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Constructed identities and appropriated spaces : an exploratory study of South Asian identity and space in Toronto

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CONSTRUCTED IDENTITIES AND APPROPRIATED SPACES:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SOUTH ASIAN IDENTITY
AND SPACE IN TORONTO

by

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ABSTRACT

"South Asian" is a term commonly used in Canada to refer to individuals with ancestry in the Indian subcontinent and surrounding countries. The label has been created through Canada's means of statistical data collection on visible minority populations. Drawing from sociological, cultural studies, and geographic literature, this exploratory study seeks to determine the reciprocal relationship between South Asian identities as they are considered in Canada and urban space in Toronto. The research has been conducted through a critical review of literature regarding ethnic identity, hybridity, the production of urban space, and two key informant interviews. The key findings of the research suggest that South Asian identities are often multiple/situational, and that certain aesthetic aspects of South Asian identity are displayed in urban spaces in Toronto which may be labelled South Asian. These spaces may be considered hybrid spaces.

KEY WORDS: South Asian, Identity, Ethnic Identity, Toronto, Urban Space

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INTRODUCTION

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

> The fragrance of incense is everywhere inside GTA Square, Scarborough's Newest mall.
> The scent pervades shops selling vibrantly coloured saris, *salwar kurtas* (tunics with pyjama-like trousers) and framed pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses, while the Tamil equivalent of Muzak – devotional tunes and songs from Tamil films – wafts from loudspeakers...GTA square is Toronto's first indoor mall dedicated to a South Asian clientele. Four more South Asian malls are scheduled to open by 2011, including the 240,000-square-foot Sitara and the 80,000-square-food T. Junction, both in Scarborough, the 160,000-square-foot Great Punjab Business Centre in Mississauga and the 220,000-square-foot Taj Centre in Brampton. Sameer Patel...says these projects face challenges. 'Unlike the previous generation, the new immigrants are young, savvy and have high household income,' he says. 'If they want to buy electronics, for example, they will go to the best store irrespective of who owns it. They will not shop in a South Asian mall just because they are South Asians.' (Radhika, Globe and Mail, November 1st 2008, p. M2)

I was curious about this article from November's *Globe and Mail* and what it meant for Toronto: what is it about these malls that make them South Asian? What makes the customers at the malls South Asian?; Other than these malls, are there more South Asian spaces in Toronto? The article also led me to question ethnic and visible minority identities in Canada. What makes a visible minority and what does the term mean in Canada?

The questions created by Radhika's (2008) article appeared to address three themes: identity, hybrid/multiple identities, and the expression of these identities in space. In order to consider the questions raised by the article, it was imperative to determine what identity means to immigrant and visible minority populations in Toronto. The era of postmodern scholarship has rejected ideas of biologically determined identities (Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001, p. 25) and conceptualized a subject with a continuously changing identity. In this framework, identity is "historically, not biologically, defined...formed and transformed in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (Hall, 1996a, p. 598). Identity is "constantly in flux" (Davis, 2004, p. 184), and shaped by both internal (inscribed) and external (ascribed) forces (Nagel, 1994, p. 156; Verkuyten, 2004, p. 75). Identity is not necessarily singular. Instead it may be multiple and hybrid (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 502). Hybridity is expressed both through the possible creation of a new identity (Bhabha, 1996; AlSayyad, 2001) or as a choice between multiple distinct identities performed by a single person (Lotman, 1990; Nagel, 1994; Song, 2003).

Canada's high levels of immigration mean multiple ethnic groups reside in the country's metropolitan areas (Bauder and Sharpe, 2002, p. 205). These groups are often classified as ethnic minorities or visible minorities when compared to Canada's perceived Caucasian majority population (Symmott & Howes, 1996, p. 141). Visible minorities are ascribed both a racial identity and a minority identity in Canada which they may not have accepted before migration. According to Sheffer (2003) and Vertovec (1999), diaspora identities are predominantly shaped through their existence as a minority population. Inter-group interaction in destination countries change migrant and diaspora identities as individuals alter their self-perception in a new location and are influenced by the norms of the destination country (Sheffer, 2003, p. 153; Vertovec, 1999, p. 20). These changes often lead to a hybridization of migrant and diaspora identities.

Hybrid identities may exist in social space (Verkuyten, 2004), gendered space (Butler, 1990; Rose, 1993), colonial space (Bhabha, 1996), and urban space (AlSayyad, 2001; Sandrecock, 2003); each position creating its own struggle to produce and define space and identity. The urban spaces discussed in this paper are interpreted as socially constructed. Instead of a platform for social interaction, space is created by the interaction which occurs in it (Brenner, 2004, p.38, p.74; Lefebvre, 1976, p.31). Space is

produced by those who use, create, and appropriate it (Brenner, 2004; Lefebvre, 1976). Access to space however varies by different axes of social identities including economic class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity (Hayden, 1981; Isin & Siemiatycki, 1999; Purcell, 2003; Qadeer, 1997; Rose, 1993).

Rhadika's article and the themes of space, identity, and hybridity which arose from it inspired three research questions: 1) is there a "South Asian" identity?; 2) is South Asian ever considered a hybrid identity among those who have immigrated to Canada?; and 3) how is South Asian identity spatially represented in Toronto? The constructivist approach to the research, emphasizing the social construction of identity (Davis, 2004; Hall, 1996a; Nagel, 1994) and space (Brenner, 2004; Lefebvre, 1976; Lefebvre 1991) makes qualitative methods the best means through which to explore the research questions. In this case the methods chosen were a qualitative literature review and two key informant interviews.

2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

South Asians are the largest visible minority group in Canada.[1] According to the 2006 census, there are more than 1 million South Asians in Canada, about 684,000 residing in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Arguably, Toronto is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Canada. The Toronto CMA receives more immigrants and refugees than any other Canadian city (Li, 2003, pg. 147; Hiebert, 2000, pg. 27). This unprecedented level of immigration is undoubtedly "reshaping the city's self-perception" (Troper 2000, pg. 3), adopting the slogan "Diversity – Our Strength" (City of Toronto, http://www.toronto.ca/diversity/index.htm).

[1] This includes "'East Indian,' 'Pakistani,' 'Sri Lankan,' etc." (Reference 336, Census Definitions 2006).

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Doucet (2001) observes that Toronto is a city where multiple identities can be celebrated because multicultural policies encourage individuals to maintain their chosen ethno-racial and cultural identities. However, despite such claims all immigrants and minority groups may not be free to express their identities as desired, or to use space equally in the city. As a result, many "immigrant groups in Toronto occupy a marginal position in the social space" (Isin and Siemiatycki, 1999, pg. 5).

When considering how Canadian statistics define South Asian visible minority status and how individuals interpret their own ethnic identities one must ask a number of questions: do people who are categorised as "South Asians" in the Canadian census accept and internalize this term? Are there any markers which can be used to recognize South Asian identity in Canada and Toronto? Is there a single South Asian identity or is it multiple/hybrid? Finally, how are South Asian identities represented in Toronto's urban spaces?

It is important to consider the implications of how Canada uses the term "South Asian," since, as Patel (2006) states, South Asians only become South Asian after they migrate to Canada. There is outside pressure to conform to a recognised ethnic category (p. 150). This imposition of an ethno-racial marker is investigated here in terms of its relation to how individuals claim, or have an ability to claim, their own identities post-immigration; an important concept as Canada's "South Asian" population grows (Tran et al., 2006) and ethnicity-based multiculturalism becomes an increasingly contested policy (Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005).

This paper is divided into three major sections: first, an extensive review of the literature from the fields of sociology, geography, and cultural studies outlines a number

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of different viewpoints regarding ethnic identity, hybridity, and the production of urban space. Second, the literature review is supplemented by two key informant interviews summarized in section three. Interviews were conducted in order to gather personal opinions about the three research topics of identity, hybridity and urban space as they specifically relate to South Asian identity and South Asian spaces in Toronto. The final section offers a discussion of how the interview data relates to the literature and provides avenues for further research inspired by the preliminary study offered here.

IDENTITY AND ITS SPATIAL EXPRESSION: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON ETHNIC MINORITY IDENTITIES, MULTIPLE AND HYBRID IDENTITIES, AND URBAN SPACE

1. IDENTITY AND ETHNIC MINORITY IDENTITY:

Paul Gilroy (2005) writes that current state-centred concepts of ethnicity make it "impossible to imagine that local, national, and ethnic connections and loyalties do not exhaust any individual" (p. 23). Ethnic identities are becoming a key organizing feature for social interaction; "This is a time in which *what* (no longer even *who*) you are can count for a great deal more than anything you might do, for yourself or for others" (Gilroy, 2006, p. 384 emphasis in original). Identity need not be singular, however, and it is increasingly possible and even expected that people will claim multiple identities through hyphenated or hybrid identities (Hall, 1996a; Mahtani, 2002).

Identities are both personal and social. Personal identities are formed through the ways individuals categorize themselves according to the roles they occupy; for example identifying themselves as a student or an athlete (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Social

identities are "about the relationship between the individual and the environment." Social identities often provide little information about how individuals consider themselves, but rather place them into pre-existing categories (Verkuyten, 2004, 42-43). Social identity is consequently formed through "categorical characteristics – such as gender, age, and ethnic background – that position people in social space" (Ibid., p. 43).

The two forms of identity can exist simultaneously. Hall (1996b) discusses identity as "a sort of collective 'one true self'" in which individuals who claim belonging in a particular group feel that they can best interpret themselves through collective traits (p.211). This kind of collective belonging also means group identities are formed by illuminating the differences between self and other: "identity becomes visible as the point where…one subject or agent may come to see itself in others, to be itself through its mediated relationships with others, and to see others in itself" (Gilroy, 1996, p. 228). If the identity in question is ethnicity, the above explanation means that it can be determined individually and collectively by subjects both inside and outside the ethnic group.

Defining ethnic identity is a difficult task; the idea is subjective and dependent on personal interpretations and societal definitions. Driedger (2003) defines ethnic identity as "a positive personal attitude and attachment to a group with whom the individual believes he/she has a common ancestry based on shared characteristics and shared sociocultural experiences" (p. 137). Driedger (2003) proposes that inter-group interaction is a crucial aspect to post-migration ethnic identity formation which grows from interaction between three groups: 1) the original ethnic community; 2) the existing community in the country of settlement; and 3) other ethnic communities located in that

country (p. 125). This definition suggests that ethnic identity requires a personal attachment to the ethnic community and that international migration can change both the way ethnic groups are formed and the way individuals identify with their ethnicity.

Race, "a category of physical characteristics" (Isajiw, 1999, p. 21) which individuals may possess, and ethnicity, are becoming synonymous categories. Cultural and ethnic belonging is supplanting the term "race" in discourses of difference and belonging (Gilroy, 2005, p. 36-37). Nonetheless, both race and ethnicity are "products of interaction between diverse populations" and often formed by outsider interpretations (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 32). Race, like ethnicity, is a social rather than a biological phenomenon. According to Isajiw (1999), people do not frequently form identities based on their physical traits and will consequently choose to identify with racial characteristics only "as a response to being categorized and excluded by outsiders" (p. 22). Ethnicity on the other hand is not always an imposed classification; it often has origins in a group's own process of self-definition (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 28). Race and ethnicity need not be mutually exclusive (Ibid., p. 26), nor are the definitions of racial or ethnic groups fixed. For example, the Irish, currently considered a Caucasian ethnic group, were once considered a non-white race (Ibid.). Cornell and Hartmann (2007) propose, however, that when visible racial differences are present among a minority group they tend to overwhelm ethnic differences in the eyes of the majority (p. 27).

A number of racial and ethnic identities are defined in Canada as "visible minority" identities. The term "visible minority" was created to refer to any person in Canada who is neither Caucasian nor aboriginal (Bauder and Sharpe, 2002, p. 205). The groups included in the definition of visible minority in the 1996 census included a number of racially defined groups like "black"; nationally defined groups such as Filipino and Japanese; and regionally defined groups like Latin American and South Asian (Ibid.). The category of visible minority is problematic for a number of reasons; it racializes those populations labelled visible minorities (Ibid.) and denies that Canada's Caucasian population contains multiple 'minority' populations within it (Symmot & Howes, 1996). The idea of visible minority is not synonymous with ethnic minority, however, as not all ethnic minorities in Canada are visible as non-white (Ibid., p. 141). The use of the term visible minority implies that Canada's Caucasian population is not visible (Isajiw, 1999, p. 23)

The concept of visible minority identity is important to this research as South Asian is a term used to signify a visible minority status in Canada (Bauder and Sharpe, 2002; Tran, Kaddatz, & Allard, 2005). Categorizations such as visible minority status mean that immigrant groups often only gain an ethnic identity after migrating and being placed in a category which they previously did not know existed, or did not identify with. The process of migration can consequently create ethnic and minority groups (Cornell & Hartmann, 1997, p. 31). Therefore, visible minority identities are only relevant in Canadian national space. The use of large, pre-determined categories of visible minority identity in Canada, mean groups often choose to identify with labels such as "Black" or "South Asian" for the purposes of social action or because of a shared history which is only recognized after migration (Isajiw, 1999, p. 22). In this sense, individuals adopt and potentially internalize elements of multiple ethnic identities which are present in the country of migration.

There are three primary means of considering ethnic identity: the primordialist, constructivist, and situational viewpoints. Primordialism assumes that ethnic identity is a biological rather than a social trait. In this case, traits such as skin or hair colour are attributed to ethnic identity. When considered in this way, individuals are said to be born identifying with certain cultural and ethnic characteristics like "language, race, religion, customs, tradition, food, dress and music;" ethnic identity is inherent (Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001, p. 23). In naturalizing concepts like race, gender, sexual preference, and ethnicity, primordialism is often blamed for stereotypical and prejudicial ideas which render identity static and unchanging (Butler 1990; Gilroy 2006; Hall, 1996c; Verkuyten, 2004). Consequently, it is no longer used in most social scientific scholarship (Hall 1996a; Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001); it is deemed determinist and often racist (Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001, p. 25).

The alternative viewpoint, constructivism, grew out of the field of sociology (Hall, 1996a, p. 597); in this case, ethnic identities are socially constructed, and occasionally consciously chosen (Nagel, 1994; Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001; Verkuyten, 2004). Constructivist interpretations state that ethnic identities are formed and maintained through individual and group comparisons with non-group members and by the interpretations and definitions of outsiders (Gilroy, 2006, p. 386; Nagel, 1994, p. 154). Ethnic identity is "negotiated and constructed in everyday living" (Isajiw, 1999, p. 33), and "conceptualized as the relationship between subjects and broader discursive practices" existing in society (Durham, 2004, p. 141). The use of constructivist theories of ethnic identity formation means that both individual and outsider/insider group interpretations are equally important in defining an ethnic identity. Consequently

conceptions of identity must be considered fluid and changeable as these multiple interpretations frequently differ (Davis, 2004, p. 184; Phinney, 1996, p. 145).

The final means of considering identity, situational identity, describes instances in which individuals choose which identity, personal or social, to emphasize in a given situation (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 231). When considering ethnic identities, situational identity means "ethnicity is something which may be relevant in some situations but not in others" (Isajiw, 1999, p. 31). For example, one may emphasize his identity as a father when claiming fatherhood is advantageous, or an individual can accentuate traits such as an accent if they feel their ethnic identity is beneficial in a given situation. Georgiou explains a form of situational ethnic identity with a term borrowed from the study of linguistics; "code switching" (Georgiou, 2006, p. 63). This concept is discussed in more depth below.

2. HYBRID IDENTITIES

Hybrid identities occur through a mixing and combining of multiple cultural identity traits outside of "exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity" (McLeod, 2000, pg. 219). The study of how hybrid identities are performed, created, and interpreted has become a key characteristic of scholarship on immigrant and diaspora communities (Scheffer, 2003, p. 153; Vertovec, 1999, p. 20).

Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) synthesises the work of Hall and Bhabha and discusses how Hall's theories of cultural identity are relevant to hybridity. Papastergiadis writes: "According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity is always hybrid, but he also insists that the precise form of this hybridity will be determined by specific historical

formations" (p.189). Hybridity is consequently a result of historical encounters between groups either through colonial settlement or interaction between diverse populations in countries of migration (Ibid.).

Among minority and immigrant populations, Gabriel Scheffer (2003) states: "No matter how members of a given diaspora hold on to their ethnic identity, none of them will be completely immune to the influences of the host-country culture and norms" (p.153). Vertovec (1999) emphasizes the fluidity of identity among diasporic peoples as they construct "syncretic, creolised" identities when placed in new multicultural situations (p. 20). Vertovec (1999), drawing from Stuart Hall, posits that the diaspora experience is entirely coloured by hybridity and cultural fluidity (p. 20). However, what Vertovec and Scheffer do not emphasize strongly enough is that the process of hybridization also works in reverse, changing how identity is experienced by newcomers as well as the existing population in the country of migration. There is a reciprocal relationship between groups, producing hybridity on both sides (Bhabha, 1996, p.54).

Hybrid identities can also be expressed through personal choice, rather than ascribed through country of residence or comparisons with other ethnic groups. Like the above discussion of situational identity, hybridity can be expressed through choosing to use or reject various traits in specific situations (Georgiou, 2006; Lotman 1990; Song 2003). Georgiou (2006) uses a concept borrowed from linguistics to illustrate a choice between multiple ethnicities or traits; "code switching." Within diasporic and hybrid populations, individuals who employ code switching perform the identity which is most salient or beneficial in any given situation (p. 63). An individual can choose the most relevant traits of multiple identities to express themselves.

2.1. Hybridity and space

The literature discussed above considers concepts of hybridity as they relate to individuals' interpretations of their own ethnic identity. However, in order to answer the research questions guiding this work, it is crucial to consider the ways in which hybrid identities are performed in and change physical spaces. The following section explores three areas of scholarship in hybridity and space: hybridity as a postcolonial theory; the practice of hybrid identities in daily life and space; and existing empirical research.

Homi Bhabha, the seminal scholar in postcolonial theories of hybridity (McLeod, 2000) describes hybrid identity in both literary and spatial analyses. Bhabha's (1996) essay "Culture's in-between" summarizes how colonial and postcolonial population movements have created "in-between" or "partial cultures" through mixing the cultural traits of colonizers with those of the local population (p. 54). According to Bhabha, the new cultures were simultaneously similar to their original incarnations, but also unique; no longer recognizable or tied to a particular territory (Bhabha, 1996, p. 54). He questions assumptions that culture is a purely national phenomenon, noting that within this national framework global cultures seem unimaginable and impossible (Ibid.). Hybridity can therefore remove cultural identity from specific national spaces; the "in-between" cultures created through colonialism have echoes of both the colonial metropolis and the colonies but could not claim a natural belonging in either location (Ibid.). However, although Bhabha proposes denationalizing identity, he does not specify what happens once culture is conceptualized in a non-national, global framework.

Feminist geographer Gillian Rose (1993) writes of the potential for relocating identity to new spaces in a tone similar to Bhabha's. According to Rose, the feminine

subject is one in which multiple identities of "race and class, as well as sexual" interact in one person (Rose, 1993, p. 153.). Women are therefore not only women; they concurrently perform and switch between multiple identities.

Because of the multiplicity inherent in female identity, Rose defines the spaces inhabited by feminine subjects as paradoxical (Rose, 1993, p. 138). The interplay of multiple identities in a single person makes the spaces they inhabit "multidimensional, shifting …Spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and outside – are occupied simultaneously" (Ibid.). Rose explains that these paradoxical spaces are difficult to conceptualize because they are created by the myriad intersecting identities performed there (Ibid.).

There are similarities in the images used by Rose and Bhabha, most notably the concept of an "elsewhere" (Rose, 1993, p. 149) of hybridity, a place where identity can be decoupled from territory. Both Rose and Bhabha posit that hegemonic masculine and nationalized concepts of space prevent true consideration of how hybrid identity exists in non-national or un-bounded space.

Geographer Katharyne Mitchell (1997a) criticises Bhabha for the abstractness of his work. Instead of simply imagining an "elsewhere" (Rose, 1993, p. 149) in which hybridity can be located, Mitchell posits that the cultural boundaries of the nation must be made clear before being erased by hybrid subjects (Mitchell, 1997a, p. 537). Mitchell does not believe Bhabha's theories sufficiently acknowledge these cultural and national boundaries. She consequently questions the role of geography in discussions of hybridity. She asks: "What are the actual physical spaces in which these boundaries are crossed and

erased?" (Ibid.). Mitchell does not believe Bhabha's abstract work goes far enough to consider this question and explain how hybridity crosses geographical borders.

Mitchell's second criticism against scholarship of hybridity is the frequent description of hybridity as a predominantly emancipatory strategy (Mitchell, 1997a, p. 533). Mitchell articulates her disagreement, stating: "In much of contemporary cultural criticism there is a celebration of diaspora and hybridity as spaces of subversion" and offers her work as a critique to the notion that hybridity is necessarily a space of conscious resistance (Ibid.). Mitchell does not believe people always adopt or perform hybrid identities in order to resist dominant and repressive discourses (Foucault, 1996). According to Mitchell, hybrid identities and those who perform them cannot "always be equated with a politically progressive agenda" (Mitchell, 1997a, p. 533).

Mitchell (1997a) and Nezar AlSayyad (2001) believe that hybridity can simply be a personal identity, consciously or unconsciously chosen; it can exist in practice as well as in protest (AlSayyad, 2001, p. 2). AlSayyad (2001) states that hybridity must be considered in its tangible, daily expressions rather than just in theory (AlSayyad, 2001, p. 2). Hybridity, then, is a lived experience chosen by individuals who wish to use it to achieve various aims performed in everyday spaces and places.

Hybridity need not grow from a colonial past or a second generation immigrant identity. It can also grow out of the struggles inherent in transnationalism and attempts to feel belonging in multiple cultures. Two exemplary studies explore the outcomes of hybrid identity in practice: Sutama Ghosh, Lu Wang, and Minelle Mahtani.

Sutama Ghosh and Lu Wang (2003) wrote an empirical study of hybridity and transnational identity. Their paper's major strength is the unique research design chosen

by the authors. Ghosh and Wang (2003) use an autobiographical/ethnographic style to explore their personal experiences of transnationalism. Specifically, they query whether there was a particular moment in which they became transnational (Ibid., p. 270).

The results of Ghosh and Wang's research highlight the ways in which the formation of a hybrid identity can closely follow the adoption of a transnational lifestyle. Ghosh writes that she felt her Indian and Canadian consciousnesses colliding once in Toronto and that she immediately "adopted a dual lifestyle" (Ibid., p. 271-274). Ghosh's and Wang's experiences fit seamlessly into the literature of hybrid identity, which often uses examples of carrying multiple identities at a time to be used at will (Georgiou, 2006; Song, 2003). These interpretations of hybridity help move the work of Ghosh and Wang out of the field of transnationalism and into scholarship of identity and hybridity.

Another empirical study on the performance of hybrid/multiple identities was conducted by Minelle Mahtani (2002). Her work focuses on the ways mixed race women in Toronto experience their own identities and the ways non-national identity can be consciously chosen, defined, and navigated in Canadian society.

Mahtani required self identification by participants as "multiracial, bicultural, biracial, multiethnic, racially mixed or of mixed ethnic origin or ancestry" (Mahtani, 2002, p. 7). Although technically about women who identify as having mixed race identities rather than hybrid identities, Mahtani's participants acknowledge the ways in which identity is dependent on situation and location. Like the choices outlined by Ghosh and Wang (2003), Mahtani's participants chose which identity to emphasise at different times: "'ethnic' identity itself is intrinsically linked to a politics of location, with the women's racialization shifting in different contexts" (Mahtani, 2002, p. 14).

The most significant element in this research is Mahtani's assertion that women who claim mixed race identity "exercised their right to choose their own ethnic allegiances" (Mahtani, 2002, p. 25). The women who spoke to Mahtani did not feel bound to claim a single national identity. Occasionally they chose to identify with a single ethno-racial identity; sometimes emphasized multiple ethno-racial identities; often rejected all national or ethno-racial identities ascribed to them; and sometimes chose another option, choosing to claim their own combination of important and significant factors in their identity (Ibid.) This result from her research is entirely compatible with many theories about ethnic hybridity and a subject's agency in choosing how and when to claim certain identities (Georgiou, 2006; Song, 2003).

Interrogating the relationship between space and identity can take many forms. As illustrated above, there are avenues available in literary, empirical, and geographic scholarship. The work completed by Mahtani (2002) and Ghosh, and Wang (2003) illustrates the subjectivity of hybridity, and its contingency upon personal experience. Canada's urban centres, as the primary destinations for immigrants to the country (Bauder & Sharpe, 2002, p. 205) are natural sites for hybrid identities to form. The daily interaction between individuals of different ethnic groups (Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005, p. 676) and the proximity of ethnic neighbourhoods to each other will undoubtedly lead to this kind of reciprocal exchange (Scheffer, 2003, p. 153).

3. URBAN SPACE AND IDENTITY

This section reviews the literature regarding the production of space by different social groups as well as the historical processes which have prevented the appropriation and production of urban space in cosmopolitan and multicultural cities. Urban space is not distributed equally, nor does it equally represent all city residents (Isin and Siemiatycki, 1999, pg. 5). There are two primary explanations for this inequality: a Marxist viewpoint which discusses unequal distribution of space based on economic class (Lefebvre, 1976, 1991; Purcell, 2003); and a culturalist viewpoint which looks at inequality through the lens of cosmopolitanism and urban ethnic diversity (Qadeer, 1997; Sandrecock, 2003)

Philosopher Henri Lefebvre uses class conflict to explain how space is used and produced in the modern city. Discussing neglect in urban planning, Lefebvre argues that space is considered normatively by governments and planners, without due consideration for the social needs of those who would use it (Lefebvre, 1976, p.30). Brenner (2004) asserts that space is in fact political and representative of societies' power-holding classes. The exclusive representation of elite interests in urban space alienates its unprivileged users (p. 79). In many urban settings ethnic minorities form these underprivileged groups (Isin and Siemiatycki, 1999, p. 5).

In order for urban groups to produce their own space, they must have access to full participation in urban life; the "right to the city" (Purcell, 2003, p. 577). Discussing Toronto, Goonewardena and Kipfer (2005) and Goonewardena (2003) also posit that the rights to produce space and to interpret space through one's own ideology and identity are central to gaining rights to the city. They continue the Marxist understanding of space and hegemony used by Lefebvre, in which gaining the right to the city requires overcoming barriers prohibiting marginalized groups from fully participating in place-making (Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005, p. 676). Goonewardena and Kipfer (2005) state that Canada's doctrines of multiculturalism have falsely reified performances and displays of hybridity in Toronto. Consumerist cosmopolitan doctrines have prevented any real intercultural engagement in the city, or a true appropriation of space. This consumerist ideology has in turn prevented minority groups from gaining the right to the city (p. 675). Multiculturalism, according to these two authors, is a profit-driven creation designed to promote commercial displays of ethnicity and hybridity (Ibid.).

'Cosmopolitan' has become the label of choice for major urban centres desiring to capitalize on their diversity (Beck, 2006; Calhoun, 2001; Sandrecock, 2003). Urban governance, according to Binnie *et al.* prioritises aesthetically cosmopolitan urban environments rather than the actual needs of transnational urban communities (Binnie et al., 2006, p.16). In order to be marketed as cosmopolitan, diversity has to be visible in urban spaces (Calhoun, 2001; Sandrecock, 2003). Within this framework, immigrant and transnational groups can benefit by being encouraged to spatially display their ethnic identity (Buzzelli, 2001; Collins, 2006) or be disenfranchised by spatial norms which are not true representations of their needs (Isin & Siemiatycki, 1999; Mitchell, 1997b).

Racialized and immigrant groups are often disadvantaged by hegemonic conceptions of space in similar ways to those described by Lefebvre. However, scholars using Lefebvre's work in the context of cosmopolitanism and space consider racial and ethnic identity rather than class as the primary barrier to the production of space. Agrawal and Hathiyani (2007) discuss hegemony in the planning process as a method of

projecting the "mentalities" of dominant ethnic groups, rather than dominant economic classes onto space (Agrawal & Hathiyani, 2007, p.135). Similarly, Isin and Siemiatycki (1999), and Qadeer (1997), explain hegemony in the production of space as a result of institutionalized discrimination and Eurocentric norms in aesthetic and spatial preferences (Isin & Siemiatycki, 1999, p. 12; Qadeer, 1997, p. 482).

Leonie Sandrecock (2003) perceives a link between identity and space, especially in multicultural and cosmopolitan urban environments. She explains: "When residents with different histories, cultures and needs appear in 'our' cities, their presence disrupts the taken-for-granted categories of social life and urban space" (p. 20). The above theories of hybridity and the production of urban space privilege agency and oppression to different extents. However, no matter how these hybrid identities are produced, they require intercultural exchange between ethnic groups. Space and place are therefore particularly important. Urban space which has been constructed, produced and appropriated by different ethnic groups provides sites of intercultural interaction in cities; the ideal locales for forming hybrid identities. If immigrant and ethnic groups can gain the right to the city and appropriate space, the locations in which this cultural exchange occurs will multiply, as will the different forms of identity. The theories of Lefebvre, Sandrecock, and Bhabha, among others provide the framework from which to consider the reciprocal roles of urban space and ethnic identity in shaping each other.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SOUTH ASIANS IN TORONTO

In order to explore some of the themes emerging from this literature review, a short exploratory study was conducted in the form of in-depth interviews with two key informants during the summer of 2009 in Toronto. The key informants were chosen because of their academic work in the fields of immigration and South Asian identity and because they had acknowledged some connection with the idea of South Asian. Professors Sumir and Naseem,[2] the informants who participated in this project, are based in Toronto and work in one of the city's universities. They are in an age range of 31+, and both immigrated to Canada as adults from India and Pakistan respectively. Both participants have post-graduate educations and are in the income bracket of $80,001 – $110,000. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes.

Qualitative techniques were the exclusive approach to this research and were deemed appropriate for two reasons: first, since identity is a subjective and flexible concept (Hall, 1996a, p. 598), I believe it cannot be satisfactorily explored through rigid or highly structured interview techniques. Secondly, my goal was to explore broad research themes and not prove or disprove a hypothesis (Neuman, 2006, p. 158). By adopting qualitative methods, the in-depth discussions allowed a personal dialogue to develop between the participants and myself.

Since my data relies heavily on the personal experiences and opinions of the two participants, there is a risk the data collected will not be entirely truthful; be influenced by participants' preconceived notions of myself as a researcher; and not be applicable to other individuals or populations. However, the personal narratives collected through the

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[2] The informants' names have been changed.

interviews provide a thick description of the how the informants interpret and experience South Asian identity and its relevance to urban space in Toronto.

Two major themes were covered in the topical interviews; the exploration of South Asian Identity, and the identification of South Asian Spaces in the Toronto CMA. Under the first theme, the participants were requested to describe how they felt about the term South Asian, the specific situations in which they were likely to self identify as South Asians, and markers of South Asian identity. Under the second theme, the informants were asked to discuss their impressions of South Asian space in Toronto.

One interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. The second informant, however, preferred not to be recorded. As a result, extensive notes were taken during the interview. The interviews were thematically coded and analysed based on the three research questions previously outlined.

When positioning myself in this research, it must be noted that I am not part of the South Asian community in Toronto or a member of a visible minority group. I am a second generation Canadian, however, and my personal experience of feeling belonging in multiple cultural milieus informs the way I perceive narratives of hybrid and multiple identities. My position as a student interviewing university professors likely influenced power relations during the interview sessions. It was challenging to address such personal questions to senior academics, and my discomfort likely led me to miss opportunities to probe further into concepts I found unclear. This discomfort was magnified by the subject under investigation; I am not myself South Asian and was at times uncomfortable questioning others about an identity I do not share. It is possible that the informants' answers were influenced by the fact that I do not share a South Asian identity.

By grounding my research in constructivism and theories of socially constructed identities, I am likely to challenge many commonly accepted ideas of how individuals navigate their own identities and understand life in Canada. Such epistemological and ontological predispositions lead me to question the utility of a multiculturalism based on national, or in this case regional, ethnic identities, and common understandings of ethnic identity as singular and national (Beck, 2006, p. 27; Gilroy, 2005, p. 23).

The research project was altered considerably due to a lack of response to my calls for participants. The original research proposal was for an empirical project drawn from focus group research with South Asian youth in Toronto. However, I did not suspect there would be so much ambivalence and reluctance to participate among potential focus group participants. Multiple requests to student groups and individuals who had previously expressed interest in the project went unanswered over the course of recruiting. I believe there are multiple factors which may have caused this ambivalence; one being my positionality. Not being South Asian myself, the individuals I contacted may have been reluctant to discuss this topic with me. If the poor response stemmed from more than ambivalence, I do not doubt that my outsider status was a factor. Consequently, the research is drawn from only two key informant interviews and not a larger sample.

1. REGIONAL AFFINITIES AND FAMILIAR SPACES: KEY FINDINGS

The scholarship reviewed above illustrates how individuals navigate multiple ethno-racial identities and how these identities may be variously expressed in physical spaces. The two interviews were conducted to further explore these ideas and the three main research questions that have guided this project.

In the following sections the information collected from the key informants is analysed and presented in two primary categories: the first deals with the key informants' definition and understanding of the term South Asian and the specific phenotypic and socio-cultural characteristics that they identified to be a part of a South Asian identity in Canada. Emerging from this discussion is the idea that South Asian identity in Canada is multiple and potentially hybrid. The second section considers the spatial expressions of South Asian identity in Toronto.

1.1. Defining and understanding South Asian identity(s)

Ghosh (2000b, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) contends that although South Asian is a commonly used term in Western societies such as Britain, Canada, and the United States to identify immigrants from the geographic region including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan, the term is controversial. There is little agreement among researchers regarding the region's boundaries or the connotations of the term South Asian. Scholars including Ghosh also argue that although South Asian is seldom used for the purpose of individual self-identification, the term may be used as a group identity in specific situations to gain economic and/or political benefits (Chatterjee,

Dasmohapatra, & Shakir, 2004; Ghosh, 2006)[3]. The key informants confirmed these ideas to a large extent.

South Asian: An externally imposed and internalised identity

Corroborating Ghosh's contentions about South Asian identity, the key informants pointed out that the term South Asian is created by the Canadian census. Although they would not consistently want to identify themselves as South Asian, they are forced to do so in certain situations (Bauder &Sharpe, 2002; Ghosh 2000b; Patel, 2006). Naseem, for example, stated: "[I became South Asian] after I arrived in Canada and it was after I discovered how I was being labelled, particularly in the census data" (Interview with Naseem, 2009). Sumir suggests that Canada's means of data collection on ethno-racial and visible minority populations have "created" the ethno-racial category of South Asian in this country; being South Asian is not inherent in an individual, but "is a term adopted in Canada" (Interview with Sumir, 2009).

Theories of ethnic identity formation propose that although imposed, members of a minority group may internalise a specific identity in particular situations to further their access to various social, economic and political resources (Ghosh, 2000b, p. 9-10; Modood, 2001, p. 68). This type of identity is called situational identity (Sets & Burke, 2000, p. 231). Naseem substantiated this theory by stating that she would only claim to be South Asian in particular situations, such as when faced with limited categories or options: "If responding to census categories then yes [I am South Asian]" (Interview with Naseem, 2009). Sumir states that due to the ways in which ethno-racial identities are

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[3] In her doctoral dissertation Ghosh (2006) questions the connotations of the term South Asian, arguing South Asia is an imaginary place and South Asian is a census category that homogenises a diverse group of people from various countries of birth; diverse linguistic and religious affinities; and different economic backgrounds. Ghosh (2006; 2007) demonstrates that South Asian subgroups in Toronto have different reasons for and processes of migration, settlement patterns, and transnational ties.

interpreted and race-based statistics collected in Canada, South Asian is something which must be "adopted." Thus, for both key informants, "South Asian" is an externally imposed identity.

During the course of the interviews, however, the informants listed specific phenotypic features as well as some socio-cultural and regional commonalities that are frequently understood in Canada as markers of South Asian identity. Sumir stated that "there are three things: first is colour, second is accent...third is demeanour" (Interview with Sumir, 2009). Naseem explains that "skin colour, body shape, hair, eyes, etc" are often considered markers of a South Asian identity (Interview with Naseem, 2009). Naseem also refers to instances when she is interpreted as a South Asian because someone else did not know her background or to which nation she belonged "because of [her]... skin colour" (Interview with Naseem, 2009).

Naseem pointed out a number of inscribed characteristics of South Asian identity. For example, a South Asian identity may be represented by aesthetic choices in clothing:

> A lot of colourful clothing. Saris, *shalwar kamiz*, men wearing sort of longish shirts, *kurtas*, and *shalwar* with them, a small skull cap, not like a Jewish skull cap which is pretty small, but a slightly larger one. (Interview with Naseem, June 16, 2009)

Naseem thus echoes Pnina Werbner's (1999) contentions that identity may be expressed through transnational aesthetic choices such as clothing –which are not only a way of expressing cultural belonging, but of "making places travel, of making contiguity out of distant locations" (p. 25).

The key informants suggested that certain stereotypes were evoked by using South Asian as an ethno-racial category; many outsiders consider it a unified group. This homogenization prevents Naseem from internalizing a South Asian identity.

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> When you go and meet somebody and they say 'oh, I know somebody from South Asia' as if I was, you know, the same as that person because of my skin colouring or my country of origin or whatever. ...Has some ideas about what South Asian-ness is. So that they might think of me as a curry eating woman, or a woman who is oppressed in a patriarchal society, or somebody who is struggling in Canada to make a living. So whatever those stereotypes might be, when somebody labels me as South Asian I think those stereotypes are being evoked by putting me into that particular slot. (Interview with Naseem, 2009)

Naseem states that this stereotype of South Asian "essentializes" her and does not allow her to express other parts of who she is (Interview with Naseem, 2009). Naseem understands the Canadian-made category of South Asian and its attendant stereotypes as monolithic and homogenizing.

These stereotypes, Naseem says, in no way represent who she is, nor do they represent the elements of South Asian culture with which she identifies. Naseem, therefore, does not feel that she fits into the Canadian idea of what makes a South Asian person and consequently chooses not to claim a South Asian ethnic identity.

Illustrating an instance of situational identity, Sumir states that to avoid being stereotyped he will answer questions regarding identity differently in different situations. Sumir believes that as a multicultural identity, South Asian can in fact deflect stereotypes which attach to better understood national identities like Indian:

> "I would not call myself Indian. I would rather use a broader term like Canadian or South Asian...People have a specific idea of Indian. I become compared to some other person. They will say 'I thought all Indians are vegetarians. I prefer not to [identify myself like that]." (Interview with Sumir, 2009)

Regional cultural affinities: Music, movies, and food

Naseem, while rejecting the Canadian stereotypes which attempt to reify South Asian as an ethno-racial identity, does feel a strong connection to the region's material and aesthetic culture. For Naseem, it is this kind of cultural commonality which truly exemplifies the idea of South Asian rather than the racial, religious, or historical ideas which typically define ethno-racial identities (Hall, 1996a, p. 616). Naseem lists many

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"common" cultural elements of South Asian identity with which she feels an affinity, such as food, music, film, clothing, and television programmes (Interview with Naseem, 2009). Naseem states that these elements create a link between herself and the aspects of South Asia with which she wants to identify. The material and aesthetic cultures of South Asia are what create Naseem's "nostalgia" for past experiences (Interview with Naseem, 2009).

For example, Naseem sought the familiar aesthetic of the Gerrard India Bazaar upon moving to Canada in order to connect with her past in Pakistan:

> Take the Gerrard India Bazaar. Shortly after I came to Canada I learnt about this and I went there to explore it, to see what was there, to see if I could recognize anything that was familiar to me. Not necessarily to buy stuff but to see the colours, the smells, the food, that would connect me in a nostalgic way with the country of my origin and the area around that. (Interview with Naseem, 2009)

Naseem is happy to discuss some traits which she considers tangibly South Asian. However, these traits are those which she seeks out and chooses to claim for herself. In the example above, Naseem decides for herself what is South Asian, how she interprets these elements, and how they relate to herself and her past.

The phrase "music, movies, and food" came up a number of times in my conversation with Naseem. In conjunction with these three cultural ideas, she frequently used the word "affinity" to explain her relationship to these traits (Interview with Naseem, 2009). Naseem says that "people from South Asia tend to…gravitate toward each other in social contexts, so there must be commonalities like food or movies or music" (Interview with Naseem, 2009). These ties connect people "between India and Pakistan, to some extent with people from Bangladesh" and that the Urdu language connects Nepal and Pakistan (Interview with Naseem, 2009). It is, therefore, possible that a South Asian identity might be more acceptable if it was not considered a homogenized ethnicity,

based in racial and ethnic terms, but rather determined primarily by traits such as "music, food, dress, and customs"(Phadnis & Ganguly, 2001, pg. 19).

Hybrid or multiple identities: "Code switching"

Although I did not ask a direct question about hybrid identities during the interviews, it was a topic I hoped to investigate through descriptions of South Asian identity. Both informants in describing situations in which they felt South Asian or the different ways South Asian identities were expressed and represented in Canada offered examples of multiple identities. The answers were surprising, however, as neither participant stated that they ever felt more than one identity concurrently. The interviews instead provided evidence that the participants identify with more than a single marker of national, regional, or ethno-racial identity, illustrating multiple identities and instances of "code switching" (Georgiou, 2006, pg. 63) or situational identity (Sets & Burke, 2000).

Sumir discusses modulating his cultural performance in different situations: "Circumstances may cause me to modulate my accent or my demeanour if I am among South Asian people or people who are not South Asian" (Interview with Sumir, 2009). However, he does not specify how or why he alters his accent and demeanour; whether he wishes to appear more or less South Asian to other South Asians, or more or less South Asian to those who are outside the group. When identifying himself, Sumir explains that "I don't refer to myself as South Asian but if someone else like you uses it, it is fine" (Interview with Sumir, 2009). Naseem also makes decisions about how to identify herself in different situations. When asked about whether or not she is South Asian, Naseem says, "It clearly depends on which context I'm located in at that point

when that question is put to me and who is the person that is putting that question to me" (Interview with Naseem, 2009).

South Asian appears to be a flexible concept which can be used or not used depending on the situation (however, both respondents concede that this level of choice is not present in the collection of official statistics). While this flexibility does not necessarily confirm that South Asian identity is hybrid, it does suggest that some who perform various aspects of South Asian identity may switch in and out of it when it best suits or represents them.

The literature reviewed in previous sections states that hybridity can be considered in two ways: through the creation of new "third" identities based on a combination of traits from multiple sources (AlSayyad, 2001; Vertovec, 1999); and as a choice between multiple traits based on their appropriateness in various situations (Georgiou, 2006; Song, 2003; Vertovec, 1999). While examples of choosing relevant facets of identity appear frequently in the two interviews, the creation of new, "syncretic" (Vertovec, 1999, p. 27) identities does not seem to be important to the two participants. It may be possible to speculate that, since neither of these participants felt a particular affinity to South Asian identity or a strong affinity to another ethnic or national identity, these performances of hybridity do not apply.

The idea of "code switching" (Georgiou, 2006, pg. 63) is used in discussions of hybridity to imply switching between multiple identities or emphasizing different aspects of oneself at different times or for different audiences. Situationally modifying how one performs their identity or how one refers to their identity was discussed by both Sumir and Naseem during our interviews, suggesting that one may not consistently perform all

aspects of an identity but have a degree of control and choice over how they express ethno-racial markers.

1.2. (How) are these identities represented in space?

The second half of the interview sessions with Naseem and Sumir focused on urban spaces in Toronto; the existence of South Asian spaces in the city and the ways which one can recognize those spaces. However, despite being asked the same questions, the two informants offered answers which differed drastically. Sumir disagreed with the notion of South Asian space as something concrete and identifiable from other forms of space. Naseem stated that simply attracting a large number of South Asian people was enough to make a space South Asian. However, it is possible to draw themes of private and public spaces and the preponderance of Indian cultural traits in South Asian space from the two interviews.[4]

South Asian space

Qadeer (1999, p. 19) and Bauder and Sharpe (2002, p. 216) argue that Toronto's South Asian population is dispersed within the metropolitan area. Indentifying one specific location, Qadeer (1999) and Lo et al (2000) discuss the role of the Gerrard St. area of Toronto as a location of South Asian commercial activity. Their scholarship posits that this area is a centralized South Asian commercial space; however, many other South Asian spaces are spread throughout the city. Qadeer, (1999) explains that these dispersed commercial areas, rather than being localized in South Asian residential neighbourhoods, serve instead as "pivots of community life, drawing customers from wider areas and

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[4] This section focuses only on the spatial representation of South Asian identities in Toronto. It does not seek to undertake a geographic analysis of the spaces themselves.

catering to other ethnic groups" rather than residential centres (Qadeer, 1999, p. 19). Naseem's comments below appear to directly echo this research and indicate that there is a separation between South Asian commercial spaces and dispersed residential space, as well as a large number of South Asian commercial areas spread around the city. South Asian public and private spaces were differentiated by the key informants: defining residential spaces as private space and commercial spaces as public space.

Sumir sets apart "South Asian identity in public" from South Asian identity in general (Interview with Sumir, 2009), suggesting that South Asian identity is best represented and recognized in public space. Sumir states that there is very little which is recognizable in private South Asian space, and that the material and aesthetic demonstrations which make up South Asian identities are found only in public: "Public spaces have a public display of South Asian culture and physical form. Private spaces are not recognizable as South Asian. Homes and houses have very little display of South Asian culture outside" (Interview with Sumir, 2009).

Naseem says that residential concentrations of South Asian people are an important way to recognize South Asian space. When asked if there were South Asian spaces in the city, Naseem responded by describing an area with a large South Asian residential population:

> There's a very large grocery store and there's a mosque, and in the buildings surrounding that area there's a lot of residents from South Asian background....so if you go to the school you see a lot of children from South Asian backgrounds so it seems there's a concentration of people from South Asia in Thorncliffe Park area. (Interview with Naseem, 2009)

Although one may not immediately recognize private spaces as South Asian spaces, a large South Asian residential population is enough for Naseem to consider space South Asian.

Naseem considers ethnic spaces in terms of recognizable enclaves or commercial areas like Chinatown. She states that since Toronto's South Asians are residentially dispersed in "pockets" around the city that the community cannot appropriate space in the same way as other groups with a more localized population: "[South Asian space] isn't as large as I would say like a Chinatown which is much larger, much more well-established. But these are smaller pockets but you do see artefacts of South Asian culture in those spaces" (Interview with Naseem, 2009).

Sumir and Naseem emphasize that South Asian space is recognized by aesthetic, material, and commercial goods. Naseem again mentions the Gerrard India Bazaar as a South Asian space in addition to Thorncliffe Park, and parts of Scarborough and Mississauga. She identifies the presence of stores and shops selling South Asian food and products as definitive signifiers of South Asian space (Interview with Naseem, 2009).Within public space, Sumir says that representations of consumer and material culture are the predominant ways in which South Asian space is recognized, and possibly the only things which make public spaces South Asian. Without these uses and traits "space is just space;" it is neutral:

> Space is just space. Is it private or public? Space encompasses many things. There can be a South Asian mall or a store, but spaces are the buildings, structures, roads, surrounding areas. Spaces have been adapted for South Asian needs and to be used by South Asian people. I would be careful saying South Asian space, though. (Interview with Sumir, 2009)

Therefore, according to Sumir, places where South Asian products are found, or where South Asian People go to receive services, are as close as one can get to South Asian space. For Naseem, these kinds for spaces are definitively South Asian.

Commercial space and Indian culture

Work by Werbner (2004) and Punathambekar (2005) discuss the importance of Hindi/Bollywood films to the South Asian diaspora. Indian film, according to Punathambekar (2005), allows audiences to "maintain… temporal continuities with the imagined homeland" (p. 156) while being able to engage immigrant and second generation youth with their Indian heritage. She concludes that "Hindi film consumption in the diaspora speaks to first generation Indians desperately trying to sustain a value system and inculcate the same in their children" (Ibid. p. 158). This importance of Indian film in South Asian diaspora communities is discussed at length by Naseem; the visibility of Indian film in South Asian space is particularly important.

Naseem's descriptions of South Asian space suggest that it is defined by Indian culture more than that of any other South Asian country. This is illustrated in an example regarding a theatre which shows only Indian films. Naseem defines this as South Asian space. She describes the theatre:

> There is a cinema…the Albion Cinema. And if you go see a movie there, they show Indian movies…And over there the audience used to be primarily people from South Asia. Even the food that you'd buy there for snacks would be Samosas and so on rather than popcorn (Interview with Naseem, 2009)

The theatre showing Indian films for a South Asian audience is an example of a space which "would definitely indicate the presence of people from South Asia," but Naseem clearly says that the theatre shows "Indian" and not South Asian films (Interview with Naseem, 2009).

Naseem says that in order to recognize a South Asian space one should look for evidence of film: "That is a big thing particularly in India. Not so much in Pakistan….but Indian film is a very strong feature of Indian culture" (Interview with Naseem, 2009). It

is interesting that Naseem specifies the importance of Indian film and Indian culture when discussing a South Asian space. It is possible that India, as the largest state in South Asia, has dominated the region's culture. However, it is also possible that spaces may be simultaneously Indian and South Asian, appealing to a South Asian population through Indian culture. Naseem's intertwined discussion of Indian culture and South Asian space illustrates that it may be possible for Indian space and South Asian space to exist simultaneously. There is the possibility that this is simply a preponderance of Indian cultural elements in Canada's South Asian community (Chatterjee et al. 2004, p. 7; Tran et al., 2005, p. 21); however, it is also possible that there is evidence of hybridity in the spaces Naseem claims are simultaneously Indian and South Asian.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The above analysis offers multiple explanations of South Asian identity and its spatial expression in Toronto. When read in light of the literature review, a number of similarities and connections can be found between the theoretical scholarship on the topics of identity and space and the answers given by Naseem and Sumir.

1. IDENTITY

The interview analysis demonstrates that South Asian identity can be formed through a combination of inscribed and ascribed traits. As explained by Nagel (1994), ethnic identity "is a composite of the view one has of oneself as well as the views held by others about one's ethnic identity" (p. 154). Some aspects such as aesthetic choices or demeanour may be preferred and emphasized, while other "phenotypic" and ascribed

traits such as skin colour are not subject to the same kinds of individual choice and may be assigned meaning by those outside the group (Marshall, 1994, p. 25). Therefore, as Naseem's and Sumir's answers illustrate, South Asian identity as it is perceived in Canada is represented through inscribed traits such as dress in conjunction with traits over which one has less control like skin colour. As the informants have noted, they do not accept these kinds of traits as equally salient, and will often prefer to identify with the inscribed traits they choose for themselves.

Both Sumir and Naseem emphasize that South Asian and its constituent national identities are imperfectly understood in Canada (Ghosh, 2007; Patel, 2006); neither participant wants to be identified with stereotypes and caricatures. Therefore, when given the opportunity, they will situationally choose how they refer to themselves rather than accepting the South Asian identity ascribed to them in Canada. Canada's long-standing categorization of South Asian as a visible minority/racial marker (Bauder and Sharpe, 2002, p. 205; Tran et al, 2005, p. 21) means that the identity has become fixed. Markers of visible minority status are not, however, enough to signify ethnic identity (Hall, 1996a, pg. 617). Scholarship interpreting ethnicity and culture as biologically predetermined has fallen out of favour to allow for more constructivist and non-racist explanations (Gilroy, 2005; Hall, 1996a; Phadnis & Ganguly, 2001). The two research participants appear to believe that Canada's creation of a visible minority category of South Asian has denied flexibility in defining the identity by endeavouring to produce a coherent ethnic group out of disparate and diverse populations. Canada's categorization of South Asian as an ethnic identity does not allow for the fluidity in group composition which is crucial in definitions of ethnic identity (Davis, 2004, p. 184; Marshall, 1994, p. 202). Consequently,

Naseem and Sumir believe stereotypes and preconceptions have developed which colour the way Canadian discourse considers South Asian as a racial and ethnic identity (Ghosh 2000b, p. 4; Ghosh, 2007, p. 224; Patel, 2006, p. 150.

Phadnis and Ganguly (2001), drawing from the scholarship of Keyes, emphasize the need for members of an ethnic group to claim belonging in the collective in order for it to be useful as a means of political organization or a tool for nationalism (Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001, p. 25). Keyes (1981) in Phadnis and Ganguly (2001) states: "The most crucial aspect of ethnic identity creation is that 'the symbols of ethnic identity must be appropriated and internalized by individuals before they can serve as the basis for orienting people to social action'" (p. 25). Since South Asian is a category whose history and commonalities have been determined in Canada (Ghosh, 2000b, p. 4; Patel, 2006, pg. 150), the shared traits which would usually be accepted as representative by members of a given ethnic group are denied by a number of South Asians. The ethnicity has not been internalized by either Sumir or Naseem, and if this is true of others in Canada, it may not be possible to consider South Asian as an ethnic identity at all.

The interpretations of identity explained by Naseem and Sumir, however, echo the conclusions put forward by Mahtani (2002). Like Mahtani's participants who "exercised their right to choose their own ethnic allegiances" (Mahtani, 2002, p. 25), Sumir and Naseem discuss the different situations in which they are willing to claim a South Asian identity. Although they are not of "mixed race" like Mahtani's research participants (Ibid., p. 7), their responses do illustrate the ways in which identity is situational (Sets & Burke, 2000), as well as instances of choosing a desired identity from

the a collection multiple identities which each could perform (Nagel, 1994; Song, 2003; Vertovec; 1999).

2. URBAN SPACE

Like South Asian identity, South Asian space was not uncritically accepted by Sumir. It appears from Sumir's answers to questions regarding South Asian space that his ideas of space are counter to theories put forth in the literature by Brenner (2004), Lefebvre (1976; 1991), and Purcell (2003) which explain a struggle to achieve "rights to the city" (Purcell, 2003, p. 577) and appropriate urban public spaces. Sumir's statement that "space is just space" that can only be "adapted" rather than claimed suggests he does not believe that space in Toronto can be or has been appropriated by the South Asian community. For Sumir there is no such thing as South Asian space.

If one considers "the right to the city" as Purcell does – rights to claim space simply by living in a city and performing daily tasks (Purcell, 2003, p. 577), Naseem appears to agree that there are South Asian spaces in Toronto. If a large residential population indicates a South Asian space, Naseem's answers imply that space in Toronto has in fact been appropriated in the way defined by Purcell; claiming space simply by living in a city (Ibid.).

3. AREAS FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH

Due to time constraints and difficulty in recruiting research participants from Toronto's universities in the summer months, this research project was scaled down from the original proposal. It took the form of a smaller preliminary study to investigate major

themes and determine questions for further investigation. While the two interviews conducted generated rich data, the participants could not offer insight into all of the perspectives and opinions held by Toronto's south Asian population.

If the same research questions were to be investigated more intensively, the number of participants would be increased. Input would be sought from participants born in Canada as well as those who had immigrated. Ideally, such a project would include discussions with 12-16 participants who would share their experiences with hybridity, South Asian identity, and urban space in Toronto through guided focus group discussions.

Focus groups would be the best method with which to approach these questions in a larger project as they would allow me to study "how individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it" (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 195). Since the research questions seek to determine some of the specifics of a particular group identity, it makes sense to query it in a group setting. The interactions which occur in a focus group will illustrate similarities and differences in experiences and opinions which may not arise in a one-on-one interview setting. Power structures are different in one-on-one interview situations, which can discourage challenges and additions to interview questions, meaning that valuable insights may not come to light as they would in the presence of others with similar ideas (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p. 194).

The two informants interviewed are both immigrants from similar socio-economic and educational backgrounds. If the research questions were addressed in a focus group format with a larger sample size and participants with different immigration histories, questions of South Asian identity could generate a wider array of results. A larger project

could consider the same questions with recent immigrants to Canada; with South Asian youth; and with second generation Canadian members of the South Asian population.

Information regarding hybrid identity and space in Toronto did not arise to the extent expected in the two interviews. If focus group studies were conducted, specific questions could be asked to draw out experiences of hybridity among participants. Questions developed for expanded focus group studies could query different aspects of hybrid identity and its spatial representation, including asking participants to identify specific spaces which represent or in which they perform multiple identities. Naseem's discussion of spaces as simultaneously South Asian and Indian suggests that there may be avenues for continued investigation on this point. As well, there is room for further consideration on how Canadian norms of spatial representation and planning, such as discussed by Agrawal and Hathiyani (2007) and Isin and Siemiatycki (1999), are incorporated in the kinds of South Asian spaces discussed in the key informant interviews.

The work included in this project is highly critical of Canada's homogenized use of South Asian as a marker of visible minority status. Continued research on the connotations of the term and how it is interpreted by South Asians in Canada could have policy implications. Continued study may be able to provide policy options for statistics collection in Canada which better reflect diversity and self-identification within the country's South Asian and other visible minority populations.

The literature review and two interviews included in this work are not intended to be exhaustive, and are not in-depth enough to constitute a complete case study. However, this research does lay the groundwork for a potential future project determining in what ways hybridity and South Asian identity are represented spatially in Toronto. The

research questions addressed in this project are large in scope and the research conducted merely scratched the surface of the topics under consideration.

It appears from this preliminary study that there is room for further exploration into the research questions. Both informants have offered some criticism of Canada's use of South Asian as a category for ethnic belonging and believe that its uses in this country are not amenable to internalizing South Asian as a personal identity. It may therefore be possible to determine through further study a) why some in Canada choose to identify themselves as South Asian, and b) what they believe that claim illustrates about themselves.

Although the research project has not managed to fully address the questions arising from November's *Globe and Mail* article, it has helped create a better understanding of some aspects of South Asian commercial spaces in Toronto. The interviews with Sumir and Naseem have created a framework from which to understand what makes South Asian space. They have also helped develop an understanding of what the term South Asian actually means in Canada. If the malls described by Radhika (2008) really do focus on providing customers with clothing, food, and music (p. M2) which represents South Asia, then it appears, according to the evidence and explanations collected above, these spaces are in fact South Asian.

APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I have contacted you because I am interested in knowing about the idea of "South Asian". Can you tell me what "being" South Asian means?
    a. *Prompt*: Is it something that is sort of given---because you belong to a certain culture, or race?

2. Would you consider yourself South Asian?

3. Which aspects of "South Asian-ness" appeal to you the most?

4. Are there aspects you do not like as much?
    a. Why?

5. How and when did you become South Asian, do you think?
    a. *Prompt*: Was it your own choice, or do you think you simply started calling yourself one because people in Canada are more accustomed to this term?

6. Do you think you belong to the South Asian community in Toronto or Canada?

7. Are there any South Asian Spaces in Toronto?
    a. What is it about them that makes them South Asian?

8. Where can I find these spaces?

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