The Punjabi diaspora in a time of media hybridization: The empowering of 'counterpublics'

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the ways in which three Punjabi-Canadian news outlets in British Columbia push back against negative representations in the mainstream press, while drawing attention to causes of concern to members of that diasporic community in Canada and around the world.

I argue that the three outlets reflect the formation of "public sphericules," which both provide counter-narratives to mainstream discourse and offer coverage that attempts to integrate members of that diasporic group into mainstream Canadian society. These are important roles for a number of reasons; because of the negative representations of South Asians that have characterized the Canadian mainstream press' coverage; and because multicultural news outlets help people to negotiate between their physical and cultural homes. Scholars in the areas of diasporic studies, South Asian studies, and counterpublic formation inform this thesis.

Through qualitative interviews with the editors at each of the publications, as well as through a two-month framing analysis of the coverage at the outlets, this study explores how multiple public sphericules can be bonding agents, building a sense of cohesion within a cultural community, while at the same time bridging that cultural community with the larger communities in which they live.

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Chapter 1

Theoretical framework and goals of the thesis

"Without a faith, justified or not, in self-organized publics, organically linked to our activity in their very existence, capable of being addressed, and capable of action, we would be nothing but the peasants of capital – which, of course, we might be, and some more than others" –Michael Warner (69)

"People do not live their lives in fractured packages. Rather, culture making transpires on a wide canvas that may draw from any number of heritages, sometimes unconsciously, but that sees itself as the canvas and not as one or another part of it" –Vijay Prashad (196)

Introduction

The Punjabi diaspora in British Columbia has remained loyal to many of the traditions of the cultural homeland, while taking part in Canadian political and social life. This duality points to a tendency of the South Asian diaspora, of which Punjabi-Canadians are a part, to "recreate a culture in diverse locations" (Clifford 249). This is accomplished through the maintenance of religious and cultural practices even as members of those cultural communities participate in Canadian political and social institutions, and work to promote upward mobility, in business and education specifically. This negotiation between belonging to multiple locales plays out in the coverage of the Punjabi press in British Columbia. This thesis will argue that in the case

of the Punjabi diaspora in B.C., ethnic media has been important to that diasporic group's ability to garner support for social and political causes in Canada and abroad, as well as in their efforts to push back against negative representations of South Asians in the mainstream press. I chose to look at three South Asian news outlets because those cultural communities have built up a diverse media market in B.C., with 33 outlets for the more than 200,000 people of South-Asian origin living in the province. The majority of these outlets are newspapers and radio stations and are mostly Punjabi language, apart from seven English newspapers and 3 multilingual radio stations. This is the largest number of outlets compared to the province's other cultural groups (Murray et al. 17). The competitiveness of the Punjabi media may be seen as a safeguard against the predominance of one or two voices. At the same time, because the outlets focus on Punjabi individuals and organizations, the possibility of a Punjabi dominating the South Asian media discourse in British Columbia must be considered. While all of the outlets present coverage of areas other than the Punjab, including the rest of India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, many of the narrative centre around issues of concern to members of the Punjabi diaspora.

This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of what roles diasporic news outlets can play in helping a cultural group to exercise influence, through political activity and social advocacy, within a society in which they are a minority. The content provided by the outlets offer a context within which members of Punjabi-Canadian communities in B.C. can navigate the shift in the understanding of home, a shift which has been brought about by globalization and transnational mobility (Alonso and Oiarzabal 6-11). The Punjabi news websites use ethnicity as a point from which to speak,

a way to carve out a place from which to make opinions heard, so they are not drowned out by a "flux of diversity" (Hall 184). I argue that these Punjabi news outlets serve a number of important purposes, pushing back against negative stereotypes in the mainstream press, offering representations of South Asians in a variety of social and political situations; and portraying strong transnational relationships between South Asians internationally.

I employ the media coverage presented by three Punjabi-Canadian news websites, as a filter through which to look at transnational communication, because it can aid diasporas by making "peoples in different nations more aware of each other, creating a lateral orientation to others like themselves in other nations, rather than to the others in the nation where they have come to reside" (Sinclair 189). The news production and sharing process has been made easier for the editors at the each of the three Punjabi media outlets, through the utilization of the Internet for the purposes of maintaining, and strengthening, transnational linkages (Kumar 1-25). But while the Internet has made communication instantaneous, allowing diasporic groups to keep in contact across vast distances, it does not 'represent a separate world,' but is instead a tool with which diasporas can focus on areas of concern and interest (Warschauer 161). The hard work on the part of diasporic institutions and individuals makes the goals of diasporic groups achievable.

While the Web is a tool, the importance placed on the print product by the three outlets will also be explored in this thesis. I will show that the Punjabi outlets' newsrooms are hybridized; not only in the sense that they mix both local and international coverage, but also in that they recognize the strengths of both the printed

and online product. The print product, in the case of the news outlets I examined, is 'residual' in the manner described by cultural theorist Raymond Williams, as print journalism "has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (122). Williams explains, because the residual is still an active part of the cultural process, "certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation" (122). At the three Punjabi news outlets I examine in this thesis, the print product is seen as a valued artifact, a status that it maintains at a time when the Punjabi outlets are making efforts to create online presence.

While Williams uses the 'dominant, emergent and residual' paradigm to discuss cultural formation, I argue that it can be applied to the discussion of the hybridization in journalism, enriching my exploration of the use of both print and online resources at the three outlets I chose to analyze. My thesis will accomplish this translation of Williams' work by showing that the print product is seen as a valued artifact, and that, because of the frequency with which members of the Punjabi diaspora in Canada engage in international travel to visit other members of that diasporic group around the world, the print product is often distributed internationally from friend to friend and relative to relative. At the same time I will argue that the Web has been used as a tool by the three outlets to cut costs and strengthen transnational linkages within various Punjabi communities.

The outlets that I looked at represent both a break from, and an adherence to, the call

for counterpublic creation put forward by Fraser (1-32). On one hand, they provide narrative about a cultural group that has been both under-represented and negatively depicted in the mainstream press in Canada. At the same time, these outlets represent spaces in which those with the means, the majority of whom are men, occupy places of power. From there they choose what South Asian stories get told. To further navigate this relationship between serving the public good and guaranteeing that individual interests are met, this thesis draws from Bourdieu's description of "the journalistic field" which, he asserts, lacks autonomy because of its reliance on outside factors, including advertising revenue. Bourdieu writes that journalism must be understood as a field, which he describes as "a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they take with respect to the field, these position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field" (*Field* 30). Drawing on Bourdieu's hypothesis, Benson points out the faults in not questioning the power structures within media systems that are funded through the sale of advertisements. He writes, "In relation to the social class structure as a whole, the so-called diversity of this advertising-funded media system may begin to be seen for what it is: a relatively narrow clustering around a few positions within elite fields of cultural, political, and economic power" (194).

The term "counterpublics" emerged in opposition to the idea of public sphere, which Jürgen Habermas defined as "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed" (1989: 92). Habermas argued that this public opinion is formed through "rational discussion" without intervention from the state or the marketplace. Since Habermas introduced his notion of the public sphere, scholars have opposed the

idea of a space where everyone can have an equal opportunity to speak and be heard. Fraser argues that the 'public sphere is hegemonic and exclusionary to minority groups.' She writes that, "virtually from the beginning, counterpublics contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech" (8). In the case of the journalistic outlets that I looked at, the website and print content can be described as empowering the development of certain kinds of counterpublics, which operate as "spaces of circulation in which it is hoped that the poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely" (Warner 122). By addressing issues they believe to be of relevance to South Asians, predominantly Punjabis, the outlets are resisting the imposing of dominant influences, as those in mainstream media will not be adept at speaking to that group. In the case of one of the outlets I explored, they are producing material in Punjabi and English, so language is another barrier to dominant influence.

The question at the heart of this debate is whether the Punjabi outlets that I analyze are truly counterpublics or, rather, exclusionary spheres that are actually more similar to the region's mainstream press outlets. Fraser writes that because subordinated groups wouldn't have a place in which to discuss what is important to them, "there is a need for" what Fraser calls "subaltern counterpublics" which represent "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate their counter discourses based on oppositional identities, interests, and needs" (14).

As is noted above, the editors at the outlets that I explored represent those "few positions within the elite fields." So what makes these Punjabi-Canadian outlets that I have chosen unique? And not merely replicative of the inequalities that plague

mainstream coverage of marginalized groups? To answer these questions and to justify my argument that they are indeed different, and necessary, I relied heavily on the body of scholarship that asserts that "public sphericules," of which the Punjabi-Canadian media is a part, do provide alternative voices to the mainstream press, and are important in creating more informed readerships.

Punjabi-Canadian press outlets as "public sphericules"

Much like the definitions offered by a number of disciples of 'counterpublics,' scholars have written about "public sphericules," which exist alongside a society's dominant public sphere (Karim, 2009; Ahadi and Murray 587-611). The public sphericule model allows for the dispersal of power in a way that other notions of public sphere engagement don't. While Fraser's counterpublics represent an oppositional relationship between the counterpublics and the spheres they aim to push back against, the public sphericule model emphasizes multiplicity and speaks more directly to the ethnic press as necessary to the participation of a greater number of cultural groups. Due to the class privilege of the Punjabi editors I interviewed, and because there is a lack of consistent engagement between the editors and the broader public, it is more apt to describe the Punjabi-Canadian press as generating public sphericules. Karim names ethnic media as a sphericule group, in that it contributes to this understanding of competition for the ability to influence state decision-making in a pluralist society. He writes, "The main causes for such media to come into existence relate to the fulfillment of groups' need for access to information in their own languages, reception of material in a culturally familiar manner, and remaining abreast with news about members of the

group, the homeland, or diaspora" (*Alternative* 165). Newspapers are the most common form of these media. There are hundreds of these outlets throughout Canada and they run the gamut in terms of form and quality.

In my research, I found that this was certainly true, with one editor running the publication out of his home, one out of an office building, and one wherever he could set up his laptop computer. Karim notes two different streams in the scholarship related to public sphericules. He argues that while Gitlin (168-174) "laments the fragmentation of the public sphere into 'public sphericules' that isolate the sole interests of those who occupy them" (qtd. in *Alternative* 165-183), Cunningham and Sinclair disagree with that assessment, contending that "the emergence of ethno-specific mediatised communities suggests that elements we could expect to find in 'the' public sphere are to be found in microcosm in these public sphericules. Such activities may constitute valid, and indeed dynamic, counter-examples to a discourse of decline and fragmentation, while taking into full account of contemporary vectors of communication in a globalizing, commercializing and pluralizing world" (28).

The counter-discourses presented, in the coverage of the three Punjabi news groups I looked at, represent cohesion on the part of the South Asian community. These news narratives also give South Asians visibility in all realms of society, a visibility that is lacking in mainstream press coverage. I certainly was aware during the interview stage of my research that the Punjabi-Canadian outlets I had chosen were part of the network of communication that included power imbalances and exclusion, yet the narratives they presented were part of an effort to create public sphericules in line with the type proposed by Cunningham and Sinclair.

While the power balance still weighs heavily in favour of the juggernaut of the mainstream publishers in Canada, ethnic media help to diversify the voices that are given space to opine on issues of concern. That public sphericules do not necessarily occupy the fringe of society was evident in the ways in which the editors I spoke to described efforts they had made to form relationships with mainstream institutions (mainstream newspapers outlets, city councils etc.). Karim notes that sociology and communications scholars have viewed ethnic media outlets, acting as public sphericules, as serving the contradictory purposes of contributing to ethnic cohesion and aiding minorities to feel more comfortable and empowered within the larger society (*Public* 230-242). This view of ethnic media played out in the coverage of the three outlets, as it offered information about services (help to find employment, information about local, provincial, and federal politics), which could aid in the integration of marginalized groups in larger society. There was also coverage that seemed to focus specifically on efforts being made, by the Sikh community, to secure places of worship while at the same time building bridges with the mainstream communities in which they lived. The coverage reflects the type of journalism advocated by Fleras, who argues that multicultural media constitute a form of social capital, in which the foundational dimensions of social capital, the bonding and bridging dimensions of social capital play out. He explains that "bonding social capital consists of those dense social ties and intense patterns of trust that secure strong mutual support and high levels of involvement in a closed community. In contrast, bridging social capital entails weaker social links and more generalized trusts in an open community with greater individual initiative, tolerance of difference, and participation in society" (727).

Karim argues for the classification of ethnic media as a form of alternative media, but it often runs against the conventional view of alternative media values. He writes:

> If participation is considered to be a key criterion of alternative media, ethnic media can be viewed as intrinsically alternative. They enable ethnic groups to participate in the mediascape. However, not all ethnic media demonstrate an attachment to progressive causes, which is another important characteristic of alternative media. The former are produced by varying interests, whose only commonality in a media category is that they address readerships or audiences that are primarily characterized by ethnicity. (*Karim, Alternative* 164)

The three outlets I explore in this thesis encourage participation through the coverage of various social and political causes, yet they, as producers of the media, have specific interests that they are trying to serve. The findings of this thesis were also consistent with Karim's public sphericule model of ethnic media, in that they were not at the fringe of society, but instead strove to create and maintain both intra- and inter-cultural communication networks. Mihelj argues that the operation of minority news outlets "does not automatically involve a rejection of universalism or a retreat from the wider public sphere. In some cases, minority outlets can in fact expose values that are far more inclusive and universal than those endorsed by the mainstream public sphere" (174). This is the case with the Punjabi outlets that this thesis explores, because the news content often overlaps with what is being produced at the mainstream outlets in British Columbia, begging the question of whether these outlets offer counter-narratives to those presented in the mainstream news. The content overlap is a result of content sharing between

Vancouver's mainstream outlets (mainly *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*) and the nature of news production, which has resulted in the coverage of crime and other conflict situations. At the same time though, these diasporic news outlets "produce distinct civic discourses not often heard in hegemonic spaces like the mass media" (Karim, *Public* 231). A sampling of these discourses will be explored at length in Chapter 3.

In Vancouver, the competition between ethnic and mainstream media outlets is fierce; this is also the case between various ethnic media outlets, which was conveyed during the interviews with the editors at all three of the outlets I examined. The ethnic press in and around Vancouver have found loyal audiences, which have allowed them to compete with mainstream publications. According to a previous study, in Vancouver (a city in which almost half its population is from an ethnic minority group) the total circulation of the 46 ethnic newspapers –including two Chinese dailies– is larger than the combined figure of its two main English-language papers (Karim, *Global* 1-22). The discussion around what purposes are served by ethnic and diasporic news outlets is not cut-and-dried, for they can fill a number of niches. Browning et al. describe the multi-faceted role of the ethnic press when they write:

> Groups and the media that seek their attention and allegiance thus engage with issues of preservation, adaptation, self-improvement, and defense of rights and interests, with the development and maintenance of cohesion, and with the social and political involvement of their members and their audiences and readers. The ethnic media may contribute to a group's understanding of itself and to its sense of community and cohesion, and to the group's understanding of the host society, of the nature of the threat faced by the group, of steps to take in defense of the group, and of its allies or

potential allies. Thus ethnic media may enhance the group's ability to act effectively and protect its rights and interests in American society (94).

The authors go on to argue that all of these purposes go toward enhancing the ethnic group's "ability to act effectively and protect its rights and interests" (Browning et al. 94). Mahtani writes of the importance of studying ethnic media and argues for "new kinds of empirical work that take into account the racialized and colonized subject positions of the diasporic media producer, and consumer" (263).

So the spaces that the news outlets provide, for editorial content and community discussion, are meant not merely to mirror mainstream publications in Canada, but rather to transform the discourse involving the Punjabi diaspora in Canadian news treatment. Warner, emphasizing the importance of the discursive space created by public formation, argues that publics are a "space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, Web sites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced. It exists by virtue of being addressed" (Warner 67). This thesis will argue that the Punjabi diaspora in British Columbia is autotelic, in that members of that diasporic group organize around discourse that is being presented by the Punjabi press outlets. This argument will be supported through interviews with the editors at the outlets, as well as through the presentation of coverage that conveys the organization around social and political causes. As is discussed in the above section on public sphericules, the outlets that I examine in this thesis differ from the type of counterpublics proposed by Warner and Fraser, yet, the Punjabi-Canadian public sphericules that I explore in this thesis exist because the concerns, or

perceived concerns, of that cultural community are addressed. All of the publications that I examined create discursive spaces, which have the ability to motivate public sphericules to support causes associated with that cultural group. They present a number of publics created through discourse, which all vary in terms of content, yet all try to reach members of the same diasporic group. The creation of these public sphericules is accomplished through the type of news coverage that the outlets present, as well as through the international distribution of their print products. The specificity of the three communities in question, coupled with various experiences of Punjabi peoples in B.C. historically, must be contextualized to give a more informed explanation of the role(s) of Punjabi diasporic journalism in the cases to be explored.

In conducting research, I was guided by the belief that "people do not have a fixed political agency, and as subjects of complex and contradictory social relations can be summoned as subjects and agents in diverse ways" (Bannerji 6). Accordingly, this thesis does not explore, or aim to present, a single Punjabi-Canadian public sphericule but, instead, it examines a group of competing public sphericules, all vying to represent the needs and concerns of the thriving Punjabi-Canadian communities which they serve. Through qualitative interviews and framing analysis of the online news presence, I found that the news outlets are effectively framing the news coverage to better garner support from various Punjabi communities, at the local, national, and international levels, for a variety of political and social causes. As well, the outlets serve to "celebrate minority successes, accomplishments, and aspirations," and to advance "a minority trajectory of settling down, moving up, and fitting in through creation of a more level playing field" (Fleras, *Theorizing* 726). The editors decide what defines success but, because of the lack

of editorial staff, particularly at *The Link* and *Punjabi Patrika*, community members and various freelance journalists send in many of the stories of successes presented in the coverage at all three outlets. Both the web and print versions of the Punjabi outlets celebrate and promote business, social, and political endeavours within that cultural group.

I conducted qualitative interviews in order to find out what motivation guided their editorial decisions and what role(s) they feel their publications serve. Interviewing diasporic media outlet editors is important because it offers a counter-perspective to the majority of media studies, which deal with mainstream outlets[1]. I found that the sites' editors were motivated by a desire to provide content that conveys upward mobility and community cohesion. By looking at the history of Punjabi-Canadians as they navigate the relationship they have with India and Canada, through communication technologies, this thesis also provides a useful depiction of how journalism fits into the current paradigm of transnationalism.

The over-arching goal of this thesis is to take into consideration a number of variables: the history of the Punjabi people's migration to Canada; the unique relationship that Punjabis have with India, specifically the Punjab; and the trends in the mainstream Canadian press coverage of South Asians, including Punjabis. Karim advocates this type of analysis, arguing that, "In order to appreciate better how individual diasporians situate their own selves, researchers need to understand how worldwide communities are internally layered according to periods of migration, the historical receptivity of societies

[1] A large body of scholarship in the area of media studies focuses on mainstream news production, audiences, and content. Scholars, including Karim (*Global* 1-22) and Matsaganis et al. (Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach 265-266), have argued for more research in the area of minority group journalism.

to various waves of migration, and the continuation of the diaspora's links with the home country and with other parts of the transnation" (*Alternative* 171-172). In focusing on the journey, settlement, and journalistic texts produced by Punjabi-Canadians, I will present a more broadly applicable method for approaching the study of diasporic news agencies in Canada and beyond, which applies the level of specificity Karim recommends.

Personal motivation

My reasons for choosing the Punjabi-Canadian press in British Columbia stem from my time as a community reporter in Abbotsford, B.C., where I had the opportunity to interact, both through work and in casual interactions, with members of that cultural community. I found there that in many instances the mainstream press, of which I was a part, failed to engage with the Punjabi community, by too narrowly portraying issues of concern to members of that cultural group. In doing this, I believe we missed an opportunity to dedicate editorial space to matters of interest to Punjabi-Canadian individuals and organizations, and, more frequently, when we covered issues of import to the whole population of the area (school closures, city council decisions, etc.), Punjabi-Canadian voices were lacking.

During my time in the newsroom, I began to look at various Punjabi-Canadian news websites to see what those outlets were covering. I saw that the narratives presented in the coverage of news websites, including *The South Asian Post* and *Punjabi Patrika,* were different from the representation of South Asian groups that I was seeing in mainstream press coverage. It has been noted that Vancouver's media has negatively

stereotyped the Sikh[2] community, as they have been, and continue to be, portrayed as militant and quick to resort to violence (Henry and Tator 44-45). During my conversations with Punjabi-Canadians, I saw that negative representation of South Asians in the mainstream press was a sore point, particularly the coverage of spousal abuse. I felt that there was a distrust of the mainstream press by members of the Punjabi community in Abbotsford. At that I time I began to think about what line(s) of research would assist me in discovering the role(s) that the Punjabi-Canadian press plays, both within the community in which it operates, and as part of the international Punjabi diaspora. Before engaging with the theoretical literature, in the areas of diaspora studies and public sphere theory, I will first lay out the methodological approach and questions that guided my research for this thesis.

Methodology

Qualitative methods employed in a multiple-case study

Case studies "emphasize the rich, real-world context in which the phenomena occur" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, *Theory* 25), and "take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats" (Marshall and Rossman 164). I wanted to find out if my argument, that the Punjabi press in British Columbia provided spaces for public sphericule engagement, could be supported across three different news outlets in three different communities, so a multiple-case study was chosen as the template. Conducting multiple-case studies clarifies whether the

[2] Sikhism is the predominant religion practiced in Punjab, India, as well as by the Punjabi-Canadian diasporic communities discussed in this thesis. Therefore, I employ the term "Sikhs" as a group descriptor throughout this work.

phenomena being analyzed are "simply idiosyncratic to a single case or consistently replicated by several cases" (Eisenhardt, *Stories* 620-627). In this thesis the phenomenon being analyzed is the ability of Punjabi news outlets to empower functioning counterpublics in British Columbia. The multiple-case studies laid out in the following chapters will support my argument that Punjabi diasporic news outlets, through their use of the Internet and print news coverage, contribute to the ability of that diasporic community to gather support for political and social causes. In keeping with my aim to emphasize the need for a detailed analysis of diasporic communication, this thesis will put forward a methodological template that recognizes that specificity is key when looking at the communicative strategies of a particular cultural group (Vertovec 1-37). The following questions will be answered in my thesis:

a) How do those outlets use online resources to advocate for political and social causes?

b) How do the outlets engage in community building?

c) What are the motivations that guide the outlets' use(s) of the Internet?

d) How do the outlets push back against stereotyping in the mainstream press?

e) How does the coverage provided by those outlets reflect the motivations expressed by the outlets' editors?

f) How do the editors represent the success or challenges of their papers?

The methodological approach that I took combined three qualitative methods of inquiry: employing the use of semi-structured life world interviews, questionnaires and, finally, a two-month framing analysis of the news coverage. I chose questionnaires and semi-structured lived world interviews because I wanted to give the editors space in

which they could talk about why they get up everyday to go to work and what place they feel their outlets occupy in both the national and international news milieu. The framing analysis was employed to look for trends in coverage, and to see how the aims expressed by the editors played out in the coverage. Qualitative research "is highly descriptive, emphasizes the social construction of reality, and focuses on revealing how extant theory operates in particular examples" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, *Theory* 28), which makes it a useful framework for conducting a multiple-case study.

The semi-structured life world interview is defined as "an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale and Brinkmann 124), which allows the interviewees to voice their opinions without too much mediation on the part of the researcher. While the interview questions were designed around various themes associated with the phenomena in question, there was quite a bit of flexibility, which allowed for a free flow of communication between the editors and myself. During the interviews, held in person, I was able to make the editors feel comfortable, so that they were at ease in being honest with me about the operation of their outlets. The framing analysis was used to see how the outlets "diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies" (Kuypers 301), through their selection of news frames. I wanted to see how the coverage was framed and what kinds of stories the outlets were telling about South Asians and where those narratives stood, counter to mainstream narratives about those cultural groups. My thesis recognizes that framing analysis is a way of looking at news discourse that "mainly deals with how public discourse about public policy issues is constructed and negotiated" (Pan and Kosicki 70), so it was interesting to talk to the

editors about why they chose certain story ideas and where those ideas came from. The framing analysis took place over a two-month period, as the news content from each of the news sites was analyzed once a week. While this is a qualitative study, the number of fresh news articles was recorded so I could gauge how often the sites were updating their content.

The news outlets I examined were: *The South Asian Post* (Vancouver, B.C.), *Punjabi Patrika* (Abbotsford, B.C.), and *The Link* (Surrey, B.C.). All three of the news outlets are stand-alone businesses, so, along with answering my research questions, I wanted to find out how they kept their publications afloat. The reasons for selecting these outlets are as follows:

1) *The South Asian Post* was chosen because, upon preliminary research, I found that this outlet not only uses new media as a news platform, but has also made use of social networking sites, with all of their online news coverage being linked to *Facebook* and *Twitter*. They have a circulation of 25,000 copies weekly. The content of the site is a mix of coverage of South Asian communities abroad and in Canada. The outlet does not work out of a physical newsroom, as everything is done virtually, with most of the correspondence between the staff members taking place through e-mail. I explored the editor's views on the strengths and weaknesses of editing in a digital newsroom and the opportunities it provides for diasporic news agencies. *The Post* has also established relationships with Vancouver's daily newspaper, *The Vancouver Sun,* to produce South Asian-focused editorial content, which contributes to a discussion about the impact that the three outlets have had on the mainstream media in B.C.;

2) Punjabi Patrika was chosen because it is publishes online in both English and

Punjabi, which facilitated a discussion about what public(s) that site wants to inform and empower. They have a circulation of 12,000 copies weekly and publish in a community (Abbotsford) where Punjabis have consistently gained, and held, seats on various municipal councils, including the city council and school board. Abbotsford is also home to the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre, at the University of the Fraser Valley, which aims to strengthen business connections between Canada and India, while at the same time putting resources into research dealing with the Indo-Canadian experience. The analysis of *Punjabi Patrika* was crucial to finding how diasporic news sites can celebrate local Punjabi-Canadian accomplishments, while also strengthening the connections between that diasporic community and the community at large in Abbotsford;

3) *The Link,* which has a circulation of 17,000 copies per week, started in 1973 in Winnipeg before moving to B.C. in the late 1970s. It was chosen because of its long history as a South Asian diasporic publication, and because of the political nature of its content and editorial stance, which will be covered in the following chapters. Like Abbotsford, Surrey (the community in which *The Link* is published) is home to a thriving Punjabi population. It is also a community where members of that diasporic group have achieved a high degree of economic and political success. Through the interviews, I discovered in what way *The Link's* editor feels that his publication has contributed to that success. Because of the political nature of much of the content, I focused both on how *The Link* promotes Punjabi-Canadian political candidates and how the coverage pushes back against negative representation of the Punjabi community in the mainstream press in B.C. *The Link's* coverage, more than the other two outlets, provides examples of pushback against negative coverage of the Punjabi community in the mainstream press.

The Link also has extensive coverage of political happenings in the Punjab, which will contribute to this thesis' argument that one of the key functions of the Punjabi-Canadian press in B.C. is to reinforce transnational relationships between diasporic individuals and organizations.

The interviews focused on various themes, including: the perceived role(s) of Punjabi diasporic media; the attributes and history of the Punjabi, including Sikh diaspora in Canada; the stereotyping of the South Asian community, with special attention to the Punjabi diaspora, in the mainstream Canadian press; and methods for utilizing the Internet for the purposes of community cohesion. One of the main challenges of the in-depth interview is to keep the interview conversational, by offering details about one's own life, while recognizing that the point is not to talk as friends do. When the researcher crosses that line which divides researcher from friend, he or she runs the risk of offending the interviewee (Sennett 37-38; Kvale and Brinkmann 123-124). Effective interviewing "consists in calibrating social distances without making the subject feel like an insect under a microscope" (Sennett 37-38). My main duty in conducting the interviews was to find the balance between engaging in friendly conversation and getting the information that would inform this thesis in a meaningful way.

The interviewees included editors from the three news outlets; as well, Satwinder Bains, the director of the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre at the University of the Fraser Valley, was interviewed. By interviewing Satwinder Bains I attempted to limit bias by using a knowledgeable informant who could view the Punjabi press from "diverse perspectives" (Eisenhardt and Graebner 28). Bains, as a person of Punjabi descent living in B.C., and as a director at an academic institution, offered a number of perspectives on

diasporic news outlets. Through my interviews, I gained a new understanding of diasporic news outlets because I made the editors I talked to partners in interview (Kvale and Brinkmann 82).

Through qualitative research methods, I found a number of ways in which journalism attempts to empower a cultural community. Through the interviews, in particular, I was able to gain a better understanding of the motivations and methods that guide Punjabi diasporic media outlets in B.C.

Grounded theory and the semi-structured lived world interview

Grounded theory was chosen as one of the guiding methodological frameworks for this thesis because I wanted to see how the editors reacted and framed coverage based on external conditions, such as changing levels of economic stability, as well as increased international relations between Canada and India. Grounded theory "seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions, but also to determine how the actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions" (Corbin and Strauss 5). In grounded theory the actors are seen as having the means to control "their destinies by responses to conditions" (Corbin and Strauss 5), so that the editors' decisions were viewed as being important to the future of the outlets. Like the semi-structured lived world interview method that I employed, grounded theory also allows (or, more accurately, demands) a flexible approach to research, since "a key feature of grounded theory is not that hypotheses remain unverified, but that hypotheses (whether involving qualitative or quantitative data) are constantly revised during the research until they hold true for all phenomena under study, as gathered in repeated interviews, observations or documents"

(Corbin and Strauss 11). It is my goal and responsibility in this thesis to show specific linkages between what was discovered in the interviews and what was depicted in the news coverage, so that discoveries could be made about Punjabi-Canadian diasporic journalism and those who produce that news, and to then contextualize that conversation within the historical narrative of Punjabi-Canadians.

Framing analysis: finding themes in the coverage

My framing analysis took the constructivist perspective, which regards frames as tools that are available to social actors (Gamson and Modigliani 1-37); so my aim with the analysis was to allow the 'social actors,' in this case the outlets' editors agency. Frames are tools with which news outlets can produce news coverage. I argue that a media outlet's choices of how to frame issues "are not trivial matters." They serve the purpose of defining issues for media consumers, and they also define how these issues will be discussed (Pan and Kosicki 70). When media outlets make some aspects of a story more salient than others, the "content leads to different construction of reality" (Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern 155). Framing analysis gives the researcher "more room for interpretation, captures a more dynamic process of negotiating meaning, and highlights the relationships within discourse" (Reese 152). By accessing the news content on the websites for the period of two months, and analyzing the coverage on each of the outlets' sites once a week, I found linkages between the news coverage and the concerns expressed by the editorial staff at the outlets. My framing analysis found connections between the interview themes and frames used in the coverage. Those frames included:

1) Successes in the Punjabi community;

2) Maintaining and strengthening local and transnational linkages;

3) Pushing back against stereotyping;

4) Drawing attention to political and social causes.

With regards to issues of stereotyping, this thesis includes mainstream press coverage of South Asians, as well as scholarship that discusses the representation of visible minorities in the mainstream Canadian press, to show how the Punjabi-Canadian coverage pushes back against negative representation. The findings from the framing analysis will be discussed throughout my thesis, following this introductory chapter, so that I can more cohesively apply the narratives presented within the coverage to the appropriate theoretical material.

To answer the above research questions, it is integral to engage in a conversation with the existing literature in the areas of diasporic studies and public sphere theory. The purpose in doing this is to establish the Punjabi-Canadian community as diasporic, and, having done that, to then position the Punjabi-Canadian press within the scholarship on public sphere theory. The findings from the framing analysis, as well as the information I gathered through the interviews, will be discussed throughout this thesis. I interweave my research with scholarship that I feel speaks to the issues at stake concerning the three Punjabi-Canadian outlets that I explored. This was done in an attempt to facilitate a conversation between theorists, editors and news narratives, using the theoretical framework established in the following sections. My hope in writing this thesis was to explore the motivations and strategies of the three Punjabi media producers, as well as their coverage. I want to contribute to the body of scholarship that Mahtani advocates for,

which explores the myriad ways to research the production of diasporic media.

Defining diaspora

Much of the early discussions around diaspora, as a term to be applied to specific groups of peoples, focused on defining diasporic groups as those who were forced to leave their homelands (Tololyan 647-655; Schnapper 225-254). The reasons for such forced departure included: economic woes in that homeland, economic opportunities elsewhere, and violent dispersal. After this definitional stage in diaspora scholarship a second wave of theory emerged, which focused on what happened once a diasporic group settled in its host country. Scholars considered connections established by the diasporic groups to the cultural homeland and to the host country, and described the various manifestations (political participation, economic activity, etc.) of those connections. As transnational movement increased over the past 30 years, the term 'diaspora' was extended to include a variety of migrating peoples, which makes it harder to distinguish the particularities of all of the groups who are defined as diasporas (Tololyan 647-655; Vertovec 1-37). Tololyan pinpoints the problem that has accompanied the inclusiveness currently associated with the term, arguing that:

> When ethnics, exiles, expatriates, refugees, asylum seekers, labor migrants, queer communities, domestic service workers, executives of transnational corporations, and transnational sex workers are all labeled diasporas, the struggle to maintain distinctions is lost, only to resume in another guise. It becomes displaced into a new effort to recall how very different the communities gathered under the label diaspora remain (648-649).

This is a problem because if scholars wish to engage in a discussion about, and give voice to, various marginalized groups, it is important to know how they can be characterized in relation to other groups. Many scholars assert that being a part of a diasporic community means you can occupy two places, the place in which you physically reside, and also the place of your cultural past. This shift in the idea of nation is coinciding with the ability of people and groups to keep in touch across vast distances through communication, transportation and labour migration (Clifford 249; Karim, *Nation* 270; de Block and Buckingham, 2007). Important to note at this point is the distinction made, within diasporic studies, between a diaspora and an ethnic group, because it aids scholarship in recognizing differences and similarities between various cultural groups. An "ethnic community differs from a diaspora because the former lacks the latter's twin commitment to maintain connections with its homeland and its kin communities in other states and to sustained self-representation and the perpetuation of significant differences" (Tololyan 652-653). This is not a static process, but instead depends on a number of factors, including reactions to economic, cultural, and social conditions, both in the cultural homeland and in the host country (Karim, *Global* 3; Tololyan 650).

Much of the contemporary focus on diasporas has highlighted the role of the imagination. This focus has been associated with the writings of Benedict Anderson, who has argued that, "The convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of a human language ... created the possibility of a new form of imagined community" (46). While the imaginative aspects of diasporic communities and

transnational movement must be considered, embedded in this discussion of transnational diasporic relationships there must also be recognition of the work that diasporic groups do in their countries of residence. This discursive work has the ability not only to change the situation of diasporic individuals and organizations, but also to actually enact change in India – politically, socially or economically. So, "rather than conceiving of the homeland as something that creates the diaspora, it may be more productive to consider that it is the diaspora that creates the homeland" (Axel 1152). The transnational communication flows made possible through diasporic relationships are enriched by an exploration of how diasporic groups use the Internet.

In critiques of the early scholarship on diasporic uses for online media, scholars point to the focus on the Internet as a mediated space, without an accompanying emphasis on the hard work being done by diasporic communities in their host countries (Carter 54-63; Tololyan 654). In the latter scenario, the Internet is viewed as a tool, rather than a utopian field of play. Carter writes that while emphasizing the hybridity of diasporic groups, the issue of "re-territorialization" is left mostly untouched, which he believes is due to "the lack of interconnectedness between the theoretical literature on diaspora and empirical research on 'actual' diasporas and their specific geographies" (Carter 55). This thesis is an attempt to bridge that gap, by looking at the literature on diaspora, and diasporic communication, as I discuss my interactions with Punjabi-Canadian news producers and explore the linkages, both transnational and national, that they have formed.

Taking into account the above definitions and discussions regarding diasporic belonging, this thesis will employ a framework which recognizes diasporas as most often sharing these two characteristics: the movement away from a cultural homeland, which is

usually caused by a traumatic expulsion or by economic motivations; and the effort to maintain or restore a homeland, or to create a homeland if one never existed. Lastly, this thesis will move forward with the recognition that the establishment of a diaspora is a much debated-over process, which can often take centuries (Schnapper 225-238; Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach 9). Punjabis made their way to Canada in the early 1900s and their history with the host nation has been marked by periods of blatant exclusion. An examination of the historical landmarks, which make up part of the Punjabi-Canadian experience, will be an integral step to establishing that cultural group as a diaspora.

History of South Asian immigration to Canada

I explored historical material related to Punjabi settlement in Canada in order to find out how that cultural group has been represented in that body of scholarship. That history was important to the analysis of the Punjabi news outlets, because the journey and settlement of the Punjabi diaspora was a prominent topic in the interviews with the three editors. All of the editors used the past experiences of Punjabis in Canada, including events such as the Air India bombing and the partition of India (both of which will be looked at in the chapter), as jumping off points to talk about various contemporary Punjabi-Canadian accomplishments and barriers to success.

As Sikhism is the predominately-practiced religion in the Punjab, past events involving that religion's practitioners are of importance to the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora. There is a significant absence of Sikhs in Canadian historiography, despite the fact that Sikhs have been involved in two very important historical moments in 20th

century Canadian history (Vashist, 2005: 3). These two moments are the heinous transgression by the Canadian government against the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* in 1914, and the 1985 Air India bombing, which further alienated members of the Punjabi community from the Canadian government. Both of these events will be discussed in this section. But while these two events are landmarks in the Punjabi Canadian experience, they are just two pieces in the narrative of Punjabi, and more generally South Asian, settlement in Canada. I want to make sure that South Asian accomplishments are presented prominently, to remedy an abundance of scholarship focusing on hardships and atrocities involving South Asian communities in Canada.

The history of immigration from India to Canada goes back to the turn of the century. Indian immigrants started coming to Canada in 1904 and, between the period of June 30, 1905 and March 31, 1908, more than five thousands immigrants, mostly Sikhs from Punjab, entered Canada, almost all settling in British Columbia (Kurian, 1991). Immigrants were usually the younger or more economically marginal members of well-off farming families. Many were farmers' sons who had not yet established families. Many anticipated that their share of familial lands would be very small unless somehow augmented. Others had spent a good deal of their lives in the army and were familiar with the risks and rewards of migration (Buchignani et al., 1985). So economic motivations were a key factor in the Punjabi migration to British Columbia. Once in the country, South Asians, Punjabis included, were discriminated against. In 1907, South Asians were denied the vote in Vancouver due to a change in the Municipality Incorporation Act. This was a landmark decision on the part of the provincial government of the time, as it denied South Asians the federal vote – because in British Columbia the criterion for voting

federally was to be entered on the provincial voters' list. For the next forty years, South Asian Canadians would remain excluded from the political process in British Columbia (Buchignani et al., 1985). By 1908, 5,000 immigrants from India had arrived in Canada.

While the Indian immigrants faced discrimination, they had some allies within the business community in British Columbia. Even with the backing of the business community, the threat of a total ban on immigration in 1909 led many Indians, who had hoped to set down roots in Canada, to move their families to India. Others, who decided to stay in North America, chose to move south to California. The Canadian government had to take a different tack with Indian immigrants because of colonial ties between Britain and India so, while anti-Chinese legislation was blatantly anti-Chinese, anti-Indian legislation was subtler. Canadian legislation thus appeared to be racially neutral, but was in fact designed to prevent Indians from immigrating to Canada (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007). On January 8, 1908, there was approval of an Order-in-Council which required any immigrant arriving at a Canadian port to come on a continuous journey from his or her country of origin (Buchignani et al, 1985). This legislation made it clear that Canada wanted to put a stop to immigrants coming from India. This exclusionary sentiment on the part of the Canadian government was further emphasized by the fact that, around the same time as the enactment of the continuous journey legislation, Canadian steamship companies were persuaded by the Canadian government to stop making direct sailings between Canada and India (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007).

The by-product of both the continuous journey legislation and the loss of ships willing to take direct trips from India to Canada was the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident, which involved "an enterprising Sikh," named Gurdit Singh Sarhali, who "quickly

became aware of the plight of those wishing to travel to North America and devised an ambitious plan to deal with it" (Buchignani, 1985: 54). Sarhali chartered a ship in Calcutta, India, collected the rental fee through ticket sales and set off for Canada. The ship started off with 165 passengers, but 111 more came on board in Shanghai, China, and then 86 more passengers joined the trip while it was docked in Moji, Japan. At the time there was a required fee of $200, per immigrant, to enter Canada, as well as a ban on artisans and labourers, but Sarhali believed that each of the South Asians on the *Komagata Maru* would be able to raise $200 once they had arrived in Vancouver, and he was willing to gamble that the ban on artisans and labourers would not be renewed (Buchignani et al., 1985). The ship arrived at the quarantine station in Victoria, British Columbia on May 21, 1914, and 22 passengers were allowed on land while the rest were held on board until deportation orders for them were secured. After many attempts by the Sikh community in and around Vancouver to aid those on the *Komagata Maru*, the ship's passengers were forced to return to their homelands after a two-month battle of wills. The ship started back on its return journey on July 23, 1914 as Vancouver residents cheered its departure. On the same day that the *Komagata Maru* left the port, the governor of Hong Kong requested that the ship's passengers not be allowed to land there, citing fears that they would be 'too seditious' to be easily dealt with. When they arrived in Yokohama and then in Kobe, they learned that they were not to be allowed to land in Singapore, either: rather, they would be sent to India, where most of them no longer resided. On September 29, 1914 the *Komagata Maru* arrived at Budge Bridge, fourteen miles south of Calcutta. Under the powers of the Ingress to India Ordinance it was planned to send everyone to Punjab, where it would be decided who would be detained

and who would not. The 321 still on board were not told that this was their fate until all preparations were made. The great majority of Sikhs from the ship wished to take the copy of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikhs' sacred book, which had accompanied them on their travels, to the temple in Calcutta. While doing so they were met by a reinforcement detachment of armed police, and a standoff ensued while troops were called in. In the early evening an attempt to extract one of the passengers from the crowd surrounding the Guru Granth Sahib provoked a serious riot. When it had ended twenty-six people were dead – twenty Sikhs, two European officers, two Indian police and two local residents. Thirty-five people were seriously injured and 28 Sikhs managed to escape capture (Buchignani et al., 1985).

After 1919, legal South Asian residents of Canada were allowed to bring their wives and dependent children to this country, prompting the resumption of a very small flow of immigrants. About 800 South Asians came to Canada between 1920 and 1939 (Indra, 1979). The period following the Second World War was a time of increased Indian immigration into Canada. With the end of the Second World War, India became an independent nation and a member of the British Commonwealth. Immigration laws became more lenient starting with a quota system (Kurian, 1991). Legal South Asian residents of Canada were formally granted franchise and citizenship rights in the late 1940s. The arrival of Sikhs and other Asians in increasing numbers in the 1950s in B.C., where the bulk of the new immigrants were settling, set off renewed alarm over an impending ‘tide’ of Asian immigration. But this time harassment could be successfully resisted and contained, though not eliminated entirely. This section has offered a brief historiography for the purpose of conveying the barriers that stood between South Asians

and successful settlement in Canada. The Punjabi-Canadian news coverage that will be explored later in the thesis, as well as the interviews, touched on these barriers and the ways in which they were circumvented. At this point in the narrative, it would be useful to look at the role that gurdwaras played in the lives of immigrants coming from India to Canada.

A home away from home

An exploration of gurdwaras in Canada, as both a religious meeting place and as a support centre for Sikhs, is important to this thesis because it indicates a community cohesion that was a recurrent theme in the interviews and the news coverage. In the first half of the 20th century, the gurdwara became more than a place of worship for those arriving in Canada from India. It became a place for families to reconnect, for the unemployed to find opportunity and food, and also served as a place to practice one's faith. Gurdwara, which translates to 'door to the guru' is built to hold the Sikhs' sacred book, Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It is attached to a communal kitchen and langar, which is where the food is served. While a room in a private home may serve as a small gurdwara, the standard pattern in Canada, begun in Vancouver at the turn of the century, has been for a community gurdwara to be established once even a modest number of Sikhs reside in the area (Connell, 2000). As the Punjabi community in British Columbia remained small and closely knit, up until the 1950s when numbers increased, gurdwaras continued to be the centre of community life. Along with the gurdwaras, the Khalsa Diwan Society (KDS), which was established in the early 1900s to promote Sikhism, helped to give Sikhs a sense of identity, place, order, continuity and community pride. When a Sikh lost

his job, the community assisted him until he was able to support himself. Hans argues that because of the support system that gurdwaras provided, "the Sikhs did not require outside financial assistance and they formed the strongest ties of kinship" (2003: 223). There were Hindu and Muslim members of the gurdwaras, as well, who contributed to the gurdwara funds. Despite the fact that most of the contributing members were Sikhs, the fact that a number of Indian immigrants from other religious denominations were among the regular contributors to the gurdwara funds "not only highlights the composite nature of the immigrant community but also the fact that the gurdwara served as a community centre whereas KDS was a secular body" (Hans, 2003: 223). The gurdwara as a secular safe haven for Indian immigrants made it distinct from its counterpart in the Punjab, where the gurdwara was primarily a place of worship. Hans describes the importance of the gurdwara to the lives of new Canadians:

> The gurdwara played an important role in helping the newcomers. On landing, it was usually their first stop. Here, they could seek spiritual and moral strength. They would thank God for their safe journey, eat a meal and check in with temple officials. Here, they could contact with relatives and friends who would find them housing a work. Accommodations were also available until such time as the newcomers could establish themselves (Hans, 2003: 223).

The strong sense of community that was enhanced by the gurdwaras was key to the survival of the Sikhs during the worst economic times of the depression years in the early 1930s. Mills were being closed and workers were losing jobs. The gurdwara helped "provide the lifeline of many unemployed Sikhs because the community decided to be self-sufficient during these hard times rather than depending on government handouts" (Hans, 2003: 223). The gurdwara continues to serve the purposes noted above, and there is a corpus of coverage, particularly in *The Link* and *Punjabi Patrika*, focusing on Sikhism and Sikh heroes.

Chain migration in the face of changing immigration policy

Chain migration was a major reason why many Punjabis settled in British Columbia, which points to an emphasis within the Punjabi diaspora on familial relationships, a recurrent theme in the interviews and in the scholarship. A majority of the South Asian immigrants arriving in the 1960s had professional credentials and were fluent in English. They found settlement relatively congenial, all the more so as most came to localities with no prior history of hostility to Asian immigrants. However, as the immigration in the 1970s shifted to semiskilled laborers – and as immigration increased despite an economic slowdown and unemployment – anti-Asian prejudice and hostility sprang up across the country. Sikhs, among the most visible of the 'visible minorities,' were prime targets of racist abuse. Countering this, however, were official policies of 'multiculturalism' and human rights – with the tacit approval, if not whole-hearted enthusiasm, of the bulk of the Canadian population (Connell, 2000: 192-193). Changing immigration criteria during the 1970s also increased the ethnocultural and occupational diversity of South Asian Canadians. A diverse range of linguistic, ethnic, national, and religious groups was established across the country, weakening the traditional preponderance of Sikhs. Up until 1972, Canadian immigration preferences remained strongly biased in favour of professionals, managers, and skilled white-collar workers – occupational skills that, for many people in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, were very underutilized because of fierce competition for few available jobs.

By 1976, there were 118,000 Indian immigrants in Canada. But after 1976, with a faltering Canadian economy, the number of immigrants being allowed into Canada was

reduced. Instead of employing a quota system, as had been done before, the Canadian government implemented a point system in which immigrants were assessed using criteria of individual "qualifications." Independent immigrants needed 50 out of 100 points, while sponsored relatives needed less (Kurian, 1991). The restrictions being placed on immigration in the 1970s made it integral for South Asian immigrants to draw on existing resources to gain entry into Canada. Buchignani et al. argue that these existing resources, most notably familial ties, were integral to South Asian success in their new home country:

> For South Asians chain migration does much more than determine who comes and who does not. Chain migration allows individuals to tap accumulated family and community resources. Having the support of Canadian relatives expedites the process of immigration. Immigrants sometimes are loaned the air fare by Canadian relatives; for many prospective immigrants, travel costs would otherwise be prohibitive. Furthermore, because South Asian immigrants tend to settle where they have friends and relatives, communities of South Asians are quickly established. In many immigrant South Asian communities individuals have far more relatives and friends the moment they arrive than other Canadians will develop in their lifetimes. Community becomes an important support group, which cushions the transition between cultures (1985: 150).

According to Paul Dhillon, editor of *The Link* in Surrey, one of the three outlets that this thesis explores, the 1980s were a "fairly busy decade for the South Asian, or Indo-Canadian community because you had resurgence in India, in the Punjab, you had the Air India attacks here in Canada, and you basically had this active scene politically in the Sikh community with the government of India" (Dhillon, 2011). While this thesis is focusing on three Punjabi news outlets in B.C. and the history of that cultural group in the province, there are other well established Punjabi-Canadian communities in other parts of Canada. In Toronto, and surrounding cities, Sikhs have distinguished themselves because of their long history of settlement. At the University of Toronto, "the success of the Sikh

Studies initiative is reflected in the intellectual contributions that Toronto academics are making to the field, the ability of the program to attract the participation of distinguished scholars and the recent graduation of Canada's first Ph.D. in Sikh religious studies" (Israel, 1994: 13). In terms of Sikh migration to Canada, while the majority of immigrants have come from India, there have also been Sikh communities that have originated from at least 15 other countries (Israel, 1994). The historical narrative that this thesis has presented thus far is complex, in that it is marked by discrimination and acceptance, setbacks and success. South Asians who immigrated to Canada both before and after the war decided to emigrate both because of conflict at home and because they felt that their economic prospects in Canada were better (Lele, 2003). There have been strong relationships formed between Punjabis and the communities in Canada in which they chose to live, but there have also been events that have negatively impacted the Canadian-Sikh community's relationship with both Canada and India. Both the positive and negative aspects of Punjabi settlement in Canada acted as catalysts for the establishment of Punjabi press outlets, and they continue to guide the operation of those outlets. Among those important events was the Air India bombing, which will now be discussed in more detail, as it had a major impact of the relationship between the Punjabi-Canadian community and the Canadian government.

Air India bombing

The coverage of the Air India bombing is an example of the negative representation of Sikhs in the mainstream Canadian press, and the time during which the event took place was mentioned in the interviews with the editors as a period of great fear and

trepidation on the part of the Punjabi community in B.C.. Air India Flight 182, a Bombay-bound flight that started from Toronto with a stop in Montreal, was flying across the Atlantic on June 23, 1985, into Irish air space, when it suddenly disappeared from Shannon Airport's radar screens. The Boeing 747 jumbo jet went down in heavy seas ninety miles off the coast of Ireland, killing all three hundred and twenty-nine people aboard. After the Air India flight crashed, there was suspicion focused on Canadian Sikhs, mainly by the Indian government, because they were engaged in reprisals after both the Indian army's attack on the Golden Temple, and the massacre of Sikhs in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination (Singh, 1994).

The media were implicated in the demonization of the Canadian Sikh community as they "virtually put the Canadian Sikh community on trial day in and day out for years, and tarnished its image. Those were difficult days for Canadian Sikhs, yet they endured the stigma" (Singh, 1994: 144). The events in India, leading up to the Air India bombing, were an important turning point for many Sikh-Canadians. A number of immigrants from the Punjab had hoped to save money and eventually return to their cultural homeland but, after the tragic events of the 1980s, many among them decided to make Canada their permanent home. Dhillon explains this turning point when he states: "the militancy and insurgency happened in Punjab, and it became a place where there were mass killings and murders and the people who had come here suddenly decided that that wasn't our land, our home anymore" (Dhillon, 2011). With the permanent settlement of Punjabis, including Sikhs, in Canada, came the establishment of a number of diasporic organizations with their various political and social motivations. These groups advocated for the various Punjabi causes, and they continue to be covered by Punjabi press outlets.

Like the discussion of the establishment of gurdwaras, the various diasporic organizations lend credence to this thesis' argument that community cohesion is one of the characteristics that can be applied to the discussion of Punjabi communities in British Columbia.

Sikh organizations in Canada

The fact that many of the early Punjabi advocacy groups were organized around religious concerns, particularly the establishment of a Sikh state in India, is integral to an understanding of why religious freedom for Sikhs was the focus of much of the news coverage at the three Punjabi news outlets.

A number of Sikh organizations began in Canada starting in the late 1970s, with membership increasing post-1984 in response to the tragedy in Punjab. The motivation for many of these organizations was the establishment of an independent Sikh homeland. Some of the more well-known groups were World Sikh Organization (WSO), International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), and Babbar Khalsa International.

The WSO was formed in New York on July 28, 1984, and it grew to have two separate wings, WSO-Canada and WSO-America. According to its constitution, the WSO "will strive for an independent Sikh homeland by peaceful means" (Tatla, 1999: 118). Harpal Singh, who fled from the Punjab, established the ISYF in August 1974. In Canada, he launched the new organization through two large meetings held in Vancouver and Toronto. The ISYF's constitution also incorporates an active struggle for an independent Sikh state. The Vancouver-based Babbar Khalsa came to prominence in 1978, and it focused on the preservation of Sikh orthodoxy. Its constitution clearly

commits to the establishment of an independent Sikh state, stating that its members will "work for the establishment of Khalsa rule where there would be no distinction on the basis of caste, colour, race, religion, origins or regional differences" (Tatla, 1999: 120). Through protests, rallies and the media, these and other Sikh organizations in Canada have highlighted the plight of Sikhs and argued for an independent Sikh homeland. Despite opposition, from within the community and from other agencies, the issue of an independent homeland has continued to generate a heated debate. While the massive support for such a cause has subsided, various organizations have continued to draw support from the community (Tatla, 1999: 135). These organizations have also been important to the debate over the Canadian government's attitude toward a Sikh call for independence, compared with other cultural groups in Canada. Tatla outlines the debate when he writes, "The issue at stake was how government could force changes on an ethnic community's agenda. Were Sikhs different from Canada's other ethnic groups, such as Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians and others who were lobbying independence from the Soviet Union?" (1999: 173). Since the late 1990s, when much of the government backlash against Sikh organizations took place, Tatla argues that there has been a shift in group loyalty, which can be seen "through a long struggle over the name of the market, 'Punjabi' or 'Indian Market' in Vancouver, indicating a perceptible shift from an 'Indianness' towards 'Punjabiness'" (Tatla, 1999: 202). As was discussed in Chapter 2, the use of information technologies has enabled the Punjabi diaspora to communicate more frequently with other Punjabis. This ease of communication "has contributed to a sharpened sense of common causes and the endangered state of the community" (Tatla, 1999: 203).

History of the South Asian media in British Columbia

Just as an analysis of past mainstream representations of visible minorities is important to an understanding of contemporary negative depictions, an exploration of the history of South Asian media in B.C. is essential to understanding how the motivations that guide the editors at *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* have been shaped over time. The history of South Asian publications in Canada dates back to the early 1900s. The coverage in and operation of Punjabi news outlets offers a unique filter through which to gauge the feelings of members of the Punjabi diaspora. Tatla suggests, "the Punjabi media tells us more about the mental, emotional and historic world-view of the Punjabi diaspora than any other source" (1994: 885), indicating the important role that the Punjabi press played within its cultural community as Punjabi-Canadians worked to make lives for themselves in a new homeland. Canadian immigration officials put early South Asian immigrants under close surveillance. In order to enact change in their new country, Punjabi-Canadians became politically engaged, which was reflected in a highly politicized immigrant press, particularly on the Pacific coast. Several papers made their appearance in Vancouver in the first two decades of the century, the most important of these being *Free Hindustan, Swadesh Sewak, Khalsa Herald, The Aryan, Sansar, The Hindustanee*, and *Canada and India*. None of these had a long life, as either the deportation of the editor or financial difficulties would bring about the end of the publications (Hans, 1998). In 1908, Taraknath Das published the initial edition of *Free Hindustan* in Vancouver. It was the first South Asian publication of any kind in Canada and was one of the first in North America. The violently anti-British English-language

monthly provoked a quick reaction when it first began to appear in India, and the Indian government soon began to press for its suppression (Buchignani et al., 1985). The history of the South Asian media represents a variety of efforts on the part of South Asian entrepreneurs and journalists to push back against negative perceptions, to form ties with Canadian institutions, to profit financially, and to celebrate stories of successful settlement.

Punjabi-Canadians and diasporic belonging

Having laid out a brief history of the Punjabi-Canadian, this thesis will now engage with the scholarship that examines the Punjabi-Canadian community's sense of belonging to both Canada and India. Scholarship dealing directly with the South Asian diaspora aids in discovering to what degree scholars associate that cultural group with being a diasporic group. This is key to this thesis' exploration of Punjabi news outlets, because the scholarship portrays a strong sense of connection between South Asian-Canadians and their cultural homes. This connection was one of the key frames that was used in the news coverage at all of the Punjabi news outlets I explored. Sikhs, for example, "may define themselves as a diaspora community because they do not feel as though they are full and equal members of Canadian society" (Satzewich and Liodakis, 2007: 209). But other scholars associate the idea of South-Asian Canadian as, not brought about by a sense of exclusion but instead, part of a feeling of belonging, not just with the cultural homeland but with the host country as well. This tension between the cultural and the physical homes is enhanced through subsequent generations, as many second-generation South Asian-Canadians feel that, because of their "unique experiences as the children of

immigrants in Canada," they cannot be categorized by terms such as 'Indian, South Asian or Canadian.' Instead, "they feel an increased need to manage their identities and the processes through which they express these identities. As a result of ongoing cross-border communications, the second generation comes to realize they are different from their parents: they have not had an immigration journey; are different from native-born whites in Canada: they are non-white; and are different from other racial minority Canadians: they have meaningful connections to a homeland" (Somerville, 2007: 26). This negotiation, in relation to the differences between first and second and subsequent generations of Punjabi-Canadians, was a recurrent theme in both the coverage and in the interviews. Jayaram argues that this aspect of diasporic belonging must be taken into consideration:

> An important aspect of social organization, which has analytical significance in the study of diaspora, is the generational difference. The first generation of immigrants as a diasporic community is evidently different from the second and subsequent ones. Canada now has entire generations of diasporic Indians born and brought up in that country. Whether it is a question of ethnic identity, emotional orientation to the ancestral land, the response to social institutions and cultural elements taken from India, or socio-political orientation to Canada, one could expect significant differences between the first and the second and subsequent generations of diasporic Indians. So much so, the second and subsequent generations are aptly termed 'Indo-Canadians.' This should also caution us to the dangers of overgeneralizations about the diaspora as a homogeneous phenomenon (2003: 33-34).

The differences between generations were evident in the scholarship and during my qualitative research. Among generational differences, interviews revealed that younger Punjabis were not as apt at reading Punjabi. Much of the scholarship and interviews also pointed to a more intense negotiation in younger diasporic members about where they felt a stronger sense of belonging, in the cultural homeland or in their country of residence. Satwinder Bains, the director at the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre at The University of

the Fraser Valley, in Abbotsford, B.C., says that connection to their cultural home runs across all generations and makes Punjabis unique. She states, "We've been very extroverted so far, because we wanted to settle into Canada, a new land, and to adopt Canada's values and become Canadian but, at the same time, we are very invested in our own culture and religion and language as well, so that's been very helpful because we now can say 'we know where we come from'" (Bains, 2011).

For many South Asian diasporic groups, particularly those from the Punjab, this connection to India has manifested itself through support for causes in their cultural homeland. Satzewich and Liodakis write that "over the past 30 years, Sikhs in North America, Britain, and Malaysia have helped to fund a variety of schools, shrines, health centres, and community welfare agencies, all of which are intended to promote the well-being of communities in the Punjab" (2007: 217). While 15 or 20 years ago Punjabis travelled to India only to visit their families or to get married, now, with the affordability of travel, there is more frequent travel from Canada to India (Bains, 2011). Even though the diasporic linkages between Punjabis and their cultural homes remain strong, other scholars have noted that moving to new places can also create linkages and alliances where before there were tensions. For example, Karim writes: "In the case of the South Asian diaspora, the common problems of trying to live in an unfamiliar environment appear at times to be bringing together Indians and Pakistanis in a camaraderie that does not appear to exist in their respective home countries, which have been antagonists over the last half century" (*Global* 13). The coverage, particularly in *The Link,* appears to be aimed at engaging with members of different South Asian diasporic groups (including Pakistanis, Iranians, Bangladeshis etc.). *The Link's* editor, Paul Dhillon, confirmed that

this was a conscious editorial decision. This conveys the malleability of the South Asian diaspora, who are able to create relationships of necessity, to aid in the process of transnational movement.

Much of the scholarship dealing with the Punjabi diaspora, and particularly the Sikh population from within that state, focuses on that cultural group's efforts to establish a 'Punjabi-speaking majority state within the Indian republic,' which was a movement that found some prominence following the partition of the Punjab into East (India) and West (Pakistan) and the associated 'ethnic cleansing', which occurred in the 1940s. This movement "further 'cemented' territoriality into Sikh ethnicity" (Shani, 2005: 61). Shani argues that the "narratives of transnational communities, diasporas, refugees, indigenous peoples and, it could be argued, women, are simply not heard unless they employ a discourse of territoriality, state interest and power" (Shani, 2005: 65). But Shani goes on to write that territoriality need not be the sole foundation on which Punjabis build its diasporic community. He argues that "it may be possible to speak of a 'new' counter-hegemonic diasporic Sikh identity: an identity made possible by the nationalist project but opposed to its territorializing, reifying imperatives" (Shani, 2005: 69). So, while Sikhs support the development of a transnational community, this effort "does not necessarily weave itself into ideals of statehood and more importantly Khalistan" (Kumar, 2010: 22).

Current scholarship determines that Punjabis have a long history of settlement in Canada, particularly in British Columbia, and that this history has been marked with discrimination and exclusion. It also establishes that Punjabis came to Canada because of economic motivations, originally planning to return home in a better financial position,

but stayed, due to events in India and because of the new lives they had built in Canada. And finally, Punjabis maintain strong ties with their cultural homeland, retaining many of the cultural traditions associated with their cultural home while also building new bonds within Canadian society.

Having placed Punjabi-Canadians within the scholarship on diasporic belonging, this thesis will next look at the Punjabi-Canadian community within the scholarship on the public sphere, particularly the theoretical work that looks at the formation of 'counterpublics.' Before doing this though, it is necessary to deal with the fallibility of discussing any hyphenated individual. Although this thesis has referred, and will continue to refer, to Punjabi-Canadians, Sikh-Canadians, and South Asian-Canadians, I realize that the intrinsic problem with this approach is that it makes both cultures "appear as stable identities and places, without contradictions and without interpretation of ideas and practices" (Prashad, 1999: 191). This thesis will employ hyphenated identities, but it will also employ a polycultural approach, which "sees the world as constituted by the interchange of cultural forms, while multiculturalism sees the world as already constituted by different (and discrete) cultures that we can place into categories and study with respect (and thereby retain 1950s relativism and pluralism in a new guise)" (Prashad, 1999: 197). This polycultural approach will crystallize in Chapter 2, as this thesis engages in a discussion of how Punjabi diasporic counterpublics are empowered by the three news outlets. *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The South Asian Post* are spaces of discourse in which news consumers can navigate this "interchange of cultural forms."

Chapter 2

Diasporic communities and the formation of 'counterpublics'

"The Internet is, of course, the diasporic medium par excellence, obeying few boundaries – least of all territorial ones – in its production and reach. As a publishing medium, information can be shared by all members of a particular diasporic group no matter where in the world they are. It thus has the potential to construct and maintain transnational diasporic consciousness like no previous technology" –Annabelle Sreberny (156)

"What is also important are the ways that diasporas elide the local and the global as they operate in and across social fields and political boundaries, inventing new forms of community and political practices and, in their own way, changing the world" –Victoria Bernal (2005: 673)

The formation of 'counterpublics'

A discussion of public sphere theory is useful to a rounded understanding of diasporic relationships, as an awareness of the lineage of scholarship focusing on publics and public spheres, including the public sphericule model that this thesis employs, "contributes to existing research on transnational community and identity by highlighting the linkages between individual participants, community forums and off-line organizations and institutions" (Parham, 2004: 200). This chapter draws on literature on diasporic relationships in order to discuss how the three Punjabi media outlets communicate with their audiences through their print publications and websites. I wanted

to find out to what degree the three outlets used the Internet to present the news and what role(s) they saw information technologies playing in the future of their publications. Before discussing online publics, I will discuss the foundational concepts of public sphere theory.

When applied to diasporic peoples, Habermas' public sphere takes on a different shape and increases in complexity. In the case of the Punjabi news outlets I explored, the interviews and framing analysis yielded interaction between, and operation of, multiple public sphericules, being engaged both in Canada and in multiple locales around the world. 'Diasporic public spheres,' created through political engagement and the imagination of the diasporic individual, are a large part of the cultural makeup of many countries (Appadurai, 1996). They are constantly being negotiated through differences in a number of variables, including political and cultural changes in the host and cultural homelands (Bernal, 2005). The negotiation around what constitutes diasporic public spheres is constant in the reportage in *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post*. All of the editors spoke at length about who they felt their audiences were, what publics(s) their coverage was aimed at, and how much of an impact happenings in the Punjab have on the diaspora in Canada. I use the term public in the sense that they are brought into existence "by virtue of being addressed" (Warner, 2002: 67).

The Habermasian public sphere assumes that having one public sphere is a "positive and desirable state of affairs." However, it has been asserted that competing public spheres may be more conducive to ensuring that various groups, including marginalized cultural groups, are given space to contest and negotiate issues, without being left outside of any single public sphere, where they may not have as much agency (Fraser, 1993).

While Habermas' bourgeois public sphere represented a break between the decision-making processes and the state, the three outlets that I looked at represent a strong connection between the news discourse at the three outlets and various Canadian state institutions and individuals. Fraser asserts that a "strong public" is a space where opinions are formed, and then decisions are made. It is the latter aspect of the process that separates a "strong public," from the bourgeois public sphere of Habermas. Fraser writes that "any conception of the public sphere that requires a sharp separation between (associational) civil society and the state will be unable to imagine the forms of self-management, interpublic coordination, and the political accountability that are essential to a democratic and egalitarian society" (1993: 26). In speaking of public sphericules, enacted through online and offline connectivity and coverage at the three outlets I looked at, the theory allows for overlap between messages that are bound in ethnic interests and those that merge with others in "the broader public sphere" (*Alternative* 169).

The three Punjabi media outlets that I explored convey a connection, through their coverage, between spaces where conversation takes place (community meetings and advocacy organizations) and spaces where policy is determined (government). Through their use of online and offline platforms, the editors at three outlets, and the coverage they present, are emblematic of the kind of publics that are able to 'express' their opinions by using their "multiple locales, skills and resources for the benefit of individual users and the community as a whole" (Parham, 2004; 203). The news outlets present international, national, and local coverage, with the aim of making Punjabi, and at times South Asian, narratives visible. From the negotiation of locality (to be discussed later in the thesis) to the international nature of much of their coverage, the three Punjabi news

websites take advantage of the paradigm offered by Parham. The idea of "multiple locales, skills and resources" provides a convenient entry into the discussion of online news' value in the realm of diasporic communication. After engaging with the scholarship in the area, I will look at how *The Post*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Link* utilize the Internet for the purposes of empowering counterpublics.

Online diasporic communities

A discussion of public sphere theory in the context of online community formation makes for a more contemporary understanding of how diasporas create and maintain relationships across borders. It is important for this research to consider online community formation because each publication offers its news online. I wanted to understand how the Punjabi news outlets use the Internet, and found that, by putting content online, they were able to represent strong relationships between that cultural group's diasporic members. This understanding is crucial to the analysis of diasporic news content because it offers a more contemporary view of community formation and the enabling of transnational communication that has been bolstered by innovation in information technology. As well, it points to the unique opportunities for access and transmission that the Internet provides to diasporic and transnational communities (Kumar, 2010; Sokol, 2007). It by no means easy to map the process of public sphere formation, which has been made easier, at least to a certain degree, by online communication; with so many online and offline relationships being formed through Internet use and transnational travel, it is hard to chart exactly when a public sphere is formed and what contributes to its maintenance. Bennett argues that, "with the

fragmentation of mass media channels and audiences, and the proliferation of new digital communication formats, it is difficult to draw sharp boundaries around discrete media spheres" (2003: 18). In terms of diasporic communication, the Internet allows diasporic peoples to keep up on news and events happening in their country of origin, or their parents' and grand-parents country of origin, while also acting as a "magnet able to bring back together lots of dispersed persons" (Gonzalez and Castro, 2007: 6). All of the editors expressed a desire to use the Internet so that South Asians around the world could access the information they are providing. This chapter will situate the discussion of diasporic online communication under the umbrella of public sphere theory. I will then discuss to what extent each of the Punjabi news outlets utilizes the Internet to communicate with other members of the Punjabi diaspora internationally, as well as with the members of that cultural group in the communities in which they operate. As was discussed in Chapter 1, there are divides within the many Punjabi diasporic communities in Canada and abroad, as is evident in the many competing organizations, including the Punjabi press outlets, that have attempted, and continue to attempt, to represent the many interests of the Punjabi diaspora. While divides within the community existed long before the proliferation of new media by news outlets, the use of the Internet by the three Punjabi news outlets serves to destabilize the public sphere and generate "new forms of fragmentation and solidarity," which are central to this process that presents both opportunities and dangers to the theory and practice of democracy" (Downey and Fenton, 2003: 200).

Building online connections

Both Paul Dhillon, editor of *The Link*, and Andy Sidhu, editor at *Punjabi Patrika*, were skeptical about the importance of online news to the operation of their outlets, yet they both saw the move to online news production and the refinement of that production process as inevitable in the North American news landscape. As diasporic groups communicate through the Internet, it is tempting to assume that they lack personal and group connections because the interactions are taking place virtually, or that the coverage of the three Punjabi outlets, which opposes dominant media narratives, is simply lost in the mix. Dean argues:

> Under conditions of intensive and extensive proliferation of media, conditions wherein everyone is presumed to be a producer as well as a consumer of content, messages get lost. They become mere contributions to the circulation of images, opinion and information, to the billions of nuggets of information and affect trying to catch and hold attention, to push or sway opinion, taste, and trends in one direction rather than another (2009: 24).

Tatarchevsky, echoing Papachrissi, admits the potential of the Internet as a place for people to get together and interact, but doubts "its potential for revolutionary social change, as it is a public sphere functioning in the existing structures of political institutions and economy" (Tatarchevskiy, 2011: 298). Dhillon and Sidhu both conveyed a "tempered enthusiasm" for the Internet as a platform for diasporic journalism. While they both saw the potential that the Internet held for helping them to reach a mass audience, they expressed the belief that their audience primarily relied on the print product for their news. The arguments of Dean and Tatarchevskiy were relevant in the interviews I conducted with the editors, as both Dhillon and Sidhu voiced skepticism about the potential for online communication, realizing both the abundance of other media messages that they had to compete with, and the fact that the policy they wished to influence through coverage would be enacted through offline efforts.

However, these 'virtual neighbourhoods' are able to "mobilize ideas, opinions, moneys, and social linkages that often directly flow back to lived neighbourhoods in the form of currency flows, arms for local nationalisms, and support for various positions in highly localized public spheres" (Appadurai, 1996: 195-196). There was certainly coverage presented by all three outlets, which conveyed the type of coordination that Appadurai argued was a consequence of 'virtual neighbourhoods.' It is at this meeting point between discussion and action, that online journalism becomes a key medium of transnational communication. Diasporic news sites challenge the Habermasian notion of the state's "publicness," a view that asserts that a state's power is tied up in the idea of publicness, which implies that the state will do what is best for everyone who lives with its borders (Habermas, 1989). The Punjabi outlets challenge this by exposing instances in which Punjabis have not been provided for and have been discriminated against. News outlets that publish online, or as part of a hybridized newsroom, like the ones examined in this thesis, can challenge the idea of a "common good," rejecting the notion of an all-encompassing public sphere, so that what actually appear in the news coverage, and through the operation of the outlets themselves, are 'counterpublics.' This is a term that has been used to define the groups that have formed their own publics because of the exclusionary nature of the Habermasian public sphere (Fraser, 1993; Warner, 2002). But whereas Fraser's description of counterpublics relies on a rejection of and opposition to hegemonic power imbalances, this thesis argues that 'public sphericules,' formed around both print and online news discourse, can aid diasporic peoples in navigating issues of culture and belonging, and can also serve as hubs where people can meet, physically and virtually to become aware of a variety of political and social initiatives that could benefit

other diasporic members in their physical homeland(s) and internationally. At the local, national, and international level, the Punjabi diaspora is engaged in myriad struggles to push back against competing spheres. These struggles play out in the coverage at the three outlets and are explored in Chapter 3. Before moving to an analysis of the three Punjabi news outlets and their utilization, and lack, of web platforms for news presentation, it would be useful to explore what is at stake in the discussion of online public spheres.

What constitutes an online public?

Publics are not just spaces in which political discussion takes place, but should be thought of instead as "interstitial networks of individuals and groups acting as citizens" (Emirbayer and Sheller, 1999: 156). The coverage at *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* reflect citizenry of the kind described by Emirbayer and Sheller. These publics, represented through the coverage at the three outlets, are flexible in terms of their ability to form alliances, build relationship with different stakeholders, and change the direction of their foci when various areas of concern pop up. I agree with Emirbayer and Sheller's argument that it is the networks coming into existence through the formation of publics that should be emphasized, over and above the political discussion that takes place within these spaces. A common trend that came up in my research was the emphasis on the diasporic networks and their importance within the process of political movement and social advocacy. Partnerships with organizations in Punjab and Canada, made between both the news outlets themselves and diasporic individuals and organizations, were talked about by editors and were evident in the coverage I analyzed. Information and

communication technology (ICT) helps publics to be politically active, or to perceive political action, in a new way as "many citizens see direct action, their activism within or support of social movement organizations, as more gratifying and politically effective than being a member of a hierarchical (national) political party" (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, 2005: 182). But, although online communication may open up new avenues for political and social action, participation in online-communities, while important, does not in and of itself constitute a public sphere. Instead, Parham argues, "the networks sustained among individuals who participate in these expressive acts largely constitute the publics. Such networks allow participants to leverage their multiple locales, skills and resources for the benefit of individual users and the community as a whole" (2004: 202-203). This argument mirrors that of Emirbayer and Sheller, with its emphasis on the 'networks' and 'the enabling of an active citizenry.' The sites examined in this thesis make members of the Punjabi diaspora aware of community groups and social causes that they can connect with and participate in; as well, they inform them as to what government services might be useful. The linkages formed through these sites create the possibility for the type of citizenry advocated by Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, but the public space that online sites create doesn't in and of itself comprise a public sphere. Papacharissi explains this distinction:

> As public space, the Internet provides yet another forum for political deliberation. As public sphere, the internet could facilitate discussion that promotes a democratic exchange of ideas and opinions. A virtual space enhances discussion; a virtual sphere enhances democracy (Papacharissi, 2002: 11).

In conducting the interviews, I wanted to find out to what degree the Internet was enhancing discussion in the manner described by Papacharissi. Paul Dhillon, editor at *The Link*, asserted that readers still chose to call in to complain about, or suggest ideas for,

coverage, choosing not to use online means to discuss coverage. The coverage is on the Internet, there for people to read and react to but, in the case of *The Link*, there has been the creation of a virtual space, and not necessarily a virtual sphere. The act of online community formation can also be exclusionary, as those without computers can't experience the benefits that online community participation has for those with the means to take part (Papacharissi, 2002). This argument, and my interaction with the editors at the three newspapers, strengthens this thesis' assertion that it is the combination of offline and online efforts that contributes to the Punjabi diaspora's efforts to draw awareness to social and political causes, and to push back against stereotyping. In terms of the journalistic production at the three outlets, all of the editors stated that the Web gives them access to news releases from institutions from the city and wire copy from news services. While *The Post* has a staff of reporters who attend events and work remotely on stories that they send in to Mann to be edited, both *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Link* rely more heavily on freelance contributors to provide original news content. Because the strategy of *The Link, Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* seems to be very much rooted in a combination of offline and online efforts, it is necessary to explore in more detail how the analysis of online communication benefits from a concurrent look at the offline linkages.

Exploring online and offline diasporic linkages

Instead of examining online communication, and the publics that are thus formed, in a vacuum, it is more helpful to see the use of information technology as part of the larger action of public sphere empowerment and as one motivating force behind community action. Certainly, my research found that both online and offline efforts were crucial to

the operation of the three news outlets I explored. In this vein, Warschauer argues that 'community informatics,' which "seeks to apply ICT to help achieve the social, economic, political, or cultural goals of communities" (2003: 162), is a more useful tool than the 'virtual community approach,' when examining how online tools facilitate offline endeavors. He asserts:

> While the virtual community approach focuses on developing online ties, the community informatics approach seeks to actively engage an array of groups in social projects. In this way, the community gains access to social contacts and support from diverse resources that may have not been accessible before (Warschauer, 2003: 167).

What became evident early in the process of qualitative interviewing was that, while the web was seen as a necessary tool in the newsroom, both Dhillon of *The Link* and Andy Sidhu of *Punjabi Patrika* emphasized that distribution of the print product would remain an important aspect of both publications for the foreseeable future. Sidhu says that the goal is to put out a print product that will be a collectable for readers, something "that people will keep in their library, in their homes, for future reference" (Sidhu, 2011). The *Patrika's* 2011 special supplement to celebrate the naming of the Sikh gurdwara, a place of worship for Sikhs, as a Canadian Heritage site, is a good example of the importance placed on the print product – both on the part of the *Patrika*, as well as by those who wanted to advertise in and have a copy of the issue as a collector's item. Sidhu said the issue was originally supposed to be 24 pages, but because of advertiser interest it ended up being 40 pages. At one point they had to put a stop to selling ads because the issue would continue to increase in page count due to a high level of advertiser interest. In terms of distribution, Sidhu said that he received requests for a hard copy of the supplement from around the world, including from India and England, and that most of the information being spread about the supplement came from word-of-mouth

communication. Papacharissi makes the distinction between the Internet as space, and Internet as public sphere, when she writes, "It should be clarified that a new public space is not synonymous with a new public sphere. As public space, the Internet provides yet another forum for political deliberation. As public sphere, the Internet could facilitate discussion that promotes a democratic exchange of ideas and opinions. A virtual space enhances discussion; a virtual sphere enhances democracy" (2002: 11). While this thesis will continue to stress the importance of the Web as a tool being used by diasporic media outlets to create public spheres for the purposes of drawing attention to causes, celebrating successes and pushing back against stereotyping, "the digital public sphere for contesting media power would be far less important if it were sealed off from other communication channels in society" (Bennett, 2003: 33). Looking beyond online communication to the collection of the linkages, of which the Web is a major part, enriches the discussion of diasporic communication. Editors of *The Link, Punjabi Patrika,* and *The Post* vocalized this effort to combine communication channels for the purposes of empowering and informing members of the Punjabi diaspora.

The operation of a 'virtual newsroom'

The Post is the most web-savvy of the three publications, which comes from the fact that they operate a "virtual newsroom," meaning that its editorial staff doesn't work from an office, but instead interacts and sends content via e-mail. *The Post* has a small office in Vancouver where some of the production takes place, and where editorial meetings are held. It is the only outlet, of the three I explored, which puts equal emphasis on their online and print news coverage. Editor Jagdeesh Mann described the promise of the Web

as being able to "bring a lot of people into one space, without them actually having to be there," and bypassing binary divisions, including those between sales and editorial, writing and IT, which 'infect' media. Mann states that, while the internal hierarchies that govern the operation of media outlets were probably efficiencies in larger corporate structures, "in the new world where the Internet is taking a large bite out of the industry, there is a lot of change in definitions and job roles. I think those binaries are becoming impediments" (Mann, 2011). He was hopeful about the possibility of making easier the transition from "passive reader" to "active writer" for *The Post's* readership. In an environment in which readers would actively participate in the production of content, Mann said that *The Post* would be "a hub" where readers could meet to write and comment on issues of concern and interest. This effort is explained by Mann, who states:

> We can do all kinds of cool things with sites. I think the idea is that you have to harness the energy from a Web 1.0 to a Web 2.0 environment. What that means is, you have to create a structure online which encourages a participation of active content submission from the readers (Mann, 2011).

The strategy communicated by Mann, who spends most of his working day commuting to various meetings and news events, checking his e-mail while in transit, mirrors much of the scholarship on diasporic communication online. The Post's coverage, which highlights local, national, and international events is reflected in the multi-site nature of the news production itself. Bernal argues that, "in both cyberspace and the spaces of diaspora, then, location is ambiguous, and to be made socially meaningful, it must be actively constructed" (2005: 661). As this thesis has argued, the creation of discourse is integral to public sphere creation, so while *The Post* operates in a virtual newsroom, with staff working from multiple locales, the content created and presented on the outlet's website constitutes a discursive space. *The Post's* staff sends in

content digitally to be posted on the news outlet's website and in the print edition, which comes out once a week. *The Post's* website, which gets 75,000 visitors a month, gives readers the option of sending in content and commenting on existing content through various social media tools, including *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Even so, the audience(s), that Mann hopes to appeal to do live in a physical space. This has meant that while the online strategy regards the hierarchies of the traditional newsroom, and even the physical newsroom itself, obsolete, Mann has a strong opinion about who his audience is and how he best thinks *The Post* can serve their interests. (This will be covered in more detail in Chapter 3, which will explore how the coverage of the three outlets is framed, and delves further into the journalistic aspirations of the editors). Even though scholars have put the Web forward as a tool with which diasporic groups can reach across borders to communicate with other members of the diaspora, Mann has emphasized that *The Post* is very much involved in issues and projects based in Canada. He said *The Post* aims to provide a forum in which members of the diaspora can negotiate what it means to feel a connection to both India and Canada. He explains this role, stating:

> Media like *The South Asian Post* have a very unique role to play in helping to articulate conversation, or dialogue, both inside that community, inter-community and intra-communities as to what culture is going to be tomorrow (Mann, 2011).

Even though Mann emphasized the importance of using the Web effectively more than did Sidhu and Dhillon, he was also very locally minded in terms of content. Indeed, even though technological advances and the prevalence of diasporic communities internationally demands a rethinking of "the ways that we think about the nation and its territorialities, as well as diaspora and its territorialities" (Carter 60-61), in the case of *The Post*, the goal is to focus on news based in Canada. This is telling, given the fact that

The Post is the most Internet-centric publication, with a polished look, an editor with an IT background, and employment of social media tools. Both the *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Link* have moved to the Web more recently, each motivated by a desire to draw readers from around the world and to cut distribution costs.

Getting eyes on the content

The Link, which puts most of its efforts into the print version, went online in 2006-2007, and early in 2010 the whole site was revamped. After marketing the newest version of the site *The Link*'s editor, Paul Dhillon, said the number of people going to the website jumped by 300 per cent, so the publication's management decided to put more resources into the site's maintenance and to regularly fill the site with content from the print publication. *The Link* counts on contributions from freelancers for most of its news content, with much of the editorial work and all of the production being done by Dhillon himself, so creating new content for the website hasn't been a high priority. Dhillon explains: "We don't come out until Saturday so in essence we should be putting up stories, but we don't do that because I don't have the time to do that and I believe it's not worth my while to do that" (Dhillon, 2011). Dhillon adds that because *The Link* has a specific audience, many of whom still read the print product, the push to create content for the Web hasn't been as urgent as in mainstream newsrooms. Dhillon views the Internet as a great tool for members of the Punjabi diaspora though, making information relevant to Indian diasporic groups more accessible:

> In the current situation where business people, politicians, can sit and go see *The Link* right there, instead of their staff having to go to the market and get one for them, [online content] they can read whenever, so our core readers have now jumped to the Internet and now they can look at other newspapers on the Net, like Indian

> newspapers in India, and at the same time they can see what is on *The Link* (Dhillon, 2011).

Because diasporic media serve such a specific audience, the affordability of the Internet as a communications tool has made it easier for "narrowcasting to target specific audiences rather than those that provide the means for mass communication" (Karim, 2003: 274). *The Link*, which started out in the 1970s with the goal of providing Punjabis with news from India, has turned to more localized news coverage. Even with this transition, the focus for Dhillon is to 'narrowcast' to South Asian diasporic groups. This corresponds with the editorial coverage of *The Link*, particularly its focus on promoting South Asian political candidates and presenting a view of South Asians that pushes back against the negative depictions of those cultural groups in the mainstream Canadian press. These editorial motivations will be explored further in Chapter 3, but for the purposes of this chapter's discussion of online public spheres, Dhillon said he believes the Internet has made it possible for readers to engage with *The Link* as part of the corpus of publications that are either based in South Asian countries, or that deal with South Asian events and concerns.

Distribution through the Web is inevitable … and affordable

The third publication, *Punjabi Patrika*, moved to the Web because of the expense of sending out its print product. Its site is the least polished of the three, and is the only one that has an electronic version of the print newspaper available on the site. Once a week the digitized version of the newspaper is put on the site, making up the majority of the site's news content, other than news video picked up from the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) that runs along the side of the site's homepage. It is also the only one of

the sites that includes Punjabi-language content. As is mentioned in the above discussion of *Punjabi Patrika's* supplement that celebrated Abbotsford's gurdwara being recognized as a Canadian Heritage site, Andy Sidhu, *Punjabi Patrika's* editor, received requests for copies of the print product from other parts of Canada, as well as from overseas. Sidhu says that the Web has helped to keep distribution costs down because now he can point interested readers to the news site. The site gets about 500 visitors a month, which indicates that many of the publication's readers still prefer the print product, but Sidhu, like Dhillon, sees the potential for the Internet to reach a wider audience. He states:

> In modern times you've got to be on the Web to get more people to read whatever you are putting out and to get more ideas and thoughts from people, readers especially, about what they think about the issues in the paper (Sidhu, 2011).

So even in a newsroom that puts more resources into the print product, there is still an appreciation of the community formation capabilities of the Internet, and a desire to create a proactive readership. The affordability of the media distribution platforms also allows for a level of accessibility that empowers users to advocate for causes in the homeland (Androutsopoulos, 2006: 521), which the *Punjabi Patrika* certainly does in their news coverage, which will be explored in Chapter 3. Sidhu interestingly sees the possibility of a different future for ethnic newspapers, when compared with their mainstream counterparts. He believes, "in the time to come there will be very few newspapers published as readers move to electronic media totally — although ethnic media might be able to survive only because a large percent of our readers are immigrants from the old country wanting to know that which is happening in the old country" (Sidhu, 2011).

Even though Abbotsford is a growing community, Sidhu said that not too long ago

the Punjabi-Canadian population in Abbotsford got their news from Surrey and Vancouver news sources. Now, with the prevalence of online communication, news service content is accessible to everyone with the ability and resources needed to log on to the Internet. It has also allowed smaller news outlets like *Punjabi Patrika* to grant that level of accessibility, as well. This access to audience gives outlets, including *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post,* the ability to reach out to global audiences and compete for media power, in a way that would not have been possible without the use of information technology (Curran and Couldry, 2003). While Chapter 3 will examine the news coverage and the role of ethnic media, conversation around the sharing of content between news agencies is just as pertinent to the discussion of online public sphere formation, because through online communication the Punjabi diaspora has been able to globalize issues of concern to that cultural group.

Particular to the Sikh diaspora, online communication has "enabled the Sikhs abroad to create a new platform for the movement in cyberspace" (Sokoi, 2007: 228), which doesn't necessarily mean a cohesive conversation. Whereas in broadcast and in print, diasporic news outlets and media consumers may not be as aware of the various conversations being put out, "people now actually can meet online and be exposed to diversity. New media has exposed the diversity that print and broadcast media concealed" (Mahmod, 2011: 81). The emphasis on the pluralizing of 'counterpublics' in the discussion of diasporic news outlets is crucial, particularly when attention is paid to the use of the Web for news presentation, as "with limited delay and multiple information platforms, diasporas now have access to a plethora of information resources" (Kumar, 2010: 4). This has meant that a multitude of diasporic voices and opinions are available to

news consumers. This is certainly the case with the news coverage presented on the three sites examined in this thesis; the coverage differed greatly, as could be expected based on the different views each editor voiced in terms of editorial aims. But, even as the editors expressed different motivations that guide their respective publications, all three outlets frame the coverage as to celebrate successes, push back against stereotypes and make the Punjabi diaspora aware of social and political causes. Many conclusions can be drawn from the above examination of online diasporic communication. As well, it serves as a transition into the scholarship on ethnic and diasporic news outlets and their role(s) in a globalized communication milieu.

A more holistic examination of online diasporic communication

The scholars that most accurately reflected the narrative, concerning Web use by these three Punjabi news outlets examined, were the ones that tempered the championing of online public spheres, as the great equalizer for diasporic peoples to combat hegemonic discourse, with the view that online communication works alongside offline coordination to empower minority groups. This realization must enhance the specificity exercised by researchers when analyzing how diasporic groups use the Web. Phippen advocates for "advanced analytics," which doesn't just look at the number of people that visit a website, but rather explores "the relationship and interaction between a web site and its customers. It does not just collect website information, but also it uses it in conjunction with other data, such as demographics, customer profiles and subscription information" (2004: 180). Other than tracking the number of visits, *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* do not have this level of analysis, proposed by Phippen, with

regard to their online operations. A suggestion for further study would be to find out the rate of Internet penetration the news sites are having in the Punjabi community, to see to what degree that online news is impacting the readerships that the editors propose to serve.

All three of the editors that I spoke to did emphasize the importance of relationships they had formed offline, and how information and communication technology (ICT) can be useful in strengthening those relationships. This view – that online communication is one of many useful tools – is similar to the community informatics approach put forward by Warschauer. That approach "seeks to apply ICT to help achieve the social, economic, political, or cultural goals of communities" (2003: 162). Also integral to Warschauer's work is the emphasis on relationships, and the acquisition of "social capital," which he describes as "a key strategy of community informatics," but social capital is not gained principally through online communication, "rather, social capital is created and leveraged by building the strongest possible coalitions and networks in support of the community's goals, using technology projects as a focal point and organizing tool" (Warschauer, 2003: 163). The principles that guide the theory of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and its relevance to the Punjabi news outlets, will be explored in detail in Chapter 4, when this thesis looks at the relationships that the editors, and the publications themselves, have to the communities in which they operate.

That chapter will also examine diasporic communication in a multicultural context, although to what degree Canada is multicultural will discussed at length in Chapter 3. While all three of the editors praised the possibilities of the Internet, all tempered that praise by stressing the importance of the relationships that they were able to form with

politicians, other news outlets and the business organizations. Mulgan argues that the discussion of online communication must be accompanied by an analysis of "structural foundations of democracy," because without such a discussion one fails "to ask how agendas of political discussion will be formed and how the network will bring people together rather than isolating them in their own homes, defined as a lone consumer rather than as a member of a class, religion, ethnic group or gender" (1991: 68). Comparisons can be drawn between Mulgan's argument and Fraser's discussion of strong publics. *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* represent networks of relationships between members of that diasporic group and state organizations, as well as intra-cultural relationships. Such connections must be looked at critically to see who is, and isn't, being included in the conversations being put forward by the three outlets.

Sidhu, Mann and Dhillon all talked about their offline interactions with a variety of individuals and organizations, in the political, social and economic realms. These interactions served a number of purposes, whether to offer aid in matters of concern to the Punjabi communities in which the publications operate, or to benefit the publications themselves, financially. There was recognition that as powerful a tool as the Web is, it must be paired with offline coordination. Thus, as Tololyan aptly points out: "Some of the privilege that the new logic of spatialization and mobility has taken away must be restored to locality and place. Enthusiasms concerning mobility have delayed recognition of the immense tasks diasporas face and carry out locally" (654). The three Punjabi publications, like many of the region's ethnic press outlets, have been able to thrive in a competitive media market by facilitating both online and offline discussion, with the recognition that large portions of their readerships, particularly at *The Link* and *Punjabi*

Patrika, are still primarily print newspaper consumers.

The concentration on the print product by *The Link* and *Punjabi Patrika* partly stems from their view that their audience is mainly interested in the print product. This view is not without its support in scholarship related to ethnic media. Matsaganis et al. argue that the perception of audience desires at times keeps ethnic media outlets from putting resources into web content development. They write that the reason why "many ethnic media outlets do not have an online presence may be that the producers feel they are serving a community that does not connect with the Internet. If producers do not feel that the payoff will override the costs, there is no incentive to explore online alternatives" (Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach 256). The recognition that there is an emphasis on both online and offline news production, brings to the fore the hybridization of the diasporic newsrooms, which was alluded to earlier in the thesis. This argument relies on the cohabitation of the 'residual' and the 'emergent,' with the print product as the former and online communication as the latter.

True to the findings presented in this chapter, Williams described 'emergent' as "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship [that] are continually being created" (1977: 123), so the emphasis is on the relationships made possible through the 'emergent.' The hybridization practiced by the three Punjabi outlets, combined with hard work by the editors, has made each one a hub of information for the readerships that they serve, a fact that lends itself to an exploration of the role(s) of diasporic press, particularly in Canada.

Chapter 3

The Punjabi-Canadian media: origins, roles and motivations

"A structurally diverse press succeeds in a culturally diverse society when it opens up journalism by putting new, more, and different people in control of it. Ultimately, journalism diversity matters most as it strengthens the role of minority media in the struggle to achieve the social justice and political parity that a multicultural society demands" –Theodore Glasser, Isabel Awad and John W. Kim (75)

"The search for 'voice,' and an arena in which that voice can be heard, has spurred the creation of alternative media, and a contestation of the mainstream media's power to define" –Yasmin Jiwani (11)

The power of media discourses

Media discourses have the power to represent, and even construct, a social group by "[establishing] who is 'we' and who is 'other' in the 'imagined community' of the nation-state" (Henry and Tator, 2002: 27). The 'preferred messages' embedded in media texts, "sustain particular interpretations of social reality, as well as historically specific definitions of groups within it" (Jiwani, 1993: 6). There has been an attempt on the part of the Canadian English-language media to cover stories of concern to various cultural groups in Canada, in part due to the realization that they can increase their profit margin if they appeal to a wide variety of ethnic groups (Mahtani, 2008). Yet ethnic media outlets in Canada are vital because they can serve the diasporic community of which they

are a part by pushing back against negative representations, as well as by facilitating members of that group's ability to express their opinions, through the coverage of political and social causes. The scholarship in this chapter will show that negative representation of visible minorities still persists and will explore the ways in which the three outlets that I examined push back against these negative representations.

Diasporic groups constantly have to reassert themselves and 'reconstruct' the memory of their cultural homeland in the face of misrepresentation and Eurocentric depiction by the mainstream media of their host country (Mahtani, 2008). Media is integral to this process of reconstruction, as it aids members of the diaspora in defending against stereotyping, while also helping to connect diasporic individuals around the world (Sinclair, 2009: 189; Louw and Volcic, 2010). In the following sections, I will engage in a discussion of the scholarship in the area of racist discourse in the mainstream media, particularly in regards to the coverage of South Asians in the Canadian press. I will then explore what roles ethnic media can, and do, serve in a multicultural society. This chapter will end with my argument for the importance of ethnic media in the face of racist discourse in the Canadian mainstream press, paying particular attention to the coverage of the Punjabi diaspora. Throughout the chapter there will be analyses of the news text from *The Post*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Link*, as well as discussions related to the roles of diasporic outlets, in opposition to negative mainstream coverage.

Trends in Canadian mainstream news coverage of South Asians

Before discussing the coverage of *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post*, I wanted to see some of the trends that have characterized coverage of South Asians in the

mainstream press historically. Jiwani argues that examining how cultural groups have been covered historically is useful because "the historicity of representations is critical in any investigation that focuses on their contemporary formation" (1993: 107). In her critical discourse analysis, Indra (1979) looks at Vancouver mainstream print coverage of the South Asian community from the early 1900s to 1976, and what she finds is a pattern of negative representation in which South Asians are portrayed as "being a group who were very quick to resort to physical violence in order to settle their affairs," (Indra, 1979: 174). This portrayal was evident throughout her analysis; and as she noted at the end of her work, "As they have for over 50 years, South Asians continue to be associated with the deviant practices which do not characterize the portrayal of other groups" (Indra, 1979: 177).

In the mid-1970s, the negative coverage of the Sikh community in Vancouver caused that cultural group to reject coverage of their community by the mainstream press. Sikhs in Vancouver spoke Punjabi at public meetings, so that the mainstream press would not be able to understand what they were saying, thereby making it difficult, if not impossible, for the mainstream press to cast a negative light on the Sikh community. A more recent study by Henry and Tator also concluded that Sikhs have been depicted negatively in the Vancouver press, saying, "press coverage of the issues of concern to this community is sensationalized, and Sikhs are commonly depicted as militants, as terrorists, and as disposed to violence" (2002: 45).

The Canadian mainstream press continues to present negative depictions of South Asians. For example, there has been a history of racist discourse on South Asian "monster homes" in the suburbs of, and outlying communities around, Vancouver that is

still prevalent. Karim concludes that this discourse includes "moral panics" about racialized groups, which "seem not to be as intense when they live in enclaves that are within urban cores, with tourism brochures boasting of the exotic nature of our Chinatowns and Little Indias. But alarms begin to sound when people from these places move to suburban locations" (*Nation* 707). Starting in the early 1990s and continuing today, there has been ample coverage, both in the daily Vancouver news outlets and in the Canadian national newspapers, focusing on the "monster homes," and the fear that these homes would bring down the property values of surrounding houses. *The Province's* November 27, 2009 story, "Tempers flare over 'monster homes'," explores the issue of the ominously titled, "monster homes" and their appeal for Indo-Canadians who want to have enough room to accommodate members of their extended family. Interestingly, and in line with my argument that Punjabis in B.C. have formed strong counterpublics by taking part in various legislative bodies and lobbying groups, the story notes that, "The Surrey Ratepayers Association, composed largely of Indo-Canadians, persuaded council last year to look at increasing house sizes by 1,000 square feet across the city" (para. 17). Chapter 4 will further explore the ways in which Indo-Canadians have benefitted from participation in government and social activism groups, but I mention it at this juncture as part of the characterization of Indo-Canadians that is evident in the mainstream press in B.C.

In *The Globe and Mail's* December 10, 2009 story, "Debate rages over Surrey 'monster homes'," the "alarms" alluded to by Karim are front and centre, as the lede states: "Some residents want big homes for their multi-generational families, others protest that they mar the 1950s neighbourhood character" (par. 1). Other than the mention

of a South Asian homeowner in favour of large homes, the South Asian community is mentioned only near the end of the story, so the debate is mostly presented as a battle over aesthetic ideals, avoiding any conversation around tolerance or understanding. Even as property value and aesthetics are at the forefront, Surrey resident, Rick Hart, is quoted as saying that the monster homes are "a sign of a 'cultural divide'" (par. 3), so the readership is unsure about exactly what the neighbours, who are against the homes, most fear. The effect of *The Globe and Mail's* presentation of the issue is that South Asians are rendered voiceless, even as they are being indirectly implicated in a kind of fracture in the community. South Asians are not given the editorial space in which to talk to the issues, instead, those who are against the construction of large homes in Surrey are allowed to speak.

Both of the "monster home" stories subtly advocate an acculturation for the sake of the community. Bhatia and Ram write that such a suggestion implies that "one can float in and out of cultures, shedding one's history or politics and replacing them with a new set of cultural and political 'behaviours' whenever needed. Advocating the strategy of 'integration' as the endpoint or the telos of the individual or the group's acculturation process overlooks the contested, negotiated and sometimes painful rupturing experiences associated with 'living in between' cultures" (2001: 14). Moving this analysis of Canadian mainstream depictions of South Asians forward, it should be noted that both stories place South Asians on the periphery of the issue and then do not allow any members of that cultural group to address the problem, or the perceived problem. Jiwani refers to this underrepresentation as indicative of the coverage of visible minorities in the mainstream press. She argues:

> In the arena of mass mediated representations, people of colour are largely an invisible minority – visible only as agents involved in conflict situations, or when they fit prevailing stereotypes of their groups, and/or where they have achieved recognition for some exceptional behaviour according to the standards of the dominant society (as for example, in sports). People of colour are often portrayed as monoliths known only by strange cultural practices, illegal activities, social problems and their occasional 'good' ethnics (1993: 10).

An example of the portrayal of South Asians as "agents involved in conflict situations" can be seen in an article in *The Vancouver Sun*, a daily newspaper with the largest circulation in Vancouver. The October 14, 2011 story, "South Asia in Surrey," was written by journalist Douglas Todd as part of a series focusing on the different cultural groups in the lower mainland of British Columbia. The story not only depicts Punjabis as contributing to gang violence in the area, but also conveys a separation between the business activity and the area's Punjabi, largely Sikh population. It reads: "The signs on the traffic-filled thoroughfare in front of the exotic-looking Sikh gurdwara are strictly secular, announcing McDonald's, Blockbuster, Save-On Foods and Zellers" (para. 2), and later, "The pulsing heart of the South Asian community in Metro Vancouver resides among the swath of brand-name outlets, large new homes, traffic-filled streets and tidy townhouses centred around west Newton, near the Surrey-Delta border" (para. 3). The Punjabis in Surrey are part of the workforce that manage and operate these brand-name outlets and live in the large new homes, yet the story indicates that there are two different worlds within this one community, with the businesses in the area being described apart from the "pulsing heart of the South Asian community."

Later in the story, the stereotype of the 'violent South Asian' is again employed when Todd writes that "even though Surrey has a reputation for crime and a history of religious tensions, Sharma, an office administrator dressed in a long, tangerine-coloured Punjabi

suit, strongly defended her South Asian community" (para. 42). The crime problem in Surrey is directly attributed to the criminal activities of the South Asian community living there, and the story follows up by describing the range of violent activity that South Asians have been a part of: "from sword-wielding clashes between rival Sikhs to last year's parking lot shooting at Guru Nanak gurdwara" (para. 48).

The Link's Paul Dhillon said the mainstream press has naturalized violence in the South Asian community, without offering context to stories about certain issues revolving around violence, particularly spousal abuse and so-called honour killings. Dhillon believes that in instances of spousal abuse and murder, the mainstream media brings such atrocities in the South Asian community to the forefront. He said that by doing this, it makes it "easy for the mainstream to know that 'hey, you guys have a problem killing your wives,' but when you look at it there is no such thing. When you look at it in context, domestic abuse is rampant in all communities" (Dhillon, 2011). He added that this is an effort to lump South Asian men together, to the detriment of that cultural community as well as the news consumer. He states, "Men are not brought up any different, or more macho, than in the mainstream community. They are just different families, different people, that cater in different ways" (Dhillon, 2011). This stereotype has been alluded to in the mainstream press, as well.

The Globe and Mail column, "Honour killings in Canada: even worse than we believe," which was published on November 15, 2010, highlights the focus that is put on instances of South Asian spousal abuse compared to the many "domestic homicides" in Canada, without directly implicating the mainstream media as part of this disparity. Columnist Gerald Caplan writes that in Ontario alone, from 2002 until 2007, 212 women

were killed by their partners "compared with 12 so-called honour killings in all of Canada in the past eight years. Women killed by partners are known as domestic homicides, and, unless especially gruesome, are barely worth a mention in the media. Maybe there's just too many of them to be newsworthy" (para. 3). So, he continues to question whether the focus on "so-called honour killings" is due to the fact that the victims are from South Asian, Muslim and Middle Eastern households. He writes:

> By giving such prominence to these communities and their cultures, are we not denigrating them? For all our ostensible acceptance of multiculturalism, are we not feeding our lingering prejudices against certain specific minorities among us? Look at it purely statistically. If so-called honour killings are in fact culturally approved by their communities, as is often charged, shouldn't we expect far more than 12 in the entire country in eight years? And if the rest of us truly embrace a culture that repudiates violence against women, why are so many of them still being murdered? (para. 8).

In both the scholarship on the representation of visible minorities and in Caplan's column, "newsworthiness" is pointed to as a possible reason why spousal abuse in South Asian communities is highlighted. Jiwani writes, "Conflict and controversy are the stock in trade for news, and when these stories involve people of colour, their news value is heightened. In part, this may be due to the lack of representation of people of colour in other non-conflictual sectors of life" (1993: 493). The news coverage of the three Punjabi outlets, particularly that of *Punjabi Patrika*, differs from the mainstream coverage in that their stories feature Punjabis who are agents in all realms of public life, including as members of government and social activists, not mainly as participants in conflicts.

Before moving on to a discussion of diasporic media and its role(s) within a multicultural society, it would be beneficial to discuss various critiques of multiculturalism in Canada and how those critiques relate to the coverage of minority groups. In Todd's story in *The Vancouver Sun*, multiculturalism is mentioned in the

conversation involving what barriers exist in a multicultural community. This question posed: "Will Metro Vancouver's large-scale experiment in multiculturalism be held back by ethnic separatism, division and mistrust?" (para. 24). The narrative asserted in the story is that the cultural practices and gang involvement of the Punjabis in Surrey is a threat to that "experiment in multiculturalism." Karim writes that this is not a new narrative: "There are some stories that pop up with cyclic regularity: for example, those about ethnic gangs and how the practices of particular cultures disrupt life in neighbourhoods" (*Nation* 704). Multiculturalism, as it is employed in *The Vancouver Sun* story, is about categorizing and separating, more than about adapting and including. In the story, Punjabis are assigned various cultural identities, not allowing for agency on the part of the individual to negotiate cultural identity for him or herself. Bannerji pushes back against the practice of naturalizing cultural identities, when she writes:

> We need to repeat that there is nothing natural or primordial about cultural identities – religious or otherwise – and their projection as political agencies. In this multiculturalism serves as a collection of cultural categories for ruling or administering, claiming their representational status as direct emanations of social ontologies. This allows multiculturalism to serve as an ideology, both in the sense of a body of content, claiming that 'we' or 'they' are this or that kind of cultural identities, as well as an epistemological device for occluding the organization of the social. We are encouraged to forget that people do not have a fixed political agency, and as subjects of complex and contradictory social relations can be summoned as subjects and agents in diverse ways (Bannerji, 2000: 6).

In *The Vancouver Sun* story, the narrative is in line with the multiculturalism described by Bannerji and Prashad (discussed in Chapter 1), which "sees the world as already constituted by different (and discrete) cultures that we can place into categories" (Prashad, 1999: 197), as opposed to polyculturalism, which recognizes the interchange of cultural identities and challenges the categorization of culture. Dhillon said he feels that there has been an effort on the part of the current Canadian government to squelch

cultural practice. He states, “Under the Harper Conservatives ... the aim is to do something similar to the American melting pot. But even in America ... there is a backlash against the melting pot as ethnic groups have entrenched themselves in their cultural heritage and are not necessarily ready to tow American ideology” (Dhillon, 2011). This section will end by discussing a critique of multiculturalism, which argues that, while multiculturalism was intended to include the conversation around, and practice of, all cultures, “'common sense’ understandings of the term confine its usage to racial minorities” (Jiwani, 1993: 80-81). The result of conflating multiculturalism policy with the existence of visible minorities is articles such as the one above, which sees cultural practice not as an individual’s ongoing negotiation, but as the maintenance of petrified archetypes that have the capacity to divide communities. Thus, a polyculturalist approach offers a richer and more adaptable approach to the discussion of how Punjabi-Canadians negotiate identity through the practice of journalism. I will now move onto a discussion of diasporic media outlets and the purpose they serve, before narrowing the conversation to focus on the roles of South Asian outlets, and their place within the journalistic field in British Columbia, based on the opinions of various scholars and the editors at *The Link, The Post*, and *Punjabi Patrika*.

Diasporic media as areas of contestation and consensus

Much of the scholarship in the area of diasporic media, often referred to as ethnic media, emphasizes that while such media outlets are spaces in which diasporic groups can coordinate and push back against negative representation in the mainstream press, they are also places where members of the diasporic group can see, and at times

participate in, the debate around how to approach issues of concern to that diasporic group. Georgiou and Silverstone write that when the media is looked at as spaces of contestation, it provides "frameworks for identity and community, equally contested of course, but significantly available as components of the collective imaginary and as resources for collective agency" (2007: 35). At an even more fundamental level, "Through use of ethnic media for news, the argument runs, the group becomes aware of political and social issues that are potentially threatening or potentially advantageous for it" (Browning et al., 2003: 97). What occurs in ethnic media is the presentation of counter-narratives, or other ways of representing issues. The news coverage of the three Punjabi outlets analyzed as part of this thesis makes South Asians visible in a way that is simply not seen in the Canadian mainstream press. The motivation to provide these counter-narratives keeps *The Link's* editor Paul Dhillon in the newspaper business. He explains, "What drives you to work in journalism is that you as a reporter/editor think that your work is making a difference in the community and giving voice to people who are not covered in the mainstream" (2011).

Much of the scholarship I explored, and material from the interviews I conducted, gave strength to the argument that diasporic peoples consume diasporic media in different ways, and to different degrees. Those patterns of use can be dictated, or guided, by a number of factors, including time spent in the host country, language and political/social activity. Scholarship in the area of consumption of ethnic media by various cultural groups indicates that a majority of immigrants use both ethnic media outlets and general news sources to get information (Browning et al, 2003; Georgiou and Silverstone, 2007). While audience surveys and interviews are outside the scope of this thesis, the editors at

the three Punjabi outlets all expressed a strong belief that they know who is consuming their product and know what that perceived audience wants in terms of news coverage. For Jagdeesh Mann, at *The South Asian Post*, the audience for his publication uses both ethnic and mainstream news sources: "They're reading *The Vancouver Sun*, they're reading *24 Hours*, but they pick up *The South Asian Post* because they still feel some pull, they still have some gravity that pulls them into this orbit" (Mann, 2011). *The Post* has also been the outlet that has formed the closest connection with *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*, producing South Asian-centric editorial content for the major dailies on a number of occasions.

Yu and Ahadi write that a "multicultural communications infrastructure" can result in the kind of partnership struck between *The Sun* and *The Post*, where either ethnic media is linked to mainstream media, or space for ethnic narratives is secured within mainstream media. Yu and Ahadi argue "this integrative yet intercultural approach maintains existing institutional structure while securing ethno-cultural societal culture is important" (2010: 56). They go on to argue that ethnic media should "aspire to act as players in the larger public sphere where most politics and government affairs operate" (2010: 65). The danger of this approach though, is that the ethnic media outlet, in forming relationships with mainstream news outlets, may "be hindered by/mired with coercion by government forces, the influence of economic variables, and the controls of the dominant culture (Shi, 2009). The worst-case scenario would be that the ethnic outlet might be steered away from providing counter-narratives to hegemonic discourse, instead providing editorial content on celebrations and food recipes rather than positive depictions of South Asians and calls to action to address issues of concern. While Mann

has formed relationships with mainstream media outlets, Andy Sidhu, editor at *Punjabi Patrika*, said his goal is to help the community at large in Abbotsford to understand the Punjabi population there. He states:

> When I started the newspaper, I felt that in Abbotsford the South Asian community and the Caucasian community were far apart. The Caucasian community would not know why I would have a turban on my head, why I would have a beard, why our lady-folks would dress the way they dress, and I felt my paper would become a voice of the two communities – the reason for it being bilingual (Sidhu, 2011).

For this reason, and to push back against negative representations of Punjabis in the mainstream media, Sidhu decided not to include any negative representations of South Asians in the news coverage. This exercise of agency, for the purposes of authoring a view of South Asians that runs counter to those in the mainstream press, was evident in all three of the outlets I explored. An examination of how Sidhu's decision plays out in the news coverage will be included in the framing analysis section of this chapter. Ethnic media, in this case *Punjabi Patrika*, are often used, not only to offer an alternative to mainstream news coverage, but also to "work to bridge the gap between marginalised groups and mainstream society" (Yu and Ahadi, 2010: 65).

The contemporary South Asian press in British Columbia.

That tradition of an engaged press discussed in Chapter 1 continues, as contemporary South Asian news publications remain an integral part of the experience of South Asian communities in British Columbia. Those media outlets have a particular interest in civic issues because members of South Asian communities are actively involved in politics at the municipal, provincial and federal levels (Karim, *Public* 236). The oldest of the three outlets analyzed in the thesis is *The Link*, which has been publishing since the 1970s. *The*

Link also has the most politically charged news content, with an abundance of political coverage from both Canada and India. *The Link's* editor, Paul Dhillon, said in the early days of the outlet, *The Link* was the only publication in the Vancouver area that would feature Indo-Canadian candidates, stating, "We used to be the only game in town, in terms if you were announcing your candidacy or nomination, because back then there was no other media" (Dhillon, 2011). Ethnic publications in Vancouver have since gained prominence and are in competition with each other and with the mainstream publications in the area. *The Link* is no longer the lone publication with the aim of informing South Asian readers, but its coverage remains opinionated and filled with news content concerning political parties in Canada and in Punjab, which is consistent with earlier studies of the ethnic press in and around Vancouver (Ahadi and Murray, 2009).

There has also been recognition on the part of political parties, who wish to cater to the various culturally diverse constituencies in B.C.'s lower mainland. Karim writes, "The voting power of large concentrations of minority ethnic groups in constituencies such as Surrey Central becomes very significant during elections. When politicians attempt to reach these electorates in their own idioms, ethnic media become key vehicles" (*Public* 238-239). Ahadi and Murray suggest that "Punjabi news are generally more opinionated and politicized in their identity communicated than other third-language news" (2009: 601), which, they add, may not fully engage the public in constructive debates. That same study talked about how consumers of South Asian, Iranian, and Korean news publications that were interviewed said they believed "that some people started up media publications as money-making ventures, rather than from a desire to present a voice that was not heard" (Ahadi and Murray, 2009: 604). This finding was

reinforced by my interview with Dhillon, who also concluded that there was a different motivation guiding publishers of mainstream news outlets and those that ran ethnic papers. He believes that many people who start ethnic news outlets lack an understanding of journalism, and are instead usually advertising salespeople who want to be publishers and owners because they believe they can sell ads to keep the operations afloat. Dhillon said he thought this situation was less prevalent in the mainstream news outlets. He states, "traditionally people who come into newspaper publishing are sophisticated enough that they know about the news. They're not just businessmen looking to make money" (Dhillon, 2011). The views expressed by Dhillon concerning ethnic news outlet ownership, and those interviewed as part of Ahadi and Murray's study, lend credence to the need for a future study of audience opinions of ethnic newspapers and the impetuses behind their creation.

Some of the themes explored thus far in the chapter, including the emphasis on political content in *The Link*, the emphasis on positive coverage of South Asians in *Punjabi Patrika*, and the focus on Canadian content in *The Post,* will play out in the following section, which explores the news text over a two-month period by the three outlets. For the framing analysis, I analyzed 162 articles that were posted on the outlets' websites between mid-December 2011 and the end of February 2012. I limited my analysis to stories that were posted to the sites' homepages. What I discovered were narratives that fit into the following four frames:

1) Successes in the Punjabi community;

2) Maintaining and strengthening local and transnational linkages;

3) Pushing back against stereotyping;

4) Drawing attention to political and social causes.

The analysis will start with an exploration of the coverage of successes in the Punjabi community and the Punjabi 'hero' coverage, which included both historical and contemporary narratives of Punjabis displaying heroism in the face of discrimination, economic challenges, and social upheavals.

Punjabi successes and the 'hero' narrative

There was ample evidence of coverage in *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post* which conveyed success in South Asian communities, through the profiling of South Asian, usually Punjabi, achievements in the fields of politics, science, humanitarian aid, and sports, among others. There was also a connection between the celebration of success and the conveyance of strong connections between members of the Punjabi diaspora and India.

Within the collection of news coverage that celebrated South Asian successes, there was the presentation of South Asian historical hero narratives. Two examples of this were feature pieces on Sikh heroes, Guru Gobind Singh and Bhal Mewa Singh. The story, "The Incomparable Guru Gobind Singh," which was posted to *Punjabi Patrika's* news site on January 13, tells the tale of Guru Gobind Singh, one of the ten gurus honoured in the Sikh religion. He is described in the story as "a fearless warrior, reckless in his bravery" (para. 8). Gobind Singh was the originator of the Khalsa tradition, which mandates that Sikhs adhere to a number of different codes, including not cutting one's hair, carrying a kirpan (a dagger), and wearing an iron bracelet. Those who wear these symbols of Sikh faith "have been required to test their rights in numerous court actions in

Ontario and throughout Canada. The relationship of the kirpan and the crucifix and the Star of David as merely a reflection of three religious traditions 'symbolizing differently' is difficult for many non-Sikhs to understand or accept" (Israel, 1994: 67). After offering an overview of Guru Gobind Singh's life, the writer of the *Punjabi Patrika* story expresses his feelings of anxiety after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. After that event, the writer said wearing a turban and having a beard made him fearful because he felt "as though all eyes were on me, scrutinizing my appearance suspiciously" (para. 31), but he goes on to say that his pride in the history of Sikhism gave him strength during that time. He writes, "the realization that I was heir to the noble and brave tradition of the Khalsa magically caused all fear to evaporate and filled me with pride – not to mention that it also put a swagger in my gait" (para. 35). So within the frame of celebrating success is the creation of a lineage of heroism that is a source of strength for Punjabis, in this case specifically Sikhs. The fact that these historical narratives are being kept alive within the contemporary information flow of Punjabi news outlets means that Sikhs, both young and old, can access them, which is significant, as it maintains an inter-generational focus on religious belief, that is certainly not specific to *Punjabi Patrika.*

The Link's January 15 story, "Bhai Mewa Singh: Remembering The Legacy Of A Canadian Shaheed (Martyr)!," centres on a Bhai Mewa Singh, who came to Canada in 1906 and worked in the lumber industry. The story states:

> Bhai Meva Singh Ji arrived in Canada at a time when racism against non white immigrants was at its peak. As a newcomer to Canada his experience was less than welcoming. Local newspapers portrayed the early Sikh immigrants in a negative fashion. The new Sikhs were refused rental accommodations and were not allowed to purchase food by local grocers. No social organizations endeavored to help the Sikhs. Local politicians were even spewing venom against the Sikhs who were British

subjects (para. 2).

On September 15, 1915 Bhai Mewa Singh witnessed the murder of two devout Sikhs and soon after he started receiving threats to his life if he chose to testify against the accused murderer, who was a known informant for the Canadian immigration department. The story states that, "Bhai Meva Singh Ji didn't waver; he testified in court and spoke the truth. He told the court that Bela had shot Bhai Bhag Singh Ji and Bhai Battan Singh Ji from behind without any prior provocation" (para. 7). The story notes that on January 11, 1915 Bhai Meva Singh was hanged as hundreds of Sikhs stood outside and braved the rain and cold weather to receive Bhai Meva Singh's body. They took out a procession through the city and cremated Bhai Meva Singh's body. Since his hanging, Sikhs have continued to celebrate the legacy of Bhai Meva Singh every year since 1915. This narrative of heroism also conveys a respect for the past and a lineage that is seen as being central to the Sikh tradition. Fleras argues that faith-based communities, particularly Sikhs and Muslims have been demonized in the news, depicted as "a threat to national security and societal culture" (178). The coverage of Sikhism in *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post*, offers a counter-narrative to the one Fleras describes, depicting cohesive Sikh communities, either working on social cause projects with the community at large, or within the network of Sikh communities to ensure religious freedom and to promote positive historical narratives.

It should be noted that these stories were on the homepages of both *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Link*, alongside other news items. These hero narratives are an important aspect of the coverage at the three outlets, as they suggest an effort to present readers with positive historical narratives that oppose negative representations in the contemporary

mainstream press. Andy Sidhu, editor at *Punjabi Patrika*, said that one of the motivations that drives their coverage is the effort to provide heroes for younger readers to look up to. He said they aim "to promote not only their achievements, but to help the younger generations to learn from their achievements, their success" (Sidhu, 2011).

Like the historical hero narratives, one common feature in the coverage on all three news sites was the repeated assertion of the important place that Punjabis have in the history of Canada and, more broadly, their importance internationally. As part of that corpus of coverage, there was a focus on the prominence of the Punjabi language around the world. In *The Link's* January 21 story, "Punjabi Gains Prominence With Language Ranking Top 10 In The World," language is the conduit through which the story conveys the importance of Punjabis to Canadian society. It states:

> Nationally, Punjabi stands as the sixth most spoken language in Canada. In the Metro Vancouver area, Punjabi is the third most spoken language after English and Chinese. It is also the case in Metro Toronto where places like Brampton, Springdale and Mississauga have substantially large Punjabi speaking residents. In British Columbia's cities like Surrey and Abbotsford, Punjabi is second only to English as the most spoken language (para. 2).

The story then emphasizes the importance of the Punjabi diaspora to Canada, stating, "Our community has been in Canada for 125 years and has made an invaluable contribution to this country's growth and development. Unfortunately, our mother tongue Punjabi is still considered as a foreign language. PLEA would like to urge the community and our elected representatives to spearhead a campaign to get due recognition at the national level to our mother tongue Punjabi. Well-wishers of Punjabi in Canada and around the globe need to start a movement (Lok Lehar) to promote Punjabi at every level. It is about time to get something like this going" (para. 8). In many ways the story reflects the emphasis on upward mobility, a topic that was prevalent in all of the

interviews conducted for this thesis. Satwinder Bains, director of University of the Fraser Valley's Indo-Canadian Studies Centre, notes, "We have reached a stage in our Indo-Canadian community lives that are beyond survival" (Bain, 2011). That was a theme in my other interviews as well, as the editors focused on how far the Indo-Canadian community has come. In addition to positive historical Punjabi narratives, all of the outlets shed light on the triumphs of a number of diasporic individuals.

In *The Link's* January 28 story, "Sikh American Elected Mayor of Historic US City," the lede tells the reader that one of the oldest cities in the U.S. has just elected Satyendra S. Huja as the mayor. It states:

> Charlottesville, Virginia, a historic city of more than 43,000 people and once the home of three US presidents – Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe – now has a Sikh American mayor. Satyendra S. Huja, initially elected to the Charlottesville City Council in 2007 and reelected in November 2011, was chosen mayor unanimously by the five-member city council on January 3 (para. 1).

The emphasis on successful settlement presented in coverage of the three Punjabi press outlets advances the notion that "multicultural media advocate positive social changes in the quest for an equitable and inclusive society" (Fleras, 2009: 726). While political and institutional achievements were prominent in the coverage, individual stories of migration were also evident.

The Post's feature series, called "Mera Pind" (which translates to "my village") , focuses on the accomplishments of Punjabi-Canadians and their feelings toward Canada and India. "Mera Pind: Nirmal Gill," which was put on *The Post's* site on January 17, like all of the versions of the feature that were analyzed, is made up of questions that aim to get information about: an individual's birth city in the Punjab; what they do to support that hometown; and what brought them to Canada. Gill came to Canada to work as a

plumber and opened his own business. "'I love living in Canada but I miss the warmth of India a lot because it will always be home,' says Mr. Gill" (para. 2).

All of the Mera Pind features that were analyzed contain that same negotiation around belonging. This tension between the cultural and physical homes is enhanced with subsequent generations, as many second-generation South Asian-Canadians feel that, because of their "unique experiences as the children of immigrants in Canada," they cannot be categorized by terms such as 'Indian, South Asian or Canadian.' Instead, "they feel an increased need to manage their identities and the processes through which they express these identities. As a result of ongoing cross-border communications, the second generation comes to realize they are different from their parents: they have not had an immigration journey; are different from native-born whites in Canada: they are non-white; and different from other racial minority Canadians: they have meaningful connections to a homeland." (Somerville, 2007: 26). *The Post's* editor, Jagdeesh Mann suggests:

> The South Asian community itself still has a lot of internal linkages, a social fabric supported from India is still fairly strong, but what they're finding is, as parents are coming here and raising their children and becoming engrained in the Canadian experiment, that there's the inevitable tugs and pulls on that fabric, particularly through the second and third generations, that are making them realize that they are no longer in India. That culture, which is rooted, literally from the soil up, doesn't have the same roots here (Mann, 2011).

Those "tugs and pulls" are reflected in the coverage of *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post*, as the news emanates from both India and Canada in an effort to accommodate readers who are interested in happenings in their place of residence and their cultural homeland. Mera Pind serves the dual purpose of celebrating individual success, while at the same time conveying the maintenance of transnational ties, as Punjabi-Canadians

express their feelings of belonging to both India and Canada.

The power of the diaspora and migration to India

The representation of a strong connection between Punjabi-Canadians and India was especially evident during January 2012, because Non-resident Indians (NRIs), a group in which Punjabi-Canadians are a part, were granted the right to vote in Indian elections. There was an abundance of coverage in all three Punjabi-Canadian outlets concerning the state elections in the Punjab and the fact that the Punjabi diaspora now held the power to vote in those elections.

In *The Link's* January 15, 2012 story, "Non-Resident Indians Get Voting Rights," the power of Non-resident Indians (NRIs) is conveyed as the story focuses on the newly acquired voting power of the diaspora. The story states, "fulfilling the long-standing demand of its diaspora, India Sunday said it would allow Non-resident Indians (NRIs) to vote and participate in the election process" (para. 1). The remainder of the story discussed the role that the diaspora plays in the economic growth of India. In the story, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh notes, "'We believe that Indian diaspora has much more to contribute to the building of modern India,'"(para. 4). *The Link's* February 11 story, "NRI's Have Increased India's Stature, Says Minister," furthered the representation of a powerful Indian diaspora, as India's finance minister, Pranab Mukherjee praises NRIs, saying, "The respect that India has been able to command at the international arena has come in no small measure by this soft power of the overseas Indian, who the world over are known for their values of hard work, of excellence and enterprise and respect for their communities and adopted countries" (para. 2). So, the

narratives of upward mobility within the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora are complemented by stories that convey pride on the part of the Indian government because of the accomplishments of NRIs.

There was coverage of the election in *The Link*, *The Post* and *Punjabi Patrika*, including *The Post's* January 31 story, "India Congress Party Faces Key Electoral Tests" and *The Link's* January 27 story, "PUNJAB POLLS MONDAY! Anti-Incumbency Mood In Punjab Should Mean Victory For Congress." These stories also imparted the frequency of transnational movement, which characterizes the South Asian diaspora, as discussed in Chapter 1. Balwant Sanghera, who is a contributing writer for *The Link*, actually travelled to the Punjab to cover the elections. His February 4 story, "VIEW FROM PUNJAB" is as much a promotional piece about India as it is about the Punjab state election. Sanghera writes, "Returning to India within two years was an interesting experience. The brand new Delhi international airport gives the visitor an excellent impression about the capital city of the largest democracy in the world. The immigration and customs were a breeze through. The warm air outside was a welcome change from the colder weather in Vancouver and London" (para. 1). He goes on to praise the Indian government for improvements to the infrastructure. While the election may have been the reason for an increase in Indian political coverage at the three outlets, *The Link* features a section on its homepage called "Punjab Link, " which is updated along with the national and local Canadian coverage.

The NRIs were a key player in much of the coverage, as portrayed through their successes abroad and the potential power they held over India's future, as well as through the narrative of their potential return to India. This was most evident in *The Post's*

coverage. In “A Silent Exodus of South Asians,” from December 14, 2011, Vancouver restaurant manager Sohil Roy is getting ready to return to India to marry a woman that he met on a dating site, and then set up a new life there. Roy explains, “‘I love Canada but I just can’t make ends meet here to open my own restaurant ... India is booming and there are a lot of opportunities there now’” (para. 3). The story cites statistics that indicate as many as 300,000 NRIs may return and settle in India by 2015. While much of the mainstream Canadian coverage of South Asians has focused on how gender inequality is rampant, which will be discussed in the next section, this story indicates that part of the reason that the diaspora are returning to India is because women who hold high-powered jobs in India don’t want to leave the lives they have built for themselves. Geeta Khanna, who started her marriage consultancy three years ago, explains:

> Many successful women are not keen on quitting high-paying jobs in their cities and moving to the West, where it may take years to get working visas or jobs. ‘They are no longer looking to marry Indian men who live and work overseas, even though they may be professionals themselves. This is because there is greater physical comfort living in India which they don't wish to compromise on. This is a reverse in thinking of the Indian woman, who earlier thought living in the US or UK was what dreams were made of’ (para. 18).

While coverage in *The Post* presented India as an attractive place to live and do business, the possible negative outcomes for India from partnerships with out-of-country investors were also explored. The December 6, 2011 story, “Megastore Mayhem,” focused on the plight of New Delhi store owner Harish Chandra Mishra, whose business is being threatened by both Indian and foreign chain supermarkets. The shift from locally owned businesses to corporate industry is a monumental one; India’s retail industry has been predominantly made up of locally owned businesses. The story notes, “India’s retail market estimated at about 590 billion dollars has long been dominated by shops like

Mishra's, but that might change with the government allowing global chains like Walmart, Carrefour and Tesco to enter the retail sector" (para. 3). The story further explains that Canada has come out in favour of India's move to open its retail sector to international investors, which is of little surprise based on the appeal India's huge consumer base would have to countries hoping to invest. This body of coverage is insightful because it lends an understanding of the impacts that globalization processes have on transnational partnerships, of which diasporic groups are a part. Karim writes that an enhanced focus on those effects is necessary as these "transnational groupings" are emerging as "key players in globalization processes" (*Global* 3)

While most of the coverage that included NRIs portrayed that group as powerful and beneficial to India, there was an interesting portrayal of abuse of that power in *The Post's* February 22 story, "Cash promised to fight India's social scourge," which presented the problem posed by NRI bridegrooms. The story explains, "Lured by the promise of large dowries, prospective grooms frequently breeze in every year from the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe marry, then rush back home with the spoils, leaving behind what have become known as 'abandoned brides.'" (para. 9). The story draws attention to the "abandoned brides" phenomenon, at the same time conveying a transnational effort on the part of various agents, including *The Post* itself, to rectify the situation. The story states, "Last March, *The South Asian Post* reported that in a concerted effort to stop the social scourge that has left over 30,000 women desperate and looking for their husbands, a government team in the town of Jalandhar, Punjab has begun impounding the passports of NRI runaway bridegrooms" (para. 6). This story conveys the willingness of *The Post* not only to advocate for the abandoned brides in India, but also to present a narrative that

casts a negative light on NRIs, who are abusing the practice of dowry exchange. The story also presents a counter-narrative to the body of mainstream coverage that presents the immigrant in Canada as manipulating the immigration system. Fleras discusses the prevalence of this representation, stating:

> Mainstream news media continue to frame immigrants and refugee minorities as troublesome constituents whose activities pose costs or create inconvenience, in part because Canada's immigration program, but especially its refugee determination system, is also framed as broken and in need of a major overhaul (Fleras, 2011: 137).

In *The Post's* story, it is the NRI who is the 'troublesome constituent,' and it is India, not Canada, that is the setting for the abuse of the system. *The Post's* story about the abandoned brides is an example (one of many that I analyzed) of a story that not only drew attention to social and political abuses against South Asians, but also presented the narrative of coordinated action taken by members of the South Asian diaspora. In the abandoned brides story, the diasporic group attempting to remedy the abuse is *The Post* itself. So *The Post*, in this instance, is operating in multiple locales and interacting with multiple publics, including the abandoned brides and government agency in the Punjab.

Pushing back against stereotyping and providing context

The practice of so-called honour killing, which was discussed in *The Globe and Mail* opinion piece earlier in this paper, has been an issue of concern to the editors of all three of the Punjabi outlets. The editor at *The Link*, Paul Dhillon, suggests that the coverage of spousal abuse in South Asian communities by the mainstream press suffers from lack of context. Echoing the tone and message of the *Globe and Mail* piece, Dhillon says that when a case of spousal abuse or homicide involves a member of the South Asian community, it is featured prominently in the mainstream press. In her book-length

analysis of representation of visible minorities in the mainstream press, Jiwani argues that coverage of violence by visible minorities serves the purpose of contrasting the "so-called primitive" culture of the visible minority with the "progressive and egalitarian" West. She argues that the result of this is that, "the West is seen as being devoid of patriarchal institutions and norms, and free of any form of gender-based violence. The Others are constructed as being backward and traditional, oppressing their women and in stereotypical ways as imagined by the West" (2006: 92). Dhillon expressed his concern at this trend throughout our interview and advocated for the type of coverage that contextualizes spousal violence, so that South Asians are not depicted as "backward and traditional."

In the case of honour killings and spousal coverage, the few examples I found during my two-month analysis conveyed efforts being made within the South Asian community to bring guilty parties to justice. For example*, The Post*'s January 17 story, "Honour Killing Petition Puts Pressure on RCMP," focused on the enforcement of justice after the murder of Jassi Sidhu in 2000. The story represented an effort, in the form of an online petition, being made by members of the community to speed up the investigation. The story also notes that *The Post's* publisher, Harbinder Singh Sewak, *The Province's* deputy editor Fabian Dawson, and Indian journalist Jupinderjit Singh worked together to author a book on the murder, entitled *Justice for Jassi*.

In *The Link's* January 28 story, "12 Honour Killings in 13 Years Too Much For Canada," the coverage, much like the *Globe and Mail* opinion piece, condemns the act of honour killing, but at the same time argues that the heinous act is part of a larger societal problem. *The Link's* editor, Paul Dhillon, said that providing context is his favourite part

of being in the newspaper business, adding, "For me, contextualized news is the best way, you have news about something, you have news about something else and the reader is able to connect that. To me that's the exciting part about doing the newspaper" (Dhillon, 2011). He asserts that mainstream coverage has perpetuated belief within the public that violence is a natural occurrence in South Asian households. He said mainstream coverage of South Asians has been "abysmal" and that the representations of South Asian men as violent has been counter-productive and misleading. He states, "If you keep saying we have a problem, we have a problem, that doesn't necessarily help" (Dhillon, 2011). *The Link's* coverage was also the most critical of Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party. In the January 28 story, "Kenney Continues On Immigration Busting Path With 'Minimum Language' Skills Requirement," Federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney is accused of using a new language requirement to curtail immigration. The story states:

> Federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney feels every month or few weeks — he has to come out with something new on the immigration front in keeping with the Conservatives and the old Alliance party agenda of curtailing Canada's immigration or at least reducing that from the non-English speaking countries, particularly from the Asian hubs of India and China (para. 1).

The Kenney story is a good example of the ways in which the Punjabi-Canadian press coverage advocates on the behalf of minorities, and pushes back against negative depictions of immigrants from non-English speaking countries.

Punjabi Patrika's editor Andy Sidhu also asserts that negative representations of South Asians are pervasive in mainstream media coverage. Sidhu said that, because the mainstream media is so saturated with these negative representations, the *Punjabi Patrika* has decided not to "carry anything that is derogatory to the South Asian community,"

adding that "anything that involves murder, killings, drugs, we don't [cover]. There's enough TV, radio, other newspapers that carry that and we feel that ours is a family-reading newspaper" (Sidhu, 2011). Thus, the majority of the coverage in *Punjabi Patrika* casts a positive light on South Asians and provides information that could be useful to new Canadians. As was mentioned in its use of the hero narrative, *Punjabi Patrika* sets out to offer positive figures for younger people to look up to. This brings to the fore the debate over whether the journalism practiced by *Punjabi Patrika* serves the public good by serving the "watchdog" function that has been ascribed to journalism (Gans, 1979; Schramm, 1964), which dictates that journalism's role should be to act as a monitor of powerful institutions and individuals on behalf of the public. Fleras writes that critics often cite that the ethnic media's advocacy for a particular cultural group "inspires a softer journalism that ultimately privileges ideology over balanced coverage" (2011: 243). It must be considered that the journalism prevalent in the Western world, which values objectivity, neutrality and detachment (Hanitzsch, 376) is lost when coverage aims to present mostly positive narratives of a particular cultural group.

The Link and *The Post* differ from *Punjabi Patrika* in that both of those outlets covered news events that contained violence and controversy. They also differ in their presentation of the federal government, as *The Link* coverage I analyzed was critical of the Conservative Party, while *Punjabi Patrika* emphasized decisions by the government to aid immigrants and new Canadians, as well as partnerships that were being formed between the government and various South Asian organizations and individuals.

Drawing attention to abuse of South Asians, in Canada and abroad

Another frame that emerged frequently was drawing attention to causes of concern to South Asian diasporic members. In *The Post's* February 14 story, "The Lost Sikhs of Afghanistan," attention is drawn to the plight of the Sikh diaspora in Afghanistan, which the story states has dropped from 160,000 at its apex, to just 1000 currently because of "relentless persecution." The story states, "In Kabul, Afghanistan's Sikhs face relentless persecution. The forty families still living in their homes around Gurdwara Har Rai Sahib in Kabul's Shore Bazaar rarely venture far from their dilapidated homes. Many have taken refuge inside the gurdwara, where within its heavily shelled walls there is neither sanitation nor heat" (par. 3). The story goes on to paint a picture of a once diverse religious landscape in Kabul prior to 1991, with 11 gurdwaras and three Hindu temples. The story celebrates the Sikh diaspora, which "blended into Afghan culture by adopting local customs and language" (par. 10). Clifford notes the importance of stories of diasporic movement when he writes, "a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin" (250). Like the 'hero' narratives discussed earlier in the chapter, stories like this one serve the purpose of making members of the Sikh diaspora aware of a history of successful settlement, as well as the current discrimination being experienced by other Sikh diasporic groups.

Also within the frame of drawing attention to social and political causes was a body of coverage that focused on abuses being committed against various cultural groups in Canada. *The Link's* December 31 story "Immigrant Workers Discriminated Against By Canadian Employers," points to the increasing wage and employment gap between immigrants and Canadian-born workers. Quoting a recent study, the story states,

"immigrants tend to possess an observable-skills profile that would usually be associated with higher economic rewards. The population of working-age (16-64) immigrants in Canada are more likely to have university degrees than the Canadian born, and are older, on average. They are also more likely to live in large cities, where earnings tend to be higher" (para. 6). There was coverage in all three outlets that pointed to a skilled, educated South Asian diaspora. *The Post's* editor, Jagdeesh Mann said that the immigrants coming to Canada from India now are often equipped with all the skills necessary to become professionals. He suggests, "we're finding there are a lot of people who are educated when they come to Canada now. They have a competency in speaking, reading and writing in English. They aren't necessarily coming here to work on a farm and pick berries. They are here to work in a professional capacity" (Mann, 2011). Whereas in the past, skilled immigrants had barriers, including discrimination and lack of opportunities, all three editors and Satwinder Bains emphasized that they believed that the tides had turned and that there are now opportunities for South Asian skilled workers.

Coverage at all of the Punjabi outlets contained content aimed at getting immigrants into Canada and employed as quickly as possible. This emphasis in the coverage makes features like *The Post's* Mera Pind, focusing on the success stories of diasporic individuals, all the more relevant as it presents realizations of successful settlement. Satwinder Bains argues that the coverage of the Punjabi press reflects an upward mobility that the Punjabi diaspora values and says that being covered in the Punjabi media, in most cases, is a way of gauging and celebrating how far you have come. She notes, "The paper is very important to show where we are now, and how far we have come" (Bains, 2011).

Visibility of success and failure in the Punjabi-Canadian press

My two-month framing analysis of the news coverage revealed depictions of a thriving Punjabi diaspora, whether it be through personal profiles of artists, entrepreneurs and athletes, or through news coverage of Punjabi politicians. Recent scholarship on the Canadian mainstream press coverage of visible minorities, points out the importance of the ethnic press in Canada. Fleras' 2009-2010 content analysis of *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* headlines found that, of *National Post's* headlines for articles relating to minorities or diversity, 322 (out of 429) articles "were negative inasmuch as they indicated or implied that minorities were troublesome constituents – that is, problem people who are problems, have problems, or create problems" (Fleras, 2011: 148). The *Globe and Mail* fared the same, as 264 out of 409 headlines published were judged as negative in their representation of minority or diversity issues. Fleras argues that the problem stemmed from inconsistency in coverage. He suggests,

> Glaring inconsistencies prevail because of mixed messages that normalize invisibility and problematize visibility: on the one side, there is a tendency to normalize the invisibility of highly visible migrants and minorities in domains that count as success (e.g. politics or business); on the other side, there is an inclination to problematize their visibility in areas that count as failures (e.g., crime) (Fleras, 2011: 141).

It has been demonstrated in this chapter that there has been a tendency on the part of "mainstream" news outlets to project a negative image on the South Asian community. Negative media representations can have a major effect on a group's self-perception, as well as on how they are viewed by other groups. Jiwani discusses this negative impact with regard to media discourses on race, arguing that, "in representing race, the news media racialize particular groups of people, demarcating them as different from the majority and imputing qualities that emphasize their difference, and then, by

inferiorizing, trivializing, and exoticizing these qualities, ultimately render such differences deviant" (2006: 40). More recently, Fleras asserts that media discourses should not be taken for granted:

> Only discourses of reality exist, since nothing can be known except a representation consisting of narratives, symbols, and images. In short, no one should discount the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of media in constructing and conveying their representational frames within contexts of power and domination (2011: 136).

The *Punjabi Patrika*, which only highlights positive stories about South Asians, provides narratives of success that can serve as inspiration for second- and third-generation Punjabi-Canadians. In the face of negative coverage in the mainstream press, these positive narratives are crucial to the cohesion, and ultimately to the success, of the Punjabi diaspora. *The Post* and *The Link* present both positive and negative coverage of South Asians, but there is certainly an emphasis on upward mobility, both on the part of the South Asian diaspora, and also in terms of India's place in the world and the potentially important role that the diaspora can play in helping to shape that country's future. The important function of the three outlets is to make South Asians, and specifically Punjabis, visible in all "domains" of life, whether it be in the political, social, or cultural realms.

As the above scholarship argues, the media is ultimately hugely powerful in the construction of identity. This being the case, the emphasis on upward mobility and narratives of success and empowerment, in the coverage of *The Link*, *The Post* and *Punjabi Patrika,* become all the more important in the face of negative mainstream coverage. The crucial question becomes, is the presentation of positive narratives come at the cost of serving the public good? I argue and have discussed above that through their coverage, *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* are giving visibility to issues

concerning members of a cultural group, which may not get coverage in the mainstream press. Ultimately, this is the crucial purpose that they serve. In Chapter 4, this thesis will move to an exploration into how these discourses presented in Punjabi-Canadian press inform members of that diasporic group about social causes, political candidates, and economic successes –among other issues related to the Punjabi diaspora. This conversation will be bolstered by a discussion of what it means to be politically active in a world where the transnational movements of people and information is increasing.

Chapter 4

Punjabis in Canada: discussion and action

"Ethnic identification amongst a Diaspora group is dependent on a shared history, language, religion, and immigration pattern. Indo-Canadian groups, specifically, are a unique hybrid of identity-forming, political organization characterized by similar ethnic, economic and foreign policy interests" –Anita Singh (2010: 37)

"People sometimes think that Indians, Punjabis are very aggressive, which they are in a very positive way, in the sense that they never rest on their laurels and they always look for the next thing and the next thing. I think they're forward thinkers in terms of mobility, in terms of transnationalism, in terms of diaspora. People are always thinking, 'what's the next horizon'" –Satwinder Bains (2010)

The economic and political influence of the South Asian-Canadian diaspora

The ability of South Asian-Canadian communities to work both within and outside mainstream Canadian institutions (including all levels of government), speaks to Fraser's conception of a strong public. The three Punjabi news outlets convey a connection between the discussion and action, with South Asians participating in debate as well as playing a role in policy change. Fraser describes a strong public as one "whose discourse encompasses both opinion formation and decision making" (1990, 24). This goal is made attainable through connections to state institutions, as Fraser argues:

> Any conception of the public sphere that requires a sharp separation between (associational) civil society and the state will be unable to imagine the forms of self-management, interpublic coordination, and political accountability that are essential to a democratic and egalitarian society (Fraser, 1990: 26).

As was evident in the coverage analyzed in Chapter 3, the three outlets represent Punjabi diasporic individuals and organizations that are willing to engage with government agencies to enact change. This chapter will further that discussion by exploring the political influence of the South Asian-Canadian diasporic community, and how media outlets contribute to this influence. This chapter will then look at the competition that exists between Punjabi news outlets in British Columbia, using Pierre Bourdieu's writings on the acquisition of social capital as a filter through which to explore the notion of competing publics, and at the importance that has been placed on building relationships by the three editors I interviewed. The chapter will end with a discussion of what it means to be socially and politically active in a world where increased transnational movement makes it possible to be socially and politically active in multiple locales. This section will particularly focus on what this change in political and social activity has meant for the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora, as well as for *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post*.

Working within institutions to form "strong publics"

The South Asian community in Canada has become "entrenched in key sectors of the economy and entered important segments of the professional class, including business, law, medicine and engineering" (Singh, 2010: 10). Under the Stephen Harper government in Canada, this professional turn has yielded a strengthening of relations between India and Canada. The Indo-Canadian lobbyist is influential because he or she works within the

Canadian political system, instead of challenging that system (Singh, 2010). The Indo-Canadian community has also maintained a connection with India, through communication and travel, setting them apart from many other second- and third-generation Canadians (Somerville, 2008), thus allowing for a high degree of cohesion between members of various South Asian diasporic groups and those living in India. This cohesion is conveyed in a June 10, 2011 folio in *The Globe and Mail,* which was dedicated to the India diaspora. Shan Chandrasekar, President of *Asian Television Network International*, talks about the ability of the Indian diaspora in Canada to transport cultural traditions, while at the same time adapting to life in Canada:

> There's a lot of family values in the Indian diaspora. As the next generation grows in this country, the second and third generation, multilingualism may fade but multiculturalism will still be strong. From that perspective, the Indian diaspora really keeps its culture together … But the Canadian way of life has become an integral part of the Indian immigrant's life in Canada (Friesen, A11).

The same folio talks about ways in which Canada can take advantage of the Indian diaspora communities' connections with other members of the diaspora around the world. Singh, in her case study of the Canadian-Indian diaspora and its ability to influence Canadian policy under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, writes that Canada's Indian diaspora has become more important than its size – more than one million people – would suggest. The liberation of immigration policy, under the Pearson and Trudeau governments, attracted a more educated, economically-mobile, professional Indian immigrant into Canada, which, over the following decades, led to first- and second-generation Indo-Canadians who were "entrenched in key sectors of the economy and entered important segments of the professional class, including business, law, medicine and engineering" (Singh, 2010: 10). By working within political, business, and social

structures, both at the national and international levels, and by having achievements within those realms celebrated in the coverage of the Punjabi press, the Indo-Canadian diaspora has taken an important step toward making their counterpublics transformative, as well as communicative. Dahlgren argues for the importance of working within the institutions set up by the nation state, even beyond the creation and maintenance of a public sphere. He writes, "The public sphere per se is no guarantee for democracy: There can be all kinds of political information and debate in circulation, but there must be structural connections—formalized institutional procedures—between these communicative spaces and the processes of decision making" (2005: 152). The coverage at the three Punjabi outlets represented a willingness on the part of Indo-Canadians to work both with and within government institutions. As well, the editors I interviewed spoke of their efforts to build relationships with government representatives, which will be discussed further, later in the chapter.

This thesis has examined the roles of the Punjabi diasporic media at this point in time, when Indo-Canadians have entered into these "key sectors of the economy." Anita Singh's dissertation took a different tack, exploring Indo-Canadian business and advocacy organizations, including the Canada-India Business Council, the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce and the Canada-India Foundation. She concluded that such organizations have been able to take the economic success that the Indian diaspora has experienced in Canada, and transform that success into political influence. At the same time, Canada's interest in India has been prompted by the latter's eight to ten per cent GDP growth rate, as well mutual security concerns and technological requirements (Singh, 2010). Singh discusses the influence of the Indian diaspora as "its maintenance of

transnational relationships, its knowledge of the Canadian and Indian markets and expertise in business has provided the government with important tools to pursue its foreign policy towards India" (Singh, 2010: 201-202). The influence she describes was seen throughout my analysis of the news coverage of the three news outlets; the maintenance of transnational relationships, success in economic pursuits and partnerships between India and Canada were themes which ran through much of the news content.

The three editors, as well as Satwinder Bains, emphasized that this was an important time for the Indo-Canadian diaspora, in terms of the success that Indo-Canadians have had in Canadian politics and business. Mirroring Singh's conclusion that the specificity of circumstances led to the acquisition of political influence by various Indo-Canadian organizations, I also argue that it is the time and places in which the Canadian South Asian diasporic media outlets operate that add to their effectiveness in directing focus toward various social and political initiatives. The establishment of Abbotsford's University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research is an example of success put into context. In 2006, after a two-year fundraising campaign, the university was able to establish the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research. Satwinder Bains, director at the centre, explains that a number of variables worked in their favour, as "India was coming on the stage as a world player, and that whole 90s liberalization of the economy helped us in terms of Canada's access to India" (Bains, 2011). In the years leading up to the creation of the centre, and the accompanying Chair in Canada-India Business and Economic Development opening, UFV had already established relations with a number of Indian universities, including Punjab University. The strengthening of such transnational relationships, along with support for the local

Punjabi and mainstream community (who matched the $1.5 million being provided by the provincial government), made the project both attainable and attractive for UFV.

Bains said that she believes the Punjabi community turned a corner in Abbotsford in the early 2000s, moving from the periphery of the community's business and social realms to becoming a force that held both economic and political sway. She argues that this shift occurred when banks in Abbotsford started to hire Punjabi bank tellers, because it was an indication that the banks believed they could serve the Punjabi population better if they hired Punjabi staff. This shift and the relationships being formed at this point in the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora's history point to both upward mobility and a favourable economic atmosphere. At the same time these relationships, and the exercise of a political will, have led to the establishment of academic and organizations dedicated to the study of Indo-Canadian experiences and advocating on behalf of those cultural communities. There is also the negotiation of belonging to both India and Canada, which was discussed in the coverage at the three Punjabi outlets. Scholarship has focused, in particular, on this negotiation within the Sikh Canadian communities. Religious Studies scholar Joseph T. O'Connell, arguing for an informed analysis of contemporary transnational and national Sikh belonging, notes:

> Canada-born Sikhs are now closely tied to the Punjab in ways undreamed of by the pioneer Sikhs in B.C. – by easy travel, instant communication, joint economic ventures, substantial continuing immigration, and so forth. So, while the pressures to conform and assimilate into secular Canadian life are pervasive and powerful, countervailing pressures and resources – from family, kin, and religio-ethnic community – are also pervasive and powerful. There is clearly much scope for tension, but also for mutual accommodation and compromise, in forging creative ways of being Canadian and Sikh (2000: 200).

The Sikh communities in B.C., as was evident as I conducted my research, have

maintained these transnational linkages, a circumstance which allows for the type of mobilization described by O'Connell (continuing immigration, joint economic ventures, etc.). They see themselves as a distinct ethnic group, forming their own cultural, political and economic organizations. Further, as discussed earlier, supporters of the Khalistan movement are a distinct but powerful minority with control over many cultural and religious organizations. Singh discusses the three aspects of the Sikh-Canadian diaspora, lending to an interesting case study:

> First, there are signs of growing cleavages within the Sikh community, its internal support divided between separatist and pro-India factions. Second, the current Canadian government has not given Khalistan advocates the same policy-level access as other ethnic groups. Third, much of the Sikh community's current messaging is internally focused, attempting to keep members interested and active (Singh, 2010: 44).

Rather than focusing on the "cleavages" mentioned by Singh, particularly because the editors I interviewed said that the Khalistan debate has not figured into the conversations they have had with readers in the past number of years, this thesis has taken an approach instead that considers ways in which the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora outlets have conveyed cohesiveness within the Indo-Canadian communities they aim to represent. Still, taking into consideration the motivations and debates that have taken place and which continue to take place within the Sikh diasporic communities, it would be impossible to argue for one South Asian-Canadian, or even Indo-Canadian political will. There is no set-in-stone South Asian cultural identity, and rarely, if ever, are there circumstances, political, economic or social, that are deemed agreeable by all members of a cultural community. The danger in scholarship that points to the assertion of political will by a cultural group, even if the underlying narrative is one of empowerment, is that "reified cultural identities" are reinforced. As Bannerji argues, these cultural identities

began during colonization as "the earlier European orientalist racist perceptions of India, for example, perfectly tally with the Canadian state's and the media's perception of the Indian communities in Canada" (2000: 49). For this reason, I have attempted to present an ever-changing, malleable notion of diasporic will and motivation, which can differ from individual to individual. But the fear of perpetuating the notion of "cultural identities" should not take away from the importance of the empowerment narratives, presented both in Singh's study and through my analysis of news coverage And it would be unfortunate to shy away from an exploration of diasporic communities and their transnational relationships because of pre-existing formulations of identity. To support my decision to explore diasporic empowerment narratives and transnational diasporic relationships, I turn to Mihelj, who argues for the exploration of cultural groups, even with the tensions and self-questioning that such an exploration demands, adding that the movement of transnational groups helps to make for a richer analysis. He writes,

> Despite the porous nature of cultural boundaries, international migration and the ability of individuals to maintain multiple attachments to places and collectivities near and far, modern nation-states do manage to create and maintain complex webs of cultural traits, social formations and systems of symbolic exchange, and can therefore be treated as relatively stable and thick 'cultural areas' (2011: 15).

I found this passage to be a fitting jumping off point from which to start thinking about how to justify my approach to the exploration of *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post*. I assert that these diasporic news outlets are an important part of that "complex web of cultural traits, social formations and systems of symbolic exchange." They play an important role in defining and focusing the debates taking place in the various Punjabi, and more broadly South Asian, diasporic communities in Canada and abroad. Whatever those debates entail, as has been conveyed through the analysis in Chapter 3, narratives of

empowerment, however complicated, are crucial in light of negative coverage of South Asians in the mainstream press. Singh's analysis emphasizes the political power that is exercised by the Indo-Canadian diaspora, while the news accounts of the three Punjabi diasporic outlets encompass narratives of success both writ large, through stories of transnational partnerships and institutional successes, as well as writ small, through the coverage of individual achievements. Necessary though these success narratives may be to the cohesion of the cultural groups that they aim to target, their presentation, in the coverage at the three Punjabi-Canadian outlets, is governed to a large degree by the business motivations of those outlets —governed as well, more interestingly, by the desire on the part of the outlets to be the defining voice of the Punjabi-Canadian communities which they serve. I will now explore this motivation employing Bourdieu's writings on the acquisition of social capital.

Competition and the importance of social capital

When I first walked into the offices of *Punjabi Patrika*, I was struck by the large photo on the wall—the mayor of Abbotsford. As well, shelves in the offices were filled with books signed by authors and poets who had contributed to, or had been featured in, the publication. Both the photo of the mayor and the signed books represent the relationships that have been formed between the news outlets and various community members. Bourdieu describes social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the

collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in various senses of the word" (1986: 51). During my interviews with the editor, Andy Sidhu, there were repeated mentions of the relationships he had formed with city officials as well as with Abbotsford's Punjabi community, which led me to think about the production of social capital in regards to the relationships that Sidhu described. From the outset of the interview, Sidhu said he wished to be the representative voice of the Punjabi community in Abbotsford, with the goal of bringing that community together with the Abbotsford population at large. He discussed these relationships in ways indicating that the paper gets its capital from being integrated with the larger community, and how this is essential to being a key voice in the Punjabi community in Abbotsford.

Bourdieu explains that the volume of social capital possessed by an agent "depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those with whom he is connected" (1986: 51). These connections are the product of "investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relations, such as those neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights)" (Bourdieu, 1986: 52).

In the case of the relationships formed between Sidhu and various city councilors in the community, *Punjabi Patrika* benefitted because those in positions of power would advocate for the publication. These three quotes from Sidhu exemplify the importance he

places on social capital. The first conveys the pride that Sidhu felt at having the backing of the city's mayor, in the early years of the publication. He states:

> I was very, very lucky to have the full assistance and cooperation of the mayor of Abbotsford, then Mayor George Ferguson. In fact, he became the unofficial spokesperson for my newspaper. Whenever there was a function and he saw me in the crowd, he would mention the fact that I was there (Sidhu, 2011).

Sidhu voiced his satisfaction at the fact that, "I think I know every one of the officials in Abbotsford…and if we don't know about them, they know about us." And near the end of our last interview he said that "*Punjabi Patrika* is a name that is quite well known within the community, and I am not just talking about the South Asian community, I am talking about the community at large" (Sidhu, 2011). Sociability is integral, as "the reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed" (Bourdieu, 1986: 52).

By exploring the relationships and the acquisition of social capital with regards to *The Link* and *The Post*, I found that the editors at those two outlets have disparate aspirations in terms of what institutions they wish to form relationships with. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, *The Post* has established partnerships with *The Vancouver Sun*, and recently Vancouver radio station CKNW, and provides South Asian-centric content for that outlet. *The Post's* editor Jagdeesh Mann, with a pride similar to that expressed by Sidhu, spoke about the relationships he had formed with mainstream publications. Being familiar with the operations of multiple news outlets has been of great benefit to Mann. He states, "I work in ethnic press, in English, so I know the ethnic side inside and out. I used to work with *The Sun* prior to this, so I know *The Sun* and *Province* guys fairly well." And, "A lot of these other outlets don't talk to each other, but we talk to

everybody" (Mann, 2011). By having a foot in both worlds, or as he put it, being "positioned right in the middle," Mann said *The Post* has carved out a niche for itself as a "content broker," able to share content with and take content from Vancouver's mainstream publications. *The Link's* editor Paul Dhillon, on the other hand, was enthusiastic about connections he had made with South Asian politicians and South Asian publications, including *The Times of India.* Part of the reason that the two editors differed in the relationships they wished to promote during the interviews could be because of Dhillon's negative feelings toward the mainstream Canadian media. There was a strong agreement between the two editors when discussing the issue of competition between Punjabi press outlets.

The different approaches and motivations guiding the three editors is a part of the competitive nature of the Punjabi press outlets' relationships with each other. Mann spoke about this fierce rivalry that he believes exists between the ethnic press agencies in British Columbia, stating, "The ethnic press is funny. There are a lot of egos. A lot of publications are built either around religious, political, or personal totems, and so ethnic publications won't acknowledge one another" (Mann, 2011). He sees *The Post* as the "upstart" and feels that *The Link* and *The Voice*, which is another Punjabi news outlet in the lower mainland, hold negative feelings towards them. While *The Post* has formed content-sharing partnerships with mainstream outlets, that is not the case with other Punjabi outlets. Mann speaks to this decision, stating:

> We don't share content with *The Link* and *The Voice* because I guess there is a sense of resentment because their two publications have been in the market the longest, and we're kind of upstarts that have come along and taken a reasonable share of the market (Mann, 2011).

Dhillon, while less emphatic in his acknowledgement of competition between the

Punjabi outlets, agreed that there is "no camaraderie or general sort of fellowship, it is just people doing their own thing" (Dhillon, 2011). He did say there was a Punjabi Press Club in British Columbia, but he felt that it was mostly a social club and not a place where those involved talked about the present or future state of the Punjabi press. Instead, he stated, it has "disintegrated into more about getting free lunches." His final statement on the subject was that among the English-language Punjabi press outlets in particular the competition was more evident. He states: "Amongst the English-language papers there is healthy competition, or nasty competition, whatever you want to call it" (Dhillon, 2011).

Symbolic capital played a huge part in the way that I approached the analysis of *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post*. All three of the editors occupy powerful positions because of symbolic (prestige), economic (enough money to live well) and cultural capital (education) they have. From these positions of power, the editors attempt to represent the needs of the South Asian diaspora. This thesis has privileged social capital because without the social connections formed by the editors, all of the other types of capital accrued would not be of much value. The bridging and bonding of social capital that played out in the coverage at the three Punjabi outlets makes them unique in the Canadian journalistic landscape. Fleras argues that the multicultural media should provide both the bridging capital between different groups, in part by securing bonding capital within one's own group (727). In that multicultural media both engage in cultural preservation while incorporating their readership into Canadian society. Fleras writes that "[multicultural media's] reciprocal status as both pockets of insularity and pathways to integration cannot be underestimated in advancing the principles of multiculturalism in multicultural Canada" (727). As I showed through my framing analysis of the coverage at

The Link, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* in Chapter 3, both the bridging and bonding purposes were served in the coverage.

Reshaping what it means to be politically active

So for the Punjabi diaspora media, who emphasize news coverage focused on events in both Canada and the Punjab, what type of citizenry is being advocated for? More generally, what does it mean to be politically and socially active in a world where the Internet and ease of transportation make it possible to maintain multiple individual and institutional ties internationally? Cammaerts and Van Audenhove write that "political participation–or rather the perception of what it means to be politically active as a citizen–is reshaping. Many citizens see direct action, their activism within or support of social movement organizations, as more gratifying and politically effective than being a member of a hierarchical (national) political party" (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, 2005: 182). The coverage presented by *The Link, Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post* conveys a participation, or at least an interest in participation, in political and social causes in Canada as well as in India, leading one to believe that the Punjab diaspora in Canada are positioning themselves in multiple publics, thereby enhancing their influence in policy and decision making globally. A good example is the abandoned brides coverage in *The Post*, which did not simply report on the issue but instead chose to advocate on behalf of the brides. The tendency, as is noted in the scholarship on Punjabi diaspora, of cultural groups to become involved in multiple causes in multiple locales, has enhanced their ability to "link up with a community of interest and action beyond their own nation state" (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, 2005: 182). I argue that this has not taken away from

that diasporic group's ability to influence change in the communities in which they live in British Columbia, especially in the three communities, Vancouver, Surrey and Abbotsford, which are home to *The Post*, *The Link* and *Punjabi Patrika*.

As has been discussed in previous chapters, the lower mainland has a long history of Punjabi settlement and over the last century that cultural group has made use of both transnational relationships and Canadian legislative and economic processes to empower political engagement and business ventures. Within the coverage of the three outlets, I observed an advocating of the notion of citizenry, similar to that put forward by Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, which played out in the coverage of causes concerning the aid of members of Punjabi individuals and groups. An example of this was in coverage of the elections in the Punjab, which included narratives in which members of the diaspora participated in an election outside of the nation-state in which they reside. But, along with that corpus of coverage, there was also an abundance of editorial content, particularly in *The Link*, which was focused on Canadian political matters. The negotiation between belonging has been discussed with regard to the coverage of diasporic members, but looking at the websites of the three outlets also lends to a discussion of that same negotiation, especially when one explores how the sites deal with locality.

The presentation of locality in the Punjabi-Canadian press

The coverage of the three Punjabi-Canadian outlets presents a negotiation over what local means, as stories focused on and based in multiple locations around the world share space on the outlets' websites. A look at previous scholarship on the presentation of

locality in diasporic media lends credence to the mobility that characterizes the Punjabi outlets that I explored. In his study of Vancouver-based ethnic news outlet *Ming Pao*, Cheng discusses the multifaceted meanings of locality in the face of frequent international travel and immigration. He argues that the frequency of international travel allows immigrant newspapers to play a key role in constructing locality:

> When immigrants travel frequently, both physically and symbolically, back and forth between a host society and a homeland, there emerges a new sense of locality that transcends the polarity between the place of origin and the place of residence. This locality is the sense of simultaneously belonging to more than one place. I call it a transnational, multilocal sense of belonging. Immigrant newspapers play an important role in manifesting and producing such a new sense of attachment between people and places (2005: 146).

Communication technologies, particularly the Internet, are empowering diasporic peoples to engage with causes around the world. Cheng refers to the locality enacted in this process as "a transnational, multilocal sense of belonging" and he insists that immigrant newspapers play a key role in maintaining and developing attachment, on the part of the readers, to multiple locales. All three Punjabi news outlets negotiated the locality and fulfilled role put forward by Cheng in different ways. While they all shift between coverage of events within the region they physically reside in and political and social happenings in India, and other South Asian countries, they utilize different classifications for the news they present. Similar to *Ming Pao*, *The Link* uses geographical names (*Punjab Link*) and cultural groups titles (*South Asian*), as well as the sections*, Top News, Link News*, and *International*, to delineate news sections, instead of relying solely on hierarchical orders (*local*, *national,* etc.). *Punjab Link* contains stories from the Punjab but, with *Top News*, *South Asian* and *Link News* sections, locality is negotiable, locations of the news events constantly shifting between cities, provinces and

countries. Cheng writes that this "is a way for the newspaper to deal with a transnational, multilocal sense of belonging. News organizations' mapping of the world is both reflective and constitutive of a particular perspective that relates people to places" (2005: 151). *The Post*, on the other hand, includes the categories *Local News* and *Regional News* but, as was discussed in the preceding chapter, *its* coverage reflects a negotiation of belonging for South Asian-Canadians. Cheng calls for an exploration of locality that doesn't include "nostalgia for origins," but instead recommends that it be "conceptualized as the affective, discursive, and material aspects for people to connect to places and other people" (2005: 156). By destabilizing locality, the Punjabi outlets are offering points of interest to South Asians anywhere in the world with access to the Internet. The coverage that is grounded in place(s), particularly in *Punjabi Patrika*, includes the type of activism and political activity that requires, or benefits from, access to institutions and the ability to enact transnational relationships to aid in the empowerment of the Punjabi diaspora.

Engaging with 'multiple locales' within the Canadian institutional framework

It is fitting to end with the discussion of an example of coverage that conveys the influence that Indo-Canadians have been able to exercise, as discussed by Singh (2010). As well, this piece displays the engagement with multiple locales that empowers groups to look beyond the place in which they reside (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove, 2005). The February 25 story, "UFV builds partnership with leading language university in India," is about the partnership that was formed earlier this year between UFV and Punjabi University in Patiala, India. The purpose of the partnership will be to "work together on tasks such as developing diaspora studies programs and courses, exploring

common research, and student exchanges" (para. 2). Bains, in her role as Chair for the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research, is quoted in the story explaining the relevance of such a partnership. She says, "'As India becomes a world leader on the international stage, it becomes more and more relevant to build partnerships with diaspora communities, and with B.C. being home to one of largest Indian diasporas in the world, this is very relevant. Diaspora populations have a large economic and heritage impact on India, and we've provided a new avenue of access to the diaspora in Canada,' says Bains" (para. 9). Within the framework of university bureaucracy the Indo-Canadian diaspora was able to guarantee a line of research that will focus on the experience of the Indian diaspora.

UFV established the partnership with the Punjabi University for the same reason that it established the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies and Research, and many of the same reasons why the lobby groups that Singh explores have been able to influence Canadian policy decisions. As Indo-Canadians have secured positions in Canadian institutions and as ties between India and Canada have increased, the call to address gaps in institutional and organizational Indo-Canadian representation has been strengthened. At the same time, the ability of the diaspora to maintain transnational ties has made the establishment of partnerships easier. This last factor has been bolstered by and represented through coverage in Punjabi media outlets including *The Link, Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post*, all of which present narratives in which the Punjabi, and more broadly South Asian, diasporic individuals and organizations use both diasporic and state connections to enact change. In conducting research for this thesis, I found that, quite in line with Fraser's description of a "strong public," much of the coverage and the interview material point to

a the mobilization of a number of different avenues in order to move various causes forward. Like the conclusion I make in Chapter 2, that online communication is best utilized in concert with offline relationship, the Punjabi diaspora appears to have benefitted through transnational connections and efforts to influence decision-making in their countries of residence.

The competition between the three Punjabi outlets adds credibility to another proposition of Fraser, who argues that "the concept of the public presupposes a plurality of perspectives among those who participate within it, thereby allowing for internal differences and antagonisms, and likewise discouraging reified blocs" (1990: 18). *The Link*, *The Post* and *Punjabi Patrika*, while all operating under the banner of the South Asian-Canadian, and specifically Punjabi-Canadian, diaspora, compete with each other and have come to vastly different reasons for their being and motivation to guide their production. While a partnership has formed between various Vancouver area mainstream news outlets (*The Vancouver Sun, CKNW*) and *The Post*, all of the editors I interviewed said there is little to no interaction between the Punjabi press agencies. Dhillon and Mann even indicated that there was a rivalry between the outlets. So, the outlets, as competing counterpublics, are in no danger of becoming "reified blocs," distancing the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora from the mainstream public. Instead, even as they all push back against negative representations in the mainstream press and assert narratives of South Asian success, the outlets are competing against one another to create superior content and, in the Bourdieusian sense, to be the definitive voice of the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora in British Columbia, through the acquisition of social capital.

In this chapter, I have presented various avenues for future exploration in the areas of

diasporic communication, and, more specifically, Punjabi journalistic communication. As well, I have argued that competition among the three Punjabi outlets guards against the formation of a "reified bloc," separated from the spheres where policy is formed. Further, the representation of Punjabi diasporic political and social action presented by the three outlets is a mixture of the utilization of transnational communication and participation in Canadian local, provincial and national institutions. In the final chapter of this thesis I will emphasize the need for future scholarship in the areas mentioned above; as well, I will justify the approach I took during the research and discuss how that approach made for a more fruitful discussion of the current state and role(s) of the Punjabi press in British Columbia.

Chapter 5

Canadian diasporic media: new directions

"Like the diasporic Indians living in multicultural polities elsewhere, and being both constructors of ethnic identity and objects of ethnic identity construction by others, the diasporic Indians in Canada too have been required to negotiate the problem of ethnicity. They have engaged in active economic and cultural competitions. They have experienced ethnic discriminations, either explicit or covert. Sometimes they have been even involved in ethnic conflict. On all of these systematic studies are due" –Narayana Jayaram (37-38)

"Transnational studies and postcolonial theory developed the category of 'hybrid' to move away from the idea of culture as a thing and toward an engagement with cultural mixtures" –Vijay Prashad (194)

The Punjabi-Canadian press and multiculturalism

After conducting interviews with the editors of *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post*, I came away pondering what role(s) those outlets play within Canadian society. My two-month framing analysis of the news coverage offered findings that were consistent with the existing scholarship on Punjabi diasporic journalism, particularly the studies of Karim (*Public* 230-242), and Ahadi and Murray (2009), which focus on the popularity of ethnic press in and around Vancouver. My findings were also consistent with much of the scholarship on diasporic news outlets, in terms of the ways in which diasporic media can

connect people to international issues. It is harder to pinpoint where the three outlets I explored fit, in relation to the mainstream Canadian journalism industry, particularly concerning scholarship pertaining to Canadian multiculturalism and the national media landscape. What I have tried to avoid in this thesis is the temptation to argue that the ethos of the three Punjabi-Canadian outlets is to challenge nationalism and that, by doing this, they would be helping that cultural group to circumvent a system which has disenfranchised them historically. The argument more pertinent to the aims of this thesis is that being a Canadian means engaging with ideas and policy that focus on issues around diversity and multiculturalism. These issues, while constantly being debated and negotiated, provide a framework within which Punjabi-Canadians have both faltered and thrived. Mihelj argues that nationalism and national communication are often demonized, and that "nationalism also provides the basis for social inclusion and solidarity, and that both its historical rise and contemporary transmutations are closely intertwined with processes of democratization as well as struggles against discrimination and oppression" (2011: 7).

Growing up in and around Vancouver, I developed an interest in journalism, first as a consumer and then as a journalist. I was always drawn to the pamphlets, newspapers, radio programs, and television news programs which attempted to represent the wide range of cultural groups in the region. As much as the research for this thesis has further opened my eyes to a history of discrimination and racist discourse against visible minorities within the Canadian mainstream press, I am also in agreement with Mihelj, who argues that nationalism and national communication can act as guards against the negative forces of "discrimination and oppression." I have concluded that while Canada

is home to a wide range of diasporic and ethnic communities, racist discourse still pervades much of this country's mainstream news coverage of various cultural groups. This negotiation, between the diversity of opinion that is made possible through diasporic communication networks and the continuing negative depictions of minority groups, made the relationship to journalism, that all of the Punjabi-Canadian editors had, all the more complex. While all three editors discussed the negative depictions they felt characterized the mainstream press' coverage of Punjabi-Canadians, they also expressed a desire to cover Canadian issues and talked about the successes that Punjabis have had in Canada. The argument that national communication includes all sorts of journalistic outlets is as compelling as the narrative of alternative media outlets that reach beyond the national, in the hopes of being able to enact global change. In the case of the Punjabi-Canadian press, it is the representation of strong national and transnational communication networks, which helps to explore how Canada is seen by various members of the South Asian-Canadian diaspora and how belonging is negotiated. This is important, as it helps to "underline the coexistence of competing imaginings of the same nation. Without acknowledging this, we can easily fall prey to treating national imagination as homogenous and even harmonious, and miss its inherently contested nature" (Mihelj, 2011: 18).

At the same time that Punjabi-Canadian press outlets focus on social and political causes abroad, they also give large amounts of editorial space to Canadian political events and issues, as well as to economic and social partnerships being formed within Canada's borders. By presenting coverage of current affairs in South Asian countries, the outlets are asserting that "being real countries, lived historical political spaces, these

countries were and are going through many political and social struggles, changing their forms, none of which were in a position to be petrified into immutable cultural identities" (Bannerji, 2000: 49). Just as Canadians debate what it is to be Canadian, so various other nations discuss what defines their national cultures. It is this negotiation, taking place both within and outside of Canada, which reinforces a polyculturist approach to the study of Canadian diasporic news outlets. The debates taking place within the South Asian communities in British Columbia, as reflected in both the interviews I conducted and the news coverage I read, are varied and point toward the benefits of a polyculturalist approach, which recognizes that cultural practice and belonging are not bounded but, instead, are constantly being negotiated. I found that, both in the coverage and through the interviews I conducted, the idea of what it was to be a Punjabi-Canadian was being negotiated, and it differed from editor to editor. Dhillon, at *The Link*, in much of his interview maintained that the aim of a Punjabi-Canadian includes fighting against discrimination, whether it be by the Canadian government or the mainstream media. For Mann, from *The Post*, being Punjabi-Canadian meant struggling for a sense of belonging. He also emphasized that that struggle intensified with the second- and third-generation Punjabi-Canadians. Sidhu, at *Punjabi Patrika*, asserted that Punjabi-Canadians must build bridges with the community at large and must celebrate the accomplishments that Punjabis have had in Canada and abroad.

Prashad argues, in the case of young South Asian Americans, the polyculturalist approach that helps to "render the polycultural lives of the South Asian Americans meaningful is itself a great service to a young community that is otherwise considered mongrel by some scholars, by community elders, and by those white observers who are

disappointed that the children are not distinctive specimens of their ancestral homeland" (1999: 200). In my opinion, the same reasoning can be applied to the second- and third-generation Punjabi-Canadians, who feel a unique connection to both India and Canada. By viewing those connections and the negotiation as ever changing and to be determined on a person-to-person basis, researchers can stave off any sort of set-in-stone view of diasporic loyalty and avoid archetypal discussion of cultural groups. This makes the discussion more complex, which Prashad argues is the goal. In my research, I found it became hard to pinpoint a narrative in which all three Punjabi outlets accomplished one task, with one aim in mind. Prashad argues that, "A polyculturalist approach complicates the foundation of identity, but does not undo its importance" (1999: 201). In terms of scholarship, the multi-faceted nature of diasporic journey leads to a myriad of areas that are ripe for study, so that complexity simply means more avenues for exploration.

Editors' views on the future of diasporic press in Canada

The views on the state of diasporic media given by the editors at *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* included both confident, optimistic predictions for the future as well as narratives depicting the demise of diasporic news outlets. Discussing them helps to determine various potential areas of interest for the future study of diasporic media in Canada. *Punjabi Patrika* editor Andy Sidhu said he is confident that his publications have become the representative outlets of the Punjabi diaspora in Abbotsford, and he has aspirations of his outlets becoming the "voice" of the community at large. At the same time, he is skeptical about the future of ethnic newspapers because of the competition with mainstream publications:

> I feel that the ethnic newspapers too will not all last for too long. There will be the main ones that have been around for some time and who are well established and also have moved in to accept the fact that we have to work with mainstream media. Very often we find some newspapers that are only one-sided and are not keen to integrate their work (Sidhu, 2011).

In order to survive in the current media landscape, Sidhu believes partnerships must be formed between ethnic and mainstream media outlets, like those relationships that have developed between *The Post* and a number of Vancouver media outlets. *The Link's* editor, Paul Dhillon, who doesn't hold a high view of the mainstream press in Canada (as was noted in Chapter 3), argues for the existence of ethnic media, stating that "in any media you are restricted in what you can report and can't, but at least in the ethnic press you are able to serve a community that doesn't have a voice in the mainstream and you are able to be a bit more daring" (Dhillon, 2011). For all three outlets, this has resulted in the presentation of narratives of South Asian success. In *The Link*, in particular, the "daring" aspect of the coverage played out through politicized coverage that was critical of government agencies in Canada and India.

Like Sidhu, Dhillon believes his outlet is important in the lives of its readers, but he also knows that no matter how popular *The Link* is with its general readership, its fate is tied to the South Asian business community. He explains:

> Optimism isn't really applicable to South Asian and ethnic media's survival as it remains a stable platform that isn't necessarily built for a lot of growth. But yes – there are issues like Internet and competing forms of media like radio that are making owners somewhat uncomfortable about the future. But its survival is largely dictated by growth of South Asian business and as long as that sector continues to grow — the media will remain stable with very small spurts of growth (Dhillon, 2011).

After conducting the interviews, I realized that many of the assumptions I had formed during my time as a journalist were false. I had believed that the Punjabi-Canadian communities in British Columbia kept the Punjabi-Canadian news outlets stable and

freed them up to concentrate solely on tapping into their resources in that cultural community to present narratives in opposition to mainstream media representations. Certainly, all of the editors expressed altruistic motivations and emphasized the importance that the Punjabi-Canadian audiences play in keeping their respective outlets afloat, but all of the outlets are dealing with understaffed newsrooms, and pressure to come up with revenue-generating ideas and to develop partnerships with mainstream outlets.

As this thesis has explored the ways in which the Punjabi press has pushed back against negative mainstream representations of South Asians, partnerships with mainstream publications may put that pushback in danger. By forming editorial partnerships, Punjabi-Canadian outlets are tapping into broader markets and giving mainstream publications an inside track with the South Asian communities in B.C. After exploring the role(s) that Punjabi outlets have played historically, it is now necessary to question their future. At this particular moment in time it becomes salient that these diaspora media outlets may follow one of two paths: they may serve as "strong publics," attempting to make visible the causes and achievements of Punjabi diasporic individuals and institutions; or they may be engulfed by larger, mainstream media outfits.

A strong public has connections to institutional power structures and is able to influence policy decisions. I believe, based on my conversations with the three editors, that partnerships between diasporic press outlets and mainstream publications could work against the Punjabi press in B.C. The reason being that the Punjabi outlets will concentrate less on presenting counter-narratives, and will instead simply provide content that mirrors the depictions of South Asians found in mainstream outlets. Past mainstream

coverage of South Asian Canadian communities, and the scholarship analyzing that body of coverage, indicate a trend of negative coverage that depicts South Asians, and Sikhs in particular, as prone to violence (Indra, 1979; Henry and Tator, 2002). *The Post's* editor, Jagdeesh Mann, says that one partnership they have formed resulted in a 28-page supplement, April 2012 in *The Province*, which focused on Vaisakhi, a time of celebration that runs across religious lines in India. For Sikhs, it represents the establishment of the Khalsa tradition in Sikhism. This is certainly an important landmark, which warrants coverage in the pages of any Vancouver publication But I believe a more useful endeavor would be a partnership that addresses the negative coverage of Punjabis in *The Province* and *The Vancouver Sun,* particularly in the areas of spousal abuse and gang violence. Coverage of festivals and an emphasis on violent acts will not help to undo the more than 100 years of negative press representation, but will instead perpetuate those damaging stereotypes. In Chapter 3, I concluded that *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post* are important to Punjabi-Canadians because they make their cultural group visible in many realms of society. The light cast on South Asians by the three outlets isn't always positive, but the focus is solely on South Asians which, I have argued in this thesis, is important to the self-image that South Asians have of themselves. In a partnership between *The Sun* and *The Post*, I am not confident that the coverage the two publications would team up on would accomplish what the Punjabi outlets do, insofar as making South Asians more visible in everyday interactions and accomplishments. Mainstream Canadian publications, as has been borne out in the scholarship presented in this thesis, have done a lot to merit distrust in the duty of representing visible minorities. That being said, Mann is excited by the prospect of more partnerships with mainstream

media outlets and described the Vaisakhi partnership between *The Post* and *The Province* as "a big breakthrough, relationship-building exercise with *The Province* and the community appreciate it" (Mann, 2011). He sees these partnerships as a way for *The Post's* content to be viewed by more people and as a revenue-generating move for his publication.

The struggle between revenue and quality content production certainly is not specific to ethnic news agencies, but "with the exception of the largest ethnic media, issues of independent auditing, clear reports of circulation, revenues and so on, make it difficult for ethnic media to compete with mainstream media for advertising dollars" (Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach 262). In Mann's opinion, forming partnerships with mainstream news helps to address these problems by appealing to a wider audience.

As Singh notes in her earlier-discussed study, Indo-Canadians have gained ground in many areas of Canadian society, so there could be more well-rounded mainstream coverage of Indo-Canadians, because they have "become entrenched in key sectors of the economy and entered important segments of the professional class, including business, law, medicine and engineering" (Singh, 2010: 10). They will become more visible in coverage, simply because they cannot be ignored or be placed inside pre-existing negative archetypes. For now though, I believe that the Punjabi press is crucial to the maintenance of strong counterpublics that enable South Asians to, on one level, celebrate the accomplishments they have made in Canada (through successes, political campaigns and social causes, etc.) and, on another level, to reinforce international connections that can serve as sources of strength.

Suggestions for further study in the area of diasporic communication

When conducting research for this thesis I found a lack of scholarship related to specific diasporic groups in Canada and the media they are producing. This gap in research has been noted, as Matsaganis et al. conclude that "researchers working at the intersections of media and society in fields including communication, media studies, journalism studies, ethnic studies, anthropology, and sociology often do not take ethnic media into account in their research on diverse communities" (Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach 266). They also argue:

> At a time when media institutions of all kinds are facing serious economic and social challenges, we continue to see growth in ethnic media sectors. The relative invisibility of these media in research belies their tremendous importance to communities around the world (Matsaganis, Katz and Ball-Rokeach 266)

My thesis addresses this gap in scholarship, particularly in the Canadian context. In developing a methodology for this thesis I paid specific attention to the narratives, historical and contemporary, related to Punjabi-Canadians. Much of the literature I reviewed spoke broadly about the 'ethnic press' in Canada; I offer a methodological template for looking at a specific diasporic group in Canada. The methodology of course needs refinement, in terms of providing a more in-depth historical analysis and exploring the news outlets for a longer period of time, but that refinement is well worth the time and effort, as I believe it will yield important studies in the area of diasporic communication in Canada.

What I found in my research is a combination of offline and online relationships

being formed including, and between, members of the Punjabi-Canadian diaspora. *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post* are a part of this network of relationships; and the ways in which those outlets maintain transnational relationships, while aiding Punjabi-Canadians in the promotion of causes in Canada, is an area that is ripe for study. True to Raymond Williams' argument for the importance of the residual (1977), all of the outlets operate in hybridized newsrooms, where the possibilities of online news are acknowledged while the print product is still looked at as an important part of the product. This thesis has explored the combination of offline and online relationship formation, but a closer look at diasporic relationships is certainly called for. Jayaram argues for the importance of scholarship focusing on the relationships being made by the Indian diaspora in Canada:

> Expressions of ethnic identity and articulations of ethnic interests could be seen in the associations formed by the diasporic Indians in Canada. The formation of associations on regional, linguistic and caste lines is noteworthy. The structure and functioning of ethnic Indian associations abroad deserve more scholarly attention (2003: 38).

A more detailed study of the relationships between the publications and the Punjabi community would help to define who is being included in the newspaper coverage and who, from that cultural community, may be left out. Parham emphasizes the importance of fostering networks for ethnic media producers. He argues that, "while many ethnic media provide spaces within which to express one's opinions to geographically distant others, it is much more challenging to foster networks among these others that one can mobilize around specific issues or projects" (2004: 203). At *Punjabi Patrika*, the use of both Punjabi and English calls for an exploration of audience and news consumption. In what ways does the Punjabi-language coverage mirror the English-language coverage in terms of content? And in what ways do they differ? He also calls for an exploration of the

connection that Indo-Canadian communities maintain with their ancestral land, which was evidenced in much of the coverage explored in Chapter 3. One aspect of that relationship that he focuses on is the significance of remittances and the economic ties being formed between the Indian diaspora and Indian government. He argues that, "in the wake of the attempt of the Government of India to tap in foreign investments, particularly from Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and the People of Indian Origin (PIO), there is considerable scope for study of this in the context of the Indian diaspora in Canada" (Jayaram, 2003: 39). Burman discusses remittances and what they convey about transnational affiliations. She writes, "Remittances veer into yearning because they manifest an insistence, asserted through everyday practices, on transnational affiliations and diasporic citizenship (which does not necessarily indicate anti-nation-state sentiment, since one can simultaneously vie for status as a national)" (2002: 52). Remittances were briefly discussed in the section of the framing analysis that dealt with *The Post's* feature series, "Mera Pind," and its focus on what Punjabi-Canadians do to aid their hometowns in the Punjab, but further study in the area would certainly give more indication as to the unique relationship that Punjabi-Canadians have to the Punjab. With the Indian government's decision to allow NRIs to vote in Indian elections, there should also be research in the area of diasporic communication as it relates to Indian politics. I discussed the coverage of the elections in the Punjab, particularly in *The Link*, but a long-term analysis of Indian political coverage would contribute to a more informed discussion of transnational political participation.

The historical context offered in this thesis focuses primarily on the Punjabi-Canadian experience in British Columbia, and some of the moments that, either positively or

negatively, have affected those experiences. However, because the outlets are positioned in specific communities – Vancouver, Surrey and Abbotsford – the history of Punjabis in those communities deserves a closer analysis. Such a focus may offer a clearer indication of how diasporic communication affects Punjabi-Canadians in those respective communities. The study of diasporic communication and "studying diasporic cultures in the urban context where they are experienced – and where many of the media develop and are consumed – involves contextualising diasporic (media) cultures in the space where they become possible" (Georgiou and Silverstone, 2007: 40-41). This would require an in-depth historiography of the specific cities in which diasporic communities exist, because each community offers unique challenges and opportunities for those who reside there. Georgiou and Silverstone also call for more scholarship to explore how people use diasporic media, which was a focus that this thesis only touched on. *The Post's* editor, Jagdeesh Mann, asserted that his publication was just part of a Canadian-centric conversation and that the audience for *The Post* also read Vancouver's mainstream publications. Mann's view of the diasporic audience is in line with Georgiou and Silverstone's argument that "people use diasporic as well as non-diasporic media; they appropriate technologies in order to renew repertoires of diasporic identity, but also in order to fulfill age group interests, professional or other political interests, hobbies and friendships in and across places" (2007: 45). A survey of the readers of the three Punjabi-Canadian news outlets would shed light on what the primary news sources are for Punjabi-Canadian readers.

The editors I spoke to discussed the concerns of a cultural community, but future studies in the area of diasporic community must include an examination of the structure

of diasporic news outlets, paying particular attention to class structure, Cohen writes that this examination is critical "in order to evaluate the degree to which alternative media provide a true alternative to their corporate or mainstream counterparts," (216), Future scholarship in the area of diasporic news production must move beyond the praise of alternative voices, to a recognition of the possible limitations that may be shared by these outlets and the mainstream media that they aim to oppose and compete with. While this thesis explored the ways in which the editors represented their audiences, a necessary step forward will be to engage with the Punjabi communities that they propose to serve, to find out if the messages the outlets are conveying are serving the purposes that the public sphericule scholarship asserts that they do. In conducting such studies scholars will be able to see what sphericules the diasporic content serves, and to what degree the multicultural media's messages differ from those in the mainstream press.

Conclusion: towards a more equitable media landscape

The coverage of *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika* and *The Post* provides an abundance of information about the Punjabi-Canadian publics that they aim to represent. I presented the narrative of a diasporic group that overcame discrimination and anti-immigration policy to become influential both within the realm of Canadian politics and as an internationally recognized diasporic group, making efforts in business, humanitarian aid and social causes. There can be no clear indication that the three outlets I explored have definitively contributed to this upward mobility. This lack of clarity and causation stems from the fact that, "the contradictions, oxymora and struggles of diaspora are expressed in public transnational dialogues and debates, which tend to be highly mediated"

(Georgiou and Silverstone, 2007: 46). Being mediated, the narratives presented in the coverage at the three outlets are open to interpretation. However, I repeat the argument that I made in Chapter 3; giving visibility to South Asian successes and failures, in all realms of society, is crucial at this time in media history when the power to present to a mass audience lies in the hands of so few. Dhillon recognizes the limitations and motivations that both hinder and guide his decision to stay on at *The Link*:

> The purpose and goals sometimes are lofty, but the reality is that you try to do the best you can with what is given to you—the resources. What drives you to work in journalism is that you, as a reporter/editor, think that your work is making a difference in the community and giving voice to people who are not covered in the mainstream. But at the end of the day there isn't any concrete measurement to know that you are making a difference other than what people write to you about or occasionally phone to tell you (Dhillon, 2011).

I believe that a number of factors will dictate the future of the Punjabi press in British Columbia: the continued influence that members of that community have on local, provincial and federal governments; the maintenance of strong economic ties between Canada and India; the expansion of connections between Punjabi diasporic communities internationally; and the tenor of relationships with established mainstream news outlets. The diversification in terms of media landscapes could lead to a variance in mainstream newsrooms as, "competition from ethnic news media helps impel general media to recognize the diverse groups in their communities and increasingly to include them in both hiring and reporting" (Browning et al., 2003: 119).

I will end this thesis by stressing the need for spaces in which groups, including visible minorities, can have a place in which they can discuss matters of importance and, more significantly, where they can feel as if their participation in the discourse that is created in such spaces will be meaningful and transformative. Looking at the ways in

which Canadian diasporic news outlets attempt to represent issues and oppose negative mainstream media representations is of the utmost importance, if journalism scholarship desires not only to reflect upon mainstream media's production and audiences, but also to look to the smaller, bilingual, often less-populated offices of the diasporic press outlets in Canada, who are part of the discussion yet often not given prominence in the scholarship on journalism in Canada. Dahlgren (2005) argues that what happens within these diasporic spaces deserves attention, and that their existence in the first place is integral to a fair and equitable media landscape in Canada:

> If the vision of a singular, integrated public sphere has faded in the face of the social realities of late modern society, so has much of the normative impetus that may have previously seen this as an ideal. The goal of ushering all citizens into one unitary public sphere, with one specific set of communicative and cultural traditions, is usually rejected on the grounds of pluralism and difference. There must exist spaces in which citizens belonging to different groups and cultures, or speaking in registers or even languages, will find participation meaningful (152).

I believe that *The Link*, *Punjabi Patrika*, and *The Post* provide these spaces and. through their efforts to make Punjabi achievements and causes visible, they are representing the importance of participation in both national and transnational projects.

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