

The Role of South Asian Family Culture in South Asian Gang Involvement

by
Amarveer Kandola

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Declaration of Committee

Name: **Amarveer Kandola**
Degree: **Master of Arts**
Title: **The Role of South Asian Family Culture in
South Asian Gang Involvement**

Committee: **Chair: Bryan Kinney**
Associate Professor, Criminology

Alissa Greer
Supervisor
Assistant Professor, Criminology

Martin Bouchard
Committee Member
Professor, Criminology

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Abstract

South Asian gang involvement remains a predominately unknown phenomenon – often defined as a sociological phenomenon rather than a cultural one. Studying South Asian gang involvement within South Asian cultural contexts can possibly inform new policy initiatives that might prevent further gang violence in B.C. The current study uses a qualitative approach to garner the perspectives of South Asian family members in order to understand South Asian gang involvement as a cultural phenomenon. Through one-on-one qualitative interviews and a social learning theory lens, data indicated that South Asian family culture – through the promotion and reinforcement of masculine attitudes and the idealization of wealth – can potentially influence a South Asian boy to join a gang. These findings are similar to previous gang studies on family, masculinity, and wealth across other cultures. Policy implications targeted towards South Asian families and directions for future research, including interviewing current/former South Asian gangsters, are discussed.

Keywords: Gang involvement; South Asian gang involvement; Family culture; Social learning theory

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Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee.....	ii
Ethics Statement	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	ix
List of Acronyms.....	x
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 The context of South Asian Gangs in B.C.....	1
1.2 South Asian Culture – A Look into the Family	3
1.3 Looking at the Diaspora – South Asian Culture in B.C.....	4
2 Gang Research Over the Years: A Literature Review	6
2.1 Risk Factors Related to Gangs	6
2.2 Family Risk Factors	8
2.3 Family Culture and Socialization in Masculinity Contexts.....	11
2.4 Conceptual Perspective: Hegemonic masculinity.....	12
2.5 The South Asian Gang Context.....	14
3 Research Objectives.....	15
3.1 Thesis overview.....	17
4 Theoretical Positioning.....	17
5 Methods.....	18
5.1 Thematic analysis	19
5.2 Study procedures.....	20
5.2.1 Sampling and recruitment	20
5.2.2 Interviews.....	23
5.2.3 Data analysis	25
5.3 Methodological rigor	26
5.4 Ethical Considerations	27
6 Findings.....	28
6.1 Views on men and masculinity in South Asian family culture and the impact on boys	32
6.1.1 Patriarchy and power in South Asian families.....	32
6.1.2 Feeling invincible: parental neglect in South Asian families	32
6.2 Honour or ‘Izzat’ as a concern in South Asian family culture	33

6.2.1	The importance of wealth within South Asian family culture	33
6.2.2	The Need for a South Asian Male to be the Breadwinner	34
6.2.3	The pressure and need to accumulate wealth as a South Asian man	36
6.3	Views on the socialization of South Asian masculinity	37
6.3.1	Learning masculinity: The role of fathers in constructing stoic South Asian men...	37
6.3.2	"Jatt is a farmer"	38
6.3.3	Being a Jatt: A warrior mentality	39
6.4	Views on South Asian gangsters.....	40
6.4.1	Born in high school: The young South Asian gangster	40
6.4.2	The appearance of the South Asian gangster	41
6.5	Views on South Asian family culture fostering gang involvement for boys.....	42
6.5.1	The patriarchal nature of South Asian family culture fostering gang involvement..	42
6.5.2	The role of parental neglect in promoting gang involvement	43
6.6	South Asian gangsters: The drive to be a man	44
6.6.1	The lure of gangs: Easy money over hard work	44
6.6.2	Accumulating wealth by any means necessary	46
6.6.3	Protecting Izzat by any means necessary	47
6.7	South Asian gangsters: The desire to be a true Jatt.....	48
6.7.1	The relevance of aggression amongst South Asian gangsters	48
6.7.2	Hyper-masculinity within the Jatt mentality	48
6.7.3	The Surrey Jack: Hyper-masculinity amongst South Asian youth	49
7	Discussion	51
7.1	South Asian families and the role of the patriarchy.....	53
7.2	South Asian family culture: The concern over Izzat.....	55
7.3	Masculinity within South Asian families.....	56
7.4	South Asian Masculinity and the importance of wealth	58
7.5	Limitations of the study	60
7.6	Policy Implications	61
7.7	Future Research	64
8	Conclusion	65
	References.....	66
	Appendix A. Recruitment Flyer.....	75
	Appendix B. Recruitment Email.....	76
	Appendix C. Cosnent Form.....	77
	Appendix D. Consent Script.....	80
	Appendix E. Intrview Script.....	81
	Appendix F. Question Guide.....	82
	Appendix G. List of Participants.....	84

List of Tables

Table 1.	Demographics of participants.....	21
Table 2.	Breakdown of themes and sub-themes.....	30

List of Acronyms

- B.C. British Columbia
- CFSEU-B.C.
- SAFE
- TA
- U.K.
- U.S. United States

1 Introduction

“Growing up, [South Asian gangsters] learn what being a man is or how they think it’s supposed to be like. Then, that’s how they act, like respect should be given to them”

This quote is from Manjot, a 24-year-old female participant in my study. Manjot’s quote introduces key ideas related to my study. First, when speaking about South Asian gang involvement, the desire of respect is possibly a driver for the behaviour of a South Asian man. Second, Manjot’s quote also speaks to the notion of “growing up” and the potential family socialization that may exist within South Asian families. Finally, Manjit’s quote provides, altogether, a possible indication of South Asian masculinity. These ideas are key understudied parts of the dynamics of South Asian gang involvement and gang violence in British Columbia (B.C.).

1.1 The context of South Asian Gangs in B.C.

Historically, gang violence has been a cause for concern in B.C. In 1980, less than 20 gangs operated in B.C. (CFSEU-BC, n.d.). Between 2006 and 2012, there were an estimated 134 gang-related homicides across the Lower Mainland of B.C. (Bouchard & Hashimi, 2017). In 2009, amidst a brutal gang war and ongoing public pressure, B.C. implemented an anti-gang agency, the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit – British Columbia (CFSEU-BC; Sangha, 2018) and, subsequently, there was a steady decline in gang-related homicides (Bouchard & Hashimi, 2017). Despite this decline, gang violence continues to be a prominent in B.C. It is estimated that there are potentially 188 active gangs in B.C. today (CFSEU-BC, n.d.). In 2021 alone, there was a gang war that resulted in 123 gang-related shootings (CBC, News, 2021; Judd, 2022). In 2022, Metro Vancouver police reported 20 gang-related shootings and four deaths within the first 40 days of the year (Judd, 2022).

A major concern in B.C. around gang violence has become the ethnicity of those involved in gangs, predominately South Asian youth (Pabla, 2019; Todd, 2017; McElroy, 2016).

After accounting for 21% of the province's victims of gang-related homicides from 2006 to 2014, there has been a steady rise in South Asian gang involvement (B.C. Anti-Gang Police, 2014; Bains, 2021). During the 2015 B.C. gang conflict, 94% of the victims involved in the gang conflict were South Asian (Bains, 2021). The trends of South Asian involved in gun homicides continued into 2016 and 2017 where 88% of the gun homicides victims were South Asian (Bains, 2021). As of early 2021, South Asian gangsters still accounted for 60% of victims of gang homicides (Larsen, 2021). The South Asian community, in turn, has expressed a deep concern over South Asian gang involvement. For example, in 2018, over 1,000 South Asian community members attended an anti-gang rally in Surrey in the wake of murders of two South Asian teenagers (Ferrerias, 2018).

Despite the alarming levels of gang violence involving South Asians, there is still little research on and understanding of the nature of South Asian gangs. Studies have showed that gang membership is a high-risk state of being with immense adverse consequences for gang members and the communities they occupy (Decker & Pryooz, 2010; Egley, Logan, & McDaniel, 2012). With the alarming rates of South Asian gang violence in B.C., government programs aimed at describing and preventing South Asian involvement have looked at sociological risk factors (i.e. low socio-economic status, peer pressure, racial discrimination, and neighbourhood social disorganization) for gang involvement in order to deter gang involvement in B.C. (Pabla, 2019; McConnell, 2015; Sangha, 2018; Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2011). However, it appears that most of these sociological risk factors do not apply to South Asian gangsters (McConnell, 2015; Bains, 2021). South Asian gangsters, for instance, may potentially not be impacted by neighbourhood disorganization or a low socio-economic status (McConnell, 2015). Instead, it appears that there may be unique aspects to South Asian gang involvement that are possibly characterized more by potential cultural influences, including family-based factors like parenting and socialization (Brar, 2017; Pabla, 2019).

In recent years, police in B.C. have released the images of those involved in gang conflicts in an attempt to put pressure on friends and family who have remained largely silent (Bains, 2021). The aim of this initiative was to break the code of silence that was prevalent in South Asian family culture and have South Asian families cooperate with police (Bains, 2021).

In essence, South Asian families, at least those unwilling to cooperate with police, present another potential problem to B.C.-based gang conflicts. While a lack of cooperation from families with police is not unique to South Asian families, South Asian families are interesting in that they operate a guise of family collective (i.e. the family unit over the individual) (Bains, 2021). The ideas of a lack of cooperation from South Asian families speak to larger themes that represent South Asian family and potentially speak to South Asian gang involvement. Hence, it is possibly through potential unique cultural influences in South Asian families that South Asian gang involvement may foster. The idea of potential cultural influences in relation to South Asian gang involvement brings into question of what South Asian culture is.

1.2 South Asian Culture – A Look into the Family

A unique aspect of South Asian culture is that it inherently promotes the importance of the family. Jheeta (1988) identified South Asian culture as a unique entity in that the culture, through the family, provided one's belonging, identity, economic security, and honour. Thus, the family unit is at the core of South Asian culture. In South Asian culture, individuals are expected to sacrifice personal desire in order to ensure the well-being of the family when individual and group conflict arises (Almeida, 1996; Ibrahim, et al., 1997; Segal, 1991).

In turn, within the South Asian family, the idea of Izzat is of utmost importance. Izzat is a South Asian term that means honour and respect. In South Asian family, maintaining family honour or Izzat is a key feature (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006). Izzat fosters a collectivist orientation within South Asian families where family honour is more important than individual desire (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006). This collectivist orientation of South Asian culture has potentially fostered familial interdependence with parents and elders acting as authority figures for young children to enforce cultural norms and, consequently, protect family honour (Almeida, 1996; Segal, 1991; Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006).

Hence, as Sue (1981) highlights, there is a hierarchical nature to South Asian families that was based upon age, gender, and generational status. The hierarchy in the family is a determinant of one's role and responsibilities (Sue, 1981). For example, parents and elders exert

a significant amount of control over adolescents in the family and adolescent autonomy itself was not a desirable trait for South Asian families (Dosanjh & Ghuman, 1998). In South Asian families, the power balance between parents and children exists amongst parents as well (Segal, 1991) South Asian family culture follows a patriarchal hierarchy, meaning that men hold the most power in the family (Segal, 1991). Fathers and grandfathers are the patriarchal heads of the family and the primary decision-makers of normality in the household (Segal, 1991). In contrast, while a mother and grandmother due to their elder status hold greater status in the structure of a South Asian family, mothers and grandmothers are still subordinate to their respective patriarchal husbands (Segal, 1991). The primary role of a mother and grandmother in a South Asian family is that of a caretaker (Segal, 1991). Consequently, the South Asian family can be a site of oppression that possibly reinforces hetero-normative, patriarchal, exclusionary, and hierarchical practices and ideals (Bhandari, Titzmann, 2017)

While the patriarchal hierarchy is not unique to South Asian family culture, the patriarchal culture within South Asian families is, to my knowledge, unique in that the patriarchy can be socialized into family members through South Asian rituals (Dhaliwal, 2020). For example, the birth of sons in South Asian families is often a celebrated event and families place more value in boys. As boys grow, despite their parents' wish to limit the autonomy of their children, they are given more freedom than their sisters or girls in general in South Asian families (Sue, 1981; Segal, 1991; Dhaliwal, 2020).

1.3 Looking at the Diaspora – South Asian Culture in B.C.

Such patriarchal values within South Asian culture persist in South Asian diasporas. Diasporas refer to a group of individuals, usually with similar cultural values, born in the same country that now occupy a space in a new region (Beine et al., 2011), such as in B.C. Hence, first generation South Asians (or South Asian immigrants) often still follow the cultural practices that their parents taught them (Dhaliwal, 2020). For instance, in South Asian diasporas, South Asian family culture values communal practices and placed family at its core, often being framed with a patriarchal structure (i.e. father holding the most power in the household) (Dhaliwal, 2020). Under this patriarchy, members of a family have certain roles to fulfill depending on their

position with the hierarchy, with gender and age playing a vital role in deciding how each role is performed (Dhaliwal, 2020).

In turn, the key to a South Asian diasporic family is socialization and identity construction. One of the major struggles of life in the diaspora is identity construction for immigrants. Following immigration, subsequent generations of Canadian-born South Asian children of immigrant parents have greater difficulties with identity construction (Dhaliwal, 2020). South Asian parents possibly encouraged their children to seek out educational opportunities that western society offered while also discouraging them from leaving behind their ethnic identity (Sohal, 2009). While patterns of complete loyalty and family obligation have lessened in Punjab, India to reflect growing diversity in gender role beliefs, South Asian immigrants, detached from the growing gender equality in their homeland, possibly struggle to separate themselves from their upbringing (Sohal, 2009). Instead, they possibly pass down ideas of masculinity and gender to their children with the expectation that their children will accept these norms (Sohal, 2009).

B.C. is home to a large proportion of South Asian immigrants. South Asian immigration to B.C. occurred in three waves. From 1904 and 1907, the first wave of 5,000 South Asian immigrants arrived in Vancouver (Osterberg, 2020). In the second wave of South Asian immigration to Canada, a large number of South Asian immigrants in 1947 migrated to Canada and settled in B.C. after exclusionary immigration policies were struck down (Bains, 2009 in Osterberg, 2020). The final and largest wave of South Asian immigration began first in the 1970s and continues in present day (Osterberg, 2020). From the 2016 Canada Census, there were 291,005 South Asians living in Metro Vancouver – 168,040 of which were residing in Surrey (Canada Census, 2016). However, as described above, the increase in the South Asian population in Metro Vancouver has been concurrent to the increase of South Asian gang involvement in B.C. (Osterberg, 2019; McConnell, 2015).

The proliferation of South Asian gang involvement in B.C. and unique aspects of South Asian families raises an important question: how does specific and unique aspects of the cultural socialization within South Asian family culture influence South Asian gang involvement? What

is it about South Asian family culture in terms of the socialization of young men that fosters their involvement in gangs? It is possible that ideas around masculinity, family hierarchies, family culture, and socialization of South Asian families may play a role in influencing gang involvement among young south Asian men. Despite the cultural focus of my study, my discussion does not aim to problematize South Asian families, rather my aim is to further study South Asian family and the features of South Asian family culture that might be relevant to looking at the South Asian gang context. Gaining a deeper understanding of these features is thus the focus of my research.

2 Gang Research Over the Years: A Literature Review

2.1 Risk Factors Related to Gangs

Longstanding gang research has examined gang involvement in the context of social environments and social risk factors. Much of the work with respect to gangs has focused on the factors that ‘push’ a youth into gangs (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Gang research, for instance, posits that gang membership has resulted from dynamic reciprocal relationships between peer groups, social environments, and family life that also reinforces and fosters gang involvement. Maxson’s (2011) review of literature indicated that risk factors supported across studies included: (1) experiencing a critical life event; (2) delving in antisocial behaviours (i.e. risk-taking); (3) having pro-delinquent attitudes; (4) minimal parental supervision; and (5) associating with delinquent peers. Likewise, youth who become gang involved possess multiple risk factors prior to gang involvement (Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013).

This is applicable in historically specific and important studies. In a longitudinal study of street youth gangs in Rochester, Thornberry et al. (2003) reported that gang involvement was related to a variety of risk factors, such as peer influence, familial criminality, poor parental management, and poor school performance. One factor in particular was low commitment to school (Thornberry et al. 2003). Similar to this finding, other studies have suggested that gang involvement is a response to school failure and that gang members saw little value in school (Howell & Egley, 2005). Within the school, Thornberry et al. (2003) reported that peers engaged

in antisocial delinquency could be an influencer that resulted in gang membership. Similarly, a quantitative study of youth in London, England, Alleyne & Wood (2014) reported that peers engaged in delinquency could possibly influence other youth.

Beyond school, other social environments can also play a role. For instance, some studies have indicated that gangs can thrive in disorderly and disadvantageous neighbourhoods (Spergel, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003). Such environments of influence can reinforce antisocial behaviours, including gang-related behaviours, in youth (Thornberry et al., 2003). These antisocial behaviours can thrive in the presence of social disadvantage and poverty. The factors of social disadvantage and poverty were present as far back from 1923 to 1926 in Frederic Thrasher's classic study of gangs where he studied 1,313 gangs in Chicago and found differences in gang presence between practically gang-less prosperous suburbs and neighbourhoods marked poverty, social disorganization, and gang violence. Importantly, in the context of gangs, social disadvantage can be marked by racial marginalization. After gathering data on Chicago communities that were over 70% Caucasian, African-American, or Hispanic, David Curry and Irving Spergel (1988) found an intersection between poverty and race. Curry and Spergel (1988) reported that Caucasian communities had low rates of poverty and zero gang homicides, while African-American and Hispanic communities faced high levels of poverty and gang homicides.

While the previous studies overview the literature on U.S.-based gangs, Canada-based literature on gangs offers another unique look at risk factors associated with gang involvement. In the Canadian context, Descormiers (2013) reported that: (1) youth were motivated to join a gang due to the allure of money and the want for respect, (2) youth were mostly introduced to gangs by their friends, and (3) majority of youth participants had family members in a gang. In McConnell's (2015) study of gangs in various cities including Toronto, Ontario, McConnell reported that racial minorities were more likely to be gang members than Caucasians and most of these racial minorities came from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds (Tanner, 2010). Overall, key sociological risk factors for gang involvement point to social disadvantage, poverty, and peer influence. However, there is another key domain to understanding gang involvement amongst youth – family life.

2.2 Family Risk Factors

Another main factor contributing to gang involvement is features related to families. In terms of family structure, research has indicated that gang-involved youth grew up in difficult family circumstances characterized by absent fathers, violence within the home, and domestic abuse (Deuchar, 2018). Using self-report surveys of middle school students in Europe, Haymoz, Maxson, and Killias (2014) indicated that a large proportion of gang members came from 'non-traditional' families. These non-traditional families were classified by single-parent households, often headed by single mothers (Haymoz, Maxson, and Killias, 2014). Oppressive family backdrops have been considered main risk factors for youth in more recent research too. In qualitative interviews with gang-involved Latino youth in Los Angeles, Deuchar (2018) found that gang-involved youth grew up in difficult circumstances, with absent and/or abusive fathers. Similarly, in a qualitative analysis of gang intervention programs in Chicago, Flores (2014) argued that involvement in gangs was a potential by-product of strained family ties resulting from non-traditional household structures.

However, other scholars have debated the role of non-traditional families in relation to gang involvement. In a longitudinal study of gang members in the U.K., Smith and Bradshaw (2015) found 18% of gang members grew up with both parents whereas 82% grew up without. Moore (1991), in studying Latino gang members in Los Angeles, found that 37% of gang members grew up with both parents. Hence, while non-traditional family structures tend to predominate the backdrop of gang members, gang membership can still emanate from families of all sizes. As such, the conflicting, albeit minor, findings have led scholars to look at other aspects of the family in relation to gang involvement.

One such point of research has been family attachment. Broadly, parenting behaviours are related to general levels of delinquency amongst youth (Blaske et al., 1989). Some studies suggest that lack of parental attachment, parental emotional distance, and parental inability to supervise children can have gang-related effects on youth (Thornberry, 1998; Shute, 2008; Scott, 2008). Studies show that the quality of parental attachment (or parent-child relationship) is associated with delinquency and gang involvement. For instance, high levels of parental support

(i.e. behaviours that create bonding) were associated with lower rates of delinquency, while lower levels of parental support were associated with higher rates of delinquency (Hoeve et al., 2009). In a quantitative study of 536 Caucasian and African-American youth juvenile males in Philadelphia, Friedman et al. (1975) reported that gang-involved youth had poor relationships with their parents, including having a poor mother-child relationship. Similar findings have been reported in a qualitative study of Hispanic-American males, which found that family members of gang-involved youth did not participate in behaviours, such as eating as a family and having outings, that created bonding between parents and children (Alder, Ovando, & Hocevar, 1984).

In more recent studies of gang involvement across cultures, low parental attachment remains linked to delinquency and gang involvement. In a quantitative study of youth in Korea, it was found a lack of parental attachment was significantly associated with an increased risk of a youth engaging in delinquent behaviours (Han, Kim, & Lee, 2016). In a quantitative study of gang-involved youth in Hong Kong, Chui, Khiatani, and Kiconco (2022) found that poor parental attachment was linked to gang involvement and increased risk of a youth engaging in violent behaviours. Poor parental attachment extended to a lack of parental supervision as well. Thornberry (1998) reported that, in Rochester, poor parental supervision was associated with youth gang membership. In contrast, higher levels of parental supervision are related to decrease risk of gang involvement (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). For instance, for African-American and Hispanic males in Chicago, it was found that greater levels of parental supervision decreased the risk of delinquency and gang involvement (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000). To further explore this relationship between gang involvement and poor parental attachment, Vigil (2007) conducted qualitative research in East Los Angeles with the youth gang members and found that youth gang members had strained relations with their family members; as such, they came to regard local gang groups as ‘brothers’ and a surrogate family (Vigil, 2007). Collectively, the need for surrogate families via gang membership may become heightened when youth face parental neglect.

Research on work-family conflict has also contributed to understanding the costs, benefits, and meanings of work and family identities. Cinamon (2006), in studying 358 university students in Israel, reported that couples that prioritized work over the family had

greater levels of work-family conflict. Such type of conflict in the family can lead to delinquency and gang involvement (Perron, 2013). In studying Asian gang-involved youth in Hong Kong, Deuchar (2018) reported that gang-involved youth grew up with absent parents due to work pressures and work-family conflicts. Similarly, in a qualitative study of gang members in B.C., Brar (2017) found that gang members had strained relationships with their parents and reported that their parents were often consumed in their work, unable to supervise their children.

Another main factor contributing to gang involvement is family culture – or the set of values, beliefs, and norms associated with a family. Children do not grow up in isolation, but instead their development is governed by family culture and socialization. Research indicates that parenting and family culture go hand-in-hand – they reinforce and support one another (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Parenting and family culture is an important feature of delinquency and gang involvement. Harsh discipline can promote problematic behaviours amongst youth (Scott, 2008). In a quantitative study of 7,513 youth in Wisconsin, U.S., De La Rue and Espelage (2014) found that harsh punishment from parents increased the risk of a youth joining a gang. However, results across studies are not consistent. For instance, Chu et al. (2009) did not find, in a study of 165 youth offenders (of which 58 were gang members) in Singapore, an association between parental discipline and gang involvement. The differences between these studies may indicate that the regional location and background of culture and a family may play a role in terms of gang involvement. Hence, the role of parenting within gang contexts needs to be explored further.

In contrast, studies on family socialization in relation to delinquency are limited albeit consistent in their findings. Studies show family socialization of negative behaviour (i.e. encouraging aggression in children) and promotion of negative qualities (i.e. greediness) are linked to the development of delinquency in children (Hudson, 1987; Tratsiakou, 2019) – both of which are potentially related to gang involvement. In a qualitative study of the development of gangs in British Columbia, Singh et al. (2006) contended that possibly youth were driven to gangs in order to attain status and respect – items that were key features of their family culture. Overall, while filled with limited research and inconsistent findings, family culture studies indicate that family culture, through socialization, can potentially play a role in youth gang

involvement. However, more research is needed to gain insights on the interplay between these factors, particularly among families from South Asian cultures.

2.3 Family Culture and Socialization in Masculinity Contexts

The process of socialization is important to understand the role of family, masculinity, and gang involvement. Primary socialization is a process that can occur within the family, and instill norms and values into children that can define their future behaviour (Oetting, 1992). In studies of gender roles and socialization, scholars have examined gender socialization to determine why males and females act differently. Previous literature indicates that gender socialization can occur as early as in birth delivery rooms where newborn boys are dressed in blue while girls are dressed in pink (Messner, 2000; Anderson, 2003; Bussey & Bandura, 2004). As such, from the moment that a baby enters the world, the baby is met with socialization through symbols with attached meanings of behaviour (Walker, 1999). The family is a main context through which symbols and attached meanings are conveyed through socialization between members and then reinforced by the family, which helps shape behavior patterns, values, and a sense of self or identity, including frames of reference for acceptable behaviour across active situations (Stets & Carter, 2011; Stets & Burke, 2000). In particular, masculinity may be one factor that becomes socially constructed through family socialization. Research has shown that the construction of masculinity and what it means to be a ‘man’ can occur within the family (Martinez, 1995; Deuchar, 2018).

The construction of masculinity can be similar across cultures as well. For instance, in a qualitative study of Hispanic family culture, Martinez (1995) found that machismo ideals (e.g. male is sole provider of family; patriarchal head of family; dominant and aggressive) were stressed in childhood and accepted among males can lead to males pursuing masculine power through gang-affiliation. In the Canadian context, Henry (2015) found that an Indigenous, gang-involved youth’s biological father played an important role in the youth’s life. Henry (2015) reported that these Indigenous boys had ideals of hyper-masculinity (i.e. aggression and violence) socialized into them as they observed their fathers being abusive towards their mothers and them. Furthermore, aspects of hyper-masculinity are reinforced through rewards, as fathers

will praise their sons when they utilize hyper-masculine behaviours and act like true ‘men’ (Henry, 2015; Pabla, 2019).

Research has also shown that the socialization of masculinity through the family culture (e.g. promotion of patriarchal, hyper-masculine ideals) can be an initial stimulus for gang involvement (Martinez, 1995). For instance, Hong Kong-based gang members reported growing up in male-dominated villages that offered them greater admiration from fathers, but this family context and culture within the village also pressured them to prove their masculinity over others through gang involvement (Deuchar, 2018). In a qualitative study of African-American, Flores (2014) found that gang members grew up in family environments that celebrated the image of the family-oriented male breadwinner. In turn, breadwinning appeared to become a definer of masculinity for these gang members (Flores, 2014). As such, it appears that masculine identity may be bounded by family socialization.

In some cases, masculine identity revolves around physical dominance and aggression. In a qualitative study of gang members in Glasgow, McLean and Holligan (2018) reported that, for participants, masculine identity was bounded by ideas of manliness, including physical dominance and the need to protect one’s family. However, masculinity can also extend to a performance or, in other words, acting in certain ways that one has been socialized to believe are masculine.

2.4 Conceptual Perspective: Hegemonic masculinity

Related to socialization, concepts like hegemonic masculinity which describe masculinity as a performance, can be understood as a process that legitimatizes men’s dominance in society and subordinates the identities of other men and women (Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is composed with a set of dominant values that can be socialized and reinforced through the performance of what it is to ‘be a man’. Empirical work found that stoicism was a key part of hegemonic masculinity (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2007). However, hegemonic masculinity can extend beyond mere emotional stoicism. For instance, hegemonic masculinity

can idealize overt heterosexual behaviour, physical strength, assertiveness, and a rejection of feminine weakness (Messerschmidt, 2005; Deuchar, 2020).

Gangs can be an outlet for hegemonic masculine socialization and expression (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Ethnographic work by Cohen (1955) highlighted that young gang members engaged in delinquent behaviours to actively deny their femininity and assert their masculinity. As such, gang activity can be a means of enacting hyper-masculine behaviours in order to sustain a plausible masculine identity (Pitts, 2008). In studying Latino gang members, Deuchar (2018) reported that, once initiated into the gang, youth gangsters became immersed in hyper-masculine behaviours, where violence was used to assert dominance over others. Hyper-masculinity through gang activity, in turn, granted these Latino gangsters status, power, and respect (Deuchar, 2018).

However, hyper-masculinity can also develop within the context of the family. In part, boys learn what it is to 'be a man' through learning and watching expressions of masculinity from other men, including fathers, and women (Wall & Kristjanson, 2005). Such socialization can occur through masculine ideas, like that boys should 'be a man' and that 'men do not cry', which can be reinforced by parents (Hlavka, 2014). In a qualitative study of college students, Kaufman (2014) indicated that, growing up, boys were socialized by their family to internalize their emotions, participate in contact sports, and told to act like a 'big boy'. Kaufman (2014) reported that this early socialization and pressure to be masculine appeared to lead boys to develop aggressive and hyper-masculine behaviours. Similarly, in relation to gangs, some studies have indicated that early socialization and exposure to macho attitudes, domestic violence, pressure to act tough or like a man resulted in anger amongst gang members that they then expressed through hyper-masculine violence and gang membership (Deuchar, 2018; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991).

Overall, gang activity can offer an avenue for one to express their masculinity despite oppressive backdrops as well as attain it. For instance, gang life can also unique opportunity for men that otherwise feel powerless in their lives. Hagedorn (1998) argues that when legitimate practices that serve to validate one's masculinity are not available/possible, then individuals will

seek alternatives that match the values espoused by hegemonic masculinity and, consequently, these alternatives provide individuals a means of achieving manliness. For instance, the lure of ‘easy money’ from drug dealing in the face poverty can appeal to youth as it provided them financial gain as well as masculine respect (Flores, 2014; Anderson, 1999; Vigil, 1999). Accordingly, for individuals that are feeling powerless and unable to express their masculinity in legitimate settings, exaggerated forms of masculinity will develop as individuals will seek settings in which they can perform masculinity. In Anderson’s (1999) ethnographic study of marginalized gang-involved youth in Philadelphia, Anderson highlighted that the inclination to violence emerged due to the circumstances of life, including economic and racial marginalization. In turn, scholars have described gang life as an expression of marginalized masculinity (Flores, 2014).

2.5 The South Asian Gang Context

Turning focus to South Asian gang involvement, the risk associated with South Asian gang involvement are similar to the some of the risk factors (i.e. masculinity, family socialization) cited above. However, South Asian family socialization may be a unique context and culture where masculinity and gang involvement is shaped. In the context of South Asian masculinities in Canada, young South Asian men possibly conform to the masculine ideals that their immigrant father pass down to them (Frost, 2010). In a qualitative study of South Asian high school students in B.C., Frost (2010) being masculine for some South Asian men meant that one was more masculine than Caucasian counterparts and be the way their fathers and grandfathers socialized them to be (e.g. using violence, drinking alcohol, being heterosexual) (Frost, 2010). In the same study, Frost (2010) indicated that South Asian boys, feeling powerless, then engaged in hyper-masculine to situate their masculinity in the presence of their Caucasian peers (Frost, 2010). In this case, South Asian boys attempted to ensure that their masculinity was not subordinate to Caucasian masculinity (Frost, 2010).

South Asian masculinity can also be shaped through ideas of related to how a man should operate, including breadwinning (i.e. being the primary income earner in the household). In a qualitative study of South Asian men in Spain, Lum (2015) reported that South Asian men

adhered to ideas of breadwinning (i.e. earning more money than their wife/female partner) to feel like ‘true’ South Asian men (Lum, 2015). Ideas of breadwinning, or earning money, can be linked to South Asian gang involvement. In qualitative interviews with South Asian community members, Pabla (2019) found that the expectation on boys to one day be the primarily breadwinner may make gang involvement financially luring. Pabla (2019) further reported that gangsters in the 1990s were impacted by racial and economic marginalization in their youth. Consequently, these youths became gang involved in an effort to claim their masculinity in the presence of white society (Pabla, 2019).

Within South Asian families, the socialization of South Asian boys is also of relevance. In a qualitative study of South Asian gangs, Pabla (2019) indicated that the patriarchal nature of South Asian family culture created a ‘golden-boy’ mindset amongst South Asian boys that minimized the importance of family bonding and hard-work in favour of instant gratification and material gain. According to Pabla (2019), the ‘golden-boy mindset’ created an environment where boys were granted an excessive amount of freedom that possibly lead to gang involvement. The patriarchal nature of South Asian family culture also expressed the importance of masculine attitudes. In an unpublished thesis, Gill (2012) indicated that South Asian families socialized ideas of masculinity, including hyper-masculine behaviours, as key features of South Asian masculinity. However, some studies also report that South Asian masculinity is not just restricted to hyper-masculinity. Research has indicated that South Asian parents socialized ideas of breadwinning into their boys who then, as men, defined breadwinning as a key feature of South Asian masculinity (Lum, 2015). In turn, gang involvement became an outlet for these boys to attain their masculinity by earning easy money (McConnell, 2015; Pabla, 2019).

These ideas of socialization are potentially evident in the persona of a ‘Surrey Jack’. Frost (2010) defines ‘Surrey Jacks’ as a group of young South Asian men in the Lower Mainland that are hyper-masculine, extremely aggressive, violent, heavy drinkers, and likely gang involved.

3 Research Objectives

There is a limited amount of published research on South Asian gang involvement in relation to cultural risk factors. Research has indicated that family conflict, including lack of parental attachment and parental neglect, might play a role in South Asian gang involvement (Brar, 2017). More broad research on gang-involved racial minorities, including South Asian, has reported that youth internalize hyper-masculine behaviours that their parents socialize into them and this can play a role in their gang involvement (Ngo, 2010). Recent studies have also documented how South Asian community members problematized and viewed South Asian gang involvement (Pabla, 2019). Here, South Asian community members pathologized South Asian culture as one that was patriarchal and promoted gang-involvement amongst South Asian youth (Pabla, 2019).

While studies have examined South Asian culture (Pabla, 2019), no study, to my knowledge, has documented the role that South Asian family culture might play in socializing South Asian males in relation to gang involvement. Features of family culture and structure provide individuals with an environment that may reinforce delinquency (Nye, 1958; Martin, 1994; Deuchar, 2018; Kakar, 1998; Sirpal, 2002). Gaps in the literature beg the question of how features of South Asian family culture and structure shape the socialization of young men and its relationship to gang involvement. South Asian family values, the role of parenting in socializing these family values have not been explored in great detail in the past. Hence, a better understanding is needed of the role that socialization within South Asian family culture may play in constructing South Asian gangsters.

The objective of my study is to explore the socialization of South Asian family culture and examine family member' perceptions of South Asian masculinity and young South Asian men's involvement in gangs. The research questions guiding the study are:

1. What are South Asian family members' perceptions of the role of South Asian family structure and culture in shaping gang involvement among their community?
2. How do South Asian family members perceive family socialization as impacting a sense of masculinity and involvement in gangs?

Family structure and culture are key to my study and are based upon the notions of (1) family hierarchies, and (2) the norms and values that dominate family ideals. First, family hierarchy is

defined as the structure of the family (i.e. the top-level which included parents with children falling under them). Family hierarchy can influence how a family functions, particularly in the context of a patriarchal household that is dominated by male members (Sangha, 2018). Second, family culture is defined as norms and values that define the ideals of a family (i.e. what was acceptable or unacceptable behaviours).

It was not my aim to further problematize or stigmatize South Asian culture/families. Discourses regarding South Asian family culture can have stigmatizing effects on the South Asian community, leaving community members feeling alienated (Pabla, 2019). Hence, I do not aim to blame South Asian families nor do my findings mean to suggest that all South Asian youth will experience South Asian family culture the same. Instead, the purpose of my study was to gain insights into the potential role of South Asian family structures and culture in shaping South Asian gang involvement. Such knowledge could be applied to future policy and prevention strategies such as collaborative undertakings by police and South Asian community organizations, aimed at promoting positive associations with South Asian family culture for South Asian boys that may help prevent South Asian boys from becoming involved in gangs.

3.1 Thesis overview

The next part of this thesis details my theoretical positioning. Next, the methods and study procedures of my study are described. Afterwards, the findings, including quotes from participants, are presented. Finally, I conclude my study by summarizing the key findings and comparing it to previous literature. Policy recommendations and directions for future research are discussed as well.

4 Theoretical Positioning

To guide my study, I focused on the processes of socialization within a South Asian family. As such, I situated my study within a social learning perspective. Social learning theory details the way the norms and rules of behaviour is learned through the social, emotional, and cognitive mechanisms (Bandura, 1977). A core feature of social learning theory, as proposed by

Bandura (1977), is the emphasis on learning of behaviour from one's environment, including being socialization from socializing agents like one's family. The purpose of my study is not to test social learning theory but rather use social learning theory as a guide to sort through participant views. Hence, while social learning theory is an expansive theory outlining the manner in which behaviour, observation, and modelling intertwine, only the core features of social learning theory are of relevance. In particular, I focus on observational learning (i.e. the learning and development of one's behaviour, attitudes, and identity by observing others) and imitation (i.e. following behaviour and modelling behaviour, attitudes, and identity) (Bandura, 1977). It is through observation and imitation that children are socialized and learn of acceptable patterns of behaviours. The latter point relates to classical points of reinforcement of acceptable behaviour and punishment (i.e. punishing one for displaying negative behaviour) (Nabavi, 2012).

Social learning theory helped guide the findings of my study. Using social learning theory, I examined the participant's views on South Asian family culture and masculinity were possibly an expression of process of socialization. Gender, for instance, is socially constructed and a product of social-cultural influences on an individual (Schneider, Gruman & Coutts, 2005). In my study, when discussing gender in terms of South Asian gang involvement, male participants drew on experiences and understanding of what it means to be a 'man', discussing what the accepted behaviours that a South Asian man can display. The presented example illustrates how social learning theory aligns with my intentions to contextualize the discussion of family culture, masculinity, and gang involvement within social learning processes. It is the idea that participant views help illuminate how a South Asian boy becomes socialized and develops his identity as a South Asian man within the context of South Asian family culture, masculinity, and gang involvement.

5 Methods

To examine South Asian gang involvement in the context of South Asian families, I employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research offers a unique grounding position from which to conduct research and foster specific ways of examining social phenomenon (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Qualitative inquiry provides a point of view of a social world and tools through which to build an understanding of a social problem through the perspectives and experiences of

individuals (Hesse-Biber, 2017). As such, a qualitative inquiry offered a methodology that allowed me to understand South Asian gang involvement through lived experiences and perspectives of South Asian family members. As such, when I sought to understand gang involvement through participant perspectives, I viewed their perspectives as constructions of subjective truths, realities, and meanings that were specific to context of inquiry (Thorne, 2016).

5.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is both a qualitative approach and analytic method. It is considered appropriate for studies that aim to discover perspectives using interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Alhojailan, 2012). Thematic analysis is a way to identify, analyze, and report themes/patterns within data, and helped me, the researcher, organize and understand data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For my study, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA) method appealed to me as an analytic method that offered a flexible and iterative approach to thematic analysis. Under this form of TA, the analysis was both inductive and deductive: inductive in that my analysis was data-driven and coded inductively, but also deductive in the sense that I had ideas that I was interested in exploring. For instance, I was interested in sensitizing topics – such as parenting, which offer ways of seeing and organizing experience, alerting researchers to important aspects of the topic and research (Charmaz, 2003). I was also attuned to pre-existing concepts, such as hegemonic masculinity, that helped organize data meanings. However, my approach overall remained iterative and inductive in that themes that I identified were not fitted into a pre-existing coding framework; instead, data was open-coded and participant/data meanings were emphasized. I identified themes through a latent approach, going beyond descriptive levels and examining underlying meanings of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A latent approach was useful because it allowed the analysis to be more interpretive – requiring an active role on my part to understand the underlying social contexts at work (Patton, 1990), rather than limiting myself to description only (a semantic approach) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As such, I used a constructionist perspective to guide the TA. A constructionist perspective deems meaning and experience as socially produced and reproduced, rather than reflective of individuals (Burr, 1995). The aim of the current study was to focus not on the motivation of individual psychologies, but rather on socio-cultural contexts that contextualized individual accounts. Using a social constructionist lens, I examined the way experiences, views, and meanings were made sense of and produced through the effects of cultural discourse and context. For instance, as a starting point in interviews, I first asked participants about their definition culture, gangs, and gangsters to analyze how these ideas were socially constructed (see Appendix 6). Hence, a constructionist perspective helped define the TA framework of my study.

The applied approach of TA was fundamentally useful for this study because of its flexibility – it was adaptable to various theoretical/conceptual frameworks and research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I aimed to gain insight on South Asian gang involvement by documenting and analyzing the views South Asian community members. As such, with a large, diasporic community in B.C., with possible shared values and beliefs, it was useful to adopt an approach that conceptualized and identified potential patterns and connections within data. Hence, TA was appropriate for the purposes of this project. Furthermore, while there are other theme-based methodologies, they are more focused on theory building or discourse analysis and, thus, not suitable for this project.

5.2 Study procedures

5.2.1 Sampling and recruitment

The study population of interest was South Asian family members who were interested in discussing South Asian gang involvement. These family members (excluding those who were current/former gang members) were seen as outsiders to South Asian gangs (i.e. they were never involved directly with the gangs or gang activities). These South Asian family members included those who knew South Asian gang members as well as South Asian people who were interested in sharing views on South Asian gangs.

The inclusion criteria included the following: (1) 18 years old or older, (2) self-identified as South Asian, (3) an immigrant from Punjab, India or a second (or later) generation South Asian. All participants resided in Lower Mainland for at least the past 10 years and were able to provide verbal, informed consent. The exclusion criteria included the following: anyone who did not meet the inclusion criteria and individuals who self-identified as South Asian but one of their parents did not self-identify as South Asian.

The sample included 12 participants. A sample size of 12 participants was deemed as suitable due to data saturation, or the sense that additional information in interviews was becoming redundant, since the collected data at 12 participants was rich and I was able to answer my research questions with it (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). The goal of this study, alike to other TAs, was to answer the research questions (Braun et al, 2009). As such, I considered data saturation to exist after 12 interviews because all of the research questions were answered and corresponding data in later interviews (participants #10-12) was becoming redundant. As such, no further interviews would have added great richness to the data.

To recruit participants, I first used convenience sampling where participants who met the study criterion and were easily accessible were included in the sample (Dörnyei, 2007). Convenience sampling was suitable because it allowed me to recruit from my own network of contacts in the South Asian community. For instance, I created a recruitment flyer that I emailed and handed to my networks within the South Asian community which allowed me to recruit four initial participants who then helped to ‘snowball’ the sampling into recruiting other participants.

After the initial sample was constructed (seven participants), I used purposeful sampling to recruit further. Purposeful sampling is the process of identifying and selecting individuals that have experience with the phenomenon of interest, and can be used to produce a rich dataset based on the information being generated (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). For instance, after seven interviews with participants, I noticed that the sample did not include participants who were mothers; hence, I choose to recruit participants (two participants in total) who were mothers because I believed the perspectives of mothers was important to fully capture the functioning of a South Asian family. The combination of convenience, purposeful, and snowball sampling

helped me reach the South Asian community, which can be difficult to reach for outsiders (i.e. those who do not have a personal network in the community), and allowed me to, through purposeful sampling, to get rich data with 12 participants.

Interested participants made contact through the study email or phone number. Each interested participant received options to schedule an interview time and a consent form to review before the interview. Subsequently, one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. There was no honorarium for participation.

At the end of each interview, participants were asked a series of demographic questions. The sample reported a median age of 25.5 years old (range: 18-60; median: 25.5 years old). Half of the participants (n=6) were between the ages of 18 to 25. The sample was equally composed of 50% males (n=6) and females (n=6). Over 50% of participants (n=8) were second generation immigrants (i.e. their parents were immigrants to Canada, or first-generation immigrants, and they themselves were born in Canada). Over 50% of participants (n=8) had lived in Metro Vancouver for 21 to 31 years with a range of 19 to 35 (median: 25). An overview of these demographic characteristics is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of participants (N=12)

	n	%
Age group, in years		
18-25	6	50.0
25-32	2	16.7
33-40	1	8.33
41-48	1	8.33
48+	2	16.7
Median	25.5	
Range	18-60	
Gender		
Male	6	50.0
Female	6	50.0

Immigration Status		
1st	3	25.0
2nd	8	66.7
3rd	1	8.33
Lived in Metro Vancouver, in years		
10-20	1	8.33
21-31	8	66.7
32-42	3	25.0
42+	0	
Median	25	
Range	19-35	
Language Spoken		
English	10	83.3
Punjabi	2	1.67

5.2.2 Interviews

The main data source of this study was one-on-one interviews that provided a deep and personal account of participant experiences and views. Interviews were guided through a topic guide (see Appendix 6) that was flexible – such an approach was suitable because it provided me the opportunity to probe and collect open-ended data, explore participant’s thoughts and topics that were related and important, and delve deeply into their views on South Asian gang involvement (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The initial questions therefore allowed for flexibility and included several questions to elicit participants views on South Asian gangs, gangsters, and family culture. The questions were informed by my positioning in the South Asian community, my previous knowledge, my understanding of hegemonic masculinity, the research questions, and the literature review. I also used probing questions, for instance, when a participant mentioned Surrey Jacks, “Could you please, in your own words, define the term Surrey Jack” to garner further perspectives from participants on South Asian gang involvement and family culture. The interview guide was reviewed and discussed amongst myself and my supervisor as the study unfolded. For example, the guide was piloted with one participant after which I

debriefed with my supervisor and refined the language and questions to ensure I was collecting rich data relating to my research aims.

I started the interviews with a brief description of the project, my objectives, and an overview of the topics we would cover in the interview. Questions began by eliciting general views (“can you tell me what South Asian gangs mean to you?”) to more specific questions (“how would you characterize the family life of a South Asian youth who might join a gang?”). As the project evolved, the interview guide remained unaltered but I was able to probe when necessary to elicit rich and detailed information. It also allowed me to follow up on ideas and themes emerging from prior interviews to gain a more robust understanding of what I was seeing. To conclude the interview, I asked each participant if they had anything else to share or if they had any questions.

Each participant received a consent form to review before we met for the interview. At the beginning of the interview, we reviewed it again and I answered any questions participants had. The consent process took approximately 15 minutes while each interview lasted 30 to 70 minutes. I attained verbal consent from participants to record the interview as well as for me to take notes. Interviews were recorded after consent was attained and participants were reminded their participation was voluntary. Note-taking during interviews was vital, as I wrote memos and notes that quickly began to organize and analyze the data in a preliminary state (concurrent data analysis). Due to COVID-19 protocols, all interviews took place over Zoom or through the phone. Interviews were conducted in English (10 interviews) or Punjabi (two interviews), and later transcribed and translated to English when necessary.

All audio recordings were encrypted with VeraCrypt and transcription files were password protected. The audio recording and transcription files did not use any identifying information in the file name. Audio recordings were transcribed within three weeks of the interview to protect participant data confidentiality. Upon transcribing, I checked my interview notes with the audio recording to identify any inconsistencies and further wrote memos about the data. Audio recordings were then destroyed once the transcription was complete to ensure data confidentiality. Prior to the destroying of the audio recordings, all the audio recordings were

stored in SFU Vault. Each participant received a pseudonym in the findings section and I de-identified any revealing information, including personal stories, to protect confidentiality.

5.2.3 *Data analysis*

The data analysis was done concurrent to data collection, meaning that I analyzed data as I collected it. Such an approach allowed me to reflect on data collection and analysis concurrently, with findings of my analysis informing further data collection and sampling (Johnson et al., 2018). Concurrent data analysis informed the evolution of my study. For example, after seven interviews with participants, the sample consisted of just fathers, and males and females under 25 (most of whom had mentioned South Asian father-mother relationships). It became clear that the sample could benefit from the perspective of South Asian mothers who could offer how a South Asian mother views South Asian culture, parenting, and gang involvement amongst South Asian boys. As such, concurrent data analysis helped guide my data collection and sampling and allowed me to immerse and re-immers myself in the data as the study evolved – thus producing a rich and meaningful analysis.

To facilitate the thematic analysis, interview data and field notes were coded and sorted using NVivo software (QSR international, version 12). To develop the coding structure and categories, transcripts of interviews were read and inductively coded. This initial coding phase noted similarities and differences across participants, and focused mainly on perspectives. These initial codes captured South Asian family structure, culture, and masculinity – that later became organizing ideas that I was interested in analyzing further. Using NVivo, I used memoing and mapping to identify developing themes, sub-themes, and important ideas/concepts. These were discussed regularly between myself and my supervisor. As the coding progressed, further themes developed that focused on literature concepts. However, the goal was not to make the data fit theory or concepts; instead, the concepts, like hegemonic masculinity, helped illuminate the data and organize and understand it.

After coding and collation, I sorted different codes into potential themes, and collated all relevant coded extracts within identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process, I continued to use NVivo to map out the relationship between codes, themes, and different levels

of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were fully realized and had shared meanings (i.e. meaning-based patterns), with main themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Afterwards, when writing up the findings, I continued to review, revised, and synthesized the data into the themes as necessary.

5.3 Methodological rigor

The first strategy I used to ensure the methodological rigor of the study was memoing and debriefing. As noted above, during and after interviews, I used memoing and wrote memos to myself regarding the insights I derived during interviews, and after I reflected on the data. This helped to remove and re-immense myself in the data when needed. After interviews and coding, I debriefed and discussed the data with my supervisor. These discussions prompted me to read literature when needed, including on TA analysis, and interpretation. These discussions guided me and helped refine my codes, themes, and analysis as need be.

The second strategy I used was reflexivity. Reflexivity is an approach where the researcher examines themselves and their situatedness in the data (Dodgson, 2019). This strategy was important throughout my study. I am uniquely positioned in the current study as I am South Asian and I researched my own community. In addition, I interviewed participants that came from the same community as myself and, at times, I had a prior interpersonal relationship. I was mindful throughout the interviews about my unique positioning which helped me acknowledge my own power, position, and impact. I acknowledged that I held biases about South Asian gang involvement as well as my community and family culture. For instance, during data analysis, I was drawn to cultural references, including terms, like ‘Izzat’, which were specific to South Asian culture, because they spoke to my personal experiences and background. I, however, was mindful and reflexive that I was attracted to these specific South Asian cultural references and, during data analysis, I questioned if these cultural terms were relevant to my study because of my bias or because they spoke to the participant’s views. Hence, I acknowledged that my own bias could impact, due to my position as a researcher, the results and analysis – confirming my own bias rather than reflecting participant views.

Being mindful allowed me to pause and reflect on how my own biases were being reflected in the interviews, data, and analysis. As such, I situated myself in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I found memoing was, again, a useful tool for exploring ideas in a more non-informal manner. This helped me to reflect on the data, my own biases, and how these were potentially influences my interpretations or inclination to focus on certain data. It was useful to reflect, to ask, “Is this my previous assumption or a reflection of the data?,” to drive data collection and analysis.

However, my prior relationships and positioning within the South Asian community was also a strength. It helped me build rapport with participants, which would have been much more difficult without my positionality within the community. In the interviews themselves, participants expressed that it felt easier to convey ideas, believing I understood their perspectives. For instance, participants in their interviews would state things like, “You know how it is in *our* culture,” speaking to a level of trust and understanding between myself and participant built out of being South Asian.

Furthermore, my positionality as a member of the South Asian community provided me with an understanding of the phenomenon – including the language, family structure and culture – that outsiders otherwise would not know. While such a view may be a source of bias, it also meant I could reach a level of closeness and understanding with both with the topics and interpretations of the findings. South Asian culture is not new to me. Instead, my positionality as a member of the South Asian community helped me to ask questions, use language, and probe for data in a highly specific and well-informed manner. This, along with easy accessibility to the South Asian community, lent itself to the richness of my data and interpretation.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

All audio recordings were encrypted with VeraCrypt and transcription files were password protected. The audio recording and transcription files did not use any identifying information in the file name. Any field notes or research memos did not include identifying information. Emails and phone numbers were kept in a separate file from the study data and were deleted after the interview was complete. Any field notes and memoing were transcribed and

anonymized along with the interview transcript, and then destroyed. Further, if participants shared unique experiences that could be identifying, these were modified/de-identified or removed if necessary to help protect and anonymize the participants identity.

Interested participants received a consent form via email or, if they preferred, it was given and reviewed with them through Zoom or via phone-call. Participants were given a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the interview to consider the study and their research participation. The consent form informed the participant of the study's goals and procedures. I attained verbal consent from participants to audio-record the interview as well as note-taking. To minimize any confidentiality issues, I did not speak about anyone's participation with others or mention an individual's participation when others were present. Interviews took place in a quiet, private space and it was one-on-one with only the interviewer and participant present in the Zoom.

Further, to avoid propagating harmful stereotypes about South Asian family culture and South Asian gang involvement, the current study used inductive thematic analysis to allow themes to be identified from the data. This allowed participants' voices to guide the discussion and the data only spoke to their lives and opinions.

6 Findings

In this section, I present findings on how participant views on how ideas of masculinity and gang involvement are constructed and promoted, respectively, within South Asian family culture. The findings are organized into two major domains, including: (1) participant views on what South Asian masculinity within the context of South Asian families and culture, and (2) South Asian masculinity in the context of South Asian gang involvement. The first domain speaks to participant views on **South Asian masculinity within South Asian family culture**, including the role of parenting, the importance of being wealthy as a South Asian male, the socialization of masculinity, and hyper-masculinity. The second domain presents **the connection between South Asian masculinity and family culture to South Asian gang involvement**, including participant views on South Asian gangsters, the lure of easy money for gangsters, and

hyper-masculinity within gang contexts. Each domain contains several themes and subthemes (see Table 2).

Table 2: Breakdown of themes and subthemes

Domain	Theme	Sub-theme
Masculinity within the South Asian cultural contexts	Views on men and masculinity in South Asian family culture (culture and parenting)	Patriarchy and power in South Asian families
	Honour or Izzat as a concern in South Asian family culture	<p>Feeling invincible: parental neglect in South Asian families</p> <p>The importance of wealth within South Asian family culture</p> <p>The need for a South Asian male to be the breadwinner</p> <p>The pressure amongst South Asian males to accumulate wealth</p>
	Views on the socialization of South Asian masculinity	<p>Learning masculinity: The role of fathers in constructing stoic South Asian men</p> <p>The Jatt way: Jatt mentality amongst boys in South Asian families</p>

Masculinity and South Asian gangsters	Views on South Asian gangsters	Being a Jatt: A warrior mentality
		High school
		Appearance of South Asian gangsters
	Views on South Asian family culture fostering gang involvement for boys	The patriarchal nature of South Asian family culture fostering gang involvement
		The role of parental neglect in promoting gang involvement
	South Asian gangsters: The drive to be a man	The lure of gangs: Easy money over hard work
		Accumulating wealth by any means necessary
		Protecting Izzat by any means necessary
	South Asian gangsters: The desire to be a true Jatt	The relevance of aggression amongst South Asian gangsters
		Hyper-masculinity within the Jatt mentality
		Surrey Jacks

6.1 Views on men and masculinity in South Asian family culture and the impact on boys

Participant perspectives and narratives about South Asian family culture invoked notions of patriarchy and parenting,

6.1.1 *Patriarchy and power in South Asian families*

Participant perspectives provided insight into how patriarchy was constructed in South Asian family culture. Participant views described patriarchy in terms of how South Asian culture promoted the dominance of fathers over mothers. For example, when asked to describe a typical South Asian family, Janya, a 26-year-old female, explained:

The father makes choices and then the mother follows. The mother can give her opinions. It depends like on what family you're talking about, but like from my experiences and seeing it growing up, it's like the men have the final decision. They're the one who called the shots, whereas the woman basically follows their husband, right.

In terms of South Asian family culture, participant views like this depict a household where the father was the patriarchal head and the decision maker, with mothers as submissive and powerless in the family. In the South Asian family culture, the power dynamic between parents, with the father as dominant and the mother as submissive, extended to the treatment of children – both boys and girls. For example, when describing 'typical' South Asian parenting, Jason, a 24-year-old male, depicted these dynamics, saying:

Boys are getting treated with more respect, the boy is able to make his own choices, the girl is kind of told what to do, what to wear, and who to get married to. So, the boy ends up having more freedom than the girl.

This quote highlights the gender parity in South Asian families, where boys have more freedom, choice, power, and voice than girls. Thus, participant perspectives on South Asian family culture indicated that patriarchy in South Asian families depicted by the differential treatment and power between males and females with males holding greater power and autonomy.

6.1.2 *Feeling invincible: parental neglect in South Asian families*

Participants seemed to indicate that the greater level of autonomy for boys coincided with a lack of parental supervision, or parental neglect, of boys. Absent parenting extended inadequate supervision via grandparents. Gauri explained:

I know in my age group, a lot of kids had two parents working right. And they'd have the grandparents taking care of the kids. But the grandparents were like, you know: didn't speak English, stayed home, and didn't really understand what type of stuff the kids couldn't get into here compared to, say, India at the time. In India, now is a different story, but like back in the day, yeah, life there was so innocent, and the stuff kids get into here is just ridiculous.

This quote speaks to the inadequate supervision of children via South Asian grandparents created by South Asian parents working long hours. Overall, participants viewed that South Asian family culture was strained by work-family balance in that parents prioritized work over family bonding – a part of the family culture that seemed to be linked to the importance of wealth in South Asian families.

6.2 Honour or 'Izzat' as a concern in South Asian family culture

Building on the findings of South Asian family culture in the previous section, participants linked wealth as another important part of South Asian family culture and masculinity.

6.2.1 The importance of wealth within South Asian family culture

Participants reflection of South Asian families and family culture also depicted wealth as being one major aspect that was a symbol of one's honor, or Izzat, and status in the community. The notion family wealth and its ties to honour was evident in participants' descriptions of Izzat, or the amount of honour or respect a South Asian individual or family holds. Participants specified that one attained Izzat through wealth and material possessions that would result in status and external validation from the community:

Like respect. For the South Asian community, it's about showing the money they have, the big houses they have, the cars they have. That's how the South Asian community, at least some of them, define Izzat, which is like self-worth. (Balwant)

Discussions of Izzat related to the importance of wealth and money within South Asian families. For example, when discussing the importance of wealth in South Asian family culture, Karan, a 27-year-old male, stated:

Generally, in South Asian families, you'll see a lifestyle that is out of the ordinary and that isn't typical of what you see from other cultures in the sense that we tend to strive for more of a lavish lifestyle... I think, we as a South Asian community, whenever we see some other individual or some other family living this particular lavish lifestyle, we try to strive for the same type of lifestyle. It's kind of like the mimicking features, like if you have that, I want it to. So, I'll do anything in order to get that thing so that we are on the same level, if that makes sense. I think we're more of the, monkey see monkey do type mentality. And I think that's a major reason as to why you'll see those parents working a lot and not being at home with their kids.

This quote details a sense of competition among families within the South Asian community to accumulate wealth. For Karan, the result of this competition a culture celebrated and promoted wealth by any means possible, including working long-hours and other activities.

6.2.2 The Need for a South Asian Male to be the Breadwinner

Since wealth was constructed as a primary definer of one's Izzat in South Asian family culture, participant viewed attaining wealth as the primary goal for South Asian families, particularly for males in patriarchal families. When discussing the responsibilities of South Asian males within the patriarchy, participants narratives depicted South Asian masculinity as being socialized and defined by the amount of financial wealth a South Asian man possessed. When questioned about their views on South Asian masculinity or what it meant for a South Asian male to 'be a man,' participants consistently linked ideas of masculinity to the idea of earning money or breadwinning. Participants often talked about how this notion showed up in their families. For example, Jaggy, a 28-year-old male, explained: "To be a man, I think probably just

being able provide for his family, you know, take care of his parents. Just somebody that is able to take care of everything”. This quote illustrates the view that being a primary provider, care-taker, and breadwinner in the household provided men with a sense of value and masculinity. Through a social learning theory lens, it was imperative, as Aston – a 23-year-old male stated, for a South Asian male to learn that he has to “take all the responsibilities on his shoulders” and ensure that his household was taken care of to the point where "his parents can relax now cause he's the man of the house". For some participants, ultimately, financial success defined South Asian masculinity.

This idea was underscored through the contrasting idea that South Asian men were emasculated when they were not financially well off. Sanjit, a 41-year-old father, spoke about South Asian community perceptions of the South Asian male who was not wealthy or the primary breadwinner:

For some people, if a man doesn't have money, he is considered an embarrassment. The culture rejoices when you're successful – when you have money you have respect. But otherwise, some people will see a man who can't provide as useless. If you're poor and South Asian, no one will want to be associated with you. But, if you have money, you have respect.

Sanjit's quote depicts the view of South Asian masculinity where financial success dictates a South Asian male's self-worth and anything in contrast to that – in this case a South Asian man who fails to provide for his family – has failed, is not respected, and, consequently, punished or ostracized from the South Asian community. Hence, it seemed that being the breadwinner was not a cultural expectation for a South Asian man; rather, it was a cultural demand that was socialized into South Asian boys.

Expanding beyond male-to-male masculinity, participants mentioned how South Asian family culture constructed masculinity to also subordinate women. Gauri, a 37-year-old mother, for instance, mentioned that, for her, South Asian masculinity was linked to the husband-wife relationship in a South Asian family:

He needs to be the breadwinner in the relationship. Can he still bring in more money than his partner? And that would be, you know, he's a real man by doing that, like if the woman were to make more money than him, you feel that's like a shot to his person. Like, that's demeaning.

This quote illustrates the view that, when a South Asian man is not the primary breadwinner in a relationship, he is subordinate to his female partner. As such, participants viewed that South Asian masculinity was positioned relative to females in the family: it was seen as important to earn more than female partners especially. Alternatively, South Asian men risked being seen as unacceptable or less of a man.

6.2.3 The pressure and need to accumulate wealth as a South Asian man

Due to the potential of facing social stigma from the community by being a poor South Asian male, participants in this study mentioned that there was intense pressure for South Asian boys to be successful. Male participants recalled from their own experiences and described a pressure that was mounted upon South Asian boys:

I think there was always a lot of pressure to do well and to see to go to university, particularly because my parents weren't born here. So, first generation Canadian. So, I think there was a lot of pressure to do well.

This quote is from Jaggy and indicates how he, as a first-generation Canadian in his family, felt pressure to succeed academically considering the opportunity his parents had afforded him – one that they did not have in India. Hence, male participants felt a need to almost repay their parents for their hard-work and this, consequently, mounted pressure on male participants to be successful and wealthy. Aston described how this pressure to be successful possibly came from parents:

Parents, most of them are like immigrants, so they expect their children to work hard since like it took a lot of hard work and effort to come from there [from Punjab to Canada]. So, they expect their children to go to school 'cause most parents didn't have an education. So, they [parents] work hard so they can pay off their kid's tuition and then they expect the

children to respect them and like become something, have a name, bring esteem to the family name, make money, and then take care of their parents when their older.

This quote illustrates the pressure boys feel to repay their parents for their hard work by being successful. 'Success' here was to bring respect and esteem to the family as well as to be a man. Thus, within South Asian family culture, there was a pressure for South Asian boys to prove their masculinity – to become wealthy and the patriarchal breadwinner of *his* family.

6.3 Views on the socialization of South Asian masculinity

As mentioned in the previous theme, South Asian family culture promoted various norms and ideals related to the patriarchy and masculinity and, within South Asian families, the primary socializer of these cultural values of masculinity were parents, particularly fathers.

6.3.1 Learning masculinity: The role of fathers in constructing stoic South Asian men

From the view of many participants, fathers in South Asian families played a main role in the socializing boys and, consequently, the construction of masculinity. In the interviews, participants were asked how young South Asian boys learned to become 'men' as they grew up. Participants consistently mentioned that masculinity was socialized by fathers who taught their boy how he should act. When discussing how her brothers and other South Asian boys learned about South Asian masculinity, Noor, a 22-year old female, stated that much of it was socialized through their fathers:

It starts with they see. A lot of dads will be like to their sons, "Don't cry, you're not a girl. Don't show any emotions". And the dad feeds these thoughts to the boy and the kid grows up thinking it's wrong to show emotion, to act weak. He thinks he has to stand up for myself, he can't let others disrespect him or talk back to him, particularly woman.

Here, South Asian fathers are thought to play a role in teaching their sons about ideas of masculinity, including emotional stoicism, throughout their development. Using social learning theory as a framework, participants seemed to indicate that fathers reinforced ideas of emotional stoicism, or not displaying any emotion regardless of the situation and remaining unaffected by

emotional events, which was clearly part of the construction of South Asian masculinity. In Noor's quote above, South Asian fathers reiterated to their boys that they should be strong (i.e. emotionally stoic) and not show weakness, including retaliating against any perceived disrespect. As such, participants' views indicated that a South Asian boy may first learn ideas of South Asian masculinity through his father, who can teach him that showing emotions or being disrespected rendered him weak and emasculated. In turn, it seemed that being tough and emotionally stoic may be a part of claiming masculinity as a South Asian boy.

Noor's quote also spoke about the importance of observational learning as well as how South Asian masculinity functions relative to others, particularly females. For instance, when continuing to speak about South Asian masculinity, Noor also commented:

Growing up, this boy will see his mom always showing his dad respect, making sure he gets his dinner on time, and they grow up with that mentality. This is how a man should be treated like and this is how a man should act.

This view illustrates that masculinity functions within a patriarchal South Asian family – within parental relations – where the wife is subordinated to her husband. Likewise, South Asian boys, observing this, can begin to believe that a man is superior to women and become socialized to believe that male dominance over females is a part of South Asian masculinity. In turn, for participants, South Asian masculinity was about the amount of power and respect a man held.

6.3.2 *"Jatt is a farmer"*

In the previous sub-theme, I explored South Asian masculinity through the process of socialization. The discussion revealed the importance of emotional stoicism as a part of South Asian masculinity. However, participants indicated that emotional stoicism was only one part of South Asian masculinity – the other was masculine bravado or fearlessness.

This sub-theme's title is a quote is from Gavin, a 45-year-old, and is a simple definition of a 'Jatt'. The term Jatt was defined as a social group based on the Punjabi caste system in India that denoted the amount of 'respect' one has. In this system, Jatts are considered high in the hierarchy. However, while the true definition of Jatt alluded to farming and being a farmer,

South Asians conflated the definition of Jatt with ideas of superiority. As Sanjit, 41-year-old father, explained:

In India, it's a caste. Jatt's are like a farmer, had a farm, large land. But, they didn't have the most money and that's where this ego idea comes from. They acted tough, like we have land and have that, to prove their ego. The cultural part of Jatt, the belief of being tough, is rooted in reality because Jatts were like army guys, they helped deal with conflict. But, most take it to mean that they're better than the next guy.

Sanjit's quote indicates how Jatt refers to farmers, but that individuals in the South Asian community might refer to themselves as a Jatt to signal their superiority over others in the caste system. Hence, in the South Asian community, there can be a corrupted use of the word 'Jatt' where individuals might have called themselves a Jatt to indicate that they are superior, strong, and – as indicated by Sanjit's reference to soldiers – a warrior.

6.3.3 *Being a Jatt: A warrior mentality*

Among participants, the idea of men being 'warriors' was a fixed value in South Asian culture. The ideas of being strong, being a warrior, and being a Jatt were synonymous with one another and reinforced in South Asian families. As Gavin explained:

When a kid isn't follow a parent's orders, doing something wrong. Parents might, jokily, say to be a man. But that means be good, be smart. Like, if at school, a kid fights someone, a parent might say be a man. But it means like get your act together, straighten out. But then, some parents might mean be a man, Jatt, brave, strong. Jatts, like can be physically strong because their labourers. But, some people take this wrong. They say like be a Jatt, so they fight in school because the kid is like "I'm a Jatt, I'm fearless". It means I'm strong, but that isn't what Jatt means. Jatt is a farmer in a Punjab. But, in Canada, kids feel proud of being a Jatt.

Gavin's quote demonstrates how South Asian diaspora families in Canada dilute the meaning of Jatt and, instead, use Jatt as a state of being – to fictitiously describe a South Asian man who was strong, courageous, and fearless. In such a context, being a Jatt meant being a true "Punjabi man"

(Gavin) or, in other words, being masculine by being strong, fearless, and brave. In turn, it seemed that hyper-masculine behaviours came to define another part of South Asian hegemonic masculinity.

6.4 Views on South Asian gangsters

As discussed in the previous theme, participant views indicated that South Asian masculinity was constructed by emotional stoicism and fearlessness that was socialized into boys within the family. The current section presented participant views on South Asian gangsters, including another point of socialization for boys – high school.

6.4.1 Born in high school: The young South Asian gangster

Participants narratives constructed South Asian gangsters as relatively young, mostly in their late teenage years or early adulthood. Age estimates such as "16," "early 20s," and "late 20s" were common. Related to this age range, high school seemed to be an important transition place for entering gang involvement as participants often reflected on noticing gang involvement beginning in high school. Aston, a 25-year-old male, grew up playing soccer and hanging out with South Asian youth that would eventually become involved in gangs: "I used to play soccer back in high school, I knew a couple of people that became involved". As another example, in recalling a story about a gang member she knew, Janya, a 26-year-old female, stated:

All of a sudden when we transitioned into grade 8-9 I don't know what happened, but he never came to school. In grade 7, this kid was just amazing so sweet, so nice. And then the transition... It was obvious he was [in a] gang.

For participants, high school was a turning point for young South Asian men where potential influence or influences pushed a South Asian boy into gangs. This idea reflects "nidus" - a term that refers to "a nest or breeding" or as "a place where" something develops (Merriam-Webster, 2022). In participants narratives, high school reflected the concept of nidus, where it was a place of influence that breed gang involvement. For instance, Aston believed that high school was an important point of social influence for South Asian youth:

I would say like it all starts from like the drug use they particularly do in high school, so like probably like 14, 15 and then also like the friends they hang around with, if they're doing the same thing and I think they influence probably that one other friend who has like a cousin who's into maybe gangs. So, it trickles down, where they probably bring that friend with his cousin along and at the time they're probably not knowing like how bad of a situation this is for them and they sort of don't want to feel left out so they just sort of go along with that.

Aston's quote illustrates the influence that occurs in high school where, either through drug use or participation in peripheral or minor gang activities, a South Asian youth can become gang involved to fit in at school.

6.4.2 The appearance of the South Asian gangster

First, participants constructed the appearance of South Asian gangsters as symbolizing how they are financially “well-off” and “bougie” (Manjot). I defined bougie as an individual who wore expensive clothing, watches, shoes, and/or drove an expensive car – an allusion that they were financially well-off. When asked how they would describe South Asian gangsters, Manjot, a 24-year-old female, explained: “They like to dress the same. They have designer clothing, a lot of jewelry, watches, expensive cars, and even wear logos that represent them”. This quote illustrates Manjot’s view of the typical appearance of a South Asian gangster, indicating a homogenous appearance amongst gangsters. In essence, participants viewed that a South Asian gangster dressed for appearance by wearing expensive material items.

Participants seemed to indicate that the appearance of a South Asian gangster denoted them as ‘cool’ referring to an aesthetic to describe an individual who was respected or popular. When asked to describe the main features of a South Asian gangster, Jaggy, a 28-year-old male, explained:

They try to keep up appearances, look cool, have brand name things, work out all the time, deal drugs or involved in some sort of illegal activity and think just partying you know, alcohol, those kinds of things.

When probed to clarify what he meant by “keeping up appearance,” Jaggy explained: “I think part of it is to look like they run things, to act like they are making a ton of money, to make it look like they are running the world, I think that's part of the image”. These quotes indicate the view that that appearances are important for gang members and impart a sense of power for them. As such, participants viewed that a South Asian gangster engaged in activities (i.e. buying branded clothing, dealing drugs to money) to construct an appearance that painted them as being cool and wealthy.

6.5 Views on South Asian family culture fostering gang involvement for boys

Views on South Asian gangsters, as depicted above, were also linked to South Asian family culture. In the interviews, participants were asked about the role, if any, that South Asian family culture might play in terms of South Asian gang involvement. Participant talked about the dynamics in South Asian families and their views on such dynamics could foster gang involvement amongst South Asian boys. In particular, participant interviews invoked the notion that South Asian family culture created a feeling of invincibility among South Asian boys that promoted individual autonomy, and translated to boys perceiving gangs as a high reward and low risk endeavor.

6.5.1 The patriarchal nature of South Asian family culture fostering gang involvement

The dynamics between genders in South Asian families, including the differential treatment of boys and girls in terms of freedom, seemed to create an environment that potentially fostered gang involvement among boys. One way in particular way that this occurred was through the freedom and feeling of invincibility that boys had in their families. Some participants spoke directly to the notion of boys’ freedom and the link to gang involvement. Gurleen, a 19-year-old female, explained:

They [South Asian boys] look at it like, ‘My parents give me freedom, they trust me more. They’re letting me do this stuff, and I can do whatever I want’. They are rules for him, but he starts to stop caring about it because, as he grows up, he’s just like whatever. Parents then also stop caring as much and allow him to do what he does and they don’t pry into his

life because they're like, 'He's going to do what he wants'. They don't care what he's doing at school, about what people are saying about him. So, the kid then feels the parents are not going to say anything to him and they can do whatever they want... Like I can say for a fact, [gang members] in my high school, their parents weren't strict with them, they could do whatever they wanted, stay out late and that's dumb because they are like I have this freedom, might as well use it. So that can be something that encourages many to join South Asian gangs knowing that.

This quote illustrates the view that South Asian boys operate with a high level of agency as well as a lack of supervision in their lives – able to do as they please without being punished for bad behaviour or having parental oversight. From participants' perspectives, it was excessive freedom and a lack of parental strictness (or consequence) that could encourage gang involvement amongst South Asian boys.

6.5.2 The role of parental neglect in promoting gang involvement

Parental neglect was illustrated in several views from participants, especially when they were asked to share their perspectives on why South Asian boys become gang involved. For example, when talking about why South Asian youth become involved in gangs, Sanjit explained:

Parents just giving them everything and not looking after their kids. The parents give them a car, the money they need, but the bonding time is not there. The guy I knew, he became a part of the gang but he didn't need the money. His parents were too busy working, didn't spend time together, didn't bond. The family dynamic wasn't there, his dad was going to India every two, three years, and not home.

Sanjit's quote illustrates the role that parents played for some of his gang-involved former friends, where both a lack of supervision and a lack of parental bonding pushed boys into gang involvement. Given that parents were consumed by work, boys were subject to spoiling but also absent parenting and little family bonding.

This sense of freedom and lack of supervision and consequences were also link to the view that boys were excessively spoiled by their parents – a factor that could also influence gang involvement. For some participants, South Asian family culture created an environment that promoted greed, such as parents buying material possessions for boys, over necessity in South Asian boys. For example, when discussing a friend who became gang-involved, Aston described the role that spoiling from parents might have played:

In terms of like spoiling, like getting them things especially when it's not important or needed, like if it's important for them then they should get it, but like when it's not like a necessity, like they're just getting everything whether that's like video games, nice clothing, especially when you're in high school like wearing expensive clothing, they're just getting everything they want or like go where they want when they get their car when they get turned 18 years old. So, I feel like that plays a huge role in influencing, influencing them into South-Asian gangs because they're always looking at, okay, I've always like gotten whatever I wanted and also from that, I feel like it's sort of like influences their behavior and like it sort of changes that behavior whereas like people I've known like one guy. He's been given everything he's wanted and from that like he's sort of like has like these angry tendencies towards his like family when he didn't get what he wanted. I feel like that contributed to him getting into gang.

As shown here, it was thought that excessive spoiling could promote a greed-filled mindset for boys that may then look to gangs to fulfill their materialistic desires.

6.6 South Asian gangsters: The drive to be a man

In the previous theme, I explored the ways participants viewed how South Asian family culture, primarily through patriarchal ideals, possibly promoted South Asian gang involvement. In the following section, I presented participant views on South Asian family culture possibly constructed and reinforced 'becoming a man' as the ultimate goal for South Asian gangsters.

6.6.1 The lure of gangs: Easy money over hard work

Participants seemed to indicate that South Asian gangsters did not, or at the very least had limited, access to prosocial means to attain Izzat. When describing his view of South Asian gangsters, Jaggy explained: “For the large part, I would say a lot of these people weren’t the smartest in the classroom type of Individuals”. For participants, this idea of gangsters struggling in school (and potentially failing to attain a high school diploma), made gangs an easy outlet to earn money. Janya held a similar view:

So, it becomes an easy way of making money, you don’t have to go through the stress, having a nine-to-five job. You’re making money and you don’t have to report to someone. Like I’m sure like gangs, they do report to someone like higher power, but like whoever is in charge, but you don’t have to worry about, you know losing your job, paying your bills or any sort of thing 'cause you know you’re going to be making a lot of money and living a good lifestyle because you see it. The gang members, they’re traveling, they’re wearing the clothes that you like, driving the cars you like, so you join that gang to have access to all this money because you think it’s easier than going through like school education reporting to like, you know your parents.

This quote reiterates the attractiveness of joining gangs over school and hard-work. As Gavin stated, “Easy money is everything. [The gangsters] don’t necessarily want to work hard. Like, they don’t want the 9 to 5. They can’t and don’t want to. When gang life gives you easy money, why work hard?”. Hence, participants seemed to indicate that there was an unwillingness to work hard, or at the very least, work blue-collar jobs to be successful, particularly when gangs offered instant gratification through easy money:

Another thing is I think South Asian boys like maybe they see their father working so hard every day since they’ve immigrated from India and they just want to earn money and maybe are thinking that it’s an easier way to just join a gang. Like why work? Why sweat, why wake up at 6:30 AM? Go to work at 7AM, come home at 7:30 PM and repeat that and become a robot like. Why do that? Maybe they find that being in a gang is an easier option.

In the end, gangs can present an incredibly lucrative and easy-access option for South Asian boys to earn money. Participant perspective indicated that, when their goal was to attain masculinity,

South Asian boys might have reworked the hegemonic masculine idea of being successful into meaning being successful by any means necessary.

6.6.2 Accumulating wealth by any means necessary

Participants seemed to indicate that South Asian family culture itself did not discriminate based on how one attained Izzat, instead it only demanded that men be successful. When discussing what it meant for a South Asian boy to be a man, Karan stated:

Being able to provide for your family, having independence in the sense that you have a car house having established career, whether that's a legit career or a criminal one. So just establish establishing yourself whether or not that's like legal or illegal.

This quote demonstrates that, within South Asian family culture, a man's success may be more important than whether or not they earn money through prosocial or criminal structures. For instance, Gauri reflected on a gangster she knew and his mother's attitude towards her son's gang involvement:

I think he kind of felt that he could do anything, you know, because of his upbringing. His mother was like he was the true son and he was perfect, you know, he made some money. So that was a big thing. He had one brother, but his brother wasn't successful at all. He had sisters and, yeah, their husbands and all were middle class. But, he was making tons of money doing this, which I honestly think was his biggest motivation and his mom wasn't thinking about what the effects would be on his family and she didn't care. She was proud of his success.

The example Gauri provides illustrates a culture where success may be defined by one's amount of wealth accumulation rather than how one attains said wealth. Using social learning theory as a framework, parents seemed to value wealth accumulation, regardless if their son attained said wealth through a prosocial career or gang life, which then possibly socialized and reinforced the importance of attaining wealth by any necessary, including gangs as a tool for wealth accumulation.

6.6.3 *Protecting Izzat by any means necessary*

As alluded to above, after attaining Izzat, it was paramount for South Asian families to protect it. Numerous participants view and experiences underscored this extreme importance of protecting a family's honour – which was directly tied to gang involvement. However, while some participants thought wealth was important and could drive boys into gang involvement, other participants noted that, since gang involvement was an illegal activity, gang involvement could be a threat to a family's Izzat. Participants described, in scenarios when their boy was gang-involved, how families would attempt to protect their honour. As Sanjit explained:

I think the main thing is that the family might hide it. We, as a South Asian culture, try to protect our kids to hide their flaws. But, for these families with gang involved kids, there's a stigma that they will have if the community finds out so they try to hide it and protect their family name by making sure people don't find out.

This quote reveals the view that South Asian families possibly hide their child's gang involvement to protect their Izzat. Participants, like Balwant – a 60-year-old mother, seemed to indicate that community knowledge of a boy being gang-involved weighed on his parents in that they feared also being labelled as “bad parents”.

However, participants also indicated that South Asian families was dynamic and fluid when it came to Izzat. Some participants explained that when a boy's gang involvement became known, parents then celebrated their child's gang involvement. Karan, when discussing a former South Asian gang member, revealed that – when people realized his friend was in a gang – his family had a peculiar reaction:

When people found out, his family was like, “At least his name is out into the world because it's being reported on. Who cares that he is a gangster? At least he's out in the public now”. And you, you don't really see any disappointment within the family.

Karan's story illuminates a scenario where a South Asian family celebrates their child's gang involvement, framing it as infamy that protected and garnered some type of honour for their

family. In essence, participants viewed that, in South Asian family culture, families operated under the desire to protect their family Izzat by any means necessary.

6.7 South Asian gangsters: The desire to be a true Jatt

The above discussion explored how participants defined South Asian masculinity by cultural factors like wealth and Izzat, relating it then to South Asian gang involvement. The following discussion built upon the previous discussion of South Asian gang involvement by assessing the second part of how South Asian masculinity was constructed – through aggression and bravado.

6.7.1 The relevance of aggression amongst South Asian gangsters

Initially, I believed that participants would discuss the hyper-masculine behaviours of these South Asian gangsters that might indicate a susceptibility to gang involvement. Some participants mentioned this: “I would say [South Asian gangsters are] ... aggressive, have aggressive behavior. If you say something wrong, they start being defensive and violent towards you". This quote is from Jason, a 20-year-old male, and demonstrates how South Asian gangsters display some hyper-masculine, or at the very least, aggressive behaviours. For example, the perception of being disrespected caused South Asian gangsters to become defensive and aggressive as retaliation for the perceived disrespect. These behaviours (i.e. being aggressive) aligned with my initial beliefs – that participants would view the South Asian gangster as an aggressive individual who resorted to aggression for respect.

6.7.2 Hyper-masculinity within the Jatt mentality

A form of hyper-masculine behaviours were depicted when talking about Jatts in interviews, including aggressive unprovoked and violent behaviors, and excessive drinking. Participants noted that South Asian gangsters might have used aggressive behaviours to claim or prove their masculinity. When discussing why a South Asian boy might call themselves a Jatt, Balwant, a 60-year-old mother, stated:

Some might say, “I’m a Jatt, I’m strong”. These kids go down the wrong path, they come to think that this way of thinking is right, like being aggressive. They might hit someone, or be violent. Parents need to stop them, teach them this is wrong. But, some just think this is what it means to be a man, to have money, to be strong and a Jatt. And then this thinking gets them into gangs. They start drinking or doing drugs, this a big problem. Like, okay, you drink with your family – that’s fine. You’re enjoying it but doing so in your house and within limit – never too much. But, some take it wrong. Some drink and start swearing at people outside, they drink to get into fights, like get the confidence to be aggressive. That’s wrong. But, they think, I’m a Jatt so imma drink, I’ll go outside have fun, get wild, and then fight anyone.

This quote illustrates two views of South Asian hegemonic masculinity. First, the quote indicates that South Asian gangsters can pervert the meanings of Jatt to consider it the truest form of South Asian masculinity. From the view of these gangsters took the South Asian hegemonic masculinity connotation of being strong as emotional stoicism and reworked the idea of being strong to mean being fearless and aggressive. As such, from the participant perspectives, for South Asian gangsters, a South Asian masculine man was not strong because he was unemotional and tough, rather he was strong because he was fearless and aggressive. Second, the quote also depicts how there might be a desire for South Asian males to resort to using aspects of hyper-masculinity in order to prove their manliness wherein drinking and fighting are expressions of masculinity. Hence, South Asian hegemonic masculinity returned to the idea of the caste system where being a Jatt (i.e. aggressive and fearless) was dominant and superior South Asian masculinity over other forms of South Asian masculinity, such as being emotionally stoic. As participants saw, South Asian masculinity then became a performance wherein men attempted to prove who was the most masculine.

6.7.3 The Surrey Jack: Hyper-masculinity amongst South Asian youth

In addition to South Asian masculinity functioning within a Jatt mentality, participants seemed to indicate that the persona of the Surrey Jack was a product of South Asian masculinity. To explain what a Surrey Jack was, when probed to describe one, Gurleen stated:

[A Surrey] Jack, so those are defined as, in high schools, guys who are dressed up in a way they refer to as Jack or they were active way in a certain way and when you look at him, you would think, 'Oh, he's a gangster'... They smoke weed, they drink alcohol, they go partying then, and they're basically like Playboys. And they also don't care about anyone either.

Participants indicated that South Asian boys adopted the Surrey Jack persona to feel respected and masculine. Jaggy stated:

They're big into drinking, partying, and doing all these things that people do when there older. So, I think it is about their masculinity, feeling big, I think the power they feel [doing that] is attractive.

To Jaggy, the Surrey Jack was associated with the behaviors that depicted a persona through which a boy could feel masculine and powerful. Such views were also reflected in behaviors. Participants recalled Surrey Jacks behaviours as aggressive actions which were thought to protect their masculinity. As Aston explained:

[Surrey Jacks] have their own friend's circle, so if someone messes with them, then jump that person and fuck them up. They're trying to show themselves or demonstrate that they're like bigger than they actually are.

For Aston, Surrey Jacks persona and masculinity was constructed both within and outside of their gang and, in doing so, consolidated power and respect. In essence, he saw them attempting to appear "strong" through "violent" (Aston) actions. When probed as to why Surrey Jacks might be aggressive and violent, Aston stated:

Because then this goes back to the idea of like it shows that they're more in control, right? Having that sort of physicality with the person could sort of like demonstrate like they're stronger.

Here, Aston indicates that Surrey Jacks use violence and aggressive behaviour to assert dominance or appear strong. Using hegemonic and protest masculinity as a framework, South

Asian youth may adopt the Surrey Jack persona to reclaim or claim their masculinity while subordinating the masculine identity of others in high school. In this case, "jumping" a man (i.e. physically assaulting someone off-guard with a group of friends/cousins) was seen as a way that Surrey Jacks subordinated the masculinity of others because they, through violence, displayed hyper-masculinity that symbolized their strength and power (or masculinity) over other men.

7 Discussion

South Asian gang involvement is an understudied phenomena The few studies that exist have addressed how sociological risk factors for gang involvement do not apply to South Asian gangsters. Recent studies have pondered the role that South Asian culture might play in South Asian gang involvement. No study, however, has explicitly examined the dynamics of South Asian family culture in relation to South Asian gang involvement. Identification of possible risk-related factors of South Asian family culture may help improve the understanding of how a South Asian boy may join a gang.

In turn, I aimed to explore the perspectives of South Asian community members to gain an understanding of the potential role that South Asian family culture can play in South Asian gang involvement. In the following discussion, I outline the findings of the current study and its relevance. First, I will summarize my main findings and briefly position them relative to other literature. Second, I will discuss these findings and their contributions to the literature. Then, I will discuss the implications of these findings and end this thesis with a conclusion.

Using semi-structured interviews with South Asian family members, I presented a TA analysis of South Asian family members' perspectives on South Asian family culture and gang involvement. Findings illustrated how participants South Asian family culture is patriarchal in nature with the father holding the most power in the household (research question #1). For instance, participants indicated that under such a structure, South Asian family culture promoted an family environment that influenced young South Asian men to join gangs. This finding is important because previous research has suggested that the patriarchal nature of South Asian families may have made joining a gang easier for South Asian boys (Pabla, 2019). In my study,

participants viewed aspects of South Asian family culture as influencing South Asian gang involvement. These aspects of South Asian family culture produced environments that favoured and granted young South Asian men an excessive amount of freedom. For participants, parental neglect further problematized this freedom, replacing family bonding with instant gratification. This finding aligns with previous research that indicates that low parental attachment (i.e. lack of family bonding) and low parental supervision are potential risk factors for a youth to become gang involved (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000; Han, Kim, & Lee, 2016; Thornberry, 1998). Participants indicated that South Asian family culture functioned to protect family honour and respect by any means necessary. This protection of family honour was related to South Asian cultural aspects, including Izzat.

I also explored participants views on South Asian masculinity. Findings demonstrated that South Asian masculinity was a performance wherein men prove their manliness over other men (research question #2). This finding is important because previous research suggests that boys, across cultures, can draw on hyper-masculine behaviours to prove their masculinity, which then is related to gang involvement (Deuchar, 2018; Vigil, 2007; Buffam, 2018). In my study, participant perspectives indicated that South Asian gangsters drew on hyper-masculine, including those based on Jatt ideas, to protect their masculinity. Financial success was also a key dimension of South Asian masculinity. Wealth was constructed as a definer of South Asian hegemonic masculinity. Participants reported the pressure that South Asian boys were under to successfully be considered a true 'man'. In turn, it seemed that South Asian masculinity and the pressure of being successful pushed South Asian boys towards gang involvement.

The findings of this study make four significant contributions to existing literature. These contributions and their implications are discussed: 1) South Asian patriarchy, 2) the concern over Izzat, 3) hyper-masculinity within South Asian family culture, and 4) money as a definer of masculinity. While these findings explicitly link certain aspects of South Asian family culture to South Asian gang involvement, it is stressed that these aspects of South Asian family culture, including discussions around masculinity and wealth, are not unique to just South Asian culture. As such, it would be fundamentally incorrect to perceive South Asian families as responsible for

pushing youth to become gang-involved, as the aspects discussed below exist across other cultures and families.

7.1 South Asian families and the role of the patriarchy

One of the main findings of my study was that South Asian family culture was patriarchal and gendered. Participants constructed South Asian family culture as patriarchal in that the culture promoted and socialized into boys the dominance of males over females. As well, similar to other studies, participants indicated that South Asian family patriarchies granted young South Asian men an excessive amount of freedom (Segal, 1991; Dhaliwal, 2020; Bains, 2022; Pabla, 2019). According to participant views, this excessive freedom coincided with a lack of parental strictness, which possibly enabled gang involvement amongst South Asian boys. These findings align with studies on different cultures. In triad culture in Hong Kong, gang-involved youth indicated that they received too much love and preferential treatment from fathers (Deuchar, 2018). Likewise, for Hispanic and African-American gang-involved youth, it has been reported that lower levels of parental strictness, control and supervision was associated with a greater risk for delinquency and gang involvement (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2000). Thus, it appears a lack of parental supervision does not just exist in South Asian families, rather it exists in other cultures and, in general, a lack of parental supervision appears associated with a greater risk for gang involvement amongst youth. My study contributes to this body of work – adding perspectives from a different culture in South Asian culture – by demonstrating how excessive spoiling and freedom as well as a lack of strictness and consequence might play a role in enabling gang involvement.

In the context of South Asian family culture, participants indicated that spoiling, along with excessive freedom, created an environment that reinforced and promoted greed over necessity – values that get imparted on South Asian boys. For instance, family members indicated that South Asian families spoiled their boys, which then promoted a greed-filled mindset for boys. In turn, spoiling and freedom created a feeling of invincibility amongst South Asian boys. Other research on South Asian family culture finds that the culture created a ‘golden boy’ mindset where values such as family bonding and hard-work were minimized in favour of

spoiling with material items (Pabla, 2019; Sue, 1981). My findings, which are unique to South Asian culture, reinforce the patriarchal nature of South Asian families, including the role of spoiling.

Family bonding in relation to freedom and spoiling was also a key discussion point in interviews. Parental neglect was linked to parents working long hours, and participants thought that such neglect led to improper supervision of children. They reported that South Asian gang members might have been subjected to neglect and a lack of family bonding. The limited research positioned on South Asian gang involvement shows that South Asian families enabled boys to become disconnected from their families, which possibly resulted in gang involvement (Pabla, 2019). This finding aligns with research across other cultures. Gang-involved youth in Korea experienced a lack of parental attachment, which was associated with an increased risk of them engaging in delinquent behaviours (Han, Kim, & Lee, 2016). Likewise, in triad culture, Hong Kong-based and gang-involved youth also experienced poor parental attachment which increased their risk of engaging in violent behaviours (Chui, Khiatani, & Kiconco, 2022). Extending to family bonding, the findings in my study also align with U.S. literature that have found that Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic gang-involved youth experienced poor parental and family bonding. In particular, with Hispanic culture stressing the importance of family over the individual, it has been found that a lack of family bonding (i.e. having family outings) increased the risk for Hispanic youth to become gang-involved (Alder, Ovando, & Hocevar, 1984). Hence, it is apparent that, across other cultures, parental absence (possibly resulting from work pressures) can create an allure of gangs (Deuchar, 2018) – it is not an unique issue present only in South Asian families. However, my study makes a contribution to this body of work by explicitly demonstrating how parental neglect and possible subsequent gang involvement stems from work-family conflict in South Asian families.

In a larger conservation of gang involvement, these findings in regard to South Asian family culture are important because they move beyond simply looking at the role of sociological familial factors (i.e. social-economic factors such as single-parent households or the impacts of poverty) in relation to gang involvement. Instead, my study looks at parts of a culture and how that might relate to gang involvement by examining how South Asian culture and the ideas

related to it are constructed, socialized, and reinforced into South Asian boys. With the keen focus on the family and culture, my findings suggest real-life functioning within a South Asian family that might promote South Asian gang involvement and the identification of said functioning may be the first step to gang involvement prevention.

7.2 South Asian family culture: The concern over Izzat

Izzat was a key concept in the study and participants constructed it as the main concern in South Asian family culture. Izzat as a concept is not new in the literature - previous studies indicate that maintaining family honour or Izzat is a key feature of South Asian families (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006; Pabla, 2019). My study contributes to this limited body of work by demonstrating how the importance of Izzat is socialized and reinforced within South Asian diasporic families. For instance, in the current study, discussions of Izzat indicated a competition among families within the South Asian community to accumulate wealth. Family members also, similar to previous literature, indicated that protecting Izzat was vital (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sanghera, 2006; Pabla, 2019).

My findings also suggest that Izzat may drive parental inaction around their child's gang involvement. The idea of a family hiding or ignoring a not necessarily a new idea in terms of the gang landscape in B.C. For instance, in an article published by the Surrey Now-Leader, B.C.-based news publication, in 2018, Tom Zytaruk discussed a blatant obstruction that police face when conducting investigations into gang violence. Symbolically titled as "Domestic Silence" in all-capitals, the article presented the idea that, after a gang shooting occurs, there was this code of silence amongst the families of gang members (Zytaruk, 2018). Zytaruk (2018) even questioned if the parents knew what their kids were involved in, perhaps being an example of "cluelessness at best, willful blindness at worst". Research on South Asian gangs supported this notion of willful blindness, suggesting that South Asian parents possibly ignored or even hid their boy's gang involvement (Pabla, 2019). My study found that South Asian parents possibly hid, or at the very least willfully ignored, their child's gang involvement to protect their family honour. This is a unique aspect of South Asian culture that has not been, to my knowledge, identified in any other gang study.

Again, potential stigma or loss of respect seemed to influence parental action in terms of how they appeared to the wider South Asian community. For instance, in one interview, a participant described a scenario when the South Asian family of his gang-involved friend celebrated his gang involvement when it became known. No previous study has identified these South Asian family dynamics and participants seemed to indicate that these behaviours were a culturally unique aspect of South Asian family culture. Hence, a contribution of this study is that it shows that, in South Asian family culture, families operate under the desire to protect their family Izzat by any means necessary, including by socially framing gang involvement as a positive.

Collectively, the findings around the role of Izzat in terms of gang involvement are important in their own right. To my knowledge, no other study has identified Izzat in the context of South Asian families and the potential role it may promoting gang involvement amongst South Asian boys. The contribution to this study is in demonstrating how Izzat might be related potentially to how South Asian families react to their boy's involvement in a gang.

7.3 Masculinity within South Asian families

The socialization of boys in South Asian families is a main vehicle through which masculinity is constructed amongst South Asian boys. Participants indicated that fathers socialized and reinforced their boys ideas of masculinity, including being emotionally stoicism. Empirical work shows that stoicism is a key part of hegemonic masculinity (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2007). A contribution of the current study is that it demonstrates how male emotional stoicism and male dominance over females is a key part of South Asian family culture and masculinity, and learnt from boys observing how their fathers behaved. This is an interesting finding because it illustrates the relevancy of social learning theory and how masculinity functions and becomes realized within the South Asian family context — hence a boy's masculinity can be a representation of what he has learnt and observed from his family. This finding aligns with previous research that indicates that, amongst Indigenous youth, gang-

involved boys learned aspects of their masculinity, including being hyper-masculine, from observing their fathers (Henry, 2015).

The next key finding in the study was that South Asian masculinity was defined through a Jatt mentality. Ideas of South Asian masculinity and power itself seemed to coincide with the ideas of superiority, particularly the idea of being a Jatt. Participants seemed to indicate that South Asian youth linked the idea of being a Jatt to being warriors – or strong, brave, and potentially aggressive. This corrupted use of the notion of Jatt created a sense of South Asian masculinity that was denoted by hyper-masculine behaviours, embraced by South Asian gangsters. Interviews indicated that South Asian gangsters possibly adopted a Jatt mentality wherein they engaged in hyper-masculine behaviours (i.e. excessive drinking, being violent) to subordinate the masculinity of other South Asian men. Previous literature also indicates that the Jatt mentality was a problematic feature of South Asian culture and defined through bravado behaviours (Pabla, 2019; Gill, 2012). A contribution of this study to this body of work is that it demonstrates how South Asian gangsters may draw upon this Jatt mentality.

In particular, participants appeared to indicate that that the persona of the Surrey Jack was a product of South Asian masculinity. The Surrey Jack persona and the behaviours associated with the persona allowed South Asian boys to feel masculine and powerful. These Surrey Jacks behaviours seemed to extend to more aggressive actions as well to protect said masculinity. Participants also described that Surrey Jacks were still potentially active and popular amongst high school cliques. Hence, such findings are important because, for a South Asian boy in high school, the persona of a Surrey Jack might be attractive because of the power and popularity that comes with it. In turn, in current school contexts, for South Asian boys, the persona of the Surrey Jack may be a point of influence that normalizes hyper-masculine behaviours and Jatt mentality as a path to power and popularity, and possibly even lead to gang involvement.

These findings align with previous gang research. Hyper-masculine behaviours are long linked to gang activity (Deuchar, 2020; Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2007). For example, in relation to the findings of my study, hyper-masculinity, in general, can idealize overt heterosexual behaviour, physical strength, assertiveness, and a rejection of feminine weakness

(Messerschmidt, 2005; Deuchar, 2020). In Latino culture, for instance, youth gangsters became immersed in hyper-masculine behaviours, where violence was used to assert dominance over others. Hyper-masculinity through gang activity, in turn, granted these Latino gangsters status, power, and respect (Deuchar, 2018). Hence, while my study contextualized of masculinity within South Asian culture, my findings around South Asian family culture promoting and socializing hyper-masculine behaviours into boys is not a unique finding. Instead, my study contributes to the current gang literature by showing how hyper-masculinity might function within South Asian family culture and the cultural references that might be linked with South Asian masculinity.

7.4 South Asian Masculinity and the importance of wealth

Finally, participants described how masculinity is socially constructed and reinforced in South Asian families by the amount of financial wealth a South Asian man possessed. Male participants, in particular, reported feeling a pressure to accumulate wealth and be the breadwinner in the family to feel like a ‘man’. Other research on South Asian masculinity reported that South Asian men adhered to ideas of breadwinning to feel like ‘true’ South Asian men (Lum, 2015). With masculinity constructed by how much wealth one holds, participants seemed to indicate that South Asian men felt pressure to accumulate wealth by any means necessary. My study adds to the literature by giving insights into the value of wealth in South Asian families, the need for men to accumulate wealth, and how these factors shape men’s sense of masculinity. As such, the need to accumulate wealth to feel a sense of value in the family or community may push South Asian boys to gang involvement - an activity that, as mentioned by participants, is known to provide financial rewards quickly. The latter point of easy money was similar to previous literature, which also found that South Asian boys joined gangs for easy money (McConnell, 2015; Pabla, 2019).

Collectively, these findings on masculinity and wealth underscore how masculinity can be a driver of South Asian gang involvement. Participant discussions on masculinity indicated that South Asian families reinforced the importance of wealth in order for one to be a successful South Asian man – to feel a sense value as a man in the South Asian community. In turn, while the role of easy money in relation to gang involvement has been studied, the findings in my study

are important because they suggest that, in the context of South Asian culture, masculinity possibly promotes gang involvement by emphasizing the accumulation of wealth by any means necessary. This aligns with previous gang studies across other cultures. In Hispanic culture, gang-involved youth drew on ideals around breadwinning and being the primary provider in a household to prove their masculinity (Martinez, 1995). Similarly, gang-involved, African-American youth viewed breadwinning as a pathway to demonstrate that they were true ‘men’ (Flores, 2014). Thus, my study’s findings around breadwinning, wealth, masculinity, and gang involvement are not necessarily unique to South Asian family culture. Rather, it appears that, across cultures, gang-involved youth view wealth as a method to claim their masculinity.

Likewise, another a major contribution of this study and one that has not been identified in other studies is the promotion of accumulating wealth by any means necessary in South Asian family culture. Participants seemed to indicate that South Asian family culture itself did not discriminate based on how one attained Izzat, instead it socialized and demanded that men be successful by any means necessary. Izzat, in this case, was wealth. In participant stories, family members seemed to indicate that South Asian family culture defined success by one’s amount of wealth accumulation rather than how one attained said wealth. Therefore, gang involvement amongst boys was not perceived as a negative or punished as long as it leads to further wealth and, consequently, Izzat for the family.

Despite the cultural-based findings of my study, my study does not stigmatize South Asian culture/families as inherently breeding gangsters nor does it place the blame for South Asian gang involvement on South Asian families. As indicated by the previous discussion, the aspects of South Asian family culture, including masculinity, that participants described are also visible in other cultures (see: Deuchar, 2018; Vigil, 2007). Therefore, while I discuss South Asian family culture and South Asian masculinity in relation to gang involvement, the construction of masculinity in relation to gang involvement is apparent across other cultures, including Asian and African-American cultures (Deuchar, 2018; Vigil, 2007) – it is not that South Asian family culture is alone fostering a greater propensity towards gang involvement. Rather, not all South Asian youth become gang-involved – they are variety of factors that might play into a youth becoming gang involved and these can go beyond simply the family (Deuchar,

2018; McConnell, 2015; Pabla, 2019). Therefore, to stigmatize South Asian family culture as problematic in relation to South Asian gang involvement is fundamentally incorrect.

7.5 Limitations of the study

One limitation of the current study was the sample of 12 participants. The sample size of 12 is not large and I recognize that similar qualitative studies focused on South Asian gang involvement such as Pabla (2019) included larger sample sizes. However, to meet the aims of my study, the sample size was sufficient, particularly given my added methods to promote rigour, including being reflexive, memoing, and consulting reflecting on data through concurrent data collection and analysis. I was mindful of creating a diverse sample and, through concurrent data analysis and collection, I was able to produce a sample that was suitable for my study. For instance, I noticed that after 12 participant interviews, my data reached a point of data saturation where the collected data provided a rich understanding. Hence, considering that I was also bound by time, I felt that 12 participants was perfect for the purposes of my study.

Likewise, I also noted that some participants knew each other despite my efforts to diversify the sample. While these perspectives were reinforcing similar insights on South Asian family culture, it was also a limitation as participants possibly had similar experiences within their South Asian family. Hence, participants perspectives may reflect shared collective values rather than diverse perspectives across the South Asian community.

Similarly, when considering future research and when trying to understand South Asian gang involvement in relation to South Asian family culture, the perspectives of current or former gang members should as be included. in my study, while participants had previous/current relationships with South Asian gang members, none of them were involved in gangs in any manner. While this was a fit for my study since I focused more on perspectives of family members and, it would be useful to include some current or former South Asian gang members themselves to provide a richer understanding.

Moreover, while participants had relationships with current/former gang members, most of these participants lacked deep knowledge/awareness of the gang landscape in B.C. In this case, they were removed from the gang problem. It might be helpful to garner the perspectives of South Asian police officers, gang researchers, and community workers that have studied/been around gangs and gang members in a more consistent manner. The perspectives of these South Asian stakeholders may help illuminate the gang problem further, from a perspective that acknowledges the functioning of South Asian family culture on a daily basis in a gangster's life.

Likewise, due to my positioning in the South Asian community, I recognized that I held biases about South Asian gang involvement as well as my community and family culture. I was mindful that I was drawn to South Asian culture-specific concepts that participants brought up since they also spoke to my life experiences and values. However, my prior relationships and positioning within the South Asian community was also a strength. It helped me build rapport with participants, which would have been much more difficult without my positionality within the community. For instance, level of closeness and understanding with both with the topics and interpretations of the findings that would not be possible for someone that was an outsider to the South Asian community.

Lastly, due to the realities of COVID-19, all interviews occurred via Zoom. Without the ability to interview participants face-to-face, I felt that the interviews themselves were less personal. I was mindful in building rapport, particularly through my background as a South Asian, but the reality of virtual interviews presented a real barrier to developing a connection with the participants.

7.6 Policy Implications

While no policy can alter the composition and functioning of a South Asian family, there are possible policy implications focused on building positive associations with South Asian family culture amongst South Asian boys. For instance, in interviews, participants spoke about potential negative associations that South Asian boys may have with South Asian family culture. These negative associations included South Asian boys being drawn to hyper-masculinity ideals

in South Asian family culture such as a Jatt mentality as well as relishing in patriarchal ideals (i.e. being given excessive freedom and being spoiled) – ideals that created a mindset where easy money and instant gratification replaced the desire for hard-work. Hence, potential policy implications might include creating programs that aim at building positive associations between South Asian boys and their family culture.

In 2019, the Surrey Anti-Gang Family Empowerment (SAFE) Program was launched, which invested in the lives of at-risk youth in Surrey (City of Surrey, n.d.). The program included 2448 unique clients, including 2128 at-risk youth, and 320 parents and caregivers (City of Surrey, n.d.). The aim of SAFE was to prevent gang involvement amongst youth by building positive life skills and, just as importantly, increasing a youth's connections to their family, school, and community. Within SAFE, there was culturally-specific programming, including a South Asian Family Strengthening Team, that focused on immigrant and refugee families, attempting to increase a youth's connections to their family. While the effectiveness of SAFE has not been studied, SAFE has continued to offer support in terms of early intervention, taking on nearly 1000 new clients from 2020 to 2022 (City of Surrey, n.d.; Corrado, Peters, Doering, & Champion, 2019). Likewise, while the actual effectiveness of SAFE in terms of preventing gang involvement is unknown, culturally-specific prevention programming has been established to be impactful in preventing gang involvement or helping a youth exit a gang (Smith-Moncrieffe, 2012).

Hence, there is the potential for policy to continue to focus on gang prevention programming with an eye toward family and culture. While SAFE is a good start, there needs to be further programming, programming specifically tailored to South Asian youth. For instance, the South Asian Family Strengthening Team within SAFE appears to be an useful and important program; however, it focuses on immigrant and refugee families. While my project makes no conclusion in regard to the specific demographic nature of South Asian gang involvement, participants, when speaking about South Asian gangsters they knew or know, described them as second or third generation immigrants. In turn, one recommendation would be to create a program that targets Canada-born, second or third-generation South Asian immigrant youth and attempts to build more positive associations between them and their family. This could entail re-

defining South Asian masculinity through more positive lens (i.e. promoting being magnanimous over aggression, altruism over greed) and de-emphasizing the importance wealth as a definer of success.

Likewise, with potential family-based cultural concerns amongst South Asian gang involvement – such as those described in my study – it might be impossible for the politicians or policing to make progress, since politicians and police themselves cannot fundamentally alter South Asian family culture.

Thus, another recommendation is that any programming has to occur in a manner that collaboratively involves politicians, policing organizations, governmental organizations, and South Asian community organizations (i.e. religious-based groups). The key, however, is that these entities work collaboratively. For instance, it is difficult for policing and government agencies alone to prevent gang involvement if they do not have the resources and connections to access the communities in which gang involvement fosters (Robinson, 2006; Erickson, LaBoucane-Benson, and Grekul, 2007). Research indicates that a failure to establish collaborative partnerships with policing, government, and community organizations within a policy program can cause a lack of resources, improper program implementation, and, just as importantly, a lack of trust and credibility (Robinson, 2006). To have impactful prevention, it is important to engage not just police, government agencies, or community-based groups, but to engage all of them, as such collaboration builds credibility in displaying that all facets of society care about this issue and are attempting to help.

Thus, the place for policy makers is not to create more reactive policing initiatives or create anti-gang awareness because they cannot truly address any aspect of South Asian family culture. Instead, there is potential in a coordinated approach that creates awareness amongst South Asian community about the role that parents and other family members can play in helping curb South Asian gang involvement through celebrating positive ideals within South Asian family while cautioning against problematic cultural values (i.e. the need for wealth, the concern over Izzat, and the total adherence to patriarchal ways).

7.7 Future Research

My study presented a first step in understanding South Asian gang involvement through the lens of South Asian family culture. The massive caveat here is that my study only included the perspectives of South Asian family members and, as such, the findings are representative of views rather than actual risk factors for gang involvement. However, despite this, my study lays the foundation for future research by providing nuanced insights and areas for additional study. Future research should look to interview current/former South Asian gang members to see if the perspectives in my study hold true. These studies could also elicit further responses from gang members that have not been considered in this study. It would, likewise, be important to understand any other potential risk factors related to South Asian family culture that was not explored in my study.

Additionally, any study that conducts research on South Asian family culture in relation South Asian gang involvement must interview South Asian family members, including the parents and siblings of South Asian gangsters. The perspective of gangsters while impactful and important is only side of the picture. To push this field of research forward, future research must include the perspectives of family members to understand how culture exists, functions, and is socialized within a South Asian household.

Beyond looking at South Asian gangsters and their families, future research in this field could also look at conducting a comparative type of study. For instance, a study could be positioned to compare, through a sample of gang members, South Asian family culture to other cultures. This study might look to compare the family upbringing and values that a South Asian gangster might experience to the family upbringing and values that a Caucasian gangster might experience. This study would be of relevance because it would provide the perspective of two types of family cultures – seeing what parts of culture are potentially unique and what parts are similar. While my discussion has shown that certain parts of South Asian family culture, are similar across other cultures, it is important to document how potential family culture-based risk factors for gang involvement might exist across culture and need to be addressed across all cultures in order to avoid stigmatizing a certain culture and group of people as problematic.

8 Conclusion

My study aimed to capture the perspectives and lived experiences of South Asian family members and to examine these perspectives within the context of South Asian family culture and gang involvement. The qualitative accounts provided by participants illuminated experiences and views related to South Asian family culture in relation to South Asian gang involvement. The qualitative perspectives show the relevancy of masculinity and South Asian family culture in the context of South Asian gang involvement. Findings indicated that participants perceived that South Asian family culture – through the promotion and reinforcement of masculine attitudes and the idealization of wealth – was a potential risk factor that can influence a South Asian boy to join a gang. These findings align with other gang studies as, across other cultures, it appears that masculine ideals and the desire for wealth are driving influences for a youth to become gang involved. Considering these findings within the South Asian gang context in B.C., it is of note that South Asian family can possibly play a role in a South Asian boy's development and potential turn to gang involvement. As research, community initiatives, and police work into South Asian gangs continues, the role of family culture may be an ongoing issue when considering the totality of South Asian gang involvement. If there is a desire to deter or minimize risk related to South Asian involvement in gangs, promoting positive connections to South Asian family culture amongst South Asian boys is imperative. Acknowledging that aspects of South Asian family culture are problematic is not enough. There needs to be a coordinated approach that seeks to build positive connections between South Asian boys and their culture, including re-defining concepts of masculinity, minimizing the importance of patriarchal values, and de-emphasizing the importance of major wealth.

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Appendix A.

Recruitment Flyer



SA Gangs Recruitment Flyer

We want to hear your opinion on South Asian gang involvement

Researchers at Simon Fraser University's School of Criminology are conducting research on family views on South Asian gang involvement in British Columbia. They are looking for people to participate in a 45-60 minute Zoom or phone interview.

Would the study be a good fit for me?

The study might be a good fit if you:

- Are 18 years old or older
- Are South Asian who is either is an immigrant from Punjab, India or a second (or later) generation South Asian
- Are from or have lived in the Lower Mainland for at least the past 10 years
- Be able to give informed consent
- Interested in sharing views on South Asian gangs

What would happen if I took part in the study?

- You would receive more information about the study and be asked to provide informed consent before starting
- Participate in a 45-60 minute Zoom or phone interview
- Share your views about South Asian gang involvement
- With your consent, the conversation will be audio recorded so it can be reviewed later on

Will I be paid to take part in the study?

You will not be paid for your participation.

Who do I contact for more information or if I want to sign up for the study?

Contact Amarveer

Appendix B.

Recruitment Email



Recruitment Email for SA Gangs

Dear [Participant],

You are invited to participate in a study that seeks to gain insight into the family views of South Asian gang involvement in British Columbia. The study might be a good fit if you:

- Are 18 years old or older
- Are South Asian who is either is an immigrant from Punjab, India or a second (or later) generation South Asian
- Are from or have lived in the Lower Mainland for at least the past 10 years
- Be able to give informed consent
- Be interested in discussing your views on South Asian family cultures in relation to South Asian gang involvement

We value your knowledge and experience as someone who may be affected by South Asian gang involvement. The study will entail one interview that is up to 60 minutes in length and will take place either over Zoom or over the phone.

Please see the attached consent form on this email for more information.

If you would like additional information about participating, please contact Amarveer Kandola, Master's Student at Simon Fraser University (or reply to this email).

Best regards,

Amarveer Kandola
School of Criminology
Simon Fraser University

Appendix C.

Consent Form



Consent Form

Who is conducting this study?

The study is being conducted by principal investigator Dr. Alissa Greer, assistant professor at Simon Fraser University's School of Criminology. Data collection and analysis will be done by student lead Amarveer Kandola. Both the principal investigator and the student lead will have access to the data. See "how will your privacy be maintained?" below for more information on how data will be handled.

Why is this study being done?

You are being invited to take part in this research study because we want to hear the views of South Asian family members on South Asian gang involvement in British Columbia (B.C.) in relation to South Asian family culture. We hope that by including the opinion of family members who have a direct interest in South Asian gang involvement in B.C., future policy will reflect the needs of those most impacted by it.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study within two weeks of the interview. All data collected about you during your enrolment in the study will be destroyed. However, after the two weeks period, you will not be able to withdraw your data as it will have been anonymized and there will be no way of linking your responses to the data collected. If you would like to withdraw your participation within the first two weeks of the interview, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Alissa Greer

How is the study done?

If you say 'Yes,' to participating, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview or conversation over Zoom or over the phone that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. To ensure we collect your responses accurately, we seek your permission to audio record the interview as well as to make any written notes during the interview. Here is how we will do the study:

- The student lead will contact you via phone or over email to set up a day and time that work for you to conduct the interview.

- The day of the interview, the student lead will call you at the scheduled time and will go over this consent form again. You can ask any questions you may have prior to starting the interview.
- The student lead will then ask you whether you consent to be interviewed for the study, whether you consent to record the audio, and whether you consent for the student lead to take notes during the interview. If you consent, the interview will begin.
- The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. The interviewer will ask you a series of questions about your perceptions on various topics.
- No questions about current/former illegal gang activities will be asked nor will any questions be asked about potential relation to current/former gang.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?

We do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. Personal identifying information will not be disclosed and data will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used when the interviews are transcribed to avoid any potential risks of identification. Identifying information will not be shared with anyone. If at any point you feel upset or in need of support as a result of your participation in this study, we have provided a list of resources (including 24/7 crisis lines) for you to contact (attached to this email).

Furthermore, you should feel in no way obligated or pressured to participate due to an existing or prior relationship with me or the University. If you do feel a sense of obligation or pressure, you should decline to participate.

What are the benefits of participating?

While we do not think there will be direct benefits to you from taking part in this study, we hope to use the information we get from this study to help provide a clearer picture of the relation, if any, that South Asian family culture might have to South Asian gang involvement and potentially help inform future policy.

Will you be paid for your time/ taking part in this research study?

Your participation is voluntary and there is no honorarium.

How will your privacy be maintained?

Participants will not be identified by name in any written transcripts and reports of the completed study. All data and information will be kept on university servers (SFU Vault) which is an encrypted and secure server. Only the student lead and primary investigator will have access to this server and the data it contains. All audio recordings will be deleted after transcription is complete. Study data will be maintained for two years after transcription is complete.

Study Results

The results of the study will be shared via a thesis publication and a community report. Although we will describe participants in general, the quotes will not be linked to any individual. If you would like to be notified when results are available, please send an email to.

Future use of participant data

Data from the current study may be used in future studies that study South Asian family culture in relation to South Asian gang involvement.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the SFU Office of Research Ethics at dore@sfu.ca or 778-782-6618.

How can I withdraw?

If you wish to withdraw from the study and are within the two weeks period, please contact Amarveer and declare that you wish to withdraw from the study.

YOUR CONSENT

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact. You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study. If there is a real threat of harm to yourself or others, we are required to report it to relevant authorities. Opting not to participate will not impact your employment or have any consequences to you. When asked, saying “yes” indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Who do I contact for more information or if I have questions?

Contact Amarveer

Appendix D.

Consent Script



I am conducting research about views of South Asian family members on South Asian gang involvement in British Columbia (B.C.) in relation to South Asian family culture and I am interested in your experiences as a South Asian family member. You are being asked to participate in a one-on-one interview or conversation that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. I do not think there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. If at any point you feel upset or in need of support as a result of your participation in this study, I will stop the interview and provide a list of resources (including 24/7 crisis lines) for you to contact. While I do not think there will be direct benefits to you from taking part in this study, I hope to use the information we get from this study to help provide a clearer picture of the relation, if any, that South Asian family culture might have to South Asian gang involvement and potentially help inform future policy.

Please know that I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. Your identity or personal information will not be disclosed in any publication that may result from the study. Notes that are taken during the interview will be stored in a secure location. You may choose not to answer any question.

Would it be all right if I audiotaped our interview? Saying no to audio recording will have no effect on the interview. Likewise, would it be all right if I took notes during our interview? Saying no to notetaking will have no effect on the interview.

Please answer 'Yes' if you consent to participating in this interview. [If consented] Do you have any questions before we get started?

Appendix E.

Interview Script



Welcome Text and Consent

Thank you for talking to me today and thank you for agreeing to help us with this project. The interview should take no more than 60 minutes. As a reminder, I am interested in looking at getting your views, as a South Asian family member, on South Asian gang involvement as well as South Asian families and family culture in relation to South Asian gang involvement. I believe that, including yourself, we have no more than 40 people participating in this study. As a reminder, you can refuse to answer any questions and we can stop the study at any point, just let me know. Before we begin, do you have any questions that you would like to be addressed? [If not] Okay, let's begin then.

[Interview Questions]

Closing Comments

Thank you for your time and sharing your thoughts today. Do you have any questions for me? Was there something you were surprised I didn't ask you?

Once again, within two weeks of today, I will transcribe this interview and all data will be anonymized. At this point you will not be able to withdraw your data. I will hold onto this data for two years. If you have any questions about this interview please contact me. Once again, thank you for your participation.

Appendix F.

Question Guide



Sample Questions

Thank you for talking to me today. As a reminder, I am interested in looking at getting your views, as a South Asian family member, on South Asian gang involvement as well as South Asian families and family culture in relation to South Asian gang involvement. Okay, let's begin then.

South Asian Gangs

1. I was wondering if we could talk a bit about your views of South Asian gangs. Can you talk about what South Asian gangs mean to you? What do you think are the main characteristics that define South Asian gangsters?
 - a. *Prompts:* Have you ever been involved in a South Asian gang or do you know anyone that has been involved in a South Asian gang? Without giving me any names, can you tell me a little bit about them? What was your relationship with them? Do you think gender has anything to do with their involvement with gangs? If so, what role do you think it plays? Thinking about their family and upbringing, does anything stand out to you about their family that might influence their involvement? If yes, can you tell me about that?
2. What do you think about South Asian gangsters? What do you think these South Asian gangsters see gangs as?
 - a. *Prompts:* From your perspective, how do young South Asian men/boys become involved in a gang?

South Asian Family Culture

3. How would you describe a typical South Asian family?
 - a. *Prompts:* How would you describe your own family? In the type of South Asian family you described or in your own family, how boys are treated compared to girls [AND/OR] how would you describe the authority that the father and mother hold? Thinking about the ways boys and girls are treated in South Asian families, if there are differences in how they are treated, what do you think that these differences are? What role do you think these differences might play in young boys' interest in gang involvement?
4. [If male] What was it like growing up as a male in your household? How typical do you think your experience as a boy was in comparison to other South Asian families? How are boys usually treated in South Asian families? Can you tell me a bit about some of the

male role models in your life? What were they like? How do you think they influenced you?

5. Thinking back to your family or the typical South Asian family, what do you think it means for a South Asian male to be a man?
 - a. Prompts: What are some characteristics that a South Asian male may have? How do you think a South Asian boy learns to become a man? What role might the ideas of what it means for South Asian boys to be a man play in young boys' interest in gang involvement?
6. How would you characterize the family life of South Asian youth who might join a gang?
 - a. Prompts: Is there anything about other family members involvement in gangs that might influence them? How about for someone who does not get involved with a gang?

Final Questions

1. What role, if any, you think that South Asian family culture plays in South Asian gang involvement?
2. What role, if any, might the teachings of parents play in South Asian boys getting involved in gangs?
3. Is there anything else about gang involvement among South Asian males that you think is relevant to talk about?
4. Anything else you want to share? And, is there any questions you are surprised I didn't ask or anything you think I should ask?

Okay, I'm going to turn off the audio recording and ask you five short questions:

- Can you tell me how old you are in years?
 - _____years Prefer not to answer
- What gender do you identify with?
 - Woman Man Trans Man Trans woman Gender Non-Conforming
 - Other:_____ Prefer not to answer.
- What is your immigration status/what generation South Asian are you?
 - First Generation Second or Later
 - Prefer not to answer.
- What region of India are you/your parents/your family from?
 - _____region of India Prefer not to answer.
- How many, if any, people do you know that are in a gang?
 - _____people Prefer not to answer.
- How long, in years, have you lived in the Greater Vancouver area?
 - _____ years

Thank you for your time and sharing your thoughts today.

Appendix G.

List of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Immigration Status	Region of India	# Known in a gang	Lived in Vancouver
Aston	23	M	2nd	Punjab	Couple	25
Balwant	60	F	1st	Punjab	1	35
Gauri	37	F	2nd	Punjab	Couple	35
Gavin	45	M	1st	Punjab	1	35 years
Gurleen	19	F	3rd	Punjab	1	19
Jaggy	28	M	2nd	Punjab	Couple/undefined	27
Janya	26	F	2nd	Punjab	1	25 years
Jason	24	M	2nd generation	Punjab	Couple -- not personal	24
Karan	27	M	2nd	Punjab	Couple	25
Manjot	24	F	2nd	Punjab	0	25
Noor	22	F	2nd	Punjab	0	24
Sanjit	41	M	1st	Punjab	Couple	21