Stories of Surviving through Hardship in Elder Sikh Punjabi Women

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When I am, then You are not; now that You are, I am not.

The wind may raise up huge waves in the vast ocean, but it's just water in water.

O Lord, what can I say about such an illusion?

Things are not as they seem…

Like the king, who falls asleep upon his throne, and dreams he's a beggar.

His kingdom is intact, but separated from it, he suffers in sorrow: such is my own condition.

– Bhagat Ravidas (Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji: p.657)

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ABSTRACT

Hardship and adversity are a part of life for all. However, dominant Western psychological discourses about mental health, illness and recovery can de-contextualise the social, political and spiritual nature of hardship, suffering and liberation, subjugating narratives that do not fit within this framework. Sikh Punjabi people have many stories of survival and liberation from collective historical and continuing hardships. Elder women are often positioned in Sikh Punjabi communities as storytellers and community activists, sharing knowledge and working towards collective liberation, but are rarely included in psychological research, particularly if they do not speak English. Storytelling is a naturalistic method of making sense of the world, yet narrative methods are also rarely used in psychological research. This means that psychological professionals are limited to rigid frameworks for understanding emotional suffering and healing, that are not shared by all. This ethno-poetic narrative analysis therefore explored how elder Sikh Punjabi women in the UK storied and made sense of surviving through hardship, and the liberatory potential in their narratives and narration. Participants appeared to story hardships in social, spiritual and political contexts, and survival through moving narratives of resistance, conscious Oneness, constructivism, and through the act of storytelling. Furthermore, narratives of collective liberation and social change were interdependent and weaved into personal narratives of survival. The relevance and implications of these findings are discussed for clinical psychology theory, practice, training, research and wider policy.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background and context to the research project, beginning with my personal relationship and theoretical stance to the topic. I will then go on to critically examine existing literature and psychological narratives around surviving hardship and research with Sikh Punjabi women. Finally, I will summarise gaps and opportunities in the literature and present rationale and aims for the current project.

1.1 Setting the scene

1.1.1 About me

As someone whose grandparents migrated from Indian Punjab to London via Kenya in the 1960s, I identify as a third generation Punjabi. My family are from Southall in West London, an area with a large South Asian, particularly Punjabi population, and are from a working-class background. Growing up I learnt about *Sikhi* (Sikhism) from my family, community and at school. This contrasts with the largely White, secular, middle-class profession of Clinical Psychology I have moved into. I bring a lot of myself to the research, and acknowledge the impact of colonisation on my own practice, and since no research is unbiased or value-free, I will be writing in first person and reflecting on the process throughout.

1.1.2 Theoretical framework

This research is informed by ideas from critical, community and liberation psychology. Liberation psychology aims to transform oppressive discourse and practice, through a praxis of consciousness-raising, where progress is made through the interaction of reflection and action (Martín-Baró, 1994). Critical community psychology acknowledges the role of professional psychology in perpetuating oppressive discourse and practice, and privileges local and indigenous communities' own expert knowledge and social justice potentials (Kagan et al., 2019).

Narrative theory is informed by Foucault's (1980) work on the role of power in the construction of knowledge through societal discourse. In narrative theory, discourses affect meaning-making and become part of a person's own story, which we can live through but also change through re-construction and counter-narratives

(Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). In this way, we become the product and producers of history. The relevance of narratives and my theoretical position are discussed further in the methods section.

1.1.3 Contextualising language

Punjab is a state currently divided, in North West India and East Pakistan, although state lines have changed throughout history, depending on political rule. I use the term 'Sikh Punjabi' to mean people who self-identify as coming from this background, rather than any technical requirements for geographical area of origin or current religious practice. The same applies to people self-identifying as 'women' and 'elder', as discussed in the methods section. Traditionally, psychological theories have tended to decontextualize emotional distress, therefore my hope is that the language of hardship, struggle, strength and survival will connect with everyone, including (and particularly) those who are not as familiar with Western psychological language.

1.2 Literature search strategy

An initial electronic literature search was conducted to review existing academic research around surviving hardship with elder Sikh Punjabi diasporic women. However, very little results were in the field of psychology, perhaps due to the language used in the search, but also as a minoritised and under-researched group. Nevertheless, these papers provided a helpful background, and a scoping review is presented later. Literature was collected from EBSCO and Scopus databases, with 'grey' literature and references from articles also reviewed to identify further relevant literature that otherwise may not have been captured. Quantitative and qualitative literature from 1987 to 2021 with relevance to the research topic were included, with international research written in English also included. Search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria and results are shown in appendix A. A narrative review is first presented, starting with a broad overview and deconstruction of dominant narratives in psychological literature with South Asian women, moving onto more subjugated narratives specific to Sikh Punjabi women and elders in the UK.

1.3 Problematising narratives in psychological literature

<u>1.3.1 The story of 'mental illness' and South Asian women lacking understanding</u>

Psychological literature has traditionally storied emotional suffering as an 'illness' or 'disorder' to be 'treated', and told the tale of a lack of understanding and awareness of 'mental health' in South Asian people. Educational interventions are therefore often suggested, rather than engaging with indigenous understandings of distress, with the aim of improving access to and engagement with existing healthcare services. Although perhaps intended to be helpful, this narrative brings to mind stories of missionary and so-called 'civilising' missions, suggesting the continuing colonisation of minds by Western[1] psychology (Mills, 2014).

Karasz et al. (2013) reported the lack of conceptual synchronicity between Western biomedical narratives of mental illness, and social narratives of distress common in South Asian immigrant communities in the United States. The concept of 'tension', described as emotional and physical responses to 'real life' hardships such as poverty, discrimination and relationship difficulties, is given as an example. The authors suggest a need for more partnership in healthcare and community-based participatory research. However, the continued use of language of 'symptoms', 'disorders', 'illness' and 'treatment', and identification of tension as a 'cultural syndrome', appears to perpetuate a pathologising biomedical narrative. One might question if true partnership is possible through this epistemological lens of scientific realism, shaped by a history of colonialism and scientific racism, or whether it is a form of epistemological violence (Teo, 2011).

Taylor, Brown and Weinman (2013) reported differences in perceptions of 'depression' between their recruited North Indian immigrant women and White British women in the UK. The 'Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire' was used to measure self-report responses to a short vignette describing a woman living a 'difficult life', feeling low in energy and appetite, loneliness and lack of confidence. The women from North India were reported as having less of an understanding of the character's difficulties, having less of an effect on them emotionally, and were less likely to suggest help from a health professional, compared with White British women. The authors interpreted the lack of understanding of the character's difficulties to mean a lack of knowledge about depression. However, the question

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[1] A term used to describe the cultures and traditions of Western Europe and North America

did not specify which 'difficulties' were being asked about, and the vignette lacks important contextual information about the character's life. One might also question the applicability of a questionnaire designed to elicit beliefs about 'illness' for a vignette about life stress, and why we would expect women to seek advice or 'treatment' from a medical professional about this. These cross-cultural comparison studies can perpetuate deficit-based narratives of South Asian people, comparing with White British people as if an assumed standard or norm to live up to. An alternative interpretation might be that White British women shared the same narratives as the researchers, and that traditional Western psychological methods of research and practice are not fit for purpose for those deemed as 'other'.

Fenton and Sadiq-Sangster (1996) interviewed 15 Punjabi-born women aged 30-60 in Bristol about concepts and causes of mental distress. The women storied not feeling accepted or wanted as immigrants in this country, the loneliness of not having immediate family or friends of their own, not speaking the language, racial hostility of neighbours and White people generally, and the institutional indifference to their complaints and problems. The researchers noted that the heart was a central feature in women's narratives. One woman spoke of her "heart being burnt like a cinder", one woman described her heart as "like a colander, from which life had trained", and another described "my heart kept falling and falling" (p. 75). The women spoke about feeling weakness of body and spirit. They also described 'natural' emotions such as *fikar* (worry), *perishani* (upset), *dukh* (pain or hurt) and *ghum* (sad or sorrowful), but of *dil* (the heart) rather than *dimaag* (the mind). The women were clear that this 'thinking of the heart' was not an illness of the mind and did not mean to be *paagal* (mad), rather relating them to the aforementioned social stressors. However, some said that if it gets out of control it can affect the mind and lead to madness.

Karasz et al. (2019) reviewed existing research on mental distress in South Asian diasporic communities, and reports on the burden of acculturation and cultural conflict for older South Asian women in particular, alongside relational abuse and neglect, and social isolation, as predictors of mental distress. Ekanayake, Ahmad and McKenzie (2012) studied a sample of South Asian women's "perceived causes of their depression" (p. 6), who were known to a community mental health service in Toronto. The authors reported themes of domestic abuse, infidelity, divorce or separation, and bereavement as the main stressors. The stigma of being labelled as 'mentally ill', migration and acculturation related stress, economic difficulties, racism

and inter-generational cultural distance were also named as causal and/ or influencing stressors, which mental health services and 'treatments' often do not acknowledge. The construct of acculturative stress relates to the psychosocial burden of attempts to incorporate the host country's traits within one's culture of origin (Berry, 1992). This can also be the case for children and grandchildren of migrants. However, one might critique the research and construct in its interpretation that acculturation improves mental health and conversely that a lack of acculturation damages mental health. Partly because much of the research, as above, excludes non-English speaking participants, and those who are not involved with any psychosocial services, potentially excluding a population for whom a lack of incorporation has not led to significant distress.

1.3.2 South Asian women as secretive

Shame and stigma are often cited as common problems in South Asian communities that are likely to prevent people from acknowledging 'mental health problems' and seeking help from professionals. This shame and stigma has been storied in the literature as a result of cultural and religious values suggesting suffering as a result of God's Will, Karma, disconnectedness from God, and/or self, rather than community-centredness (Sura, 1999).

However, the language and practices of mental health professionals can also be considered shaming and stigmatising for people who do not share the same contexts and moral values which influence meaning-making. For example, Mand (2008) suggested narratives of being 'hard to reach' and 'looking after their own' as a form of cultural racism, where racism is expressed through critique of practices and values based on 'culture', which leads to exclusionary practices of minoritised groups. Mand reframed White-majority public services as 'looking after their own', and uses the example of public health policies that further exclude minoritised people by making communities compete for allocation of resources.

Ghost (2003) also described the discrimination, violence and racism of the health care system, which can perpetuate narratives of South Asian women as submissive, stupid and inexpressive, yet at the same time devious and untrustworthy, with private hidden lives that are impenetrable due to 'culture', which becomes a pejorative term. These notions of inferiority are central to racist and

patriarchal ideology, and are ingrained in Western psychological narratives of 'mental disturbance' (Bulhan, 1981).

Rogers and Pilgrim (2014) critiqued the somatisation thesis imposed on South Asian women, which implies they 'disguise' or 'conflate' their 'true mental illness' with physical symptoms. Rogers and Allison (2004) highlighted the relevance of social contexts of embodied distress for South Asian women, with interviewees managing through transfer of domestic and everyday duties to other family members, rather than individual coping strategies. Therefore, individual approaches offered by mental health services, such as medication or psychotherapy, make less sense than social support, and rely on Western assumptions that talking leads to emotional catharsis and healing, which are not narratives that are privileged by all (Kirmayer and Young, 1998).

1.3.3 Elders as dependent and docile

Mand (2008) analysed public debates about South Asian elders' care needs. Traditionally, being a woman is linked with familial roles of wife and mother, with duties of caring and looking after others. Women are also often storied as cultural reproducers, particularly those who have migrated. In the UK, this contrasts with narratives of aging as becoming dependent and cared-for by younger generations and the state, especially where there are diagnoses of mental or physical illness (Smith, 2013). Psychological theories can also perpetuate these narratives, for example, normative systemic theories of 'life cycles', where later life is associated with loss of family relationships, such as 'empty nest syndrome'. This often does not apply to Punjabi families in multi-generational households, where care is reciprocal and families are heavily emotionally involved (Labun & Emblen, 2007; Burholt & Dobbs, 2011). Problematising narratives of old age often imply binary positions of carer or cared-for, dependent or independent, without looking at the complexities and reciprocal nature of caring relationships.

Traditionally, in Punjabi culture elders play an active role in the family and community. Having endured many struggles and hardships in life, they are seen to hold valuable wisdom and knowledge (Nayar, 2004). Eastern philosophies often see aging as a spiritual process, where old age is a time of fulfilment, and elders should be respected and consulted in decision-making as a moral duty, in exchange for the sacrifices they have made for the following generations (Koehn, 1993). In practice,

these values are not always adhered to and elder abuse is present in Punjab and in diasporic Punjabi communities, particularly for elder women (Koehn, 1993).

Becoming a grandmother is also associated with increased status in the family, with recognition of wisdom and experience, and a feeling of responsibility for transmitting culture to grandchildren as third generations, where second generations are more Westernised. Aggarwal and Das Gupta (2013) analysed conversations with Sikh Punjabi grandmothers in Toronto around 'grandmothering', where interviewees spoke about teaching their grandchildren about '*apna*' (our) food, manners and religious practices. They interpreted food as "one of the most important tools in a grandmother's hand" (p.84). The women were therefore not only concerned with individual survival, but the survival of traditional cultural and religious beliefs, practices and values, of which they took an active role in.

1.4 The Sikh faith and wellbeing

I will now present an overview of research into Sikh narratives about survival, health, wellbeing and liberation, as an alternative to traditional Western psychological narratives.

1.4.1 Religious and spiritual narratives of health

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) define 'health' as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'; all these aspects must function together to achieve overall health. Spirituality is not explicitly stated in this definition, although one could argue that all three aspects rely on spiritual wellbeing and consciousness (Singh, 2008).

Religious and spiritual traditions existed as philosophies of living and understanding humanity prior to the scientific study and profession of clinical psychology, yet spiritually embedded approaches are rarely practiced by clinicians (Pirta, 2013). Sandhu (2004; 2005) and Singh (2008) used Sikh concepts of distress and wellbeing to develop Sikh-centred models of counselling and psychotherapy, attempting to make services more accessible, acceptable and less stigmatising to Sikh clients. However, these papers still narrate emotional distress and suffering within frameworks of 'mental illness', so could be argued to use Sikh concepts to bolster Western biomedical approaches by adapting already existing 'treatments'.

Ahluwalia and Alimchandani (2013) promote a call to action for psychological professionals to integrate religious narratives into practice, for example by increasing professional awareness of Sikh beliefs, practices and experiences of collective hardship. In order to increase awareness, we must understand the history of Sikhi.

1.4.2 A history of surviving hardship

The Sikh religion originated in the late 1400s, with its founder Guru Nanak Dev Ji, whose main message was; "all are children of God, so are all equal" (Singh, 2005a). The word *Sikh* in Punjabi means learner, student or disciple, and in the context of Sikhi relates to seeking Truth. The main tenet or Truth of Sikhi has always been our divine connectedness, and thus equality and justice for all.

Developed in the context of religious and political persecution of Sikhs and Hindus during Mughal rule in Punjab, Sikhs have fought in defence of religious identity and freedom for the oppressed throughout history, including during British colonial rule, and continuing Hindu nationalism in India (Singh, 2005a; 2005b). Stories are often told of Sikh figures attaining *shaheed* (martyrdom) through brutal torture, refusing to give up their identity by converting, and to defend the freedoms of people from other religions. This demonstrates the focus on maintaining faith, service for others, and fighting for something bigger than the self. There has always been a belief in freedom from oppression, even if this means self-sacrifice.

Thus, Sikhi was born out of adversity, and survived through service to humanity and God, of which we are all connected. The concept of *sant-sipahi* (saint-soldier) exemplifies this. It is important to consider this historical context when analysing Sikh narratives about suffering and liberation.

1.4.3 Sikh narratives of suffering and liberation

Sikhi teaches that suffering is caused by over-attachment to the material world (*maya*) and resulting self-centredness (*manmukh*), driven by the selfish ego (*humai*), preventing consciousness and connection with God (Sandhu, 2004; 2005). *Humai* refers to preoccupation with the self ('I' and 'me') as different and separate from others. It is this struggle for individual existence and permanence, which some suggest is the cause of human despair and distress (Sandhu, 2005).

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (SGGS; the Sikh holy book and final Guru) describes a process of *panj khands* (five realms), to develop consciousness and connect with God, alleviating suffering and achieving liberation (*mukti*) from the shackles of *humai*. Depicted in figure 1, these realms are described as rungs of a ladder, as if stages of ascent, although they cannot be separated, skipped or removed.

Figure 1

Panj Khands

5. *Sach khand* - truth: the final state of evolution of human consciousness, realising unification with God, it can not be described, only experienced
4. *Karam khand* - grace: where the courageous have conquered illusion/*maya*, they will feel only God's love, joy and beauty, not passively, but through awakened courage and good deeds
3. *Saram khand* - spiritual endeavour/effort: actively striving against the afflictions of ego, requiring discipline and commitment to maintain humility and wisdom
2. *Gian khand* - knowledge: awareness of God and the universe, a sense of widening consciousness of existence, rather than intellectual or sensory knowledge, enabling a sense of humility and wonder
1. *Dharam khand* - duty/righteous action: acting with social responsibility through moral awareness and commitment to divine justice

This process depicts moral social obligations as core to the path of liberation. Well-being requires well-doing; liberation cannot be achieved without righteous action and commitment to justice, for which it is the basis, and relies on being attuned to our connectedness. By practicing this awareness, we develop inner and outer peace.

1.4.4 Sikh practices for wellbeing

Given the history and teachings of Sikhi, psychological strength and resilience are often seen as core aspects of Sikh identity, values and daily practice (Ruprai, 2016). For example, consistent recitation and meditation to remember God

(*simran*) is referred to as key for consciousness and connectedness. Group worship is also encouraged to help focus and find peace, in the company of devout others (*sadh sangat*).

In Rait's (2005) research, elder Sikh women described *sangat* (congregation) and *sewa* (community service) in *Gurdwaras* (Sikh temples) as particularly important practices for social and spiritual wellbeing. Sohi, Singh and Bopanna (2018) reported that as a minoritised group in India, Sikhs who more frequently practice *sewa,* a labour of love, are more likely to report feelings of belonging, community cohesion and social wellbeing.

Shabad kirtan, the collective singing of hymns, can be seen as a practice of peace, for example reciting *Sukhmani Sahib*, the prayer of peace, has been reported to provide comfort to those dealing with illness or bereavement (Ahluwalia & Mohabir, 2019). SGGS has been described as a "symphony" of compositions from contributors of different faith traditions, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Sidhu, 2016: p.4). The structure of SGGS is presented in a "paradigm of harmony", based on *ragas* (musical meters), described as an art form of vocal and instrumental sound which are designed to induce a state of divine awe, wonder and calm connectedness (Sidhu, 2016: p.5). Therefore, the structure and message of SGGS are designed to convey a sense of harmony and connectedness.

1.5 A (his)tory of surviving hardship for Sikh Punjabis in the UK

2011 census data reported around 423,000 Sikhs in the UK, equating to 0.8% of the population (Office for National Statistics, 2012). The UK has the second largest Sikh diaspora outside of India, after Canada (Chanda & Ghosh, 2012). The first recorded Sikh to settle in the UK was Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last King of the Sikh Empire and son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Singh & Tatla, 2006). He was kidnapped by the British Crown as a child and exiled to Britain in 1853, where he was anglicised and converted to Christianity. Duleep Singh's daughter, Sophia Duleep Singh, was a prominent suffragette and pioneer of women's rights in Britain.

The first reported voluntary Sikh settlers were men who came from Punjab in the early 1900s, often members of the British army who saw opportunities for work in the UK, such as selling textiles (Juttla, 2014). However, significant mass migration from Punjab to the UK began after 1947, following the destruction and

displacement caused by the British partition of Punjab, and Britain's losses from World War II. Britain had a shortage of labour, and men from across the Commonwealth were recruited to help. Once settled with accommodation and work, men were joined by their wives and families (Juttla, 2014). Further mass migration from colonial East Africa began in the 1960s and 1970s. Following the independence of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, the increasing Africanisation of labour and discrimination against Asians, Punjabi Sikhs migrated to the UK using commonwealth passports. East African Asians have been described as 'twice migrants', with experience of being a visible minority, facing discrimination, and working under colonial British rule (Singh & Tatla, 2006).

However, upon arrival migrants were met with a hostile environment. For Sikh men this manifested in policies and practices forcing them to remove their turbans, shave their hair and beard, and remove other outward religious symbols in order to receive employment. The violent political landscape is exemplified by Enoch Powell's 1968 anti-immigration 'Rivers of Blood' speech, the 1976 killing of Gurdip Singh Chaggar by National Front members, the 1979 Southall riots, the use of stop and search powers and Special Patrol Units for 'anti-terror' purposes, and so on. These events also led to the development of anti-racist activist organisations such as Southall Youth Movement, and organisations such as the Indian Workers Association, to fight the abuse and exploitation that racialised and immigrant communities were experiencing.

Less is documented about the contributions of Sikh Punjabi women during these times. Amrit Wilson wrote about some of the difficulties South Asian women experienced adjusting to life in the UK (1978), and the feelings of loss, separation and isolation (Wilson & Naish, 1979). Wilson also noted that many stories written about South Asian women during the 1970s were through a racist and sexist lens, narrating South Asian women as passive, implying that South Asian patriarchy was particularly oppressive. Wilson interviewed a Sikh Punjabi woman in London, who storied her childhood being 'locked up' by her family to protect her against the violence outside; whereas her father attended his workers' meetings and her brother was in 'the Youth', 'Ranjit' and her sisters were not afforded the same freedom (Wilson, 2006). Wilson narrated this act of patriarchy mirroring the historical backdrop of colonisation, the 'Green Revolution' and gendered agricultural ownership laws in Punjab, where rights and freedoms for women were increasingly removed.

Wilson reflected on the importance of remembering our rich collective past, to gather strength for battles ahead (Wilson, 2018). The generation of women who lived through these times are now in their later part of this life, therefore part of my motivation for this research is to bear witness to and share their stories of survival, and connect with this collective strength.

1.6 Stories of resistance from Sikh Punjabi women

Nandy (1983) rejects a single dominant narrative of colonised people as victims, but as resistors and active agents in fighting oppression. As we have seen, Sikhs have a long history of fighting oppression. With this in mind, and Wade's (1997) framework of 'small acts of living', I review narratives of individual and collective resistance against oppression from Sikh Punjabi women.

1.6.1 Women in Sikhi

Sikhi has always taught equality of sexes, and to advance women's rights; for example, by condemning menstrual taboos and beliefs about impurity upon childbirth, female infanticide, child marriage, dowry, and the practice of *sati* (widow burning). Sikhi makes no distinction between roles and responsibilities for men and women, souls are genderless and God is not given any gendered pronouns in SGGS. Everyone has equal rights to liberation. Sikh women were originally given the surname *Kaur,* regardless of marriage status, to resist practices of paternal ownership and legacy, and caste discrimination, although this is often not maintained due to continuing dominance of these practices. Depictions of Sikh women in history have not only been of caring roles, but also of courageous warriors, such as Mai Bhago Ji and Sada Kaur, who fought in battles against the Mughal Empire (Kaur, 2004), and Maharani Jind Kaur, 'the Rebel Queen' who led the Sikh Empire and fought British rule (Grewal, 2010).

1.6.2 Collective social action

Black Feminist movements and activist groups such as the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) campaigned in the 1970s-80s on issues of immigration policy, gender-based violence, and police brutality (Chohan, 2013). Southall Black Sisters continues as an organisation supporting women from Afro-Caribbean and Asian backgrounds subjected to gendered and racial violence.

Examples of activism in the current socio-political context are the elder women protesting farming bills proposed by the Indian government. Since November 2020, hundreds of thousands of farmers from north-western Indian agricultural states have been protesting in Delhi to repeal new market laws and protect their livelihoods. The number of increasing farmer suicides as a result of economic losses due to agricultural reform provides a stark demonstration of the impact of economic and political context on survival, which cannot be separated or understand in terms of individualised psychology or pathology (Mills, 2014). Elders have been a key part of the movement, as those who have lived through and fought against decades of suffering from political violence and persecution. Images, quotes and videos of elder women's stories have been shared all over social media, and made a Time magazine cover and article in March 2021 (Bhowmick & Sonthalia, 2021), demonstrating the resolve and resistance of these elder women.

1.6.3 Storytelling as social action

Mand (2008) documented the *Ekta* (Oneness) Project, a voluntary organisation in East London who work with elder South Asian women. They have a variety of community engagement projects, the *yaada* (remembrances) project for example, where women tell stories about their migration from Punjab. One participant reported "there is no one to hear our stories and it's very important and very near to our heart. Children have no time to ... we try to revive them [oral narratives] in the form of drama, poetry, dance and plays" (p. 198). Mand interprets the quote as demonstrating a change in intergenerational relations, but that this allows for stories to be told beyond the family. The project then became written and performed as a play, in collaboration with local sixth form students. Intergenerational storytelling projects like this can be considered a form of social action, where elders are activists leaving a legacy for younger generations.

Oral storytelling is part of Punjabi tradition, for Punjabi women particularly poetry and song. The use of *boliyan* for example, couplets that are sung at festivals or celebrations, the content of which are sometimes about difficult situations or memories, such as violence and loss, are performed in a light, sing-song manner. David (2015) wrote about the cathartic nature of these performances, of stories which might not be able to be shared elsewhere, to be able to transform, accept, and heal from them.

1.7 Existing research of surviving hardship with Sikh Punjabi women

A scoping review was carried out to examine existing academic research of surviving hardship with Sikh Punjabi women. I did not exclude studies based on age at this point, as this vastly reduced the number of relevant results, but age is discussed in the review. The studies are grouped into subcategories based on the subjects they look at.

1.7.1 Constructing health and wellbeing

Dyck & Dossa (2006) interpreted practices of constructing a healthy place and home, through the lens of gender and migration, from their interviews with Punjabi immigrant women in Canada. They referred to the importance of being able to cook healthy Punjabi vegetarian meals, from scratch, as part of their daily routine. This relied on access to the necessary ingredients in an established Sikh Punjabi community of shops, and help with cooking from family members, facilitating the construction of a healthy home and family. They also referred to the importance of Sikh daily prayers, particularly in the morning to start the day. The authors consider this an embodied practice of building a healthy, healing home, in spiritual, material and social dimensions. Chapman et al. (2011) also reported the importance of food for elder Sikh women in demonstrating care, attentiveness and nourishment for family members, particularly the importance of traditional food in making one physically and psycho-socially strong.

Dhillon & Humble (2020) interviewed five Punjabi immigrant women aged 65-68 living in Canada about their social relationships and constructs of mental health. They interpreted three 'themes'; (1) having freedom yet not feeling free, being restricted to family relationships due to lack of community connection, (2) having a happy family means having good mental health, and (3) wanting more ways to connect with other older Punjabi women. Interestingly, whereas the three women who had only been in Canada for a few years reported having good mental health, the two women who had been in Canada for three decades spoke more about 'hardships' and not always being mentally happy. They reported not having anyone to speak to about this, and were reported as slightly resistant to talking about this in the interview, instead describing relying on prayer to get them through. They also reported attending the *Gurdwara* as a way to connect with other women, as well as collectively connecting to God in group prayer, and through doing *seva* to

bring peace of mind. However, they also reported challenges in potential stigma of talking about 'mental health' with others from a similar background.

1.7.2 Surviving breast cancer

Four Canadian studies focused on breast cancer specifically. Using a narrative approach, Howard et al. (2007) analysed stories from twelve Punjabi immigrant women aged 34-63 years, 11 who identified as Sikh. The authors presented the following overarching narratives: (1) getting through a family crisis, (2) dealing with just another health problem, (3) living with never-ending fear and suffering, (4) learning a lesson from God, and (5) being part of a close-knit family. The latter was considered the most pronounced influence in the women's stories, for example the family's support in helping keep the women busy, active and positive, rather than spending time thinking too much. Some women also spoke about hiding the illness from family members initially, in order to protect them from worry and the stigma associated with cancer. Some of the women spoke about their faith in God and the illness helping to reaffirm their commitment to meditation, *paath (reading or recitation from SGGS)*, and going to the *Gurdwara* to do *seva*. The authors noted that the women rarely used the word 'cancer', that stories relating to worry, fear and pain were often left unfinished, and interpreted that the women attempted to portray themselves as strong.

Bottorff et al. (2007) conducted a narrative analysis of 25 Punjabi immigrant womens' stories of breast cancer symptom discovery. Four types of stories were interpreted: (1) construction of symptoms as nothing serious, where women had not considered breast cancer and were encouraged to dismiss health concerns, (2) descriptions of mounting suspicion, concern and tension with a beckoning realisation that their symptoms might not be normal, (3) vivid imagery dominated by fear, contrasting with stories of downplaying symptoms to protect their family, and (4) drawing the strength to face whatever comes, from supportive extended families, religious beliefs, and a need to provide care for their families. These studies speak to the importance of social and spiritual health and resources in the womens' stories of surviving breast cancer, and also the importance of maintaining their care-giving role within the family.

Gurm et al. (2008) conducted a thematic analysis of focus groups with 21 Punjabi-speaking women aged 30-85 years, 15 whom identified as Sikh. They

interpreted the most common 'theme' being the women's relationship with God, giving them strength, solace, meaning, purpose and will to continue. This also translated to what they call "positive coping behaviours" (p. 271), such as doing *paath* and visiting the *Gurdwara*, which helped to connect with a sense of meaning. They also spoke about changing their diet and exercise routines, in response to feeling the cancer was a message from God to pay greater attention to their health. Most of the women did not report concerns about disclosing their diagnosis to family members, describing them as emotionally and practically supportive. However, some women spoke about the family-in-law's unrelenting expectations of continuing with childcare duties, even immediately post-treatment, therefore family was not storied as helpful for all women. There was a reported sense of gratitude for the focus group space, which elicited feelings of safety in shared experiences and common language.

Balneaves et al. (2007) used an ethnographic approach to thematic analysis of interviews with Punjabi immigrant women with breast cancer, age 32-69, and their families. They observed a common narration from a shared perspective of "we", indicating a collective struggle. The authors interpreted six "support strategies" in families: (1) practical support, to attend appointments, assist with daily tasks and take over care-giving responsibilities, often from daughters, daughter-in-laws and grand-daughters, (2) praying to God to keep their hearts strong, (3) using positive talk to give each other courage and hope, making their hearts strong, (4) advocating during medical appointments, (5) monitoring disclosure and discussion of diagnosis for some, due to a fear of the impact on other family members and/ or stigma from the community, and (6) ensuring the women were always safe, with company, and distracted from worry. This study highlighted the collective experience of cancer diagnosis in families, the reciprocal nature of caregiving, and the recurring narrative around having a strong heart.

1.7.3 Surviving family conflict and violence

Ahuja et al. (2003) constructed a model of 'coping' with their husbands drinking and abuse, based on interviews with 24 Sikh Punjabi wives aged 33-64, living in the West Midlands. The women storied a consistent narrative of their duty to continue to care for their husband and children. They also storied moving back and forth between despondency/resignation, standing up for themselves, and attempting to change their husband's behaviour. Some women also storied feeling

isolated with a lack of opportunities for help from others. The author's model appeared to present stages, with some wives 'progressing' towards the final stage of independence and detachment from their partner. This sounds like a value-judgement that this should be the end goal to achieve, rather than one possibility. They also related this end stage with those who discovered more Western values of freedom, which reminds me again of the narrative of the British 'civilising' mission. One might also question the use of a 'coping' framework, given there is no direct translation or meaning in Punjabi language.

Mucina (2015) interviewed five second-generation Sikh Punjabi women in Canada, whose ages are not given, about surviving so-called 'honour' related violence. These women storied: (1) negotiating safety and survival, for example in secret spaces/lives, (2) grief and loss, and (3) challenging and reclaiming narratives of '*izzat*', including the honour of mothering. Mucina acknowledged potential problems with neoliberal narratives of freedom and choice, which pervade discussions around relational abuse and conflict. Often related to notions of individual human rights, these narratives perhaps rely on the assumption that all women have access to the same freedoms and choices, and value this over family and community connection. Countering this, the womens' stories, Mucina's analysis and autoethnography, demonstrated the complexities of their emotions, meanings, relationships and dilemmas, with narratives of loving connection alongside strength in resistance, which my summary here cannot capture.

1.7.4 Surviving multiple oppressions

Guru (1987) examined interviews and observations with 86 Punjabi women in Birmingham, the majority of whom identified as Sikh, through a lens of 'triple-oppression' based on constructs of gender, race and class. Oppression was storied in families, neighbourhoods, schools, employment, policing, policy and legislation. Resistance was storied as individual protest (both imagined and acted on), unity and collective action through political organisations, although the latter was often younger, second-generation Punjabi women. Elder Punjabi women storied finding strength and courage from the *Gurdwara*, moral support from other Punjabi elder women, challenging and negotiating compromises on family issues, and sometimes adopting oppressive practices and narratives of self-sacrifice with younger family members. The latter was storied as a form of resistance, perhaps as method of reclaiming power and agency over others where there appeared a lack of

alternatives. A sense of increased assertiveness within the family was often storied by women who storied a lack of power and resources outside of the family sphere, during a time of violent socio-political struggle in 1980s Britain. This helps to understand how narratives and practices of family/community cohesion and preservation of 'honour' are strengthened, re-told and re-lived, as a method of reclaiming power and resistance against the oppression 'outside', rather than the supposed 'freedom' of independence. It would be interesting to see how women story and make sense of this now.

Benigno (2020) interpreted narratives of intergenerational trauma, shame and humiliation, from mothers and daughters who survived the 1947 partition and 1984 anti-Sikh violence in India. From ethnographic research and interviews, Benigno suggested that this societal violence, hate and disdain was turned inwards for some mothers, and onto their daughters, whereas sons were positioned as a hope for continuing ancestral lines and survival in the face of political attempts to erase Sikh families. The author also presented a counter to minority world (Western) narratives of childhood as innocent, with narratives from these Punjabi women and children who had been exposed to generations of violence, separation and loss.

Arora and Ahluwalia's book chapter (2014) explored the gendered sacrifice of womens' bodies in the name of protection against oppression from outsiders, giving the example of Sikh daughters being killed by their fathers during partition riots, rather than risk them being captured, raped and converted by non-Sikh rioters. This narrative of sacrifice however means that gendered oppression within the community often continues unaddressed. The authors referred to research suggesting that for this reason Sikh Punjabi women, who are 'triple minoritised' in America, are less likely to seek psychotherapy and accept help from 'outside' professionals, preferring to seek solace in Sikhi, other family and community members (Ahluwalia & Zaman, 2009). The authors described a conflict between Sikh teachings of gender equality, and the lived reality of culturally oppressive practices, asking Sikh Punjabi women take solace, validation and empowerment in the Gurus' written words, which families can also use to seek clarity with their tensions, and therapists can use to arm themselves with knowledge.

Jakobsh (2015) analysed young diasporic Sikh womens' constructions of identity on the internet. The *dastaar* (turban) is offered as an image of resistance, to

maintain a unique identity in the face of a hostile environment. This is more often associated with Sikh men, however the image and presence of women wearing *dastaar* are increasing online, along with narratives of resisting colonial and heteropatriarchal performativity of gender. Although this research was with younger women, it speaks to the visible performance of resistance for Sikh women, through dress and attire.

Singh (2019) analysed four pieces of non-fiction written by diasporic Sikh Punjabi women in America, to understand their constructions of gender, identity and Sikhi. Meeta Kaur storied conflict and confusion about her identity, eventually finding resolution through lived awareness of God, interconnectedness and peace, which allowed her to let go of the pain of restrictions placed on her by social constructions of 'Sikh woman'. Harsohena Kaur also storied questioning the constructs of femininity and Sikhi, solidifying her own construction of Sikhi as resisting political oppression of religious freedom, and submitting to her role as a mother passing on this version of Sikhi to her son, with an ongoing conflict between her connection with Sikhi and 'the dreams of women', of which she storied having few opportunities. Harleen Kaur storied finding traditional spaces to resist patriarchal marginalisation by singing provocative Punjabi folk songs, and her ongoing struggle of 'appropriating' the *dastaar,* which she narrated as transgressing traditional boundaries of femininity and masculinity. Finally, Mandeep Kaur and Neesha Kaur storied their 'queer' love and connection with Sikhi as resistance against discrimination of women and homophobia. Singh reflected on these narratives as challenging and reconstructing traditionally cis-hetero-masculine representations of what it means to be a 'true' Sikh.

1.7.5 A Sikh praxis

Luthra (2017) interviewed Sikh Punjabi women in America, belonging to activist organisations responding to post-9/11 violence towards the Sikh Community. Their ages are not given. Luthra suggested that academic literature tends to story diasporic identity through a nostalgic process of looking to the past, attempting to preserve a historic way of life, which is assumed to be an authentic expression of a community's culture and heritage. However, the women Luthra interviewed storied looking forwards and outwards, navigating their shifting role as Sikh women within a global community. For example, in engaging with American civil rights and women's rights movements, as aligning with a Sikh praxis of equality

for all. In performing this Sikh praxis, these women were not only focused on preservation of the Sikh community and Punjabi values, but also the survival of humanity and the values that Sikhi was founded on.

1.7.6 Conclusions and opportunities

This review, although a brief summary of existing literature, demonstrated multiple complex and often conflicting narratives of surviving hardship in studies with Sikh Punjabi women. The majority of this research was conducted in North America, however, as previously demonstrated, Sikh Punjabi women have a specific history and context in Britain, which is not represented above. There is also a lack of specific research of elders' narratives of survival and resistance, as performance of Sikh praxis. I hope to attend to these gaps in the literature, with the research aims, rationale and task set out below.

1.8 Aims and rationale

In order to work towards a psychology of liberation, we must witness and pay appropriate attention to stories and knowledge that are subjugated in psychological research (Martín-Baró, 1994). There is a tendency within research and practice to present the needs of 'South Asian' diasporic communities as uniform, failing to acknowledge the heterogeneity of religious and cultural beliefs, norms, concepts and practices. Therefore, part of a liberatory praxis involves acknowledging the rich and specific histories of people that are not grouped into categories such as BAME and POC for ease of reference as anything 'other' than Whiteness (Wood & Patel, 2017). The proposed research will therefore focus on the Sikh Punjabi community in the UK. By focusing on stories from elder women specifically from this community, who are especially under-represented in research, I hope this project will provide alternatives to Anglo-centric, Andro-centric and 'working-age' adult-centric hegemony of psychological research and practice. I also hope to provide an opportunity to witness and share elder womens' storytelling, so that their stories are not lost, and show that elder women are actively engaged in praxis for social change and liberation (Castro Romero, 2015). In doing so I hope to add to research that helps inform psychological practice and provision.

1.8.1 Research questions

1. How do elder Sikh Punjabi women in the UK story and make sense of surviving hardship?
2. How do these narratives represent and contribute towards liberatory praxis?

2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the study methodology, ethical considerations, design and procedure used to address the research questions and analyse results. I will begin by discussing my philosophical position in relation to the research and how this informed the process.

2.1 Philosophical assumptions: Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology

Ontology is concerned with 'what can be known' about our world, and epistemology is concerned with 'how we come to 'know' it' (Harper, 2011). This shapes how we engage with and understand research and knowledge, as both producers and consumers, and is thus relevant to my role in developing, designing and analysing this research. While not taking away from their value, the epistemologies we currently study were developed by White European men and informed by Western philosophical traditions, so arguably might not be the most useful for this particular research. A more helpful framing of my philosophical position might be to consider its axiology. Axiology refers to the inextricable link between the researcher's aim, values, and how the research can make a valuable contribution; by actively reflecting and engaging with my position and values as the researcher, axiology can be considered as offering a process of transformation and liberation from oppressive status-quo in research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Considering the research aims, participants, and my own values, I think of a Sikh philosophy as my framework of engaging with the research.

2.1.1 Sikh Philosophy

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (SGGS) is considered the main religious text and surviving Guru, which guides what we know about truth and reality from Sikhi. My interpretation is that God is the only One Eternal True Reality, beyond what our senses can comprehend, and that everything else is a temporary illusion. Therefore, over-attachment to this material world, and the resulting selfishness, egoism, fear and hate created by humans' limited perception of separateness is meaningless, but engaging with humility and devotion to the True Reality leaves only room for love, respect and acceptance for all existence as One. This philosophical stance has informed my motivation to practice values of compassion, love, respect and liberation for all people and, as such, I see this research as a form of service with these values in mind. I also acknowledge my own limitations in terms of knowledge

of Sikhi, Westernisation, and my own ability to succumb to egoism and fear, which also influences the research process. As Nandy (1983) noted, "The West has not merely produced modern colonialism, it informs most interpretations of colonialism. It colours even this interpretation of interpretation" (p.12).

2.2 Narrative methodology

Given the above importance of reflecting on my own position and values, and the research aims and questions, a qualitative design was adopted, to allow room for complex and nuanced interpretations of how elder Sikh Punjabi women story and make sense of surviving hardship.

Narrative approaches are interested in how people story and make sense of their lives. Telling stories can be seen as a method that people use every day, and so is naturalistic (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013). Narrative analysis focuses on interpreting rich individual stories, within their social and historical context, of which there are multiple and often conflicting meanings. This approach allows for a diversity of narratives, to counteract dominant or hegemonic narratives of a group, by allowing space for less heard stories. The narrative approach is also well suited to the common use of storytelling by South Asian women, as a means of sharing significant and sensitive skills and knowledge (Bottorff et al., 1998), and to the oral traditions of Punjabi culture (Nayar, 2004).

For these reasons, a narrative approach was deemed more appropriate than other qualitative methods, such as focusing on language as priority (Discourse Analysis), collective similarities and recurring themes (Thematic Analysis), or internal embodied experience, which can neglect wider social stories and histories (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis).

2.2.1 Ethno-Poetic Narrative Approach

There is no one way of doing narrative research, and a variety of approaches have been used in existing research, guided by the data and the researchers position to the data and research questions. The analysis for this project is based on a combination of typological models, primarily ethnographic and poetic approaches. This decision was based on my background reading, responses after listening to, transcribing and reading interviews, collective dialogue in group

supervision, and the relation to poetry, song and literature in Sikhi and Punjabi culture.

Riessman (1993; 2002) described poetic structure narrative analysis, as a process of transcribing, coding, analysing and interpreting interview data. She built on the work of Gee (1991), to focus not only on the content of stories told, but analysis of linguistic features and devices used in how the narrative is spoken, organising into lines, stanzas and idea units. However, structural approaches do not take into account the interpersonal and contextual factors involved in narration. Performative approaches acknowledge the listener as key in the co-construction of narratives, as an audience to the 'performance' of the storyteller (Riessman, 2005a). In this way the performance is seen as a 'doing' rather than just a 'telling', with intentions to move the audience in some way, for example as praxis, a form of social action. Following this, ethnographic analysis views narratives as following larger social and cultural patterns of storytelling (Cook and Crang, 1995). Social roles are performed between listener and speaker, who are "political and cultural actors" (Squire, 2008: p.55). Therefore, narratives and narration can be seen to build on collective identities, becoming frames for constructing experiences (Bruner, 2004). I therefore invite you, the reader, to actively engage with the emotion of the material, and allow yourself to be moved by your interpretations.

Part of contextualising narratives includes drawing on ideas of polyphony, heteroglossia and narrative unconscious. Polyphony is the idea that a person's story is never completely their own, but a weaving together of other voices and stories, re-told and re-constructed (Bakhtin, 1981). Heteroglossia refers to the way stories are assembled using multiple codes of language (Frank, 2012), which feels particularly important when analysing narratives from multilingual storytellers. Narrative unconscious refers to the narratives of social, cultural and political events which resonate through history, influencing how people collectively conceptualise themselves, and how dominant stories within cultures influence personal experience (Raskin, 2002). Listening for this 'unconscious' includes paying attention to what is omitted and unspoken, as well as what is repeated and emphasised, as part of the story.

Given the active role of the researcher in co-constructing narratives, it was important to acknowledge the role of power in relationships with storytellers and how knowledge is constructed (Cook & Crang, 1995). Engaging in reflexivity and

awareness of how my own narratives were brought to the research process was important in contextualising narratives and allowing space to explore multiple possibilities (Elliot, 2005). The process of analysis will be described after data collection methods, below.

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Recruitment

Initially, I planned to recruit participants in person by engaging with local Gurdwaras, where a lot of older Sikh communities regularly attend, and as I was not looking specifically for a 'clinical' population. However, lockdown restrictions in response to Covid-19 meant that places of worship were no longer open as usual, therefore this was no longer possible. Participants were therefore recruited by sharing a research poster (appendix B) on social media and with personal contacts, with a 'snowball-effect' of participants sharing information with their own contacts who might be interested. If participants were willing, I contacted them by telephone to provide further information and discuss any questions. Conversations were held in both English and Punjabi. Once participants were happy to continue, I arranged a time and medium for the interview, depending on preference and access to technology.

2.3.2 Participants

Participants were deemed appropriate for the study if they:
- identify as women from a Sikh Punjabi background
- currently live in the UK
- speak English and/or Punjabi
- are over 50 years old

I initially planned to recruit participants who were over the age of 70 years old, with the rationale that they may be more connected with 'traditional' Sikh Punjabi values and less influenced by 'Western' ideas about psychology, and are also less represented in research. However, due to Coronavirus restrictions, and as older people use technology in different ways, recruitment became more challenging. I therefore changed the minimum age in the hope of reaching more people. Relevant participant demographics are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Years in the UK	Language of interview
Jassi Kaur	60	Born in the UK	English
Sukhbinder Kaur	62	43	English and Punjabi
Paramjeet Kaur	83	63	Punjabi
Kulwinder Kaur	64	41	English and Punjabi

Psychological research typically excludes non-English-speaking participants, justified as an attempt to manage cross-language barriers (Esposito, 2001). This leads to a lack of diverse representation, and further marginalisation of non-English speaking people's stories. By excluding these voices from public narratives, they are given less power and legitimacy, which contributes to a form of hermeneutical injustice, by denying public access to knowledge outside of hegemonic narratives (Fricker, 2007). It was therefore important for me to include participants who were not fluent in English, and were given the option to speak in Punjabi.

2.3.3 Interview design and procedure

Interviews lasted between 74 and 90 minutes. Three interviews were conducted mostly in English, with some Punjabi words and phrases. One interview was conducted in Punjabi, with the help of the participants' family member who helped interpret my questions from English to Punjabi, and helped to interpret some Punjabi words to English for me. Two of the interviews were held on Microsoft Teams, one via phone call, and one via video call. All interviews were audio recorded, and two were also visually recorded.

Within the narrative approach, the role of the researcher is a 'traveller' rather than a 'miner' (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, interview questions were kept to a minimum, allowing participants the freedom to narrate their stories in their own directions. However, it is also important to acknowledge that stories are co-constructed during the process of narrative research, rather than being viewed as

de-contextualised 'data collection'. I used guides and prompts to begin with, and where participants stopped or asked for more questions or guidance (appendix C). Questions and prompts were used to elicit not just stories of hardship, but also of survival, resistance, relief, liberation, connection and celebration, in line with the research aims and questions.

Interview questions were designed to be clear, straight-forward and relevant in both English and Punjabi. No psychological jargon or words that do not easily translate to Punjabi were used. I discussed the wording of questions with my bilingual family members and friends to get feedback around clarity and meaning. During the interview, I made notes about things to ask follow-up questions on and, after the interview, I made notes on impressions and other details which might not be captured on the recording and subsequent transcript.

2.3.4 Transcription and analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and denoted tone, pauses, emphasis, emotional signals such as laughter and crying, and other visual cues or expressions where interviews were via video. Transcribing can be seen as part of the analytical process, requiring many listenings and readings for these different aspects.

Riessman's levels of representation (1993), and Dunkley's approach to poetic analysis (2018) were used to inform transcription and analysis. Analysis focused broadly on micro (individual), meso (interpersonal) and macro (societal) levels, guided by questions at each stage (see appendix D). As well as personal narratives and narration, these sought to take into account my responses and role in co-construction, and collective stories about surviving hardship.

2.3.4.1 Translation and interpretation

The process of translation inevitably results in some loss of meaning, which is re-constructed in the process of interpretation to a new conceptual and cultural context (Esposito, 2001). Some Punjabi words and phrases were therefore retained in the transcription, instead offering English interpretations in the analysis. Translation was checked with another Punjabi-speaker, to ensure accuracy and validity, and explore alternative meanings.

<u>2.3.5 Ethical considerations</u>

The British Psychological Society's (2021) guidance for research ethics was consulted and considered as follows.

2.3.5.1 Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the research was granted from the UEL School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-Committee, before recruitment took place (appendix E).

2.3.5.2 Informed consent and right to withdraw

An information sheet (appendix F) was shared with all participants prior to interviewing. A screening call was also arranged prior to interviews in order to allow a chance to explain the research verbally and allow space for questions, particularly with participants whose first language is Punjabi. Consent forms (appendix G) were sent and received prior to interviews. Before interviews began, I confirmed participants had understood all the information in the information sheet and consent form, had the opportunity to ask questions, and were happy to continue. I reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point, without giving a reason, and invited them to speak as openly as they wished.

2.3.5.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants were made aware of the limits to confidentiality given that the aim of the research is to write up and share their stories with the possibility for wider dissemination. However, participants were assured that pseudonyms will be used and identifiable information removed in order to preserve their anonymity.

2.3.5.4 Distress and debriefing

Participants were made aware of the potential for distress through the interview, and I attempted to be sensitive and attuned to possible signs of distress. I reminded participants of their choice in what they wanted to share, and that they could pause or end the interview at any time. After each interview, space was given for discussing any distressing material that may have come up and signposting support for this if appropriate. Space was also offered for informal comments, feedback and questions about the research and process of interviewing. All

participants were sent a debrief sheet (appendix H). There was no deception involved in this research study.

3. RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of analysis for each individual participant. Each section will begin with a brief introduction to the participant's overall narrative and sub-narratives, followed by examples of re-constructed poems to demonstrate these, and interpretations below them. Bold text is used to denote emphasis, by increase in volume and pitch, for example. Forward slashes are used where there is a pause or break. Italics are used for Punjabi language, with translations offered in footnotes. Text in square brackets is added for clarity and non-verbal aspects.

3.1 Jassi: "We did feel protected when there was loads of us"

Jassi narrated her story as chapters of her life, based on transitions such her childhood ending, getting married, starting work, and getting divorced. Her language and use of metaphor suggested an overall narrative of continuously fighting battles, with the following sub-narratives about survival interpreted: (1) family and community protection, (2) collective resourcefulness, (3) being an active tomboy, (4) mental preparation, and (5) rebellion.

Jassi described fond memories of her childhood, despite lacking material wealth:

There was always somebody around [...]
it was probably one of the happiest and
most comfortable times of my life. /

Um / it's **really weird**
how you remember certain things
like snow and stuff like that /
and having to walk /
to school which was quite far /
Um, getting my feet wet
in the snow and stuff,
I suppose we didn't have cars in those days /
and having the **coal fire** in the **cold**,
that just bought that back. /
[47-58]

Um, I think we were the second people on the street
to get black and white TV /
uh, and that was exciting /
that was **very** exciting /
you know, and everyone used to come round /
used to be about fifteen twenty of us,
all **huddled** in our room watching TV. /
[109-114]

Jassi used sensory imagery to paint a vivid picture. She spoke of material hardship, being cold, and making a slog of a journey to school. However, she told the story with a smile on her face and a nostalgic tone, almost reliving while telling the story, perhaps because it was shared with loved ones and seen as normal at the time, in contrast to feeling strange now that things are different. Jassi telling me about getting the TV may have been a way of conveying a sense of novelty and luxury, to counteract the material lacking, by repeating and emphasising how exciting it was. This was also shared with her family, and there was a sense of closeness and warmth, despite the cold outside. I wonder if this was Jassi's sense of home, love and belonging; a large extended family who provided comfort, joy and shelter from the harsh world outside.

Jassi storied her play with other children:

I didn't have a lot of **material** things [...]
we didn't have any games
but we, we, we **made** games you know [...]
[97-105]

We used to play,
used to make our own **carts**, /
racing carts, /
out of **boxes** /
and planks of **wood** /
and find old **wheels** from people's houses
from, from **shopping trolleys** and /
so we could **race** them /

So I was like, you know, trying to **make** things. /
[358-376]

Using "we" often, Jassi told a collective story of playing with her cousins and other children in the neighbourhood. She spoke with wide eyes, an excited tone and eager emphasis on the objects they collected, racing to tell me the story as if reliving the thrill of it. Jassi again moved from talking about lacking, this time towards collaborative creativity and resourcefulness, sharing the gratification of making something from nothing.

Jassi then storied the isolation she felt at school:

[The teacher] could have been talking in an **alien** language [...]
I did **not** know what she was talking about. /
uh and school dinners /
knife and fork? **What** knife and fork?! /
We had **roti!** We used our **hands!**
So I remember being **absolutely petrified** at school /

Um, being a little bit bullied,
I used have two plaits and they used to
pull my hair /
and "Ding Dong P*ki",
and stuff like that /

um / and because I didn't speak much English,
it was **really hard** to let the teachers know what was going on. [...]
and we used to make friends with other Punjabis, so we could chat to them /
so I think maybe that's why English took a little bit longer [...]

But I remember the only thing that got me through was
playing skipping, playing with balls up against the wall, *[...]*
'cause I was quite good with/ with tennis balls and all the little games /
and being able to **play** with the other kids /
where you didn't need the language as much /
using like a double skipping rope and you could get in /
It's like "**go go go!**" and they just push you that you can go in next, so /

38

[472-558]

Jassi narrated the alienation of everyone speaking and eating so differently to what she was used to, as if she had arrived on another planet. A 'them and us' narrative was presented; with segregation and marginalisation demonstrated by the other children in their abuse, by teachers in their lack of support, and the Punjabi children seeking each other for the comfort of familiarity. Being invited and encouraged to jump into play, however, allowed Jassi to feel included, providing a sense of capability and belonging.

Jassi narrated this playfulness being taken away from her in adolescence by her parents:

It's like **night and day**
[462]

everything stopped
as far as me being a kid was concerned /
there was no playing, /
there was no games, /
there was **no** going out. / [...]

my brothers could still play outside,
play football and have mates /
and here I was,
looking out through the window,
ironing all their clothes /

my only solace was being able to go
to my cousin's house, [...]
uh and seeing that family community / [...]

um my way of rebelling was um uh /
throwing all my clothes out of the cupboard
and just throwing them all on the floor /
uh Mum is a **super clean freak** [...]/
So for her to come into my room, /

and see all my clothes piled up in the corner, on the chair, on the floor, /
would **infuriate** her / [...]

and I think for me, being such a tomboy,
and being so **physically** active,
and then all of a sudden
it was like, like, almost constricting /
like [making squeezing hand movement]
ahhh!!!
[969-1053]

Jassi storied a sudden adultification after age eleven, with different gender norms for herself and her younger brothers, who she was expected to clean and cook for, perhaps in preparation for doing the same for a husband. Her repetition, emphasis and metaphorical use of light to darkness, connotes a totalising sense that all joy was lost. Her story of looking out of the window longingly denotes a sense of mourning for the life she had. Her physical description and embodied enactment of constriction, denotes feeling as if she could not breathe, that life was taken away from her. Jassi storied anger and injustice about this, responding by provoking a response in her mother, who maybe felt safer to express anger towards than her father, whose silence is powerful here, denoting an unspoken fearfulness. Jassi storied relief in reuniting with her cousins, perhaps returning to a feeling of belonging and solidarity, rather than feeling alone in her struggle. This story contrasts with Jassi's initial story of home, which moves from being a shelter to a prison, although safer than the cruel world outside, which Jassi storied below:

There was an **awful** lot of racism/
an **awful** lot / [...]

So I've been
spat at, um /
hair pulled, /
pushed / uh /
P*ki was always the same,
"You smell P*ki", "go home P*ki", / [...]
they'd like **SHOVE** you into wall /
or shove you into one of the bushes / [...]

> **That's** when you became very fast runners /
> you know um, long distance running
> and fast running
> was a **specialty** of mine in those days [laughing] /
>
> out of **necessity** /
> out of **necessity** /
> [603-690]

Jassi emphasised the awfulness of racism, with the use of past tense suggesting a separation between then and now. In the second stanza Jassi delivers a harsh emphasis, denoting a sense of violence, particularly the powerful impact of being shoved, perhaps psychologically as well as physically. This denotes all-powerful perpetrators, who Jassi earlier told me were groups of White boys. In the fourth stanza Jassi denotes her sense of agency, and laughs talking about running as her specialty, making light of the heaviness, but also narrating active resistance. This reminded me of Jassi's narrative of a "tomboy" identity, perhaps appropriating constructions of masculinity to denote a sense of power and control, providing a counter-narrative to stories of women and girls, particularly South Asians, as helpless victims.

Jassi storied the normalisation of racial abuse and the importance of being prepared:

> If it happened, you were half expecting it / [...]
> If you got picked on, it was a **normal day** /
> **Lucky** they didn't do **more** /
>
> And, and it almost became like, well /
> I'm **only** getting spat at /
> I'm **only** getting my hair pulled /
> I'm **only** getting pushed into a wall or a bush,
> they could push me down on the floor and start kicking me /
> you know, where you think, some of the older boys might have had that / [...]
>
> It's like, you wake up in the morning and the sun's out,

"oh my God, the sun's out!",

well, **it's there** /

you know what I mean?

You either wear a hat, /

stay inside, /

if you're going to go outside, put protection on /

[742-786]

The metaphor of the sun rising daily denotes racial violence as regular and unavoidable, and perhaps a given aspect of living in Britain, as the historical narrative suggests, "the sun never sets on the British Empire". Mental preparation was therefore part of Jassi's daily routine. Her matter-of-fact tone denotes a separation of logic from feeling, of head from heart. "I'm only" becomes a mantra, looking to the positive to minimise fear and pain, and find courage to face the day. Jassi described being a young girl as a privilege here, compared with the imagined or witnessed violence towards older boys. This story reflects the constant threat of violence for racialised communities in the 1970s-1980s, who could only rely on each other for protection, as we see below:

We **did** feel protected when there was loads of us

we **never** had any trouble when there was loads of us,

no way! [...]

uh, as a group, I could say,

with my hand on my heart,

never had any trouble,

never,

not once / [...]

so it's **definitely** safety in numbers,

definitely

[821-837]

This story denotes the power of collective resistance against violence, which Jassi spoke to with conviction. I am reminded of the concept of *Sant-Sipahi* (Saint-Soldier), to show no fear, and to defend those who cannot fight for themselves. The phrase of her hand on her heart denotes a sense of truthfulness, sincerity, and

42

suggests a reconciliation with her heart. Perhaps Jassi only felt truly safe, connected and whole when she was surrounded and protected by her community.

Jassi storied her hopes of marriage offering freedom:

Um, I rebelled, that was my first time I rebelled, was when I got **married** / [...]
I started wearing loads of **makeup**, 'cause I was never allowed to wear makeup,
I took my husband, who had a **turban**, and we both went to the hairdressers and we cut our hair really **short,**
I started wearing English clothes, instead of Indian suits,
And everybody was like [takes big breath in], "**hawww,** look what she's done!" / [...]
[1261-1271]

and I think for me it was um /
Going through all the bad experiences, thinking,
once I got married I wouldn't have any bad experiences, /
that this was now my way to **shine** /
[1599-1603]

By constructing a visibly more "English" look, Jassi again provoked a response from her family. She narrated leading her husband in rebellion with her, as opposed to being led, perhaps a demonstration of taking back her power, and the hope of an ally. Jassi seemed to associate keeping long hair, a turban, and Indian clothes, with oppression and restriction, and therefore constructed a narrative of liberation by opposing these. However, I wonder if sacrificing her visible Sikh identity was a response to the physical and psychological abuse she experienced, like pulling and mocking her hair, making her feel like she needed to cut off this part of her, in order to feel safe and accepted in Britain. It feels like an attempt to move away from the old painful chapter by creating a new one, with marriage offering a light at the end of the tunnel. However, this hope was not realised for Jassi, whose husband became violent towards her, which she narrated her response to below:

Then all of a sudden,
to be oppressed again /
because it went from my **mum and Dad** control,

to a **husband** control

[1609-1612]

So, even then, for me to mention the word divorce, /

was **so bad** [shakes head] /

And I was like "**no!** I'm gonna do it",

and my cousins are like, "**no!** your dad will never do it, oh my God!

don't, no, don't, look just, you know,

it be fine,

it be fine,

it be fine."

I was like "**no** /

no" / [...]

and I think, um, I **think** it **was** the influence of my work colleagues, and

some of my friends,

that gave me / um, a **place** where I could go and talk / to someone else,

instead of the family telling me, "it's okay to be hit," / […]

"no, it's not, you've got other options / [...]

You're **working** now, you're **independent**." /

I was moving up the ladder as far as I could see so **that** was my way out /

Being secure, **money wise**, and being secure, **job** wise, was my way out /

[1328-1353]

The suddenness reminds me of the 'night and day' metaphor, of joy being taken away from her, by her imagined protector. Again, storying the psychological impact of further violence and the crushing blow of having her hopes shattered. The repetition in her cousins' narrative reminds me of the earlier mantra, normalising abuse and being grateful it is not worse. However, this time Jassi rejected this, again taking back control, this time to fight for herself. Jassi exemplifies *Sant-Sipahi* here, being guided by what she believes is right and just, and remaining strong in her defence. Although she goes against the grain of her family's advice, she has also been shaped by a collective culture of defence and protection from harm. Jassi appeared to find a new sense of community strength in her (non-Punjabi?) work colleagues and friends, and hope in new stories and possibilities. This contrasts with the 'them and us' narrative, blurring the lines between imagined oppressor and

protector. She also described finding freedom in financial security and her career, which not all women will have access to.

In her final chapter, Jassi storied reminiscing with her family:

We **laugh** now /
"Oh do you remember when Uncle got you by the hair and **smacked** you round the head? [laughing] and you went flying through the window ha ha ha."
"Yeah, that's f*cking **child abuse,** woman!" [laughing]
But at the time /
you know, like it, it's funny /
[1430-1435]

Just try bring back the happier times, as well as remembering some of the sh*t times
but putting a **spin** on it, really /
[1470-1471]

The harshness in Jassi's tone feels at odds with her laughter and talking about abuse as funny. Perhaps hardships are made speakable and less painful by using humour to transform them, and by making an effort to also tell stories of joyful times, allowing room for both grief and celebration. Here Jassi returned to her earlier narrative of looking to the positive, and of collective creativity with her cousins, working together to make something out of nothing. This coming together feels important in Jassi's story, which has moved towards an attempted integration of conflicts between; oppressor-protector, Indian-English, boy-girl, adult-child, saint-soldier and pain-joy. Below Jassi described hopes and fears for her children:

I wish that it could be more of the **Indian** culture / mixed in with the English, as opposed to the **English** culture / mixed in with a little bit of Indian /
uh because I think there are some really good values about community, /
um and being there for each other and helping each other out /
Than being sort of totally aloof, and you know, do whatever you want to do
[...]

> I highly, highly respect my dad and what he's tried to do for the family and the community / [...]
> we used to have, loads of people used to come over, and fill in forms and stuff like that,
> I really do respect that he did that /
> and I think it made us stronger in the community,
> and made us go through the hard times, without too many battle scars /
> [1576-1594]

Jassi returned to the strength in family/community, of which the lines are blurred, helping each other out during times of "battle", again suggesting warring sides of 'them and us'. She appears to position her father as the army leader and saviour, as opposed to earlier where he seemed to be a silent dictator. Jassi narrated hard times in the past tense, suggesting the war is over. By expressing her wish for more "Indian" values of community care, solidarity and service, Jassi seems to come full circle in her storytelling, returning to nostalgic memories of home, love and belonging. These are denoted as lacking in "English" values, which she describes as emotionally detached. There is a wish for integration and harmony, but an ongoing fear about the survival of the Indian part, being dominated by the English part. So perhaps the fight isn't quite over.

3.2 Sukhbinder: "No, I'm not gonna be doing that"

In contrast to Jassi, Sukhbinder did not speak much about her childhood, focusing more on surviving difficulties transitioning to life in the UK, her marriage, navigating responsibilities, and other people's expectations and assumptions about her. Sub-narratives about surviving hardship were interpreted as: (1) self-belief and determination, (2) showing her strength, (3) receiving support and encouragement, (4) reclaiming her life, (5) finding peace and guidance in *Gurbani*, and (6) finding purpose and belonging in *seva*.

Sukbhinder storied her shock and loneliness when she first arrived in the UK:

> It was hard, because
> I didn't know my husband **at all**, /
> and, then there was like, 'cause I had, like, more Indian culture, /

whereas he was more westernized, /

and um, I found it hard. /

[38-44]

When I came to this country it's like, [...]

I was **shocked**,

it was a shock to my system,

like oh God, "*a ki ho gaya?*[2]" [laughing] /

[1360-1367]

Sukhbinder often ended her stories with "it was hard" at the beginning of the interview, emphasising how tough she found things, and also perhaps the difficulty of talking about it, using the phrase to close stories down, rather than going into depth and re-connecting with those feelings. Sukhbinder highlighted a cultural difference, denoting how alienated she felt, living with a stranger in a strange country. Perhaps this was at odds with what she had imagined, as she later emphasised the shock to her system, an English idiom implying a sudden and unpleasant embodied experience, with disruptive/destructive consequences. Sukhbinder then switched to speaking in Punjabi, again denoting a sense of shock. Perhaps returning to her mother-tongue performed an embodied sense of home, belonging, and the survival of her "Indian culture" at her core. The chuckle following perhaps indicated a sense of light relief in home comfort. The untold story here might relate to the stark contrast that Punjabi women face when arriving in the UK, contrasting what they were used to, and were told. This harsh reality is storied below, where Sukhbinder described her experience of factory work:

You know, they used to be so abusive, /

'cause it was all /

white people then,

and they would sort of say, "oh come on, is that what they do in your country?"

you know, "*do this, do that*", /

you know, they used to holler and shout at you /

[1441-1448]

---

[2] "what's happened **here**?"

And then I thought,
"No. /
I'm gonna try and work / in a **proper** place,
I don't **wanna** work in a factory,
I **am** educated." / [...]
[107-111]

And even in the family, when I started working, they used to always say,
[tut] "she's come from India, she ain't gonna find nothing,
she'll just be working in a factory somewhere" […]
and I always thought in my mind,
"no, I'm not gonna be doing that, /
you know, that's not **me"**
[543-552]

Sukhbinder brought in the voice of her White British employers, as abusive and oppressive, framing this in the past, implying things have changed. She storied them as belittling and shaming, implying she was incompetent and inferior. Sukhbinder also retold her husband's family's narrative of her, as destined for manual labour due to being a woman from India. Sukhbinder seemed surprised about this, as perhaps it was not a narrative she had heard before, and did not expect to be held in the family. These narratives had become held and re-told in the communities they served to marginalise. Perhaps by living through discrimination themselves, the family were attempting to prepare Sukhbinder for disappointment. However, Sukhbinder distanced herself from this narrative, distinguishing herself as "educated" with the hope for more possibilities. Sukhbinder spoke with strength and conviction, showing her resolve in refusing to align with this narrative, which did not fit with her own sense of identity, purpose and direction. This drove her to a new career, which Sukhbinder told me was her hope for a better life, free from abuse and hardship. However, she then told me she was abandoned by her husband and faced with financial insecurity, the impact of which she described below:

I had
a house, /
heavy mortgage, […]
two young kids, /
and I didn't have no support /

and it was very, very / difficult […]

'Cause I didn't know;
who to turn to,
who would help me,
any social care,
anybody,
I didn't know **nothing** /

Yeah, 'cause there was nobody to **explain**,
nobody to take you on that **route**, /
and, [laughing] I'm gonna get all emotional now /
[tearful] sorry /
[170-202]

Sukhbinder storied struggling to meet the demands placed on her. Listing her sole responsibilities gave the impression of a heavy burden to carry. Her repetition denotes how completely alone, confused, lost and scared she felt, conveying a sense of emptiness all around her. Sukhbinder became tearful, perhaps re-living feelings of abandonment and fear. Her story suggests a lack of support from family, community, and statutory services, and I wonder if there is an untold story about shame and blame for her circumstances that meant she continued to struggle in silence.

Sukhbinder described how her parents helped while visiting the UK, after her husband returned and became violent:

I was quite bad 'cause [my husband] pushed me one, one day and I had all bruising [...]
yeah and then um, my father came home, one day
and he said, "what's that, blue on your neck?"
and I said, "oh it was just my *chunni*[3], I pulled it hard", /
and then, my son was sitting there, he went, "**no,** daddy pushed her"/
and, that's the time my father stepped in, /
and he said "nah, this can't carry on". / [...]

---

[3] headscarf

Then [my husband] decided that he wanted to go back **again** [...]
and I had to pick up the pieces **again**. /

And then, eventually my father was here,
and my mother came over as well, / [...]
then it got a little bit easier because /
they used to look after the kids, /
so I didn't have that **pressure**, /
and, I could go to work **peacefully**, /
'cause I knew my mum and dad were there / [...]

And then, my parents had to go back again,
and then, you know **again** the same old story started
[244-277]

Sukhbinder brought in her son and fathers voices of resistance, intervening to defend her, perhaps making her feel seen and less alone, after her pain was made visible by the bruise on her neck, which could no longer be hidden by her *chunni*. Here and elsewhere, Sukhbinder brought dialogue in the present tense to paint a vivid picture of these scenes, bringing me in as an audience member to witness her story playing out. Sukhbinder's language minimises her husband's actions, compared with the violence demonstrated in the imagery of blue bruising on her neck. This minimises his accountability, but also maybe made it speakable for Sukhbinder, rather than being confronted by the full force of it again. She storied a repeated desertion and heartbreak, and spoke with a sense of growing exhaustion, although her parents temporarily helped to lighten the load. I wonder if her parents also offered a sense of safety, protection, comfort and guidance, where she had previously felt alone, unseen, unheard and lost.

Sukhbinder also storied the support she received at work:

[a colleague] said, "you're very quiet, you don't say a lot, but you are hardworking,
have you got some problems?",
I told them what had happened, /

And from then on, they said

"nah, look you can't live like this, we will help you",

and then my managers they gave me shifts,

so I could / I would drop the kids off, or pick them up, one or the other, /

so, it got me, it got a little bit **easier** for me. /

[299-310]

And at work, I mean I was **really good** at what I was doing, /

and they'd really encourage me

and said "no, no, no, you **know** what you are doing,

why are you, why are you so / quiet?" you know, [...]

So, that sort of, made me a bit / you know, **stronger**. /

[572-580]

Similar to her father's resistance earlier, Sukhbinder retold her colleague's narrative of resistance, and practical support. Sukhbinder retold her colleagues' narratives of her as "quiet", perhaps a sign of lacking confidence, but also as competent, acknowledging the skills she recognised in herself. This contrasts with the story of how she was treated at the factory, so perhaps having people witness and strengthen Sukhbinder's preferred identity and values helped restore her self-belief. Sukhbinder storied how this helped her confront her husband when he returned again:

Because I'd been quite strong after that, before he came back,

I said "right ok fine, you can stay here, this is your house, /

but, /

you don't touch me,

you don't come near me,

at all" / […]

yeah, and then um, he did keep, he kept to his bargain,

he didn't say nothing to me

[364-373]

Sukhbinder narrated standing her ground, to prevent attack, as if her home/body was a battle ground to be negotiated. This reminds me of the evolutionary survival strategy of performing dominance to fend off predators, and I wonder if this was Sukhbinder's demonstration of her regained sense of strength,

which appeared successful. In this way, Sukhbinder's story moved towards a sense of resolution from conflict, where she faced up to her antagonist, who became less threatening after seeing her power. However, there also appears an untold story about financial power and control in ownership of property. Sukhbinder storied shifting narratives of strength and accountability, below:

> I used to just take care of everything
> and think "*edthey hunda, family da vich, edthey hunda*"[4] /
>
> But you know like, it's not like "*edtha hunda*",
> 'cause that means, when people think you're **weak,** /
> I think they just, **trod** on you**,** don't they [...]
>
> I didn't wanna tell anybody what was going on in the family, [...]
> I thought **I** was in the wrong, /
> I've done something that bad that he's done it, /
> and it was like, I thought it was embarrassing for me, /
>
> But it **wasn't** /
> because I didn't **do** anything, /
> **he's** the one,
> who had an affair,
> **he's** the one,
> who took all the money and walked out,
> **not me**. /
> [643-679]

The switch to using the Punjabi phrase here implies a narrative she was told by others in the family, that violence is normal and inevitable, a story which continued to be re-told and re-lived. However, Sukhbinder challenged this, framing it as a matter of perception. Being seen as small, defenseless and walked over, was linked with feeling embarrassed and at fault, perhaps for not being strong enough. However, the responsibility was then shifted to her husband, a change of positioning and perspective, to free herself from these feelings, take back autonomy and control, and change people's narratives of her.

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[4] "it's like that, in families, it's like that"

As well as work, when I asked Sukhbinder what gave her strength, she spoke about her children:

I could **feel** that /
my emotions,
where I was crying,
the way I was behaving,
and being **down** and **depressed** all the time,
that was affecting them / [...]

And when I saw, you know, other children in the family were
laughing,
knocking around, /

Whereas my kids were a bit / reserved /
and I could see that they didn't wanna go into that depression **house** /
where everything was so **morbid** / [...]

And I think that's what, it was the **kids** that made me **feel**, /
that, **no**, /
if I don't give myself hope, /
this is, this not gonna be very good. /
[476-514]

The language in the first and third stanza connotes all-encompassing darkness, despair and hopelessness, in contrast with the playfulness, freedom and joy she saw children other than her own. The description of her own children reminds me of the earlier description of herself as "quiet". Perhaps this acted as a mirror and stark confrontation for Sukhbinder; of her impact on the children, what they were missing out on, but also what else was possible. This seemed to be a turning point, moving her to take active ownership for creating change for her children. Sukhbinder used a vague conditional 'if...then' statement at the end, alluding to an unspoken alternative she imagined for her children had she not resisted.

Sukhbinder storied how helping at the *Gurdwara* helped her:

Um, it was only like when I was really down at home,

I started going to the *Gurdwara*,

and they saw me sitting there one day, one of the *Gyanis*[5], the priest

and he said, "can you come and help us to make uh *prashade*[6] in the

kitchen",

I went, "yeah, can do",

and I just got peace out of it /

[868-873]

Um, just **helping** in the *Gurdwara* used to make me,

you know, I wanted to do it, from the bottom of my heart /

um, and when I went there, it just, /

I felt that/ I was at **peace** /

[1029-1032]

Gurdwara can be translated to 'the Guru's house' or 'door to the Guru', and *Guru* can be translated to 'teacher' or 'leader', so perhaps Sukhbinder hoped it would be her way out from the "depression house" and provide her with guidance on which "route" to take. Sukhbinder storied being noticed by the G*yani*, implying they saw her suffering, and offered her a direction in being invited to make *prashad*. Sukhbinder storied accepting this invitation, and emphasised that in doing for others she found peace. The reference to the bottom of her heart signifies a sincere and perhaps unexplainable motivation to perform this *seva* (selfless service). I wonder if, in being noticed and led by the *Gyani*, Sukhbinder felt a sense of trust and compassion, which she then shared with others. Being invited to make *prashad* particularly, feels like a simple but important and symbolic task, involving a sense of power in cultivating divine blessings for all.

Sukhbinder also storied how listening to the *Gurus*' words helped:

I would just go over there, sit and listen to the *paath*[7] [...]

'cause I felt that **supported** me in a way,

---

[5] Someone who has studied Sikhi and leads prayers at the Gurdwara

[6] A sacred sweet pudding offered to visitors of the Gurdwara as a blessing

[7] the reading or recitation of Gurbani

you know like I could **lean** onto the *Gurbani*[8] / […]

You know it's like you can **talk** to somebody about it
"what have I done wrong?
Why am I going through this?"
and I could relate that to the *Gurdwara* only /[...]

And that really gave me the **strength**,
to say, "come on", you know, "I **can** do it", / […]
you know I, I, I got stronger, by doing that
mmm, mmm /

One of the *shabads*[9], one of the priests would be singing like,
"if one door closes, another door opens", /
and you know like sometimes you think, "oh God, does that relate to me? /
'cause I've gone to the *Gurdwara* with a problem in my head, /
is that **telling me** something?" /
and I used to feel **good** about that /
 [1010-1085]

Leaning onto and being supported by the *paath* connotes a sense of relying on, being held, carried and lifted up by. Connecting to and allowing herself to be guided by particular messages perhaps helped her to feel understood, and raised awareness that *Waheguru* (God) is always one's companion, offering strength and encouragement, whereas before she felt alone and directionless. The message about one door closing and another opening, makes me think about the door to the "depression house" closing or being resolved, and the 'door to the Guru' opening, providing new perspectives, purpose and possibilities. In the beginning of the interview Sukhbinder spoke quietly and hesitantly, however, by this point Sukhbinder spoke openly, with confidence and clarity, perhaps reflecting how she felt with this new perspective, affirmed through her storytelling.

Sukhbinder described how she now offers support and guidance to others:

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[8] translated as 'the Gurus' words', from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (SGGS; Sikh holy book)
[9] Hymns/extracts from SGGS

> I see a lot of, um, women that have come from India,
> I do go to the *Gurdwara* a lot, / [...]
> so they all recognise me and they always say
> "oh *bhenji*[10], can you help me with this? 'cause I don't know what to do"
>
> And then I go and talk to them because I feel /
> when I needed somebody /
> there was nobody there /
> and now I've got the **knowledge** /
> I can **pass** it to other people /
> [601-617]

Part of Sukhbinder's story is her transformation to becoming the help she wished she had, especially as a woman who came from India herself and felt alone and lost. Supporting her community of sisters, as a demonstration that we all connected with each other and God, like a family, and our duty to help each other. Carrying out this *seva* seems like it gave Sukhbinder the peace and purpose she was looking for, and a sense of strength and power in empowering others. It sounds like Sukhbinder re-discovered her sense of home, family and belonging in God and her community at the Gurdwara. The final two lines mirror Sukhbinder's contribution to this thesis, her act of *seva* in sharing her story of surviving hardship.

3.3 Paramjeet: "My mind was always on farming"

Paramjeet storied her childhood village, leaving home to get married in the UK, finding work and having children. She often returned home to her roots in her narratives and narration. The majority of the interview was in Punjabi, and Paramjeet's daughter was present to help with translation when needed. The following sub-narratives of surviving hardship were interpreted: (1) labouring to cultivate a good life, (2) being grounded to her roots, (3) nourishing a strong mind, body and heart, (4) appreciating the rewards, and (5) connection and transformation through song and humour.

Paramjeet started the interview by telling me about her childhood:

---

[10] Sister

When I was little,

That… I **still** haven't forgotten that life, /

it was **very** nice / [...]

My dad worked on the farm,

it was on a farm,

and I… I didn't really want to study,

my mind was always on farming, on the work in the farm that I was doing,

with my dad,

you know? /

And I… the rest of my brothers and sisters they are well educated,

in the, you know the school in the middle of the *pind*[11], I went, /

but… my mind was always on the farm,

"I want to go and help my dad",

and the farming life was **very** nice, I thought /

[45-64]

Paramjeet positioned this past life as separate and far away, yet emphasised that it has stayed with her, and that remembering was important to her. Paramjeet enacted her preoccupation with the farm in her repetition. Her father is the first other character introduced in her story, bringing in her childhood voice of wanting to be with and help him. Paramjeet also brought in her brothers and sisters. Explaining that they all attended and had access to education offered a counter-narrative to Indian women from the "*pind"* being uneducated. However, she also positioned herself as different to her siblings as she was less interested in studying. She did not say what she liked about working on the farm, but it seems like spending time with her father was important, and she later narrated the importance of physical toil in creating a good life. Therefore, "the farming life" provided a fitting metaphor and backdrop to the rest of Paramjeet's story.

Paramjeet told me about how her marriage was set up to a Punjabi man who lived in the UK. She storied his family coming to collect her, and staying with them in a city in Punjab, before making the journey here:

---

[11] Village

> They lived in the city,
> in the city there's **no** fields,
> it's all houses everywhere,
> the toilets were even **inside**,
> everything,
> hunna? /
>
> I stayed there two, three days,
> I couldn't go to the toilet, /
> I was looking for the fields,
> I wanted to go in the fields /
>
> Then I started to feel a bit sick,
> so I told them, "take me to the fields,
> that's the only way I can go to the toilet,
> in the field", /
>
> They said, "it is a bit difficult but let's go, we will arrange it",
> then they took me outside to the fields,
> then after a while my constipation became better. /
> [218-236]

Paramjeet storied a stark contrast to what she was used to, going from spending time in nature, to a city, where everything was "inside". Paramjeet might have felt disoriented and claustrophobic, embodying feeling 'closed-up' by becoming physically sick with constipation, and perhaps this 'gut reaction' was her body's natural response to this change in environment. She again performed her preoccupation with the fields in her repetition, and storied her literal and figurative relief when she was finally able to go outside, perhaps also returning to a feeling of home in nature that she longed for. Paramjeet bought in the voice of the family, who she storied as willing and able to facilitate this for her, despite it being challenging, and I got the sense she was appreciative of their efforts.

Paramjeet spoke about her train journey to Bombay, where they were going to get a ship to England. She storied her family coming to meet her at a station stop on the way, seeing her mother with a leg injury, and the sorrow of separation:

Then they all / they went home,

but in my brain was, [...]

"look at how my mum has injured her leg" / […]

my brain like it was, it was going over and over with my parents,

it is **so** hard //

[crying]

I was with other people, I was going to be with other people,

I couldn't go back,

then I realised, /

I couldn't meet them again quickly,

I didn't know;

where they were taking me,

which country they were taking me to /

[stopped crying]

Then we reached Bombay,

in Bombay there was a *Gurdwara*

with a bed and some sheets on the floor,

we slept,

ate *langar[12]*,

hunna? /

[265-287]

Paramjeet described a realisation that she could not return home to her family, which sounds like it came with a sudden wave of emotions, perhaps grief, sadness, guilt and regret, but also fear of what was coming, the unknown people and place. It sounds like the gravity and irreversibility of the situation hit her on this train, moving in one direction. The strong expressed emotion suggests she was re-living these moments, which she narrated as hard in the present rather than past tense. Paramjeet stopped crying as she storied arriving at a *Gurdwara*, where they were offered shelter, rest and *langar*, providing relief and respite. Perhaps this compassion, and the collective experience of sleeping on the same floor and eating the same food, helped Paramjeet feel grounded, connected, and less scared. Paramjeet tended to end stories with the common rhetorical Punjabi term "*hunna?*",

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[12] Free communal food/ kitchen in the *Gurdwara*

which there is no English equivalent for. The question mark represents a rise in intonation that in English might imply a form of checking or requiring a response, however, I would describe it as a term of affirmation or assurance, signifying an end point. For example, above it could suggest a sense of temporary resolution.

Paramjeet storied strange encounters aboard the ship, and seeking guidance from her father-in-law:

> I said, "*Dar-ji*[13]*,* why does it look like all the white women have had operations on their legs?"
> he said, "no? operation? show me what you mean?"
> and one white woman walked past,
> and I said, "look, she looks like she's had an operation, at the back of her legs",
> he said, "oh silly! she's got **stockings** on that look like that!" / [laughing]
> I didn't know, *hunna?*
> [323-328]

> We sat down to eat,
> they had in serving bowls these things,
> which I didn't know then, but now I know are corn flakes, […]
> they looked to me like small cuttings of leaves from a tree / [laughing]

> They told us to put it in our bowls and eat them, put milk on top,
> and then I was thinking, "how am I gonna eat this?",
> I said, "*Dar-j*i, I don't like the taste of these",
> he said have some bread instead, so I had some bread, […]
> it was difficult for me,
> I took my mum's *ladoos*[14] that she gave and ate them quickly, *hunna?*
> [335-346]

In the first stanza, Paramjeet storied a confrontation with something completely alien to her. In hindsight, this question might seem naive to her now, as it did to *Dar-ji* at the time, but the way Paramjeet narrated her first impression

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[13] Father
[14] A sweet confectionary often given as a gift

brought me into her sense of bewilderment. With her use of humour Paramjeet transformed the energy in the interview, after the previous story of separation, perhaps demonstrating how she got through, by turning darkness to light, and strangeness into wonder. In the second stanza, Paramjeet used a simile to compare corn flakes to something more familiar to her, again depicting her bewilderment. Paramjeet again turned to *Dar-ji* for help, implying she felt comfortable with him, perhaps as a father figure who could provide guidance. She then turned eagerly to her mother's *ladoos*, perhaps returning to a taste of home, and the comfort of her mother, which unfortunately did not last.

Paramjeet storied getting married a few days after arriving in the UK:

Normally when you do *lavan*[15] there's a song for everyone to sing,
but when I did mine I was crying,
there was no one there to sing for me,
I felt this a lot, /
so I was walking around crying /
[559-563]

Paramjeet narrated the loneliness of not having her family at her wedding, highlighting the importance of collective singing for her, and for a lot of Sikh Punjabi women, to celebrate important life events like marriage. This makes me think about the loss that Paramjeet might have felt not just of her family, but everything she knew, by not having a usual *lavan*. As well as bringing families together, weddings can also be a time of collective sadness, as the bride bids farewell to her parents and family home. Being so far away from home, Paramjeet was not able to share her grief with her parents and mark this event, instead grieving by herself.

Paramjeet described relating to a particular song at the time:

When I got married, I missed my parents, /
there was a record, it said:

"The wheat is tall,

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[15] Part of the Sikh wedding ceremony, where hymns are sung as the couple circle SGGS, to commit their vows to their union with God and each other

Why were daughters born?
The wheat is tall,
Why were daughters born?" /

I listened to it
and listened to it
so much,
the whole record was scratched by the end of it,

I used to listen to it,
cry,
listen to it,
cry,

"Where have they sent me?
I've got nobody here,
no relatives" /
[1155-1173]

The record and Paramjeet's story speak to the tradition of daughters leaving their families to live with their in-laws after getting married, which for Paramjeet was a great distance away. The record sounds like the traditional folk song '*mawan te dhiyan'*, which depicts a conversation between 'mother and daughter'. My translation does not capture the poetry of the rhyming couplet; '*kanakan lamian / dhiyan kyon jamian',* which is sung ironically in a cheerful sing-song way. It refers firstly to the wheat harvest season in Punjab, traditionally a time of celebration, and for family bonding as everyone has a role in harvesting. It sounds like Paramjeet was missing her family, and reminiscing about these times to bring back "the farming life". The song also represents the pain of being a daughter, where you become a stranger to the home you were born in, and are taken away to a stranger's home, paralleled in Paramjeet story. This represents the wider narrative of daughters as a curse, first as their fathers property, then their husbands. The song depicts a daughter talking to her mother, perhaps as the only one to share her sorrow. However, Paramjeet was not able to speak to her mother, instead repeatedly listening to the record, which perhaps provided comfort in place of her mother's shoulder, as the only thing she could relate to.

Paramjeet storied how the reality of life in UK the compared with her expectations:

My brother always used to say,
"why are you always crying?
you're going to a heaven!
Why are you crying?
you're going to heaven." /
[458-462]

You know when you do a really bad crime,
you'd get sent to *Kala Pani*[16],
you know the really bad place,
that you can't get out of,
and I thought to myself,
"is this where my parents have sent me?" / […]

It was **very** hard work,
but we had to do it
because we wanted to be able to make a home,
to get our own place / […]

Then slowy, slowly,
we struggled,
and then we bought our house [...]
I was **so** thankful to God to have that, [...]
I didn't have to bathe in the cold
[630-695]

Paramjeet brought in her brother's hopeful image, perhaps to bring her comfort when she was upset about leaving, but also what he imagined it would be like. She contrasted this with her reality, depicting a place of darkness and terror, from which there is no escape, a hell in contrast to her expectations. Paramjeet seemed to denote being exiled here by her parents as a punishment. The only way

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[16] Translated as 'Black Waters', a British colonial prison in the Andaman Islands, where Indian freedom fighters were exiled, detained and tortured.

out was by working hard in these conditions with her husband, to create a better life for themselves. Paramjeet's last stanza speaks to the necessity of patience, perseverance, and faith through struggle, and the reward of bathing in warmth. This story denotes the necessity of physical toil in order to cultivate a successful harvest.

Paramjeet's daughter commented "Mum, you were very strong", to which Paramjeet responded:

I was very strong, [...]
I was very healthy,
I used to do a lot of lifting,
I used to eat a lot of vegetables,
I was very healthy,
I didn't worry about anything, about studying or anything else,
just thinking about eating / [laughing] […]

My mum used to say, "you don't need to drink any more milk, you are big enough",
so I used go outside and drink the milk, and fill it back up with water, [laughing]
my mum would say, "the milk has spilled",
I would say, "a gush of wind came and tipped it" [laughing] /

Because when I was younger, I loved to eat,
You know when you are doing so much work, you need to eat to be strong
I used to eat, I was strong and healthy,
that's how I did so much work with my husband.
[904-922]

Paramjeet narrated being strong through healthy eating and physical labour. She told a playful story about defying her mother and sneaking out to drink milk, a Punjabi staple. Perhaps looking back with nostalgia helped reconnect with fond memories of her mother and home, in contrast to the sadness of previous stories. Paramjeet then returned to the importance of food to sustain her through the labour of farming, which prepared her for labouring here to create the life she wanted, as she narrated in the previous story, thus connecting her sense of strength with her roots.

Paramjeet also storied her daughter as hardworking:

My *Chachi-ji*[17] used to say to my mum,
"you're going to suffer, you've got three of them to get married" /

Then when I had [my daughter],
I remembered what she said, what my *Chachi* used to say, and what it is like to have girls,
I didn't know then she would be so helpful [laughing]
Any job that needs doing she's there,
doing this,
doing that. /

When she started crawling, I used to put sheets on the floor
because I didn't want her to get dirty,
putt[18], it's like that, you love all children.
[1182-1202]

Paramjeet brought in the voice of her *Chachi-ji*, who narrated daughters as a burden, which Paramjeet remembered when she had her own daughter. However, Paramjeet provided a counter-narrative, that her married daughter continues to be helpful and there for her, rather than causing suffering and abandonment. Paramjeet then recalled putting sheets on the floor, perhaps denoting how precious her daughter was to her, a blessing rather than a curse. She then referred to me as "*putt*", bringing me in to demonstrate her love for all children. Here Paramjeet storied a move away from hegemonic narratives about daughters, towards a Sikh praxis of love for everyone as equal.

Finally, Paramjeet storied her enjoyment of singing, and writing her own songs:

I sing very well /

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[17] Aunt, or more specifically, her father's younger brother's wife
[18] Affectionate term for 'beloved child/daughter/son'

boliyan[19] /

I used to sing in a centre,
it's closed now because of Corona[virus],
when there was a function, [...]
they say, "[Paramjeet], jump on the *dholki*[20] and sing", [...]
they know I like it, that's what I do,
and that's my entertainment, I like to sing /

Nowadays lots of girls and boys are allowed to sing,
but when I was young I wasn't allowed outside, how would I be allowed to sing?
To go to the toilet we used to go into the fields,
so my mum used to follow me to make sure I was going to the toilet and not to meet a boy. [...]

It was my hobby to sing, I still like it, [...]
I write them myself,
very nice songs, *putt* /
[1301-1346]

Paramjeet highlighted generational and cultural differences in what is accepted here and now, compared with her youth. It also set up the context for a *boli* she then sang cheerfully, which she wrote about falling in love with a boy, and being scared to be seen with him. Paramjeet's talent in writing and performing *boliyan* suggests she is a natural storyteller. This is also evident in Paramjeet's interview, where she came across as full of life, in her expression of tears and laughter, performance of grief and celebration, and bringing me into her story. To me, Paramjeet exemplified the concept of '*chhardi kala'*, remaining hopeful and spirited through hardship.

3.4 Kulwinder: "God is the person who is always with you"

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[19] Traditional songs performed by women at functions such as wedding events
[20] Drum-like musical instrument

Kulwinder storied growing up in a Punjabi village, coming to the UK after getting married, and challenges in her life and relationships. Kulwinder invited me into the interview more often than the others, asking questions about my own life and knowledge, shifting her purpose and positioning in her storytelling. She narrated and performed an overall narrative of celebration and connection as survival. The following sub-narrates about surviving hardship were interpreted: (1) playfulness and celebration, (2) connecting with her environment, (3) producing positivity, (4) routine, hard work and discipline and, (5) nurturing relationships with family and God.

Kulwinder spoke about growing up playing with her nephews and nieces, as the youngest of her siblings:

>We always play together with the pump, / [...]
>we play together,
>we running after chicken,
>we running after, chasing dog,
>chasing the small ox,
>you know, something like that /
>[241-253]

The repetition in this story emphasised that play was always collective. Animals were brought in as characters, set in the context of the farm, outside in nature. There is a lot of movement and activity, suggesting a sense of freedom and space. There is a blending of work and play; with the pump, usually used for watering crops, also nourishing the children in their play. Kulwinder narrated using the present tense here, perhaps representing a continued connection and closeness to this time, and re-living these moments through the storytelling. This is also the case below, where Kulwinder storied celebrating a festival with her community:

>My father, **every** year, you know in um, rainy season, /
>he put the swing on for the farm, on the tree, for us, […]
>that's what we do /

There is special festival, maybe you heard, ***Teeyan***[21],

that's what happening,

you know all the girls that were my age that time, you know like 16, 17,

they come to my farm,

and we do;

swings together,

singing together,

and doing this festival together,

eating and going,

yeah /

[274-287]

Kulwinder introduced her father here, who routinely put up the swing for them, implying an act of service that he was always prepared to do, to make it special for them as something she always looked forward to. Kulwinder went on to list the things they did, repeating again that everything she did at that time was with her community, enjoying life together. She also took a position of ownership of the family's farm, as a host or facilitator of this enjoyment. Again, this story was set outdoors in nature, where life was guided by the seasons, in contrast to when she first came to England:

When I came in this country, /

I feel really like not used to it, /

Staying inside /

the houses are very **small**, /

and not going outside,

Like because in Punjab we have **big** houses,

and **big,** big outdoor,

and I can't say garden because we say "*bahara*" is outdoors, /

And in here it is not only inside, outdoor is very **little**,

---

[21] A Punjabi festival, translates to 'girls/daughters' (could also be spelled *dhiyan*, as in Paramjeet's story). It is celebrated in the month of *Sawan*, at the onset of monsoon season. Swings are put up under trees, and young women come together to swing, sing and dance. *Teeyan* provides an opportunity for women to come together to celebrate and enjoy life together, providing respite from their hard work the rest of the year. It is also an opportunity for married women to return home and reunite with their families.

> and even when you go outside, you can see all the garden, /
> there is no privacy, /
> And that's something, you know I feel,
> "where I am? What England?" /
> [43-59]

Here Kulwinder's speech became slower and with more pauses, compared to when she spoke about her home in Punjab, with momentum and excitement. This perhaps denotes her shock and confusion at the time, taking a moment to pause and reflect on where she is, without her usual environment to help ground her. The emphasis is placed on words signifying space, the lack of indoor and outdoor space in the UK, compared with the abundance of it in Punjab, and returning to the Punjabi language to describe what did not seem sufficient in English. The lack of privacy, in combination with lack of space, implies a lack of freedom. This also means a lack of opportunities for connection with and celebration of nature, in contrast to her earlier stories. In this extract, Kulwinder starts narrating with the past tense, then moving to present tense, suggesting these feelings have not left her.

Kulwinder later storied the importance of living near a *Gurdwara*:

> Because, the reason we bought a house in [London area],
> I like to go to the *Gurdwara*, [...]
> I like to go to the *Gurdwara* because, /
> in India, *Gurdwara* is two houses away from my house, /
> I go to the *Gurdwara* almost every day, / in India as well,
> In here, I like to go to the *Gurdwara*, that's why I bought a house here.
> [793-801]

Kulwinder narrated this as a priority, suggesting the *Gurdwara* felt like a home away from home, an anchor to stay connected with her religion, community and culture. A sense of continuing routine is performed in her repetition, and storying almost daily practice both here and back home. Perhaps this continued lived practice helped her to remain connected with a sense of familiarity and normality, despite the differences she previously storied.

Kulwinder storied how working helped her to think positively:

When you go to work,
you think very positive,

And you **not** thinking about you know negative things
and fighting with husband,
and fighting with the family,
or not doing this,
and not doing,

You thinking /
how you going to your development at work,
or how you going to what you going to do tomorrow,
you need to be plan,

First you do your housework when you come,
you know same routine,
washing,
cooking,
cleaning,
and looking after kids,
after that you looking at how I'm going to plan [work] tomorrow.
[463-483]

Kulwinder's speech here is rushed, and she performed this sense of keeping busy, without much time to pause and rest, paralleled in the story. She referred to relational conflict, and focus on what she/others are not doing, as negative. Whereas a focus on what she is doing, is referred to as positive. Thus, Kulwinder depicted preferring to connect with feeling productive, helpful and hopeful, which helped to keep her going, rather than feelings of lacking, loss or disconnection. However, she also used the passive or more general term "you", rather than speaking from a first-person narrative, in contrast with her earlier stories, where she perhaps felt more emotionally connected. She could also be positioning myself as a younger listener, and herself as the elder advice-giver or teacher.

Kulwinder storied demonstrating control and will at work:

You need to be think about, you know, how to control, /

how to control this meeting,

what to say,

how to say,

but you need to be show them,

you are **willing** to do this, /

Otherwise, you know, this country,

nobody let you to stand there, /

this country is… / / [long pause]

[545-554]

You know in this country,

you have to stay very positive, /

you have to be grateful to God for what you got /

[897-899]

Kulwinder storied a need to demonstrate agency and a commanding presence, in order to evidence her ability and determination, which was also paralleled in her storytelling. Kulwinder started to narrate the rationale for this, which I interpret as nobody allowing her to take up space here, without having to earn it and prove herself. This seems to relate to dominant narratives and practices of individual meritocracy, but also of immigrants having to work harder than White British people to survive in this country, particularly women in the workplace. The narrative of gratitude and positivity reminded me of 'good immigrant' and 'model minority' narratives, where immigrant communities are expected to assimilate and be well-behaved rather than critical or questioning, in order to be accepted. This is performed in Kulwinder's unfinished sentence, leaving a story untold.

Kulwinder storied the challenge of finding time for herself:

But that's I find really hard,

you know, finding time for yourself,

especially for the woman, /

Especially for the women in this country

it's too much to do,

because you are mother,

you are wife,
and you working as well, /
that's I find hard /
[995-1004]

Kulwinder not only storied her own difficulty but that of all women in this country. She listed her roles and responsibilities, perhaps in order of priority, which leave little time for much else. It sounds like she was narrating a difference in gender roles and expectations here, but also different family and working practices to what she was used to in Punjab. Work and home life are usually separate in England (until recently), in contrast with Kulwinder's stories of growing up on a farm, where there was less of a distinction between work and play, and perhaps more opportunities for enjoyment and connection.

When I asked where Kulwinder gets her positivity from, she responded:

It's from my working hard, /
And my God as well, […]
if you talk to God every day,
then you get more closer,
more confidence / […]

Yeah, many things you can talk to God,
God is the person who is always with you,
always with you […]

I go to *matha tek*[22] since my young age, / […]
my parents do, then I follow them,
I follow them. […]

Yeah, you can do the *paath*,
morning prayer, you know like *Japji Sahib*[23], /

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[22] The practice of bowing to the *Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, signifying humility and submission to the Truth and wisdom of the *Guru*s' words, usually upon entering a *Gurdwara*.
[23] The opening composition in SGGS and a summary of the Sikh philosophy. It is usually recited in the morning, and is a reminder that God is constant, and is in all humanity.

and then you can do at night time, if you can't do *Rehraas*[24],

you can do "*Waheguru, Waheguru*"[25],

or you can do the *Mool Mantar*[26] […]

You know when children grow up they get different as well,

but I do for them,

I do for them,

Like your mum probably do for you,

and *Dadi*[27] probably do.

[1690-1791]

Here God is personified, and emphasised as a constant companion, from morning until night. Kulwinder storied the importance of talking to God routinely every day, to nourish this connection. This reminds me of her earlier story of visiting the *Gurdwara* almost every day, and it sounds like this early life, as well as continued daily practice, helped her to continue to have faith and stay positive. Kulwinder returned to her early life when storying learning to practice submission and humility to God from her parents. She then switched again to a more instructing position, perhaps performing an invitation to "follow" her, just as she did her parents. The reciprocal relationship between working hard and remembering God is demonstrated in the first two lines, and in her continued narration of routine, discipline and consistency. In the final stanza, she implied that her children have a different way of practicing, but she continues to "do for them", and brought me into the story, along with generations before me who "do for" me. She chose female figures, my mother and grandmother, maybe as she could identify with these roles, and/or speaking to gendered roles of passing on traditional knowledge in Sikh Punjabi families. I am reminded of the 'great mother' archetype, who represents life-giving energy, offering spiritual and emotional nourishment and advice. The closing verse of *Japji Sahib* also states; "Earth is the Great Mother of all" (SGGS, 38), and I

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[24] The evening prayer, usually recited after a hard day's work, as a reminder of *Waheguru*'s greatness and showing thankfulness for another successful day, allowing one to feel closer to God and spiritual liberation, to counter feeling tired, weak and unsuccessful in response to worldly hardships.

[25] Word used to refer to God, and is often used as a mantra to bring awareness and enlightenment

[26] 'Main/root chant', the opening verse of *Japji Sahib*

[27] 'Grandmother'

am reminded of Kulwinder's roots in connection with earth, nature and celebrating life.

Kulwinder then narrated her approach to life and relationships:

If you will want to be successful, /
no one is perfect, […]
no, / no one's perfect. […]

if my husband do something […]
Maybe **I** do something different, […]
but, we all do,
we all do.

So maybe um,
he like to watch TV sitting on the sofa,
I like to watch TV sitting on a chair /
you know that's, so many things you know are different
but, it's the same thing,
It's the same.

You need to be **understand**, /
you need to learn about the person a little bit […]
otherwise, if you not learn about the person,
you always looking for **criticising**,
criticising is no good / […]
because it give you some negativity […]

You need to be, you know, whatever you want to say,
want to say it in a **positive** way,
in a positive way. /
[1854-1894]

Kulwinder started by positioning herself as an advice-giver on how to be "successful", and went on to give an everyday example from her own life to demonstrate having two different perspectives and methods, but the same aim. The repetition in this extract drives her point home, along with the emphasis of

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understanding rather than criticising, perhaps with the intention of all being successful together. This reminds me of the humility narrated in the previous extract, and here Kulwinder narrated choosing to focus on the positive, performing a philosophy that there is God/good in everybody, which she demonstrated throughout her interview. Perhaps bringing in her husband's perspective was both a reminder of the diversity of people's individual stories, and of the collective narratives that have shaped hers. This continued below, where she brought her children's narratives:

> Because I'm not saying
> we're not fighting,
> we're not agree disagreeing,
> we do /
>
> But we not keeping, you know like if we have argument,
> not keeping the *roti*[28] from them,
> not making *daal*[29] for them,
> not making tea for them
> not saying hello,
> not saying bye,
> even if the husband or anyone who not saying bye to me,
> I always shout to them "buh bye!" / [laughing] […]
>
> Sometimes children say to me, "Mum, you're very funny",
> I said, "it's alright, that's I am",
> Yeah, that's I am /
> yeah, because I always try to make / the atmosphere is really happy and friendly,
>
> And even, you know when I told you the food,
> any festival come, English or Punjabi,
> I always make something special, /
> I always do something **special**,
> you know like exciting things /

---

[28] flatbread, but also commonly used to refer to food/ a meal in general
[29] lentils

[2173-2199]

Kulwinder made it clear that things are not always perfect and conflict-free, however, she storied continuing to make an effort to show love and care regardless. Kulwinder placed importance on making food, to nourish her adult children and husband, and communicating her determination to stay connected with them. This reminded me again of the archetypical 'great/earth mother', who symbolises abundant nurture and generosity, and in bringing in dialogue with her children as if in the present, she brought them to life in her story. This life-giving energy is also represented in the narrative of being funny, happy and friendly, and the desire to create something special, just as her father did for her. In this extract, food does not just represent a basic need by nourishing the body, but also the soul and spirit, making people feel loved. In the last stanza, Kulwinder came full circle in her storytelling, returning to festivals to celebrate life and each other, in a story of nourishing relationships with her environment, humanity and God as One.

4. DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss the results in relation to the research questions and existing research and theory, the challenges and limitations of this study, and implications for clinical psychology, policy and future research.

4.1 Summarising narratives of survival and liberation

4.1.1 Resisting oppression

There were many narratives of resisting oppressive hardships in the womens' stories. Jassi's construction of a 'tomboy' identity reminded me of Jakobsh (2015) and Singh's (2019) research around womens' performance of what is seen as 'masculine' identity, as resistance against gendered and racialised oppression. Her construction of a visibly more 'English' look to protest her family's restrictions, also echoes previous research of the constant monitoring and restricting of women's bodies within families and communities who feel a lack of power to fight the oppression 'outside', instead turning inwards to assert power as an act of protection (Guru, 1987; Wilson, 2006; Arora & Ahluwalia, 2014). However, this shielding of the community is also narrated in Jassi's story as keeping her and the community safe, as are narratives of family and community offering strength and courage to continue to fight, and a sense of solidarity in shared struggles, like findings from Balneaves et al. (2007) and Bottorff et al. (2007). Jassi's narratives of escaping, mental preparation, every-day acts of protest, and cultural preservation also speak to the many possible physical, psychological, social and spiritual processes of resistance.

Both Jassi and Sukhbinder challenged narratives of abuse as normal and inevitable, standing their ground in self-defence, and suggested access to financial security as a potential gatekeeper to freedom from abuse. Sukhbinder's narrative of reclaiming and performing her strength, and re-positioning of shame and blame, parallels the women in Mucina's research (2015), who re-constructed narratives of *izzat*. This perhaps relates to Guru's (1987) research, where assertiveness and negotiation was important to Punjabi women dealing with family conflict, rather than separation, which was prioritised in Ahuja et al.'s (2003) stages of coping with marital abuse. Sukhbinder's narratives of being educated, striving in her career and showing her capabilities also demonstrated an active rejection of narratives of immigrant Indian women as stupid, unaware and uneducated.

Paramjeet reconstructed intergenerational narratives of daughters, as a blessing rather than a curse, in her storytelling and in her *boliyan*, where she found space to freely express what she was previously restricted from doing. This contrasts previous research of mothers passing socio-political narratives of shame and separation onto daughters (e.g. Benigno, 2020), instead using the traditional method of *boliyan* to challenge and transform not just emotions as personal catharsis (David, 2105), but also narratives and practices that are told and lived.

Staying positive, faithful and hopeful, in the spirit of c*hhardi kala*, can also be seen as an act of resistance and liberation from oppression (Freire, 1992), demonstrated by all of these women at some point. This can also manifest in enjoyment of everyday blessings, as Sikhi reminds us, "while laughing, playing, dressing and eating, one is liberated" (SGGS, 522). Kulwinder's stories of celebration and connection therefore also demonstrate resistance. Kulwinder also narrated demonstrating control and determination in order to claim her space in this country, similar to Sukhbinder's story of changing people's image of her to avoid being trodden on. This resonates with Howard et al.'s research (2007), where stories related to painful emotions were often left unfinished, and women preferred to demonstrate their strength, perhaps aligning with preferred narratives of resilience as part of Sikh self-concept (Ruprai, 2016), serving to prevent and resist oppression by presenting themselves as strong. This contrasts with dominant psychological narratives of talking about painful subjects as cathartic, instead understanding silence as resistance.

4.1.1.2 Resistance as liberation

As demonstrated in the above narratives of resistance, these women have shown themselves as active and powerful agents in making and storying not only their own lives, but also contributing towards collective liberation. By challenging and reframing oppressive narratives and practices, they contribute towards the re-construction of societal discourse and knowledge (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). The women also told stories of the importance of accessing multiple narratives, which offered them emancipatory possibilities. This speaks to the power of access to hermeneutical justice (Fricker, 2007), which they are also contributing towards by sharing their emancipatory stories.

The findings also demonstrate the liberatory power of returning to their 'roots' and core truth, rather than accepting subjugated narratives, which I will discuss in the implications with regards to decolonising psychological practice. In her TED talk, Adichie (2009) warns of 'the danger of a single story' of 'other' people and places in Western literature, which leads to stereotypes and assumptions. By rejecting these single stories and presenting multiple, rich and complex stories, these women demonstrated the potential for empowerment through many possibilities. This would not have been possible without a narrative methodology, as quantitative and other qualitative approaches risk essentialising in favour of 'generalisability'. Therefore, these findings add to existing literature that suggest resistance as liberatory praxis (e.g. Afuape, 2012).

4.1.2 Conscious Oneness

Sukbinder's narrative of connecting with *Gurbani*, particularly through the harmony of particular *shabads*, supports findings from previous research of the relationship with God providing comfort, solace, meaning and purpose (Ahluwalia & Mohabir, 2019; Howard et al., 2007; Gurm et al., 2008). Her narrative of *sewa* bringing a sense of peace and power, also supported previous research of serving others fostering a sense of connection, belonging and social wellbeing (Dhillon & Humble, 2020; Rait, 2005; Sohi, Singh & Bopanna, 2018). Jassi also narrated a sense of safety in collective solidarity, a return to harmony, servitude and connectivity for collective survival, and a sense of inclusivity and unity through play, games and sports, countering 'them and us' narratives.

Paramjeet narrated a strong connection with her farming roots, and the reciprocal material and spiritual relationship between people, the land and food as life-giving. Paramjeet's stories of food reminded me of Aggarwal and Das Gupta's (2013) research about '*apna*' (our) food, providing a sense of ongoing tradition, home, belonging and survival, and the importance of food for nourishing not only our bodies and minds but our spirits (Chapman et al., 2011; Dyck & Dossa, 2006). The collective experience of receiving food and shelter at the *Gurdwara*, and labouring together with her husband, also seemed to help her feel connected with others and with God, and a sense of thankfulness for her blessings, which kept her going. Paramjeet narrated a sense of home in the *Gurdwara*, and also in nature, which she became physically ill when separated from. Kulwinder also narrated a sense of bewilderment when separated from her homeland and disconnected with

nature, with the *Gurdwara* providing a continued home, as in Dhillon & Humble's research (2020). Her routine daily prayers allowed her to continue to see God/good everywhere and in everyone, maintaining her focus on nourishing constructive relationships, as with Dyck and Dossa's research (2006).

4.1.2.1 Consciousness as liberation

These narratives relate to the Sikh philosophy of Oneness as the only Truth, and consciousness of this providing not only individual but collective liberation. They represent not only a psychological sense of belonging and social wellbeing, but also a spiritual awareness of our reciprocal relationship with everything, including the land that surrounds us, which cultivates a will to well-doing as liberatory praxis.

This research add to literature about the liberatory potential of spiritual awareness and devotion. For example, Khalsa (2012) explored the power of meditation as an embodied spiritual practice of developing awareness, and moving towards conscious, courageous action, in common with Freire's (1972) liberatory pedagogy of consciousness-raising empowering social change, moving from 'me' to 'we'. A psychology of liberation therefore involves re-thinking the constructed boundaries between 'self' and 'other' (Watkins & Shuleman, 2008), which I will later discuss in relation to the research process, and implications for practice.

4.1.3 Cultivation and construction

'Creating something from nothing' and 'making the most of what you've got' were common narrative in the womens' stories. Jassi narrated collective playful resourcefulness, to construct a loving and lively family and home, despite lack of material wealth. Paramjeet described the necessity of effortful labour, in order to cultivate a good life. Kulwinder described and demonstrated her commitment to positivity and productivity rather than focusing on negatives or deficits. Sukhbinder storied picking up her pieces and re-building her life, with a new sense of purpose and possibility, and sharing this with others. Perhaps like some of the women in Gurm et al.'s (2008) study, who saw their hardship as a message from God to redirect them to another purpose, and Howard et al.'s (2007) study, where hardship reaffirmed their commitment to God and service to others.

Within all of these womens' stories there were narratives of transformation from absence to abundance, through effortful toil. This reminds me of the Sikh pillar '*kirat karo*', of effortful and honest work, and accepting both life's pains and pleasures as blessings. It also reminds me of the divine feminine principle of life-giving, nourishing, producing and reproducing (Shiva, 2016). These findings add to research around constructing 'home' for Punjabi immigrants, with the body being a carrier of stories and practices (Dyck, 2006), and the potential for 'thick-living' through lively engagement between people and place (Casey, 2001). These embodied and ecological approaches will be discussed later with their implications for psychological practice. The women also constructed 'thick' narratives through their storytelling, discussed below.

4.1.3.1 Storytelling as liberation

By participating in this project, all of these women demonstrated a shared desire to have their voices heard and to share their stories with others, with the hope of creating change. They all also demonstrated their unique voices and intentions. Kulwinder's style or position was often of instructing and teaching, in an attempt to pass on her knowledge and values, perhaps strengthening her narrative of a generous and nourishing spirit. For Sukhbinder, the journey of storytelling appeared to affirm feelings of strength, capability and resilience through her survival of hardship, and a desire to help others. Jassi's collective remembering and storytelling with her cousins provided a sense of solidarity, but also transformation to something speakable and resolvable, using humour and playfulness, which was also demonstrated in our interview. Paramjeet also demonstrated storytelling through her *boliyan*, which allow stories not only to be heard and witnessed, but celebrated and life-giving, ensuring their survival. This research therefore contributes to the existing literature of liberatory praxis alongside elders, demonstrating their activism (Castro Romero, 2015).

The findings also suggest new possibilities for activism through storytelling methods such as *boliyan*. In their ethnographic research, Parmar and Puwar (2019) engaged their mothers, who have dementia diagnoses, with *boliyan* and *giddha*[30], to foster connections with each other, with stories they thought had been lost, and to create new stories together, challenging social constructions of people with dementia as docile and degenerative. Taken together, these findings show the

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[30] Punjabi folk dance often performed with *boliyan*

potential for spiritual, psychological, social and political liberation, through a variety of methods of participation in storytelling.

4.1.4 A continuing struggle

Some stories were implicit, unspoken or unfinished, perhaps relating to collective narratives and practices, which serve to silence and subjugate (Raskin, 2002). Jassi's narrative of hope for marriage, almost as a panacea, reminds me of the often-told narrative to Punjabi daughters, "you can do that after you are married". This relates to patriarchal family practices, where marriage is seen as the only option for security for women, who often do not have access to financial freedom. Sukhbinder's implied narrative of her husbands' continued financial control and power through home ownership also demonstrated these structural patriarchal practices, mirroring the colonised gendered agricultural land ownership laws in Punjab that Wilson (2006) described. This is relevant to the current context of farmers laws in India, which serve to further subjugate local farmers and inevitably women in particular, whose labour is described as "immense but invisible" (Bhowmick & Sonthalia, 2021), as although reportedly 85% of rural women work in agriculture, only 13% own any land (Oxfam India, 2018). Shiva's (1993) research on the politics of food as the new imperialism, presents the threat of global commercialisation and loss of diversity, instead farming "monocultures of the mind", which also presents a fitting metaphor for the essentialising story of clinical psychology.

Jassi described her fear about future generations losing Indian values, despite the work that current and previous generations have done to retain them. This is a common narrative I have heard from British-born Punjabis, including myself, who feel increasingly removed from their Punjabi-ness, with a sense of longing or nostalgia, and sense of duty to those who fought for our liberties. There is a wish to integrate and accept both parts of British and Punjabi identity, while living in a country that was built from the colonisation, division and destruction of the other. The narrative of British subjugation of Punjab is also mirrored in my interpretation of Kulwinder's unfinished story about not being allowed to take up space here, and of Paramjeet's story of '*kala pani*', depicting a narrative of colonial imprisonment and punishment. These stories remind me of Riz Ahmed's 'The Long Goodbye' (2020), a conceptual album depicting Britain's historical and ongoing relationship with South Asians', through the metaphor of an abusive romantic

relationship. These narratives suggest ongoing struggles for survival and collective liberation, and opportunities for change which I will discuss in the implications section.

4.2 Critical review

Limitations of the research are presented, with methodological, theoretical and ethical dilemmas discussed.

4.2.1 Recruitment and participation

I had initially planned a more collaborative project involving co-produced data collection, analysis, and participatory action, such as a collective narrative project. However, due to lockdown restrictions limiting face-to-face contact, meaning I could not recruit in person at Gurdwaras, and subsequent struggles with recruitment and time-constraints, this did not go ahead. The inclusion criteria was also therefore changed to a younger age, after struggling to recruit older participants, who are less likely to use social media, or use it in different ways. This meant that not all were representative of an 'elder' population, and perhaps less connected with indigenous stories. This might be reflected in the choice of three participants to speak mainly in English, although also impacted by how they positioned me, and my own choice to speak primarily in English, which I feel more confident in than Punjabi.

The snowball recruitment meant that the women may have told more similar narratives than if they not known each other, and lived in different parts of the country. Although participants' stories were diverse and their narratives were rich and meaningful, there were issues which were not named and examined, such as the intersecting constructs of class and caste, although again subject to my interpretation. This might reflect the relative power and privilege of women who were interviewed, in terms of upbringing, access to education, migration, work and capital, and/or perhaps the silencing of voices and stories from so-called lower castes, despite Sikhi teaching against discrimination. Because of the nature of recruitment, participants were likely to volunteer because they were comfortable sharing their stories, and perhaps reached a sense of resolution or distance from their hardships. There are many women who are continuing to silently struggle to survive, and those who do not survive interpersonal and structural acts of oppression and violence, who are not here to share their stories.

It could be argued that the ethical research principle of anonymity can serve to remove womens' ownership of their voices and stories, depersonalise and decontextualise them, and bolster narratives of shame and secrecy. Anonymity was not preferred by all women who participated and expressed interest in the project, and one woman changed her mind about participating once finding out that she would not be identified, as I did not have ethical approval for this. However, this was not the preference for all, and one participant was certain that she wanted to remain anonymous. Riessman (2005b) narrated problems with the dominance of Western notions of research ethics in her research with South Asian populations, and instead suggested an ethics-in-context approach. Future research should therefore consider participants' choice about identification, with consideration for the benefits of power in ownership, with collaboration and feedback central to ensure their voice and choice is present throughout.

4.2.2 Interviews

Although three participants chose to carry out interviews mainly in English, they spoke in Punjabi for certain phrases, idioms and culturally relevant information, which could not always be translated to English. Therefore, being able to understand Punjabi was helpful in allowing space for this. However, there were also differences in age, generation, place of upbringing, Punjabi language fluency and knowledge of Sikhi, between myself and participants. This is likely to have shaped the stories that were and were not told, depending on how they positioned me as a listener. Most participants did not explicitly ask much about my own background or understanding, although were likely informed by my verbal and non-verbal responses. Sukbinder's interview was also carried out on the phone, as her preferred method, with no visual cues to interpret from either of us.

Having critiqued the notion of talking as catharsis, being interviewed about stories of hardship may have prevented women from volunteering. Future research could allow room for other methods of storytelling, such as *boliyan*, and nonverbal methods such as dance and movement, which can elicit performances of stories that are carried by the body.

Paramjeet's interview was also conducted with the help and presence of her daughter, which is likely to have shaped the stories that were and were not told. For

example, the stories about the relationship between her mother and herself, between herself and her daughter, and wider stories about the role of daughters and women in families and society. It also seemed as though Paramjeet's daughter provided a 'supporting role' in the story of her interview, comforting her mother when upset, and prompting further stories through her commentary, perhaps enacting a story of their own relationship. The limits of the current analysis and potential for further analysis of interview ethnography is explored in the next section.

4.2.3 Analysis, reflexivity and auto-ethnography

This was my first attempt at narrative research, of which there appear to be infinite methodologies. Being informed by many approaches led to constant dilemmas and decisions about what to focus on. It has been a time and labour intensive process and much of the analysis has been excluded from this thesis due to word-limit. I found it difficult to cut large parts of people's stories that they had given their time to tell, that were meaningful in their overall story, and to continuously re-construct narratives in the process of analysis. It was also difficult to know when to stop analysis, as interpretations are continuous rather than recurring, with no clear end point or 'saturation' like other qualitative approaches (Saunders et al., 2018). I connected with Luttrell's (2000) paper on 'good enough' research using narrative methods, which named a dilemma I shared; between the desire to represent participants' voices on their own terms, while recognising our role in shaping the research encounter and interpretations, with the concern that unequal power relations mean that our voice will overshadow or colonise theirs. There is no solution to this tension offered, instead a call to transparency about these conflicts and processes, considering what is lost and gained rather than what is ideal, as a method for reflexivity. For example, in deciding which parts of the analysis section to 'cut', I found that I was excluding poems that did not appear to align as neatly with the overall narrative of the story, and/or required more interpretation. As a result there is an inevitable loss of complexity, richness, depth and breadth, in favour of a 'clearer' overall narrative.

The poems were not always told chronologically, but are presented as such to help organise a 'coherent' narrative, in a way that made sense to me, and hopefully to the reader. This sometimes involved re-constructing poems by moving around stanzas as 'idea units' to fit with others that I applied similar meaning to,

rather than what followed in the interview. However, in doing so there is a sacrifice to understanding the function of the intended structure and organisation of the storyteller, instead attempting to fit into hegemonic ways of storytelling and sense-making for the reader. Blommaert (2006) argues that this discursive re-organisation becomes a political move, with cross-cultural differences being subjugated and transformed to inequality. I attempted to attend to the poetic structure of narratives in my analysis as much as possible. However, structural approaches require detailed transcription and microanalysis of syntactic and prosodic features of talk, such as tone and intonation (Riessman, 2005a). Strict applications of this approach are time-intensive, can become unreadable to those unfamiliar with linguistics, and can decontextualise historical and interactional factors. Therefore, some structural detail was sacrificed in order to attend to other aspects of analysis, and to ensure accessibility for a diverse audience. However, this means that we don't get as much of a sense of the speaker's voice, intention and emotion.

As the analyst, my own voice is heavily present and might not reflect the intended meaning of the storyteller. My own story and interpretations are informed by narratives from our shared collective history, as well as dominant British and psychological narratives, and narratives from people I engage with on my placement; who also share stories of surviving separation, migration, subjugation and violence. If the project was more collaborative and time-permitting, there would have been opportunities for reading, evaluation and feedback from the storytellers (Riessman, 1993; Dunkley, 2018).

Some researchers have advocated for a fuller engagement with analysis of the interview itself as narrative ethnography, acknowledging research as an inherently messy process, in which relationships become blurred and interviews unfold in unpredictable ways, (Hampshire et al., 2014). Qualitative researchers are often critiqued for lack of methodological rigour, which can lead to attempts to aspire to a false objectivity, with researchers obscuring their own participatory details which are considered unprofessional. The authors argue instead that rigour lies in honest consideration of ways that researchers engaged with relationships and connections during the interview and analysis, as participants in one another's biographies, allowing understandings that otherwise would not have been possible. Pillow (2003) also critiques the use of comfortable reflexivity as a methodological tool to get better data, moving towards uncomfortable reflexivity to acknowledge flaws and demonstrate the ethical and philosophical complexities of engaging with

qualitative research. However, this is not a dominant practice in psychological research, and I acknowledge that I was informed by narratives of dichotomous 'researcher-participant' roles as 'professional', and therefore did not present much of my own participatory details and emotional responses in the analysis.

Nevertheless, this project has been an incredibly personal and emotional journey; as a part of the community with shared collective history, attempting to be truly engaged with the emotion of the material, but also as someone who is more 'Westernised' and in the profession of psychology. As such, the process has been both challenging and healing. I have at times felt immense pressure and tension about my representation of these womens' stories, of the Sikh Punjabi community, of Sikhi, and questioning whether I am the 'right' person to have carried out this research. However, through dialogue with other South Asian therapists we shared a collective story; minoritised professionals are positioned as responsible for sharing their 'expert' cultural knowledge to increase awareness and 'competency' of their White British colleagues, in a system that is set up for the latter, and thus feels like a large weight to carry. Through this collective storytelling I felt liberated from some of the weight of these expectations. Returning to connecting with the participants' stories, I often felt moved, and at times they provided strength, support and guidance during my own times of hardship, grief and struggle. I therefore found comfort in the hope of doing the same for others who read their stories and mine, however you interpret them.

4.3 Implications and recommendations

Moving from private to public transformation, my interpretations led me to consider the opportunities for liberatory praxis, discussed below.

4.3.1 Clinical Psychology: Theory and Practice

Given the above reflections, clinical psychology needs to go beyond 'increasing access' to services and training.

4.3.1.1 Frameworks of connection vs. 'knowing'

A benefit of recruiting from a non-clinical population is that stories were perhaps not as colonised by psychological language and frameworks, eliciting a range of narratives about suffering, hardship, survival, healing and liberation. These

narratives demonstrate the holistic nature of our connection with each other, our environment, with a sense of higher meaning and purpose, and the impact of threats to these on our wellbeing. Therefore, prevention and intervention strategies need to better address the spiritual, ecological, social and political contexts and connectedness of psychological distress, going beyond purely psychological and cultural models for example of 'acculturative stress' (Karasz et al., 2019;).

The women in this study described many different strategies for connection, demonstrating Kulwider's narrative of different perspectives/ methods to achieve the same goal. There are as many different ways of meaning-making as there are people in the world. Therefore, psychologists should be able to acknowledge and work alongside this pluralism, accompanying people alongside their journey from a position of humility and curiosity, rather than imposing dominant narratives which may not always make sense to others.

I am inspired by Akomolafe and Ladha's (2017) writings on 'emergence' as an onto-epistemology of 'not-knowing', in contrast with the story of global 'progress', which is steered by 'educated' White men. The authors question our current questions and solutions in response to earthly crises, instead advocating for new, creative, radical re-imaginings which unsettle the ground that exclusionary and exploitative practices of 'progress' are built on, thus cultivating and embodying new spaces for power and justice to thrive. I will next re-imagine what this might look like in existing psychological services, and go on to re-imagine psychology itself.

4.3.1.2 Re-imagining 'therapy'

For those who do seek help from mental health professionals, there should be more choice and variety of therapeutic intervention offered:

- Narrative therapy approaches can help bring us into individual and collective meaning-making, and allow a wider range of approaches to storytelling such as; music, poetry, dance, theatre, gardening, art, photography and cooking (Denborough, 2012). Given the importance of focusing on cultivation, creativity and productivity for women in this study, and performing strength as resistance, these approaches might be more acceptable and meaningful than traditional talking therapies, and allow space for storytelling as liberation psychology. Collective narrative approaches can also allow space for constructing and living 'thick' rather than 'thin' stories.

- Welcoming and working with peoples' religious and spiritual beliefs, values, tensions and goals should also be standard practice for psychologists, as we have seen the importance for some of the women in this study, for example connection with *Gurbani* and *seva* as developing consciousness and liberation. This could include working with places of worship, faith leaders and communities. For example, co-producing groups and community projects around Sikhi and wellbeing.

- Family, collective and community interventions should be available for all, rather than the standard practice of individual interventions alone, given the importance of interpersonal connection and solidarity for these women. This also allows space for collective resistance and liberation from oppressive narratives and practices, instead strengthening narratives of collective strength and survival. An example might be co-produced prevention and intervention projects targeting violence against women in the Sikh Punjabi community, incorporating the shared values of Sikhi, liberation and community psychology.

- Offering indigenous spiritual practices for embodied ecological consciousness and connection, such as meditation, discussed below.

4.3.1.3 Decolonising psychology

Given the strength, resources and wisdom often already present in communities, as with the participants in this study, the profession of clinical psychology, in its current form, does not need to be everywhere and colonise everything. We need to develop our own consciousness and humility before attempting to assert power elsewhere. If we are working towards 'decolonising' our practice, we need to examine where the story of psychology comes from, who is telling it, who has the power to construct and share knowledge, and whose voices are included and excluded (Kessi, 2015). We need to acknowledge the consequences of colonisation, subjugation and collective hardship, rather than continuing to pathologise people's responses, as a professional ethical duty and priority.

Decolonising involves reclaiming indigenous knowledges, some of which Western capitalism has exploited, repackaged and sold, such as 'mindfulness', which is based on Eastern teachings and practices of meditation. Re-authoring the story of clinical psychology should begin with training; moving away from

'monocultures of the mind', for example the requirement of training courses to teach 'CBT+1' (British Psychological Society, 2019). Clinical psychology is informed by the European so-called 'enlightenment' period, with assumptions of rationality, positivism and empiricism informing its realist epistemology. This leads the professional of psychology to fall victim to "scientistic mimicry", in order to retain legitimacy and respectability, while ironically failing to question and critique as scientific endeavour (Martín-Baró,1994: p.20). However, divinity is irrational, illogical and unknowable. You cannot 'know', you can only feel and be aware of, often without articulation. Some would argue that religion and spirituality are not key to clinical psychology, however, I would argue that the divinity within us that connects us is perhaps the most powerful force in our work and lives, and connects us with this sense of awe and wonder. Therefore, there is empowerment and liberation to be accessed by leaning into this, which indigenous and spiritual practices acknowledge, as we have seen in the women's stories.

Part of decolonising involves countering our anthropocentrism. As seen in the stories of participants, our relationships with nature, animals, food and the land are reciprocal, we cannot survive without them. In Sikhi, the highest honour is to grow food and to feed others, and the highest sin is to let someone starve. Food is not just 'fuel' for our body as a machine, food is the currency of life. However, modern corporations have commercialised the value of water, air and food, turning nature into a monopolised business that we are increasingly disconnected from (Shiva, 2000). Psychological approaches rarely acknowledge this, and the impact that loss or threat of our physical, emotional and spiritual connection with our environment can have on us. Therefore, eco-psychology approaches, which attempt to re-establish connection with this embodied reciprocal relationship, are an ethical duty (Akomolafe & Ladha, 2017).

4.3.2 Implications for policy

As we have seen recently, global crises require change at a large-scale level. Psychological practice in its current form is limited in its ability to address socio, political and environmental issues and their reciprocal relationship with emotional wellbeing, particularly for marginalised groups. However, we can contribute to change through the methods described by participants; consciousness-raising and cultivating connections with our surroundings, using

research to change narratives and inform policy, and actively resisting oppressive practice and policy, discussed below.

Given the womens' stories of racial and gender-based abuse, exploitation and violence in the UK, there is a clear need for societal and policy level change to address this. For example, the government's ongoing 'hostile environment' policies are intended to make life harder for immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and racialised people. This inevitably feeds into institutional and interpersonal violence, which dehumanise both the oppressed and oppressor (Freire, 1972). In the NHS, policies are implemented that turn care-givers into immigration offers, with passports providing access to care. This also includes discriminatory practices in psychological services, where people who do not subscribe to dominant Western narratives of psychology are deemed 'not psychologically-minded' and excluded from services, further contributing to their silencing and marginalisation. If we are to 'humanise' contexts we need to deconstruct and challenge narratives of who is and is not 'human' and 'deserving' of care, joining alongside those who are marginalised and actively protesting injustice where we see it - both within and outside of our working environments (Castro Romero, 2017). This also includes challenging pathologising approaches which de-contextualise suffering.

We also need to recognise the structural conditions that allow de-humanising to continue; health and social care services are commissioned to provide certain kinds of services, based on certain kinds of evidence, and are evaluated based on their achievement of specific targets. This does not allow much room for challenging hegemonic practices. For example, although clinical psychologists are supposedly framed as scientist-practitioners, not many clinical psychology posts are funded for practice-based research, and the 'gold standard' Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) often have strict exclusion criteria, marginalising those who do not fit some preconceived standard. This allows the myth of evidence-based practice and NICE guidelines to continue. Given that services are not acceptable for all and might not be trusted by all, I would argue for a move towards community psychology, acknowledging the abundance of wisdom in indigenous and religious practices and in local communities and re-imagining what 'support' might look like. A change of commissioning, policy and funding allocation that acknowledges existing wisdom can help to strengthen our connections with our surroundings and each other. Building bridges to foster reciprocal values of

inclusion, openness, curiosity and humility, can help cultivate new ways of being and engage with a liberatory praxis of social change (Kagan et al., 2019).

Since conducing this research project, a survey from Sikh Women's Aid (2021) was published reporting on the prevalence of violence against women in Sikh Punjabi communities. This was also reflected in the women's stories in the current research sample, and again reports some of the narratives that place blame and shame on Sikh Punjabi women, rather than perpetrators, preventing them from seeking help. The report highlights the need for further research, prevention and intervention strategies, with 55% of the women never disclosing or seeking support from the police, GP, or other voluntary or NHS organisations, often because a lack of trust. This again demonstrates the need for further community outreach and partnership from statutory services to develop relationships with the communities we are working with, rather than labelling them as 'hard to reach'.

4.3.3 Directions for future research

Given the study limitations, Participatory Action Research would allow women more power, choice and voice in the research process, to co-create something sustainable and accessible to disseminate to a more diverse audience, including policy makers (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2006). This could also include intergenerational aspects, for younger generations to witness and honour elders' stories, create new stories, and cultivate connection with their roots as liberatory praxis. As Wilson put it, remembering collective histories can help gather strength for battles ahead (2018).

Recommendations for psychological research in general would be for more transparency about our own role and engagement with the research process, resisting dominant narratives of objectivity and professionalism, which has allowed me to learn so much more from the process than I had anticipated. This also involves active engagement with a dynamic contextual ethical approach, towards a decolonising praxis of research methods, and providing opportunities for re-imagining psychology.

4.4 Conclusions

After submitting my ethics application, I was questioned by the UEL School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee about whether the project was

'psychological' enough. I hope that through engagement with the participants' moving stories of struggle, survival and liberation, and my own research story, I have demonstrated an ethical priority of liberation from the 'single stories' and 'monocultures' of Western psychology, towards psychologies that honour both our diversity and our connectedness.

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APPENDIX A: PRISMA DIAGRAM

Figure 2

PRISMA Flow Diagram of Citations Identified and Evaluated for Scoping Review

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Records identified through │
│  database search (EBSCO and │
│          Scopus)¹           │
│         (n = 110)           │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               │
               ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Records after duplicates    │
│         removed             │
│         (n = 93)            │
└─────────────────────────────┘
               │
               ▼                          ┌─────────────────────────────┐
┌─────────────────────────────┐           │      Records excluded        │
│  Titles/ abstracts screened │──────────▶│          (n=75)              │
│         (n = 93)            │           │ (out of scope, topic not     │
└─────────────────────────────┘           │ relevant, sample not         │
               │                          │ relevant, article in         │
               ▼                          │ language other than English, │
┌─────────────────────────────┐           │ women living in India)       │
│  Full-text articles assessed│           └─────────────────────────────┘
│       for eligibility       │           ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│         (n = 18)           │──────────▶│      Articles excluded       │
└─────────────────────────────┘           │          (n = 3)            │
               │                          └─────────────────────────────┘
               ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Studies included in scoping │
│          review             │
│         (n = 15)           │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```
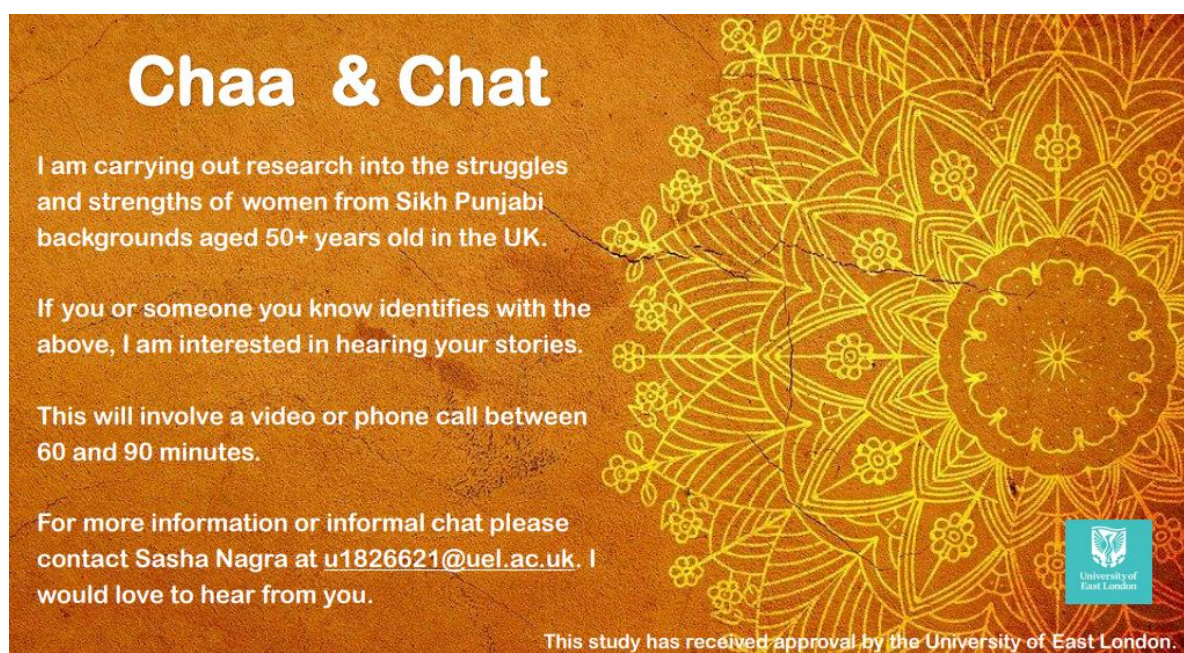
¹ Search terms:

(resilience OR strength OR empowerment OR coping OR surviving OR healing OR

resistance OR wellbeing)

AND (Sikh OR Punjabi)

AND women

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH POSTER

Chaa & Chat

I am carrying out research into the struggles and strengths of women from Sikh Punjabi backgrounds aged 50+ years old in the UK.

If you or someone you know identifies with the above, I am interested in hearing your stories.

This will involve a video or phone call between 60 and 90 minutes.

For more information or informal chat please contact Sasha Nagra at u1826621@uel.ac.uk. I would love to hear from you.

This study has received approval by the University of East London.

University of East London

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

<u>Before Recording:</u>
- Discuss what the study is about.
- Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity,
- recording, right to withdraw,
- Demographics – age, how long been in the UK, geographical location, language
- Discuss any questions or concerns.

<u>Recording:</u>
Possible questions:
- Can you tell me about where you grew up and what it was like?
- What are some of the challenges or difficulties you have faced in life?
- How do you make sense of what happened?
- How did you get through that?
- What things helped you/ give you strength?
- Who/ where did you learn that from?
- What (other) experiences in your life have been important to you?

Prompts:
- Can you tell me a little more about that?
- Can you explain what you mean by that?
- Can you tell me what that was like?
- Can you tell me about what that means to you?
- Can you give me an example?

<u>After recording:</u>
Debrief:
- Discuss how they found it, questions or concerns, feedback about the Qs/ process
- Anything off the record.
- Provide information for support if needed.

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ANALYSIS

1. Micro level:
- What is used to signify beginning and endings of stories?
- What language is used to narrate stories of surviving hardships?
- What language devices, emphasis, tone, grammatical choices are used?
- What patterns do you notice in their storytelling?
- What is the function of this language, devices and patterns?
- What overall story are they telling?

2. Meso level:
- How does the story move you or draw you in? What emotions are elicited in you?
- How do you respond? How have you contributed to the narratives?
- How are they positioning you in the context?
- How are they positioning themselves?

3. Macro level:
- What social roles are being performed?
- What other voices can be heard in their story?
- What other stories about surviving hardships are they drawing on?
- How are these other voices and stories shaping the story they are telling?
- What might these tell us about wider social/ collective stories of surviving hardship?

APPENDIX E: ETHICAL APPROVAL

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

REVIEWER: Volker Thoma

SUPERVISOR: Maria Castro Romero

STUDENT: Sasha Nagra

Course: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Title of proposed study: Sharing elder Sikh Punjabi women's stories of surviving hardship

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY
(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

Minor amendments required

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

A few points:

- You need to clarify in detail what the video-link solution would look like in case social distancing is in place. E.g. ZOOM is unaccepatable as a platform for many reasons
- If you use TEAMS, what will be recorded for how long? Where stored, How, can it be deleted? What happens when in case participant retracts consent etc?

Also, not strictly a Ethics question (although there is debate about this) I found the research questions vague and not very psychological, in particular at a prof doc level. Maybe the team can have another rethink. Also 4-5 participants seems very low, again, for a doctorate level.

Major amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students)*:

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature)*: SASHA NAGRA
Student number:

Date: 07/07/2020

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

☐ MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

☒ LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature):*   Volker Thoma

Date: 26/6/2020

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
School of Psychology

REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impacts on ethical protocol. If you are not sure about whether your proposed amendment warrants approval consult your supervisor or contact Dr Mark Finn (Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee).

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

1. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
2. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3. When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
4. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Dr Mark Finn at m.finn@uel.ac.uk
5. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.
6. Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendments(s) added as tracked changes.
2. Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information letter, updated consent form etc.
3. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant: Sasha Nagra

Programme of study: Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

Title of research: Stories of surviving through hardship in elder Sikh Punjabi women

Name of supervisor: Maria Castro

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
Recruitment - reducing age of participants to recruit to women aged 50+ years old, and location to anywhere in the UK. Changes to poster, information, consent and debrief forms relative to this.	It has proven difficult to access older participants through online means (due to Covid), particularly in Punjabi/ non-English speaking community, even through communicating with community organisations, word of mouth, and the contingency strategy of recruiting a family. I believe reducing the age required of participants to 50+ and widening the location will widen the target audience available. It has also not been possible to source interpreters for funding reasons and a younger population will be more likely to speak English. This will naturally change the nature of stories told however I believe this population also have valuable stories to tell, and will be more likely to participate, given the time limit of thesis completion. The limits and implications of this change will be reflected on in the discussion.
Participatory nature of research question and design	Removing the second part of the question and participatory aim of collaborating to design the research and ways of sharing it with younger generations, in the interest of remaining time. Participants will still be able to choose whether they want an anonymous

	1:1 space and/ or a group to tell and possibly retell their stories so will have some input into the nature of the research outcomes.
Data collection will all be on Microsoft Teams, either on video or phone call.	Restrictions due to Covid19.

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	x	

Student's signature (please type your name):   SASHA NAGRA

Date: 23.10.20

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER		
Amendment(s) approved	YES	
Comments		

Reviewer: Tim Lomas

Date: 23.10.20

University of East London Psychology

REQUEST FOR TITLE CHANGE TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR BSc, MSc/MA & TAUGHT PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE STUDENTS

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed title change to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology.

By applying for a change of title request you confirm that in doing so the process by which you have collected your data/conducted your research has not changed or deviated from your original ethics approval. If either of these have changed then you are required to complete an Ethics Amendments Form.

HOW TO COMPLETE & SUBMIT THE REQUEST

1. Complete the request form electronically and accurately.
2. Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3. Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to: Psychology.Ethics@uel.ac.uk
4. Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with reviewer's response box completed. This will normally be within five days. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your project/dissertation/thesis.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

1. A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.

Name of applicant:	Sasha Nagra
Programme of study:	Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
Name of supervisor:	Dr Maria Castro Romero

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed title change in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
Old Title: Sharing elder Sikh Punjabi women's stories of surviving hardship	The 'sharing' aspect was initially planned to involve collective narrative practice however due to coronavirus restrictions and time restrictions this did not go ahead
New Title: Stories of Surviving through Hardship in Elder Sikh Punjabi Women	

Please tick	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and agree to them?	x	
Does your change of title impact the process of how you collected your data/conducted your research?	x	

Student's signature (please type your name):   SASHA NAGRA

Date: 13.09.20

TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER		
Title changes approved	YES	
Comments		

Reviewer: Trishna Patel

Date: 13/09/2021

APPENDIX F: INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET
Stories of surviving through hardship in Sikh Punjabi women

You are being invited for participation in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what this would involve. Please take time to read this information carefully.

As part of my studies for a Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, I am carrying out the following research:

What is the research?
I am interested in the struggles and strengths of women from Sikh Punjabi communities in the UK, and their stories of survival through hardships. This is because:
- At the moment, there is not enough research involving Sikh Punjabi communities, especially women, but I believe these voices are valuable and should be heard.
- I believe that we can learn a lot from listening to these stories, some which might not often be heard, I would like to help share lessons from these stories so that they are not lost.

I am looking for people who identify as:
- 50+ year old women
- From a Sikh Punjabi background

What will your help involve?
- You will be asked to take part in an individual and/or small group discussion of no longer than 90 minutes. This will be over the phone/ video call.
- My role will be to listen to your stories, and ask follow up questions to find out more.
- I will ask to record your stories to help me remember and write about them.

Your taking part will be safe and your privacy respected, your name and identifying information will <u>not</u> be used in any written reports.

<u>**You are free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.**</u>

I recognise that it can be difficult talking about struggles and hardships and remind you that it is your choice how much you want to talk about. You can change your mind at any time. I can also provide information and support about where to get help if it becomes too distressing.

<u>You are free to change your mind about volunteering at any time, without explanation or negative consequence.</u>

You may also request to withdraw your stories up to three weeks after you have participated, if you wish. I will securely store name and contact details which only I will have access to, and will be deleted after the research is finished. I will keep anonymised stories separate and will keep them for up to three years, for further research and publishing.

Contact Details
If you would like further information or have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Sasha Nagra, on

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Maria Castro Romero, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
m.castro@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.lomas@uel.ac.uk)

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM

Consent to participate in a research study:
Stories of surviving through hardship in Sikh Punjabi women

I have the read the information sheet relating to the research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and information from this research, will remain private. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that I can withdraw my data up to three weeks after participation, until analysis begins.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

………………………………………………………………………………….
Participant's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………..
Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………..
Researcher's Signature

…………………………………………………………………………………
Date: ………………….………

APPENDIX H: DEBRIEF SHEET

DEBRIEF LETTER
Stories of surviving through hardship in Sikh Punjabi women.

Thank you for collaborating in my research study. This letter offers information that may be relevant now you have taken part.

What will happen to the information you have provided?
I will securely store any personal information such as names and contact details, which only I will have access to, and will be destroyed after the research has been completed. These will stored separately to information used in the research (recordings and anonymised written transcripts), which only myself and my supervisor will have access to, recordings will be destroyed when research is completed and anonymised transcripts will be kept for up to three years for publication and dissemination of the research. You may also request to withdraw your information up to three weeks after you have participated if you wish.

The stories you tell will be written up for my report, which I also hope to publish more widely. You may also have suggestions about how to share them.

What if you have been adversely affected by volunteering?
It is not expected that you will have been negatively affected by volunteering for the study. It is still possible that sharing your stories may be distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been negatively affected, you may find the following resources/services helpful for information and support:

   Mind: 0300 123 3393
   https://www.asianwomanfestival.com/directory

You are also very welcome to contact me or my supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Sasha Nagra, on

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Maria Castro Romero, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
m.castro@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.lomas@uel.ac.uk)