did not issue as many licences as were in demand. Due to the restrictive policies of the CRTC, some of the ethnic radio stations chose to broadcast from Washington State in the USA, under the auspices of the FCC. The study revealed that some of the South Asian ethnic broadcast media owners did not have congenial relations with the CRTC. They cited the CRTC’s lack of clear and appropriate policy for issuing licenses to ethnic radio stations as the source of this tension.

A rift was evident among the media practitioners over the issue of licensing. Some of them were strong proponents of broadcasting under the CRTC’s licensing policy to ensure a high standard of quality and media ethics. This group also feared losing revenues to their competitors who were operating in Canada albeit licensed by the USA’s FCC. The other group, operating under the FCC, claimed increased demand for their radio stations and asserted that despite lacking a CRTC licence, they were able to successfully generate revenues for their radio stations. They complained of a lack of clear policy and responsible supervision on the part of the CRTC. Media owners showed their desire to negotiate with the CRTC to become part of the Canadian broadcasting scheme but feared a lack of interest from the CRTC’s side. Ascertaining the CRTC’s viewpoint regarding this issue was beyond the scope of this study, hence the findings are based on the experiences of media practitioners and owners.
Another research question examined the historical trajectory of the development of South Asian ethnic media as a significant social institution in the lives of South Asian communities in Metro Vancouver. The aim was to analyze through the lens of media practitioners how ethnic media-making was accomplished in various formats, using various technologies, approaches, and languages, and according to various socio-political-religious orientations. An additional goal was to gain an understanding of what made some of the ethnic media productions more popular than others. It was revealed that South Asian ethnic media offered versatility in terms of presentation formats, content, languages, technology, and approaches. South Asian ethnic media was available in all three major media forms (i.e., print, radio and TV productions). Radio seemed to be the most influential and far-reaching medium among the three types. Several reasons were identified in the study for the growing popularity of local ethnic radio stations; for example, live programming in a local context made radio appealing for its audiences.

Radio stations were offering different formats and types of programming, and attracting all stakeholders (except South Asian youth); they offered news, current affairs, and social, political, and religious content from local sources as well as countries of origin around the clock, with live commentary by the hosts. Talk shows with a live call-in option were very popular and received large numbers of calls during the shows. In addition to 24/7 radio stations, there were limited private TV shows produced for multicultural TV channels by some of the media practitioners. Purchasing air time on TV seemed to be an expensive option with much more effort involved. Moreover, satellite TV transmissions from countries of origin seemed to dominate TV as a medium.
Media quality and ethics remained central concerns for most of the participants. Print media received the most criticism in terms of violating copyright and publishing cut-and-paste materials with little originality. Broadcast media, especially radio with live programming, was also criticized for failing to adhere to journalistic ethical standards demanding the provision of fair, balanced, and accurate information. While this study was focused on Indo-Canadian, Pakistani-Canadian, and Bangladeshi-Canadian communities, it was revealed that Indo-Canadian and predominantly Punjabi media owned by the Sikh community comprised the leading ethnic media in Metro Vancouver. The relatively large size of Metro Vancouver’s Sikh population justifies this lead; however, other groups that were considerable in size did not have the same ethnic media activity and output. For example, Pakistani-Canadians made up the second largest South Asian community after Sikh immigrants from India in Metro Vancouver, yet they did not have any radio station or dedicated air time on radio and were publishing only a couple of bi-monthly newspapers. The Bangladeshi-Canadian community did not have any kind of media at all.

Although media licences for South Asian broadcast media organizations were issued on the condition of including appropriate representation of all South Asian communities, ethnic media organizations were primarily owned by financially, demographically, and politically powerful groups. Pakistani-Canadians, Bangladeshi-Canadians, and some other ethnic minorities (even within Indo-Canadian and Pakistani-Canadian communities) were offered time slots with limited options, largely for entertainment programs, more specifically music programs. Most of their radio shows did
not have a live call-in option and they were not allowed to talk about political or social issues pertaining to their communities.

In general, media practitioners seemed satisfied with their roles and professional achievements working in ethnic media, which was considered to still be in its infancy. They saw it as part of their professional role to create positive change in their communities and educate their audiences. The prestige earned through their work was a significant motivating factor as compared to monetary or other benefits. Some of the media practitioners confirmed that ethnic media provided them access to corridors of power; it was up to the individual ethnic media practitioners to use the power gained through their work in media for the betterment of their communities instead of their own personal agendas. From the narratives of media owners, it was shown that ethnic media organizations had achieved gender balance within their organizations; nonetheless, the interviews with female media practitioners revealed that female journalists were more involved in frontline work—for example, reporting, editing, and broadcasting—while having little role in policymaking. South Asian ethnic media in BC was still predominantly owned and regulated by men. Overall, female journalists were satisfied with their professions, yet they acknowledged facing gender-related challenges, both at work and within society.

Presentation of gender-related issues, specifically violence against women in South Asian communities, remained a central theme related to gender and ethnic media. There were two schools of thoughts about the presentation of such issues in ethnic media. One group of participants supported the highlighting of incidences of violence against women within South Asian communities to help resolve the issue. The other group,
however, worried about how the news and issues related to gender and violence against women in their communities were being framed. They feared increased persecution and stereotyping by the mainstream media and society, which could lead to painting the entire community with “the same brush.”

This study’s central goal was to analyze ethnic media’s role in and contributions to the lived experiences of South Asian communities living in Metro Vancouver. The research question therefore inquired why ethnic media was important in the lived experiences of its audiences. Specifically, participants discussed how South Asian ethnic media sources were contributing in terms of educating communities, disseminating useful information and knowledge, creating civic engagement, helping with settlement and integration, providing a platform for political activism, instilling community development perceptions and practices, promoting ethnic cultures, and providing entertainment as well as influencing mainstream media and society’s perception about its audiences in a positive way. Overall, ethnic media seemed to be taking a significant position in the lives of its audiences. Participants agreed that ethnic media sources were educating them, helping them better understand their host country, and disseminating knowledge about the norms and practices of mainstream Canadian society while still keeping them in touch with South Asian communities’ cultures and practices.

Ethnic media raised and highlighted issues of racialization in relation to South Asian communities, and was quick to respond to the needs of its audiences. Participants cited several examples of support provided by the ethnic media, specifically radio stations, related to racialized incidents involving members of their communities. Mainstream media and society’s reactions to the ethnic media’s voicing of these issues
established the credibility of the ethnic media, both for its audiences and for mainstream society. Because of ethnic media’s advocacy, in some instances, apologies were presented by the people accused of racist acts. Overall, participants appreciated ethnic media for providing information translated into ethnic languages. Radio stations were praised for providing fresh and timely information about day-to-day local news related to politics, legal issues, the economy, and policy decisions, and the implications of these issues for South Asian communities. Participants unanimously disapproved of the politics of division and mainstream society and media’s racialized treatment of South Asian communities. Most of them shared their personal experiences of being racialized to substantiate their arguments about the existence of racialization against South Asian communities in Canada.

Ethnic media practitioners also engaged governmental representatives and public officials from time to time to seek clarification and answers regarding policies affecting South Asian communities. Ethnic media practitioners claimed to mobilize political activity through disseminating political news and information, including simplifying policy decisions and their implications for their communities. As a result, South Asian audiences, irrespective of their age, gender, and language seemed informed about and responsive to the political landscape of Canada. In this regard, radio stations played a vital role. Many radio talk show hosts were engaging municipal, provincial, and federal level government officials and inviting them to respond to direct questions raised by callers during their live shows. Print media, albeit on a smaller scale, also organized forums for interactive debates between their community representatives and
policymakers as well as governmental officials. This model created an accountability mechanism for governments and policymakers vis-à-vis South Asian communities.

Along with performing advocacy functions, ethnic media also seemed to be promoting South Asian ethnic cultures throughout the year. This, however, was mostly true for dominant communities such as Sikh and Hindu communities. The distinction, based on religious identification for elaborating cultural promotion, alludes to the fact that most cultural activities revolved around religious events and festivals. For example, Vaisakhi, Diwali, Holi, and Eid are all religious festivals characterizing cultural manifestation for most South Asians. Other than religious festivals, music, drama, film, and other entertainment content made up a significant part of ethnic media’s cultural promotion. As mentioned earlier, South Asian ethnic media in Metro Vancouver did not represent all South Asian communities’ cultures. Many participants from smaller ethnic minorities asserted that their cultures, festivals, and rituals were not given fair representation in ethnic media; for example, celebration of Eid was not given as much coverage compared to Vaisakhi or Diwali. Nevertheless, ethnic media connected audiences with their countries of origin through various forms of art and performance. Many participants celebrated the sheer fact of having access to ethnic media in their own ethnic languages, which soothed their nostalgia for their countries of origin.

Limitations

Influenced by the non-positivist approach of feminist research, this study was not aimed at drawing conclusions tailored to any specific hypothesis. Instead, the study was guided by flexible research questions, which changed shape throughout the research process in
relation to the narratives of the participants. My own position as a South Asian
immigrant, graduate student, feminist, community worker, and active user of ethnic
media has influenced the processes of conceiving, designing, analyzing, and reporting the
findings of this study. My relationship and networking connections with the participants,
although benefiting me in terms of recruitment, have challenged me in my native
informant position when it comes to maintaining impartiality throughout the research
process. Due to its qualitative approach and limited sample size, the findings of this
research cannot be generalized. However, I have sought to include prominent decision-
and history-making media practitioners, owners, and frontline journalists from within the
South Asian ethnic media industry; hence, the study provides in-depth perspectives of
South Asian ethnic media practitioners and their audiences in Metro Vancouver, British
Columbia.

The methodological approach adopted for this study aimed at including all major
stakeholders of South Asian ethnic media in such a way that in-depth information could
be obtained from both media-makers and media consumers. This approach enabled me to
gain insight into the perceptions, demands, dynamics, and challenges of both sides. The
overall scope of this research was broad due to its qualitative nature wherein semi-
structured questionnaires provided many opportunities to the participants for taking the
lead in discussions about their own perceptions, practices, experiences, and issues. The
data provided sufficient information to a point of saturation in many areas. However, due
to resource constraints (including access to many other stakeholders, time, finances, etc.)
there remain some relevant factors and issues not covered in this research. For example, I
could not include the CRTC’s perspective on their relationship with South Asian ethnic
media; similarly, I could not engage the representatives of religious or business communities specifically for their responses about their crucial and ongoing role in ethnic media-making. The majority of the entertainment content used by ethnic media is produced in countries of origin, and playing this content in Canada could have copyright implications; this dimension was not touched upon during this research due to lack of time and funding. Moreover, this research did not include online/web-based ethnic media and therefore provides no information about this particular type of media.

As an additional limitation, while this research was focused on South Asians’ ethnic media, it did not represent the entire South Asian immigrant population. As explained in Chapter 1, the definition of South Asia/South Asian can be understood geographically, socially, culturally, politically, and even in terms of collective development activity and performance outcomes in the region. Defining South Asians in geographic terms, this population could include people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and in some cases Afghanistan as well. Additionally, peoples of the South Asian region have had a history of migration to other parts of the world before later generations migrated to Canada. This group of people identify their ancestry as South Asian irrespective of their country of origin, which might not be a South Asian country. This research was unable to represent all South Asian populations. Due to limitations of time and funding, I have focused only on the Indian-Canadian, Pakistani-Canadian, and Bangladeshi-Canadian population. Nevertheless, I have tried to include people of smaller ethnic groups in this research; for example, Gujarati, Pushton, and Sindhi participants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh attended the focus groups and research workshops to share their perspectives.
Due to lack of resources, including time and keeping the scope realistic, it was decided to keep the research focus qualitative; hence, this study did not include any quantitative data collection or analysis. However, secondary quantitative data have been used to strengthen and support the findings in various chapters. Moreover, it may seem to be slightly dated data (collected during 2013), however, on the ground all variables of this research are unchanged and in some cases have been progressing in the same manner as predicted by the researcher. For example, sample ethnic media outlets with the participants included in this study are still serving the South Asian population with almost same formats. Similarly, as predicted, ethnic media outlets are increasing in numbers; recently two more licences were issued for full time South Asian radio stations in Metro Vancouver since the completion of data collection for this research. Therefore, it could be argued that the findings of this study are still useful and up to date given the continuity in growth, functions, and demographics of South Asians’ ethnic media in Metro Vancouver.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Future Research

This research filled some gaps in the existing literature and also identified some new avenues for future research. The concept of South Asian cultures presented as a stagnant and fixed notion in the literature suggests a linear and monolithic manifestation of South Asian communities. This study however discovered that ethnic media practitioners—actively engaged in cultural production—did not consider South Asian cultures as fixed or stagnant; this raises cultural implications for South Asians in Canada. It was revealed that South Asians’ cultural practices were constantly changing and progressing in the
context of their transnational migration around the world. Ethnic media played a crucial role in transforming the meaning of fixed cultural norms, helping to reshape notions about South Asian culture for its audiences by offering alternative approaches based on fusion, fluidity, and flexibility. South Asian audiences seemed appreciative of the possibility of extending their cultural practices in the context of their transnational migration experience. Further research into the role of ethnic media in transforming cultural notions and practices of its audiences could build significantly on this key finding.

Critical race and feminist research, along with working to develop a greater understanding of social relationships through theorization, also strives to challenge gender and racial injustices in society. This study has indicated an overall process of racialization experienced by South Asian communities as part of their everyday lived experiences across the spectrums of gender, class, and age. Ethnic media has turned out to be an option for responding to racialized notions and experiences of South Asian communities. As stated above, ethnic media, informed by research and vigilance related to mainstream media and society’s treatment of South Asian communities, has served a watchdog role, aiming to create a just and fair society for its communities. This phenomenon invites further and more focused research, using both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as longitudinal studies to analyze the impact of ethnic media with regard to creating social change.

This study was able to investigate various dynamics of gender in ethnic media-making. However, it could not include a detailed perspective on ethnic media’s contribution and representation of LGBTQ groups within South Asian communities.
Chapter 7 offers a brief discussion about LGBTQ representation in ethnic media, but a full-fledged and dedicated study could more productively investigate LGBTQ issues, concerns, and opportunities related to ethnic media.

Broadcast media, specifically radio stations, had to adhere to the CRTC’s policies, which offered both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the participants identified lack of vigilance from the CRTC in terms of ensuring the quality and standards of South Asian ethnic media. It would be interesting to study the nature and organizational setup—including the ratio of representation of different ethnic populations—of the CRTC and other policymaking forums. Regulation of any aspect of immigrants’ existence historically has gone against the interests of visible minority immigrants. Hence, it would be valuable to investigate the CRTC’s regulating mechanisms and the implications of these for visible minority communities.

The concluding chapter has summarized key findings and limitations confronted during this research; it has also made suggestions and recommendations for future research in ethnic media studies. The following section will include brief policy recommendations for the stakeholders associated with the South Asian ethnic media in light of the data collected for this research.

**Policy Recommendations**

Ethnic media provided communication space for scattered ethnic communities living in diasporas to interact, thus actually enhancing the principle of democratic participation in civic life. Lack of funding, sponsorship from local communities, and advertisement revenues jeopardized the survival of ethnic media, specifically small organizations. Their
closure could create a vacuum, an absence of responsive and interactive communication spaces for their communities, thereby diminishing political and social life and shrinking the space available for public debate and discussion. Moreover, it was found that funding from select sources could sometimes influence the content of ethnic media. The strength and survival of ethnic media lies in mixing community and business approaches—i.e., adopting a community approach for content-making, while commercializing operations for generating revenues for financial survival.

Media practitioners claimed there was sufficient market capacity to support an increased number of ethnic media outlets. In order to create inclusive policymaking procedures and easy-to-follow licensing policies that support the growth of ethnic media, however, the government and respective ministries have to open up their forums. Licensing policies could be reviewed in consultation with ethnic minorities across Canada to incorporate their perspectives when devising the broadcasting policies of Canada. In terms of regulating ethnic media, greater representation of ethnic voices could be a valuable resource for the CRTC. The CRTC could form ethnic advisory boards in different ethnic communities through an inclusive process. These board members could then act as watchdogs for ethnic media outlets and products, meeting regularly and submitting their analyses and recommendations for the improvement of ethnic media through a consultative process including ethnic media practitioners, audiences, advertisers, and CRTC officials. This would result in a congenial and supportive environment for ethnic media, along with asserting positive pressure on its practitioners to maintain and improve the quality of their media products. In turn, the CRTC would benefit from improved support and strategies for enforcing the regulations and media
standards related to ethnic media products. This would also make the CRTC a truly inclusive and representative body for all Canadians.

An increasing number of ethnic media outlets require intervention and support in terms of improving quality of content. Small ethnic media organizations do not have sufficient funds to engage professional and expert journalists for their organizations. In fact, most of the small level ethnic media organizations are run either through family support and time or by the contributions of community volunteers. Professional training, including paid, semi-paid, or even free training programs for ethnic media journalists, could be organized through various forums. Journalism and communication schools in various universities, collaborating with mainstream media, could become a starting point to offer such training. Ethnic media organizations will be more likely to attain financial sustainability if they are able to offer quality content to their audiences, hence this training will have a lasting influence on the growth of high quality ethnic media in Canada.

At the time of data collection, South Asian ethnic media practitioners did not have any collective forum to represent them as a body. Many ethnic media practitioners expressed a growing need for such a forum to support their expanding ethnic media in Metro Vancouver. A self-initiated, self-supported, and democratic ethnic media forum could represent ethnic media practitioners’ concerns, issues, and challenges, allowing ethnic media practitioners to share their issues within the space of the forum and strategically represent these issues to outside bodies through collective thinking and efforts. To ensure quality of ethnic media content, ethnic communities could form their own volunteer, impartial media watchdog groups within their communities. These groups
could meet frequently to share their observations and formulate policy suggestions for their ethnic media. This voluntary yet critical and crucial work could help ethnic media receive much needed first-hand feedback from their audiences.

There seemed to be no link or collaboration between mainstream media and ethnic media in Canada. Although some media practitioners asserted that mainstream media sources were confirming their news stories related to ethnic communities, this was done at an individual level. In order for real collaboration to occur, mainstream media must come to understand the potential and scope of ethnic media organizations and make the effort to interact with them at an institutional level. This could be done through exchanging news and information and even working at one another’s organizations on short deputations. This type of exchange would help in many ways. First, both mainstream and ethnic media practitioners would be enabled to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the media organizations of their counterparts. Second, some of the mainstream media’s racialized perceptions about ethnic minorities would receive a sorely needed infusion of fresh and first-hand information, which would help reshape perceptions. Third, both organizations would be able to learn from one another’s organizational approaches, management challenges, and operational strategies, perhaps helping ethnic media find effective ways to become financially sustainable. Last but not least, this would trigger social change in the media and communications landscape of Canada, increasing inclusiveness and understanding of multicultural ethnic minorities.

Ethnic media is becoming increasingly accessible and popular among its audiences in many communities. Governments frequently try to communicate with ethnic minorities using various communication platforms. The growth and popularity of ethnic
media makes it a quick, reliable, and efficient forum for sharing public information. Governments could make use of ethnic media as a potential communication space in which to connect with ethnic minorities. Concerned ministries should therefore revise their communication strategies and make comprehensive plans to include ethnic media as one of their channels through which to communicate with Canadians.

In conclusion, ethnic media is a crucial social institution in the lived experiences of South Asian communities and as such requires research and policy attention. Ethnic media has its limitations and challenges, yet it offers opportunities in terms of creating an inclusive communication landscape in Canada. Given the historical and predicted growth of populations of racialized visible minorities in Canada, it is crucial and productive to study ethnic media and gain a better understanding of the complex relationship ethnic media has with its audiences, and with the mainstream society in which it is situated.
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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This research is being conducted under the permission of the Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board. The chief concern of the Board is for the health, safety and psychological well-being of participants. Should you wish to obtain information about your rights as a participant in research, the responsibilities of researchers, or have questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Habiba Zaman, Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, V5A 1S6 by email at [...]@sfu.ca or phone at 778-[…], as a primary contact or Dr. Hal Weinberg, the Director, Office of Research Ethics by email at [...]@sfu.ca or phone at 778-[…], as a secondary contact.

TITLE: South Asian Immigrants and Ethnic Media in British Columbia: Intersections of Race, Gender, and Class

INVESTIGATORS: Syeda Nayab Bukhari, PhD Candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Habiba Zaman, Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, V5A 1S6

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The aim of the study is to investigate the usage, contribution and effects of ethnic media on south Asian communities. This project will contribute knowledge about the issues of south Asians communities and the role of their ethnic media in addressing their issues. It will also facilitate to develop community-based strategies and alternatives to deal with challenges South Asian media audiences encounter.

The title of the study was changed after the data collection to be in consistent with the thematic findings arising from the data.
PROCEDURE: You will contribute your knowledge and experiences about south Asian ethnic vis-à-vis mainstream media through either/or, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions or participation in a day-long workshop/conference. I will ask you open-ended questions which will be digitally taped and transcribed and will be used for academic and research purposes. As a focus group and day-long workshop/conference participant you will share your information, knowledge and experiences with other participants leading to create discussion about the topics/items on agenda.

RISKS: We do not anticipate any risks involved in the study.

BENEFITS: The study will produce first-hand information and analysis of usage, contribution and effects of south Asian ethnic media among south Asian communities.

DETAILS RELATING TO YOUR PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time, including during the procedure. Your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected. Your data will be saved using coded name instead of your name. If you are working as media person, name of your organization will not be disclosed in the study; a fictitious name will be given to your organization to protect you and your organization’s identity. None of your information will be shared with your employer and no permission has been obtained from your employer or organization. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff will have access to this information. As a participant in the focus group discussions and day-long workshop/conference, you will share your information with other participants with your own consent and responsibility. Moreover, by consenting to participate in the focus group, day-long workshop/conference you also confirm that any information you encounter will be kept confidential and not revealed to parties outside the focus group, day-long workshop/conference. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

If you wish to obtain results of this study upon its completion, please contact Syeda Nayab Bukhari (…@sfu.ca).

I have read and understood the above details of the experiment, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant Full name:___________________________________________

Signature:_______________________
Date_________________________________

Principal Investigator/ Research Assistant

Full name:_______________________________________________________

Signature:_______________________
Date_________________________________
Appendix B

Questionnaire for Media Professionals/ Representatives

1. Background information
   1.1. Name (fictitious)
   1.2. Gender
   1.3. Educational background
   1.4. When did you come to Canada?
   1.5. Can you elaborate your professional experiences so far? Why did you come to Canada?
   1.6. What is your role (job) in your media outlet? Why did you decide to choose this career?
   1.7. How long you have been working in this profession? Did you receive any training/professional education for this career?

2. Your Media’s role
   2.1. How do you define your (your media’s) role with regards to the community service? Can you give any examples?

Follow-up questions
   2.1.1. Settlement and integration of new immigrants
   2.1.2. Cultural connectivity and cultural preservation
   2.1.3. Addressing issues raised in mainstream society/media about South Asian communities
   2.1.4. Providing a media platform to South Asian communities
   2.1.5. Highlighting issues of relevance to South Asian communities
   2.1.6. Inclusion of marginalized segments such as women, seniors, youth and refugees within the South Asians communities? Any examples?
   2.1.7. Any other?
   2.2. How do you decide contents/topics of your program, show, news report etc.
   2.3. Also, how do you update your knowledge about the issues related to South Asian immigrant communities?

3. Mainstream media vis-à-vis your media
   3.1. Do you watch mainstream media? Do you have any issues or concerns about the contents and coverage of different South Asian ethnic groups in mainstream media? Any examples?
   3.1.1. In your opinion what could be the reasons for the mainstream’s media coverage of South Asian communities in a way that is concerning for you?
   3.2. How do you respond to or collaborate with the mainstream media e.g. through your content? Any examples?

4. Fusion-based model media
   4.1. In your opinion how do you preserve and/or promote cultural and ethnic values (if that’s your goal)? Any examples?
4.2. How do you consider your media/contents different than your country of origin/ancestry media contents? Why should South Asian audience watch/listen/read your ethnic media/content as compared to the South Asian homeland content/media transmitted through satellite and internet?

4.3. Do you think with the changing demographics of South Asian immigrant communities (including youth) your audiences’ media requirements are also changing? If, yes, how do you or your media outlet address this?

Follow-up questions

4.3.1. Youth related content to attract them
4.3.2. Involving youth through their active participation
4.3.3. Hiring youth in your team
4.3.4. Any other

5. Impact and influence

5.1. How would you evaluate your media in terms of creating any impact or influence on either/or your consumers or mainstream society/media?

Follow-up questions

5.1.1. Social, political or economic change in the South Asian immigrant communities? Any example?
5.1.2. Any meaningful change at the policy level? Does your media outlet provide a space for public debate and mediation with policy makers and governments? Any examples?
5.1.3. Any changes in the mainstream media’s coverage of South Asian ethnic communities?
5.2. Do you have any mechanism to receive feedback from the community? If yes, how do you do it?

6. Gender and media

6.1. Do you think we have any particular issues related to women or women’s rights in South Asian immigrant communities? Do you think these issues should be brought in the media, why/why not?

6.2. In your opinion how mainstream media is covering women-related issues of South Asian immigrant communities?
6.3. Also, if you can explain how you (or your media) are addressing issues related to women in South Asian communities?
6.4. In your opinion, does your organization have equal or fair representation of women media workers?
6.5. Do you think women in your organization have equal influence in deciding the media policy or media content?

7. Your media’s challenges

7.1. What are the challenges faced by your media outlet?

Follow-up questions

7.1.1. Financial
7.1.2. Government policies and regulations
7.1.3. Circulation, audience/viewership
7.1.4. Any policies that have gender or racial biasness
7.1.5. Community support
7.1.6. Any other?
7.2. How do you overcome these challenges? Who can help you to overcome these challenges?
7.3. In the context of historical, political and geographic tensions between various south Asian countries (e.g. India and Pakistan) do you face any challenges, if yes, how do you deal with it?
7.4. In your opinion, what is the future of south Asian ethnic media in Canada?
7.5. Anything concerns or recommendations for the growth of media, that you want to share?
7.6. Do you have any further comments or feedback that could be useful for my research?
Appendix C

Guide for Focus Group Discussion

1. What is the role of ethnic media in the lived experiences of South Asian communities?
2. Do ethnic media involve, engage South Asian communities to include their needs and aspiration in the media content planning? If yes how? Is it sufficient?
3. If no (to the answer of the above question), how do South Asian ethnic media can involve, engage South Asian communities in the media policy?
4. Do ethnic media respond to the following issues through their content?
   a. Settlement and social inclusion issues of South Asian immigrants
   b. Racism reflected in the mainstream society and/or media
   c. Issues of marginalized segments in the South Asian communities such as women, seniors, youth and refugees?
   d. Cultural, political awareness and religious rights and issues
5. How is ethnic media different from mainstream media?
Appendix D

Guide for Focus Group facilitations

Things to do:

1. Please welcome all the guests on my behalf.
2. Share the consent forms and take their signs, if someone is interested, they can get a copy but please get the signs before you start discussion. (see consent form attached)
3. Please ensure, they understand that they will not share the information shared by group members outside, especially with names, organizations or any particular reference for the privacy protection, this way their own privacy will also be protected.
4. Request one or two group members to take rough notes of the discussions so one of them can present the crux of their discussion to rest of the groups towards the end of your table’s discussion.
5. Once discussion is closed, the group leader can write down their points on their sheet and can share with rest of the groups.
6. Once all groups share their presentations, we will lead to open house discussion.
7. For discussion, please make sure, all group members take part in the discussion and no one overshadows the group.
8. They can use any language but to keep them easy and relaxed, you may speak Urdu or Punjabi.
9. When you ask a question, anyone in the group can answer and then a discussion can start. You can also through any prompts that surface from the discussion. Once discussion about one area/question is completed and you feel that you are getting repetitive answers, move on to the next questions.
10. Please try covering all the questions as much as possible.
11. Please try to keep the discussion focused on the questions (by participants) but of course consider their interest in the topic as well and give them some room to share their opinions as well.
12. You may begin your discussion now with the following questions.
Appendix E

Glossary and Definitions

AMRAC: The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
BBC: The British Broadcasting Corporation
BC: British Columbia, Canada
BCIT: British Columbia Institute of Technology
BME: (Black and Minority Ethnic
CWCNS: Canadian Women Community Network Society
CBC: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CRTC: The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC, French: Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes)
DVD: Digital Video Disc

EM: Ethnic Media
FCC: The Federal Communications Commission of United States of America
FGDs: Focus Group Discussions
Fido: Cellular phone company
GM: General Manager
GVBCA: Greater Vancouver Bangladesh Cultural Association
ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies
ISSBC: Immigrant Services Society of BC
Juma: Friday (prayers)
LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

MA: Masters in Arts
MBA: Masters in Business Administration
Metro Vancouver: Also called Greater Vancouver, Lower mainland
MS IT: Masters in Information Technology
MOSAIC: Multi-lingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities
NHS: National Household Survey, Statistics Canada
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
NVIVO 10: Qualitative Research Software
OMNI: Omni Television is a Canadian television system owned by the Rogers Media subsidiary of Rogers Communications
Options: Non-profit Organizations working in Surrey, Delta, White Rock and Langley

PCCA: Pakistani Canadian Cultural Association
PQ: Parti Québécois
PhD: Doctor of Philosophy
PICS: Progressive Intercultural Community Services
Radio 1130: News, weather and current affairs radio station in Metro Vancouver
RCMP: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SA: South Asia
SAARC: The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
Sanja Vehra: A non-governmental organization of South Asian women
SFU: Simon Fraser University

SNB: Syeda Nayab Bukhari
TELUS: Internet and Cellular Phone Company
TOIFA: Times of India Film Awards
TV: Television
UBC: University of the British Columbia
UK: United Kingdom
US: United States
USA: United States of America
VOA: Voice of America
XXX: Fictions name
YYY: Fictions name
Appendix F

Selected List of South Asian Ethnic Media in Metro-Vancouver

Radio Stations:
- Red FM 93.1 Radio
  - https://vancouver.redfm.ca/
- CJRJ - Spice Radio 1200 AM
  - http://spiceradio.net/
- Radio Punjab 1550 AM
- Radio India 1600 AM
  - http://radioindialtd.com/
- My FM 106.9
  - https://www.facebook.com/106.9fmsurrey/

Newspapers:
- Chardi Kala
  - http://cknewsgroup.ca/epaper/chardi-kala-canada/2810/
- South Asian Connection - Apna Roots
- Indo-Canadian Voice
  - http://www.voiceonline.com/
- Indo-Canadian Times
- The Link
  - http://thelinkpaper.ca/
- Asian Journal
  - http://www.asianjournal.ca/
- Darpan Magazine
  - http://www.darpanmagazine.com/
- Desi Today
- [http://www.desitoday.ca/](http://www.desitoday.ca/)
- Gaylaxy Magazine
- The Miracle – Bringing Harmony to all the Communities

**TV Show:**

- The Harpreet Singh Show
  - [http://www.joytv.ca/shows/the-harpreet-singh-show/](http://www.joytv.ca/shows/the-harpreet-singh-show/)
- Des Pardes
  - [http://www.visiontv.ca/shows/des-pardes/](http://www.visiontv.ca/shows/des-pardes/)
- Shaw Multicultural TV for South Asians
  - [https://www.shaw.ca/ShawTV/Multicultural/Shows/Hindi/](https://www.shaw.ca/ShawTV/Multicultural/Shows/Hindi/)
- OMNI Multicultural TV for South Asians
  - [http://www.omnitv.ca/on/southasian/shows/](http://www.omnitv.ca/on/southasian/shows/)
### Appendix G

Profile of Media Practitioners/Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Profession/Profile</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Language of Media</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Arrival in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anterpreet Kaur</td>
<td>Journalist, Presenter at a multicultural TV</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>PhD Pol. Science (India)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Amin Rahman</td>
<td>Film maker/ theater performer</td>
<td>Film/Stage</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>MS IT (Bangladesh)</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Arun Verma</td>
<td>Journalist, reporter, presenter</td>
<td>Radio, TV</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>BA (India) IT courses (Canada)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Elvis Lal</td>
<td>Journalist, reporter, editor</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>MA History (India)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Farhan Mehmood</td>
<td>Reporter, presenter</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Hindi/ Punjabi/ Urdu</td>
<td>MBA (Pakistan)</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Jabarjhang Singh</td>
<td>Editor, director news and current affairs, presenter</td>
<td>Radio/TV</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>Bachelors in Law (India)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Leela</td>
<td>Media owner, presenter</td>
<td>Radio/TV</td>
<td>Hindi/ Punjabi/ English</td>
<td>BA (India) Media Trainings (UK)</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Nadeem Khan</td>
<td>Managing editor</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>MSc Biology (Canada)</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Preetam Kaur</td>
<td>Journalist, reporter, presenter</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>MA Journalism/ Political Science (India)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sandeep Singh</td>
<td>Media owner, editor, reporter</td>
<td>Radio/TV</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>MA Journalism/ Political Science (India)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Satnam Singh</td>
<td>Media owner</td>
<td>Radio/print</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>Courses in Electronics (Canada)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Sher Singh</td>
<td>Media owner, editor</td>
<td>Radio/print</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>Grade 10 (India) High School (Canada)</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Zameer Ahmad</td>
<td>Media owner, reporter, editor, designer, distributor</td>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Masters in Fine Arts (Pakistan)</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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78 Jabarjhang Singh’s interview was conducted for Metropolis Research Project (Zaman and Bukhari 2013) and was used to substantiate the findings of my PhD dissertation with the permission of Prof. Habiba Zaman.
Appendix H

Map of South Asia\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{79} Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d4/South_Asia_UN.png