MA Research Paper   Sociology Department

October 2016

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BEYOND THE LAND OF FIVE RIVERS: SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND CLASS
CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE CANADIAN SIKH DIASPORA

by

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A research paper accepted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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2016

ABSTRACT

Romanticized visions of Khalistan became emotively embedded in the hearts and minds of Sikh-Canadians following the execution of Operation Blue Star. Today, insurgents residing within the contested homeland continue to draw support from Sikh immigrants and their Canadian-born descendants. Perplexingly, while a sizable proportion of second and third-generation Sikh youth advocate for the creation of the theocratic state of Khalistan, many selectively disregard the righteous way of life envisioned by the founders of the Khalsa Panth. This paper presents a conceptual sociological analysis of the diasporic politics of identity and homeland. Although Marx, and other modern social theorists, had presumed that nationalism would eventually disappear, globalization has attributed new importance to the project of nation-building, and imagined political communities. Using the Sikh nationalist liberation movement as the point of departure, this paper demonstrates that ethno-racial markers of identity, and primordial religious mythologies, can be politically employed to distract members of oppressed groups from realizing the material conditions which perpetuate inequality in post-colonial capitalist states. Considering that ethnies are never universally homogenous groups, and that economic incentives exist for seizing state power, nationalist movements can only be understood by identifying the concrete class interests of their principal exponents. While the Punjab problem represents the empirical focus of this paper, the rich sociological insights on inter-communal conflict, identity, and belonging are generalizable beyond this immediate context.

Keywords: Khalistan, Sikhism, Punjab, Canada, diaspora, immigration, nationalism, identity, identity politics, primordialism, ethnicity, race, caste, social class, class consciousness, false consciousness, ideology, hegemony, social control

INTRODUCTON:

At the founding convention of the World Sikh Organization (WSO) in 1984,

Ajaib Singh Bagri vehemently declared:

> The destiny of communities is changed when the blood of
> martyrs is spilled… I give you my most solemn assurance,
> until we kill 50,000 Hindus we will not rest… the Khalsa
> have to clash iron with iron… if anybody tries to get our
> nation annihilated, all of *his* family and children will be
> reduced to pulp (Quoted in Duthel, 2014: 484; emphasis
> added).

The intoxicating amalgamation of propaganda and scripture espoused by the

orthodox preacher aroused the long-dormant nationalist sentiments of the Sikh diaspora

(Bell, 2007: 23). Aspirations for the theocratic homeland of Khalistan (the land of the

pure) had initially emerged in Punjab (the land of five rivers) during the abdication of

British colonial rule. However, the struggle for Sikh self-determination was first formally

pursued within the legal confines of India's political-economic system. Under the post-

colonial state, the Sikhs' campaign for independence proved to be ineffective due to

pervasive communal bias in the allocation of social, political, and economic resources

which emanated from the central government's tacit adherence to Hindutva nationalist

ideology.

Within the 'socialist', 'secular', and 'democratic' Indian Republic, the historical

grievances of the Sikhs, and other marginalized ethno-religious groups, were

purposefully disregarded since they were inconsistent with the national politics of

dynastic succession, and the transnational priorities of the post-independence period.

While communal calls to arms resonated with Sikhs residing in the contested homeland,

they also appealed to members of the diaspora who were physically separated, but still

emotionally tied to the region of Punjab. The latter group of Sikhs, who had ventured beyond the land of five rivers, were forced to painfully sever their nationalist loyalties to Bharat Mata (Mother India) when televised news coverage of the desecration of the Harmandir Sahib complex was finally broadcasted. State-sanctioned religious persecution facilitated the intensification of Khalistani ethno-nationalism in Punjab, while also serving as the explosive catalyst for the deadliest terrorist attack recorded in Canadian history.

The violent secessionist movement continues to draw moral, ideological, and economic support from Sikh immigrants and their Canadian-born descendants. Today, romanticized visions of the 'land of the pure' have become emotively embedded in the hearts and minds of many second and third-generation diasporic youth. Perplexingly, while newer generations of Canadian-Sikhs support the imagined theocratic state of Khalistan, they selectively disregard the righteous way of life envisioned by the founders of the Khalsa Panth (pure faith), and dismiss the spiritual guidance proffered in the Adi Granth (Sikh holy book). This paper presents a conceptual analysis of the diasporic politics of identity and homeland. Although the Punjab problem represents the empirical focus of this paper, the rich sociological insights on inter-communal conflict, identity, and belonging are generalizable beyond this immediate context.

Using the Sikh nationalist liberation movement as the point of departure, this paper will demonstrate that ethno-racial markers of identity, and primordial religious mythologies, can be politically employed to distract members of oppressed groups from realizing the material conditions which perpetuate inequality in post-colonial societies. Considering that ethnies are never universally homogenous groups, and that economic incentives exist for seizing state power, nationalist movements can only be understood by

identifying the concrete class interests of their principal exponents (Allahar, 2008: 1). The homeland struggle of the imagined Sikh community is rooted in stark class, and caste-based, power differentials which have been generated by the political-economic contradictions of peripheral capitalist development.

In the contemporary period, the grievances of marginalized populations cannot be resolved through regressive resegregation efforts, or secessionist movements. In the long-term, the pervasive and problematic politics of cultural difference is unconducive to progressive social change, since the struggle for human emancipation is intrinsically tied up with a growing need for social solidarity, and collective sense of forgetfulness. Global social justice can only be achieved through the abolishment of private property, and the implementation of the proletarian dictatorship. In light of the reductionist nature of orthodox Marxist theory, especially its tendency to demote non-class-based inequalities to the status of epiphenomena, a neo-Marxist analysis will be propounded in the ensuing discussion.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section one outlines Marxian class theory while attempting to integrate considerations of caste, race, and ethnicity into the discourse of economic power. Section two examines the persistence of nationalism, and assesses the challenges posed to proletarian internationalism by globalization. Section three provides a synoptic pre and post-partition genealogy of the social and economic origins of Khalistani ethno-nationalism. Section four considers the contributions of diasporic Sikhs to the struggle for homeland, and addresses the politics of remembering and forgetting. Finally, section five draws conclusions.

SECTION I: MARXIAN CLASS THEORY

Class and Caste Stratification: A Conceptual Distinction

Before examining the historical circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Khalistani ethno-nationalist movement, and the material interests of its proponents, a brief discussion pertaining to social class is in order. Wright (1980: 326) succinctly defines classes as sets of "…common positions within the social relations of production". As opposed to signifying a social grouping of individuals, or an arbitrary ranking within a hierarchal system of power relations, classes can be conceived of as connections which arise when individuals engage in interdependent economic exchanges within society (Morrison, 2006: 55).

The life course trajectory of the modern social actor is profoundly shaped by class, since advantages, or disadvantages, are conferred on the basis of one's relationship to the productive sphere. Within modern class-stratified societies like Canada, vertical social mobility is highly unlikely, but still theoretically possible. In contrast, within traditional societies like India, where elements of caste hierarchization are latently embedded into institutional structures and practices, movement between, and among, strata is impossible due to the rigidness of the system of ascribed primordial social ranks and statuses.

Caste-based status differentiation is not exclusive to the Indian subcontinent, but the earliest expressions of this system are located within ancient Vedic scriptures (Bayly, 1999: 23). The Rig Veda and Bhagavad Gita are replete with references to purity and pollution which signify that individuals of lower birth will remain constrained to the inferior caste position they were ascribed at birth, even if they amass material wealth, or attain occupational mobility (Hawley, 2011: 16). Though scheduled castes are protected

by the Constitution of India, many Hindus still 'choose' to practice endogamy so privilege, or disadvantage, tends to become structured intergenerationally.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, allegedly set out to abolish the oppressive Brahmanical Hindu caste system, gender inequality, and idol worship (Tatla, 1999: 16). Nanak, the first of the nine celestial Sikh Gurus, was born into a Hindu Kshatriya family during a period of profound socio-political turmoil near present-day Lahore (Basran and Bolaria, 2004: 15). In Vedic scriptures, Kshatriyas represent the second echelon out of the four major caste divisions into which adherents of the Hindu faith are classified. The Kshatriyas were well respected in early medieval India since they were ordained as the armed protectors of the Hindu Samaj (community). Nevertheless, unlike the Brahmin priests which occupied the highest rank in the caste hierarchy, the Kshatriya warriors were not necessarily wealthy (Jadhav, 2007: 1).

According to the mythological Sikh Janamsakhis (birth stories), Nanak devoted his life to travelling across the Indian subcontinent "…to spread the *ultimate truth* and to put mankind on the path to salvation" (Sarna, 2003: 72; emphasis added). In stark contrast to the Brahmin priests who denied those of lower birth entry into Hindu mandirs (temples), Nanak actively delivered sermons to permanently polluted populations (Mendelsohn and Vicziany, 1998: 7). The Guru's divine version of 'truth', which was ideologically devoid of caste differentiation and inequality, appealed to Hindus of untouchable birth, as well as members of other religious denominations who were primordially relegated to inferior positions within the hierarchical structure of Indian society (Puri, 2003: 1).

Whereas the devotees of the Sikh faith were primarily derived from the downtrodden, illiterate, and backward castes, Nanak, and the other nine successive

Gurus, originated from educated Kshatriya families (Jodhka, 2014: 586). Sikh scholars tend to regard Nanak as a revolutionary however, the Guru's condemnation of the Vedic system of social stratification may also be interpreted as a form of political opportunism. Under the prevailing structural arrangements of medieval India, the Gurus only *symbolically* benefitted from their caste position. Thus, Nanak may have made a rational decision to reject the binary oppositions of purity and pollution, which form the ideological basis of Hindu caste stratification, in favour of forming a new hierarchy which strategically placed him in a position of divine authority.

History evinces that inequitable power relations are often challenged by those that do not benefit from social structural constraints. For most devout Sikhs, this contention would likely be considered blasphemous since the Gurus are revered as great liberators of the weak, needy, and disadvantaged. Still, irrespective of the political-economic factors which may have contributed to Nanak denouncing the oppressive elements of the Hindu faith, Sikhism also functions to entrench and legitimate unequal power differentials between the privileged and underprivileged. While chastising and dismantling the caste system of Hinduism, Nanak created favourable conditions for the construction of a parallel primordial stratification system amongst Sikhs.

Puri (2003: 1) notes that over time, the Sikh faith has evolved and incorporated elements of casteism that were similar, yet different to that of the Vedic hierarchical system. In the caste ordering of the Sikhs, "…Jats who own cultivable land form the upper echelon, artisans occupy the middle strata, while landless labourers reside at the bottom" (Singh and Dhanda, 2014: 501). Thus, despite the absence of caste distinction in scriptural ideology, the dominant Jat agriculturalists enjoy elevated status within the Sikh community, and commonly exercise economic power in the political institutions of

Indian society. Bal (2005: 3979) notes that high birth is not always a source of economic power since Jats, and other Sikh caste-groups, are internally fragmented with regards to property ownership, educational attainment, and socioeconomic position. Nevertheless, since the advent of globalization and the capitalist modernization of India, the caste and class interests of both the rural and urban Punjabi-Sikhs have slowly begun to complement and overlap with one another.

The conceptual distinction between class and caste is important for the ensuing discussion on Sikh secessionist politics and ethno-nationalism. While the foundational basis of the caste system is primarily ideological, class position is determined by both *objective* material conditions, which may change in exceedingly rare circumstances, and a *subjective* awareness of one's position within the terrain of social relations. Due to the stringent social enforcement of caste-based hierarchies, and their religious and cultural underpinnings, class-based systems of social stratification are comparatively less rigid.

The History of Class Struggle:

A number of theoretical paradigms have been developed to explain the persistence of class-based inequalities in capitalist societies, but the Marxist sociological framework continues to have the greatest explanatory and exhortatory strengths. Paradoxically, however, while class-based analyses are central to the historical materialist approach, Marx failed systematically to define class, and elaborate upon his usage of the concept (Wright, 1985: 6). Nonetheless, the general consensus among Marxists is that the essential determinant of an individual's class position is ownership of the means of production, or lack thereof (Sirianni, 1981: 281). Ownership, or non-ownership, has implications for control, or exploitation, and the degree of autonomy members of a particular class exercise within a given society (Swingewood, 1975: 114).

In "The Communist Manifesto" (herein referred to as the "Manifesto"), Marx and Engels (1848: 1) famously asserted that "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". According to Marx, and his co-conspirator, successive transitions between historical epochs have been premised upon conflict between a weakening dominant class, and an emerging class vying for power (McLaverty, 2005: 47). The highly influential political manuscript elucidates that the current form of capitalist socioeconomic organization is neither natural, nor immutable to structural transformation, since class antagonisms between the oppressors and the oppressed have resulted in radical changes within seemingly stable societies.

While delineating the unstable dynamics of power relations within the dominant modes of production, Marx and Engels also established that class-based hierarchies have become more simplified over time. The "Manifesto" expounds that the profound socio-political changes which accompanied the Enclosure Movements, and the Industrial Revolution, resulted in the partition of society into two opposing camps: the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Upon securing power from the aristocratic elites of the feudal era, and gaining exclusive control over the productive forces, the bourgeoisie arose as the new dominant class of the capitalist epoch. The agrarian peasantry was transmuted into the industrial proletariat following the annexation of the commons, and the institution of private property.

During the feudal era, mutual obligations and loyalties had provided the foundational basis of social relations, as well as the system of land tenureship (Hilton, 1976: 13). Under capitalism, a market society emerged which released feudal subjects from manorial bondage, while also permitting members of the landless working-class to exchange labour power for wages which were paid out by the owners of the means of

industrial production (Macpherson, 1965: 7). Today, wage labour is conventionally understood to represent a mutually beneficial economic arrangement which employers and employees enter into 'voluntarily'. Nevertheless, the Marxist interpretation, which goes beyond superficial analysis, reveals that the social relations of capitalist production are not only imbued with asymmetric power differentials, but they are also inherently exploitative.

Since subsistence farming was forcefully and violently suppressed at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, workers were *required* to offer their labour services to employers in order to ensure an adequate standard of material well-being. Hick and Allahar (2011: 10) astutely convey that modern workers are coerced into both formal, and informal, market-based contracts under economic duress. The only alternative to wage labour is slow starvation and eventual death, so the proletariat 'accept' unfair compensation, as well as poor working conditions, "under the compulsion of the whip of hunger" (Weber, 1927: 110). An immiserated class of workers, which owns nothing else but its labour power, is indispensable for the optimal functioning of the economic system. In late capitalist societies, the central industrialist imperatives of surplus value extraction, and profit maximization, continue to be realized through the perpetual reproduction, expansion, and intensification of the exploitative relations of production.

In the "Manifesto", Marx and Engels envisioned alternative socialist visions for human relations, and the social, political, and economic ordering of society. The radical social theorists contended that the demise of capitalism, and by extension the bourgeoisie, was dialectically tied to the masses developing a subjective awareness of their common grievances against the dominant class, as well as the structural conditions which perpetuate economic domination. The revolutionary impetus for social change was to be

provided by the internal contradictions of capital accumulation, which according to Marx and Engels, would inevitably generate antagonisms between "the exploiting appropriators and the exploited producers" (Quoted in Wood, 2015: 117).

Once workers realized that their class interests were antithetical to that of the capitalist owners, they were expected to institute a proletarian dictatorship, and eventually abolish the system of private ownership. Social inequality would be eradicated when the state ultimately withered away, and a classless workers' utopia would be realized under communism (Kleinman, 2000: 130). Considering the dynamism of global capitalism, and the fact that the proletariat has failed to accomplish the revolutionary role that Marx and Engels once ascribed to its constituents, theories that are supposedly couched in the dogma of economic determinism have been repudiated by the traditional intelligentsia.

Differentiating Between Class Consciousness and False Consciousness:

Within developed, and underdeveloped capitalist societies, the intensification of exploitation, and perpetual impoverishment of the proletariat, has failed to produce the conditions necessary for class struggle. Many bourgeois commentators have postulated that the absence of revolutionary determination is indicative of the ideological demise of Marxism. Still, critical intellectuals, who remain fundamentally aligned with the Marxist tradition, maintain that human emancipation is predicated upon the masses developing a genuine class consciousness. Though Marx did not formulate a coherent theory of class consciousness, his distinction between a "class in itself" and a "class for itself" has served as the conceptual foundation for the analysis of this historical phenomenon.

A class in itself denotes a categorization of individuals that merely share a common relationship to the means of production. This classification is applicable to the

working-classes of both the Global North and Global South. While these workers objectively constitute a class in opposition to capital, they remain incognizant of their conflictive connection with the dominant class. In contrast, a class for itself refers to a group of individuals that have attained a genuine understanding of their objective position within the hierarchy of power relations, and a subjective awareness of their common grievances against the dominant class (Swingewood, 1975: 113).

Class consciousness can be differentiated from the conception of false consciousness. The latter refers to a state of delusion that arises when exploited group members accept the prevailing worldview that has been manufactured to protect and serve the interests of powerful elites. An individual that acts contrary to his or her own self-interests, or class interests, is thought to be suffering from false consciousness. Scholars within the Marxist tradition have used the theory of false consciousness to explain the proletariat's complacency, and the unconsummated revolutionary drama that was envisioned in the "Manifesto". Nevertheless, while Marx was cognizant of the illusory nature of ideology, he never explicitly used the term in his writings.

The concept was originally introduced in a letter written by Engels, and later developed in the carceral writings of Gramsci, the highly influential neo-Marxist theorist and Italian politician. Gramsci reasoned that class domination is not exclusively sustained through material wealth or political power (Seidman, 2012: 133). Within capitalist societies, the ruling class also actively imposes its ideology on to the common people in order to legitimize, and reinforce, its dominant position. Since inequalities can potentially produce conflict and generate social upheaval, Gramsci ascertained that the oppressors must successfully attain the consent of the oppressed to achieve a state of "unstable equilibrium" (Williams, 2006: 178).

Today, this task is accomplished through the mass diffusion of bourgeois class culture and political values within the institutions of civil society. Members of the working-class accept, and internalize, the prevailing worldview of the dominant class as commonsensical and natural due to a relentless process of cultural and political conditioning. In the "Prison Notebooks", Gramsci referred to the project of consensus building as cultural hegemony. Prior to the advent of the industrial revolution, dominant classes employed brute force in order to maintain exploitative power relations.

In capitalist societies, socio-political order relies heavily upon a delicate balance between coercion and consent (Ornstein and Stevenson, 1999: 24). Coercion is typically reserved for extreme dissonance since the consent of the dominated sufficiently guarantees the production of docile bodies, and the maintenance of social control. Class rule is perceived to be democratic rule by the great masses of the population since the inherent contradictions of the mode of production are obfuscated by the dominant ideology (Seidman, 2012: 137).

Despite the highly incisive, and deeply profound, analyses presented within the "Prison Notebooks", arguments predicated upon the logic of false consciousness have fallen into disrepute. Berger (1975: 34) charges that false consciousness is a highly problematic contention since it presupposes that "…lower-class people do not understand their own situation, that they are in need of enlightenment on the matter, and that this service can be provided by selected higher-class individuals". According to Berger's line of reasoning, false consciousness is a pejorative theoretical proposition which is founded upon the intellectual superiority of an exalted group of individuals who can objectively know, and define, what constitutes 'reality'. Considering that ideologies selectively illuminate and conceal the ontological conditions of reality, the social world is never

objectively accessible to observers irrespective of their intellectual or cognitive capacities (Allahar and Côté, 1998: 1).

McLaverty (2005: 52) further problematizes the vanguardist implications of consciousness raising exercises by compellingly arguing that social classes are not homogenous groupings. Within post-colonial capitalist societies, distinctive markers of identity like race and ethnicity intersect and compound to determine an individual's position within the social stratification hierarchy. Consequently, objective interests cannot be reduced exclusively to economic terms since members of the proletariat may face divergent trajectories depending on their membership in racial, ethnic, or other non-class-based groupings.

It should be noted that while discernible differences exist between race and ethnicity, these concepts are often used interchangeably within academia to distinguish between groups that claim to share a myth of common descent, as well as linguistic and cultural similarities (James and Goetze, 2001: 32). According to Bonacich (1972: 548), "[t]he difference between race and ethnicity lies in the size of the locale from which a group stems, races generally coming from continents, and ethnicities from national sub-sections of continents". In the past, race was assumed to have a biological foundation however, genomic studies of human populations have revealed that "…there is more variation within races than between them" (Williams, 2001: 4833). Thus, like ethnicity which is determined by cultural factors, most scientists agree that race is primarily a social construct (Douglas, 2011; Mahtani, 2014; Calvert and Terry, 2005).

Socially constructed identity markers must be understood in relation to the Thomas Principle: "if [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Quoted in Merton, 1995: 340). Despite the fact that both race and

ethnicity are devoid of biological dimensions, being born black has very real

consequences in traditional and modern societies. Colour prejudice is especially prevalent

in the contested Sikh homeland of Punjab, in which the untouchable Mahazabis and

Dalits reside in large numbers. Akin to the historically oppressed Aboriginal population

of Canada, the dark-skinned untouchables of Punjab are the first people of the Indian

subcontinent. According to Rathna (2014: 21):

> Dalits have been treated worse than animals…They are
> ordained to do menial jobs and even prohibited to share the
> natural resources like water with the upper castes. Even
> their very sight and touch have been considered as impure
> and taboo….Their subhuman life has been *accepted* by
> them as well as the upper castes as an order of the life
> (Rathna, 2014: 20).

In 2012, the National Crime Records Bureau reported that every two minutes, somewhere

in India, an untouchable is victimized (Quoted in Ambedkar, 2014: 27). Upper-caste Sikh

zamindars (landowners), who have multiple Dalits and Mahzabis under their employ,

have perpetrated profound violence against members of the downtrodden castes. In one

high profile case, a group of Jats cleaved off the arms and legs of a Sikh Mazhabi who

filed a police complaint against them for gang-raping his daughter (Human Rights Watch,

2007: 60). Paradoxically, Sikhs adhere to a religious text which condemns violence

against women, and discrimination on the basis of caste.

Phenotypical features and primordial statuses also affect resource allocation, and

the distribution of non-material assets and privileges within 'progressive' countries like

Canada. Studies have consistently demonstrated that Canadian-born visible minorities,

and foreign-born immigrants, face "…overt prejudice and systemic discrimination in

housing, education, employment and the justice system, and in places of recreation and

worship" (Christensen, 2009: 212). Despite these empirical realities, vulgar Marxists

maintain that non-class-based identification constitutes false consciousness since racial allegiances, and ethnic loyalties, distract individuals from realizing the genuine economic basis of exploitation. In the economic determinist discourses advanced by these theorists, the differential lived experiences of post-colonial subjects, and their vulnerable positionalities in dominant hegemonic institutions, have either been willfully disregarded or unconsciously ignored.

In reality, within societies that are internally fragmented on the basis of caste, race, and ethnicity, an individual that fails to acknowledge the importance of phenotypical and cultural markers of identity may arguably be suffering from false consciousness. Still, even though racial or ethnic awareness cannot be relegated to the status of false consciousness, social justice cannot be achieved by exclusively focusing on the systemic, or institutional forms of oppression faced by visible minorities. As astutely conveyed by Marx and Engels in the "Manifesto", inequality can only be eradicated through the abolition of private property, and the institution of communism.

Progressive global change is contingent upon the interiorization of disparate socio-political movements for racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual equity under the larger project of revolutionary class struggle. Social class is not only the fundamental source of human suffering within developed and underdeveloped countries, but it also represents the most viable vehicle for generating collective consciousness and solidarity. Yet, practical politics, which are based predominantly on the similarities that people share as national and global constituents, have been displaced in favour of politics revolving around private identities and difference (Elshstain, 1995: 27).

Identity may not be reducible simply to class position however, inequalities stemming from socially constructed racial and ethnic categories can best be understood in

relation to the historical materialist perspective. A genuine sociological appreciation of these identity markers recognizes that people use ascriptive classifications to heuristically differentiate between affluence and scarcity, and between the core and periphery (Shils, 1968: 283). While opportunities for vertical class mobility are highly constrained in both India and Canada, the symbolic importance ascribed to non-dominant phenotypical, ethnic, and cultural identity markers varies inversely with the acquisition of economic capital. Gordon Lewis's (1983: 10; emphasis added) famous aphorism substantiates this claim: "…in U.S. society, money talks; in Caribbean society, money *whitens*".

In line with neo-Marxist theory, non-class markers of identity like caste, race and ethnicity should be understood as the epiphenomena of class division and the social relations of production. Nonetheless, this argument should not detract from the hardships and lived experiences of those that endure other forms of subjugation. While acknowledging the multidimensional basis of inequality, the discussion that follows will attempt to qualify the conception of false consciousness since it is still useful for understanding how hegemonic social control is maintained in both core, and periphery, capitalist societies despite bourgeoning inequalities.

SECTION II: RETHINKING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

The Unfulfilled Promise of Modernity:

Political-economic sociologists have employed Marxian class theory to undertake exhaustive analyses of the (d)evolution of capitalism in the age of globalization. Critical scholarship in the arts and humanities has been dominated by the study of globalization however, precise conceptualization of the phenomenon has been severely complicated by theoretical ambiguities pertaining to its historical origins, and long-term consequences

(Hebron and Stack, 2011: 17). In its current phase, globalization can be understood as a pattern of accelerated geopolitical interdependence that has been promoted, and reinforced, by the universal ascendance and application of neoliberal policies and institutional practices (Woodley, 2015: 177).

Initially popularized by the ultra-conservative Thatcher and Reagan administrations, neoliberalism refers to a controversial political-economic ideology that is predicated upon the logic of radical laissez-faire market principles, and deregulatory mechanisms. Ideologues of neoliberal macroeconomic doctrine stipulate that state intervention should be minimized in the 'free' market since it is unconducive to growth and development (Chomsky, 1999: 7). In stark contrast to the scholars and economists intellectually aligned with the Marxist tradition, proponents of neoliberal policies argue that private sector interests should retain unfettered control over the market economy (Harvey, 2005: 3).

Market fundamentalists reason that the invisible hands of capitalism provide effective regulatory mechanisms for the 'free' flow of goods, services, labour, and money across international borders and territories. Open borders, which accommodate international trade and commerce, will inevitably produce a society of affluence when the "…profitability of capital drip[s] down the social pyramid to benefit the poor" (Paupp, 2009: 1). Globalists, and other uncritical advocates of neoliberal hegemony, have failed to account for the uneven development trajectories of newly industrialized countries like India, and the inadvertent repercussions of globalization.

The rise of corporate tyranny, far-flung sweatshops, pervasive global economic disparity, and widespread ecological destruction are amongst the mass of insoluble problems associated with globalization and the 'self-regulating' marketplace. Recently,

public awareness has heightened in response to the ubiquitous and incessant nature of these deeply problematic tendencies. Still, the economic system has remained immune, and perhaps even fortified by the endemic crises of production. In order to understand the fundamental contradictions of this new era of neoliberal capitalism, Marxism must be retained in the form of a "living project" (Bartolovich and Lazarus, 2002: 16).

The "Manifesto" continues to represent a politically and intellectually indispensable directive in what Klein (2007) refers to as the age of "disaster capitalism". Not only do Marx's writings continue to provide highly relevant and critical diagnoses of the mode and relations of production, but they also present a view of an egalitarian future devoid of exploitation and human suffering (McLennan, 1999: 564). Even the most superficial analysis of the "Manifesto" reveals that Marx (1848: 12; emphasis added) was cognizant of the dynamic ordering of production, and the fluidity of economic capital:

> The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe…All old-established national industries have been destroyed…In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most *barbarian*, nations into civilisation.

This lengthy passage not only exemplifies the veracity and prophetic astuteness of Marx's observations, but also the profound Eurocentrism upon which his analysis was centered. In his other works, Marx also famously proclaimed that countries like India and China were inhabited by "semi-barbaric" and "semi-civilized" populations that were devoid of history (Ganguly, 1979: 117). Although the homogenization and hierarchization of entire cultures is undoubtedly problematic, Marx was fundamentally concerned with the project of *global* social justice.

At the heart of Marx's (1848: 22) polemical treatise is an exhortatory call to action: "working men of all countries, unite". Though the proletariat would initially contend with the oppressors of their respective homelands, Marx envisioned that class struggle would eventually transcend the confines of national borders. Ascriptive characteristics, and nationalist sentiments, were consequently depreciated by Marx since he was aware that they promoted divisiveness, and were unconducive to proletarian internationalism. Like other modernist theorists, Marx mistakenly presumed that "…in the wake of modernization and secularism, *irrational* considerations such as race or blind ethnic allegiance would give way to rational and universalist factors such as class" (Ryan, 2005: vii; emphasis added).

Traditional identities and 'irrational' allegiances have not only persisted, they have become more salient for their bearers during the period of global capitalism. This major theoretical oversight represents the biggest failure of orthodox Marxist theory (Allahar, 2005: 12). Considering that the proletariat has failed to develop a revolutionary class consciousness, and the fact that identity has become an ever-more complex and elusive concept during the contemporary era, Marx's promise of modernity has failed to materialize.

Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Ethnic Violence:

Reforms predicated upon the logic of neoliberalism have resulted in the erosion of sovereign autonomy, which was once exclusively exercised by the nation-state over its respective population. In the altered terrain of contemporary geopolitics, elected officials have been stripped of their ability to govern, while the state apparatus has been reduced to a superconductor for surplus value extraction, and capitalist profit maximization (Hebron and Stack, 2011; Allahar and Côté, 1998). This being the case, Chomsky

indicates that within 'democratic' countries like Canada and India, "…elite elements based in the business community control the state by virtue of their dominance of the private society, while the population observes quietly" (Chomsky, 1990: 6). Despite periodic elections, and ostensible changes in national leadership, political, economic, and social policy is dictated by domestic economic interests, and transnational corporate entities, since governmental bodies are dependent upon them for investment capital, as well as job creation (Allahar and Côté, 1998: 14).

While the significance of existing demarcated and socially constructed borders has diminished, globalization has attributed new importance to imagined political communities and ethno-nationalist separatist movements. Eitzen (2006: 211) fittingly compares the phenomenon of globalization to the Hindu deity Shiva since it "…is not only a great destroyer, but also a powerful creator of new ideas". The recent proliferation of global communication technologies, and social networking outlets, has afforded oppressed groups new opportunities for converting long-standing ethno-cultural grievances into demands for self-determination and separatism. The Sikhs are among the growing number of stateless groups who have attempted to promote, and politicize, their communal identity to achieve nationalist objectives including secession (Amoretti and Bermeo, 2004: 288).

Before considering the emergence of Khalistani ethno-nationalism in Punjab, and the propagation of the Canadian Sikh diaspora (herein referred to as the Sikh diaspora), it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of some relevant concepts in the migration literature. As previously suggested, the term ethnicity is used to differentiate between groups that share distinctive socio-cultural attributes, and adhere to a myth of common genealogical descent. It is important to note that while ethnicity is ascriptive, and

boundaries for in-group and out-group membership are socially constructed, individuals can share emotional affinities with their co-ethnics that can be as intense as consanguineal bonds (Allahar, 2005: 235).

Although prospects for proletarian internationalism have continually diminished due to the lack of subjective class identification in developed and underdeveloped societies, ethnicity has gained new salience in the politics of decolonization and nation-building. In the present context, nationalism refers to the shared ideology of a group of people that have sovereign authority over a clearly demarcated territory, or the process whereby individuals who claim to share common characteristics coalesce in order to achieve independence and establish a homeland (Allahar, 2005; Bishku, 2010). Anderson (1983: 6) claims that a nation is "…imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members… yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". Thus, like ethnic groupings, nations can be conceived of as fictive constructions since they are not rooted in objective or material reality.

Yet, Colvard (1998: vii) conveys that when opportunistic political leaders, or ethnic entrepreneurs, inculcate and mobilize their co-ethnics using elaborate mythologies of chosen people, the result can be *real* bloodshed. The Sikh Ghallughara (holocaust) represents one of the many violent manifestations of ethno-nationalism during the twentieth century. Even though ethnic mobilization has historically resulted in violent pogroms and purgative attacks, nationalism can also be a unifying force which is capable of generating collective effervescence. Today, members of transnational diasporas, who are physically separated but still emotionally tied to their countries of origin, endure the profound impact of global uprooting through ethnic loyalties, and national affiliation.

Transnational Diasporas and Ethnic Enclaves:

Traditional ethnic loyalties have persisted despite the significant challenge of cosmopolitanism which has been posed by the transnational flow of people from the periphery to the core regions, and vice-versa (Sutherland, 2012: ix). Mass migration has facilitated the creation of diasporic communities by enabling the transmission of diverse populations, and their distinctive ethno-cultural elements, beyond ancestral homelands. The by-product of loosening territorial ties, the diaspora is a "home away from home" (Allahar, 2010: 62) that is composed of immigrants that share the same nationality, but have settled outside of their country of origin either voluntarily or involuntarily.

While diasporas appeal to the primordial ideas of 'home' and 'belonging', these movements are transnational since they span across nation-states (Dusenbery, 2005: 485). Within the confines of demarcated borders, diasporas tend to have perceptible geographical and residential locations sometimes referred to as ethnic enclaves. The densely populated suburban community of Brampton-Springdale, colloquially known as 'Singhdale', is one of many ethnic enclaves that has emerged in Canada over the past several decades. Sikh secessionist leaders, and organized militant groups, have drawn considerable moral, economic, and social support from their co-ethnics that have settled within this immigrant-receiving hub.

The proliferation of diasporas is in direct opposition to the melting pot theory of ethnic relations which held sway in the migration literature for several decades (Hirschman, 1983: 399). In the past, classical assimilation theorists postulated that immigrants incorporated into the host country over time by adopting mainstream norms and values (Alba and Nee, 1997: 328). Assimilation was presumed to follow a straight line trajectory in which, upward social mobility in both education and occupation, were

normative expectations associated with successful cultural integration (Waters et al., 2010: 1168). Nonetheless, first, second, and even third-generation immigrants, are actively retaining their distinctive traditions and cultural identities as opposed to discarding them.

A large body of scholarly research has been developed on the segmented assimilation trajectories of immigrant youth. Segmented assimilation refers to the process whereby individuals either end up "…ascending into the ranks of a prosperous middle class, or join in large numbers the ranks of a racialized, permanently impoverished population at the bottom of society" (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller, 2005: 1004). Allahar (2011: 66) hypothesizes that diasporas are populated by the latter group of immigrants since identification with these types of communities is class-differentiated. Typically, individuals who possess greater social, cultural, and economic capital are less likely to identify, or reside within, diasporic communities than their lower-class compatriots.

Studies have revealed that immigrants with higher SES are usually better equipped to deal with the challenges posed by displacement, relocation and integration (Lansford, 2011; Jardine, 2008). Xie and Greenman (2011: 966) found that immigrants with lower SES incorporated into the host society much more gradually than their higher SES counterparts and that, the latter group had higher educational achievement and elevated psychological well-being. These discrepancies may be attributable to the fact that children of low SES immigrants tend to face similar barriers to social and economic integration as their parents did (Palameta, 2007: 4). Osterberg (2000: 157) established a link between low educational attainment amongst first-generation immigrants and poorer outcomes in the labour market for their offspring. A number of other studies have

corroborated that socioeconomic factors account significantly for the differential experiences of second-generation immigrant youth (Nielsen et al., 2001; Van Ours and Veenman, 2002).

The social organization of the receiving community also has significant implications for the adaptation patterns of immigrant youth. If, for instance, the immigrant community is highly concentrated into an ethnic enclave, assimilation is not always necessary for integration. Danzer and Yaman (2013: 211) contend that the "…presence of co-ethnics increases migrants' interaction cost with natives and thus reduces the likelihood of integration". Moreover, since diasporic communities tend to develop culturally exclusive, and mutually self-interacting institutions which run parallel to ones which already exist in the host country, integration is further obstructed (Allahar, 2011: 69).

This form of closed-off social organization within diasporic communities is referred to as institutional completeness (Breton, 1964: 193). When a diasporic community becomes institutionally complete, jobs, goods and services become readily available to co-ethnics within the confines of the enclave. Interactions with ethnic entrepreneurs from the homeland, and the ready availability of familiar foods and music, are all conducive to the retention of diasporic identity.

Nonetheless, in any capitalist society, resources and jobs are scarce while competition is high. Immigrants who perceive an imbalance of opportunity are more likely to prospect beyond the social boundaries of the diaspora. Since immigrants typically drift away over time as a consequence of occupational mobility, diasporas are generally typified as stable working-class communities (Allahar, 2011: 65). Moreover, when the children and grandchildren of immigrants move away from these enclaves,

economic and social integration become much more likely. Outside of the enclave, immigrants are afforded greater opportunity for interaction with the native-born population, and ethnic or racial intermarriage which may shift or blur diasporic identities (Qian and Lichter, 2007: 68).

While assimilation may be a pursuable goal for some immigrant groups, resembling the dominant group in the receiving society may not necessarily be a 'free', or rational choice others can make (Torres, 2003: 51). Immigrants that have dissimilar phenotypical attributes, or those that dress in distinctive cultural apparel, may never be able to integrate fully into the host society due to widespread xenophobia, or the presence of structural racism. Ghuman (1997: 31) acknowledges that "[t]he state of race relations in the wider society affects young people's perception of how far they are willing to go in their adaptation process, which can range from assimilation on the one hand, to separation on the other". If racism and discrimination are rampant, identification with the diaspora may be the only viable option available to visible minority group members.

SECTION III: THE CASE OF KHALISTANI ETHNO-NATIONALISM
The Sikh Qaum and the Land of Five Rivers:

The ethnonational aspirations of the Sikh community emerged in Punjab during the abdication of colonial rule. For over two centuries, the British Raj successfully employed divide and rule strategies to retain social control over the heterogeneous Indian population, while simultaneously exercising unparalleled political-economic domination over the vast resources concentrated within the semiautonomous Princely States. Following the culmination of the Second World War, violent and non-violent struggles between the colonizers and the colonized became pronounced. Eventually, the British

Empire was forced to relinquish ownership of the Crown jewel over to pro-independence, indigenous elites.

The Punjabi-Sikhs, and their co-ethnics settled abroad, played a pivotal role in the Indian Independence Movement. Yet, polarized Hindu and Muslim visions of the post-colonial state generated new anxieties in the Sikh psyche. The two-nation boundary demarcation line, which was proposed by the competing nationalist elite, would effectively rupture Punjab and divide the Sikh constituency (Telford, 1992: 969). Like other ethnic minority groups in India, the Sikhs of Punjab recognized that the implementation of the territorial partition arrangement would result in large-scale losses in political power, land ownership, and control over the community's religious shrines (Kudaisya and Yong, 2004: 122). Consequently, alongside the dominant All-Indian Muslim League, and the powerful Indian National Congress (INC), the Sikh-centric Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) submitted its Azad (independent) Punjab Scheme during partition planning.

Punjab had represented the traditional homeland of the Sikhs prior to the institution of Crown rule, as well as the primordial anchorage of the Khalsa Panth (pure community). On the basis of these ancient territorial claims, the architects of the Azad Punjab Scheme defined the Sikhs as a qaum (nation), and demanded a sovereign homeland that would ensure the preservation of their distinctive social, cultural, and religious identity (Chima, 2008; Spickard, 2005). The Sikh political leaders adamantly voiced their disapproval of the envisioned political borders of India and Pakistan, which they alleged would manifest respectively in Hindu and Muslim tyranny (McLeod, 2008: 91).

Axel (2001: 81) notes that members of the SAD were internally divided on the issue of political secession. Some were in favour of a united India, in which significant political leverage was awarded to the SAD. Others insisted that, if Pakistan was to be acceded by the British, the Northern state of Punjab should also be detracted from Hindu-dominated India to form Khalistan. Despite conflicting views among members of the SAD, the party remained unified around its central goal of maximizing autonomy in the affairs of Punjab. As opposed to perpetual servitude, the landed Sikh gentry, which occupied the SAD's political ranks, sought "…a share in political power and not merely a change of masters" (Singh, 2014: 2). Nevertheless, the Azad Punjab scheme was deemed unfeasible and the Sikh leadership became marginalized in the politics of decolonization and nation-building.

The SAD eventually acquiesced to the INC's 'secular' vision of the Indian nation-state upon being granted assurances for special status in the administrative and constitutional affairs of Punjab (Riar, 2006: 58). Still, despite the Sikh leaders' cooperation, concerted efforts to placate and unify the principal proponents of Pakistan under an 'inclusionary' Indian nationalist agenda were largely ineffective. Therefore, the Boundary Commission reluctantly mandated that the vast subcontinent be divided on the basis of seemingly irreconcilable religious differences between British India's Hindu and Islamic communities (Mason and Mason, 1997: 259). The implementation of the Mountbatten partition plan, and the dissolution of the British Raj, resulted in the formation of the independent dominions of India and Pakistan on August 15th, 1947.

Unprecedented communal violence erupted between Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims within the newly formed state borders. Though the colonial power withdrew almost completely unscathed, an estimated one million people perished in the process of

partition, and over twelve million others were displaced during the mass population transfers that took place in the land of five rivers (Zamindar, 2013: 58). When the dust settled, and the "fratricidal bloodbath" subsided, the INC inherited power from the colonial regime and emerged as the central governing body of the Republic of India (Fanon, 1961: 17).

Despite the enticing political promises made by the Indian nationalist leadership, the Constituent Assembly immediately rescinded the special recognition that was to be granted to the Sikh community for their loyalty, and significant contributions to the struggle for independence (Singh and Tatla, 2006: 67). Due to the Sikhs minority status within the Hindu-dominated peripheral state, this decision rendered the SAD virtually powerless in the governance of Punjab. In an effort to widen their constituency, and achieve greater political autonomy, the SAD launched the Punjab Suba (province) movement during the first legislative assembly elections in 1952. By this time, the Sikh political leadership had joined the "…chorus of peripheral protests [which] arose as minorities and disadvantaged classes began to see that the independence promise of an egalitarian and secular India was not being fully met" (Mahmood, 2014: 572).

Though the SAD's movement was initially unsuccessful, sustained extra-parliamentary agitation forced the INC to accede to the creation of a culturally, and linguistically congruent Punjab Suba in 1966 (Telford, 1992: 969). Under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the united multilingual state was divided into the predominantly Hindi-speaking Haryana and Himachal Pradesh regions, while the remaining areas, except for Chandigarh, formed the new unilingual Punjab (Juergensmeyer, 2014: 388).

Before the linguistic reorganization of the state in 1966, Sikhs had only constituted 35% of the total state population (Basran and Bolaria, 2004: 67). As a result of trifurcation, they formed a 60% majority in the Punjab Suba (Chiriyankandath, 2016: 56). Nevertheless, the SAD's political victory came at a heavy cost. Under the Punjab Reorganization Act, the central government managed to achieve exclusive control over the transfer of natural resources between the newborn states. Whereas the lush forested areas and abundant mineral wealth were reallocated to Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, Punjab was left solely with its river waters (Singh, 1997: 36).

Even after the uneven redistribution of the eco-rich land, the SAD remained internally fragmented. Most members reiterated their pre-independence demand for a separate Sikh homeland within India. Yet, from the margins, others continued to vocalize demands for political secession and Khalistan. In spite of competing solutions to the Punjab problem, the SAD managed to consolidate support for greater regional autonomy from the majority Sikh electorate, while remaining in a state of perpetual mobilization against the central government in Delhi.

In an effort to correct the lame reorganization of the Suba, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR) was drafted and proposed to the central government in 1973 by the SAD. The resolution, which was heavily couched in orthodox Sikh dogma, was primarily concerned with the level of centralization developing in the affairs of Punjab. In total, forty-five economic, cultural, religious, and constitutional demands were made in order to renegotiate the balance of power between the central and state government (Basran and Bolaria, 2004: 75).

The first ASR was dismissed when Gandhi declared a state of emergency, and established dictatorial control over India. As opposed to devolving power to the states,

for a twenty-one month period the Prime Minister employed extra-constitutional authority to rule over the vast nation by decree (Bharat, 2015: 11). State elections were suspended, slums were razed to the ground, and many of Gandhi's political adversaries were detained and tortured illegally (Chakrabarty, 2016: 161). In addition to these gross human right abuses, a mass-sterilization campaign was also initiated in the 'democratic' republic (Dwivedi and Rajan 2016: 155). Towards the end of the emergency period, Gandhi insidiously facilitated the induction of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale into the politics of the SAD.

The puritan Sikh leader, Bhindranwale, was installed in order to dispel the sway of ethno-nationalism, and to further accentuate political divisions within the SAD (Vohra, 1986: 1738). In the end, however, Gandhi's campaign of manipulation had highly destructive and unintended consequences. When state elections were reinstated, Bhindranwale joined the SAD's political struggle for Sikh sovereignty. In collaboration with the Sikh political leadership, Bhindranwale initiated a Dharam Yudh Morcha (righteous struggle) and revived the ASR (Singh, 2007: 560). In response, Gandhi classified the ASR as a secessionist document and vilified the entire Sikh community as treasonous and anti-Indian (Mahmood, 2014: 571).

The Khalistani ethno-nationalist movement reached its zenith when Bhindranwale successfully converted the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) into a mass support base, and began his proselytizing program of Amrit Prachar (baptisms) in Punjab. While preaching for a return to austere living and Sikh orthodoxy to responsive audiences, Bhindranwale also put forward a historical narrative centered upon Hindu betrayal:

> The Hindus are trying to enslave us; atrocities against the
> Sikhs are increasing day by day under the Hindu imperialist
> rulers of New Delhi; the Sikhs have never felt so
> humiliated, not even during the reign of the Moghul
> emperors and British colonialists. How long can the Sikhs
> tolerate injustice? (Telford, 1992: 975).

Bhindranwale and his followers eventually rejected the SAD's 'moderate' political agenda. Instead, they fortified themselves within the Harmandir Sahib Complex (also known as the Golden Temple) and began to stockpile arms.

From within the precincts of the holy shrine, the militant revolutionary drew attention to the SAD's contradictory religious and political-economic priorities: "we are losing our identity, and the interest of our Sikh leaders who have their farms and their industries at heart have started making them say that there is no difference between Sikh and Hindus" (Quoted in Rapoport, 2013: 181). Sikhs began to revere Bhindranwale as a sant-sipahi (saint-soldier) which allowed him to develop a cult-like following (Pettigrew, 1995: 21). For nearly two years, Bhindranwale and his followers occupied the Golden temple and reigned terror on Punjab and surrounding areas. Police officers, state officials, Sikhs of lax faith, and non-Sikh civilians were targeted and mercilessly murdered by pro-Khalistani factions.

The rise of Sikh fundamentalism in Punjab eventually elicited a response from the central government in Delhi. In order to apprehend Bhindranwale, and put an end to the Khalistan movement, Gandhi sanctioned Operation Blue Star, and the Indian army subsequently infiltrated the Golden Temple on June 3rd, 1984. Considering that thousands of Sikh parishioners had arrived at the temple from all over India in observance of Gurpurb (day of remembrance), the operation was purposefully engineered in order to maximize death and destruction. Just before the bloody massacre ensued, a curfew was imposed in Punjab "…with all methods of communication and public travel suspended.

Electricity supply was also interrupted, creating a total blackout and cutting off the state from the rest of the world" (Rajeswar, 2015: 111).

The armed Sikhs, who were led by Bhindranwale, were neutralized following three days of fierce gun fighting, and heavy shelling. The attack also resulted in the death of over 5000 civilians, and the desecration of temporal center of Khalsa Panth (Kapur, 1986: 137). Operation Bluestar also set into motion a destructive chain of events. Several months after the attack, Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards. Following the cremation of the Prime Minister, Hindu mobs, amalgamated with police and state officials, began combing through villages necklacing Sikh men, raping women, and dismembering children (Pettigrew, 1995: 37). The Delhi ethnic cleansings led to a prolonged period of guerrilla warfare and insurgency in Punjab.

Police and paramilitary forces actively engaged in gross human rights violations during the time. Human Rights Watch (1990: 7) has reported that high-ranking state officials and security personnel sanctioned "…brutal methods to stem the insurgency, including arbitrary arrests, torture, prolonged detention without trial, disappearances and summary killings of civilians and suspected militants". Moderate Sikhs, who had vehemently condemned Bhindranwale, became radicalized due to the circumstances surrounding the Ghallughara, and the extra-judicial killings that took place following the attack on the Golden Temple.

Ethnic Entrepreneurship and Religious Opiates: The Struggle for Ideological Hegemony in Punjab

Sikh scholars and human rights activists have attributed the rise of religious fundamentalism in Punjab, and the virulent demand for the theocratic state of Khalistan, to the political marginalization of the community in post-independence India (Pruthi, 2004; Kumar et al., 2003; Singh, 2013). In reality, however, the crisis in the contested

homeland was precipitated by the protracted hegemonic struggle which ensued between elite ethnic entrepreneurs in the Sikh and Hindu communities, as well as the socioeconomic contradictions of peripheral capitalist development. As in other parts of the Indian subcontinent, competing ethno-nationalist ideologies generated profound inter-group conflict, and intensive intra-group competition, in Punjab following the collapse of the British Empire.

Colonial encounter effectively transformed elite members of the Hindu ethnic community, who held a monopoly over trade and commerce in India since the culmination of Mughal rule, into the native bourgeoisie (Paranjape, 2012: 21). Dhulipala (2015: 55) indicates that exposure to the British education system accentuated the Hindu capitalist class's subjective awareness of its economic interests, and facilitated the development of bourgeois consciousness among its members. Following the dissolution of the Raj, the Hindu bourgeoisie managed to legitimize its dominant position in the political, economic, and social affairs of India through its representatives in the INC and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Due to its pivotal role in the Independence Movement, the INC has sustained mass appeal among the heterogeneous Indian electorate. While explicitly enunciating secular ideals, the party has implicitly adhered to the ideology of Hindutva since its formation (Swain, 2001: 93). As opposed to the INC, leaders of the BJP have actively identified India as the critical site of Hindu Jagriti (awakening), and openly professed their desire for Bharat Mata to be governed in accordance with the "great teachings of the Vedas" (Bharatiya Janata Party, 2016).

Today, despite the fact that religious pluralism is enshrined in the constitution, the state apparatuses coalition with the right-wing ideological think tank the Rashtriya

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the militant Bajrang Dal, reveal that India is fundamentally a Hindu nation (Verdeja and Smith, 2013: 84). For the most part, the BJP's Hindutva orientation, and the INC's 'secular' political strategy, have been conducive to social stability since the Indian population predominantly belongs to the Hindu faith, and because ideological sanctions for pervasive power, wealth, and status differentials are inherently built into the Vedic scriptures (Tatla, 2006: 43). For obvious reasons, however, the implementation of Hindu ethnocracy has generated considerable resentment among ethno-religious minority groups in post-independence India.

Shortly after Punjab was partitioned, conflicting factions in the Sikh community advanced counter-hegemonic cultural discourses against the central rulers in Delhi. The homeland struggle was initiated by the SAD, and eventually hijacked by the militant orthodox priest Bhindranwale, and his army composed primarily of peasant insurgents (Telford, 1992: 970). Historically, Akali leaders have projected themselves as the exclusive spiritual and political custodians of the Khalsa Panth by employing the orthodox doctrine of Miri-Piri, which "…implies that the Sikhs constitute not merely a fraternity of the faith followers but also a political community in the sense of a sovereign peoplehood" (Ahluwalia, 2003: 12). Yet, internal dissension and disunity in the political community is exhibited by the stark class, caste, and sect cleavages that exist between Sikhs, as well as the antithetical post-independence goals pursued by their leaders (Tatla, 2006: 12).

The deterioration of communal relations, and the armed uprising in Punjab, must be understood in relation to the concrete class interests of the principal exponents of Khalistan since ethnies are not universally homogenous groups, and because economic incentives exist for seizing state power in post-colonial societies (Allahar, 2008: 1). In

Punjab, the Sikh-centric SAD has overtly asserted itself as the champions of Khalsa, while covertly catering to the class interests of the agrarian rich Jats (Baaklini and Desfosses, 2016: 148). Control over religious shrines, schools, and the highly lucrative Shiromnani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), has allowed the SAD to define Sikh identity, and homogenize the interests of the entire community in accordance with the political-economic objectives of the Sikh bourgeoisie (Tatla, 1999: 18).

The affinity between India's public and private sectors is affirmed by the commercial interests of party leaders at the national, state, and district levels. Sukhbir Singh Badal, the reigning president of the SAD, and his predecessors, have utilized the profits accrued from industrialized agricultural practices to purchase political power in Punjab (Sidhu, Brar, and Punia, 2009: 48). Badal, and his political rivals that occupy the ranks of the INC and BJP, have managed to actively mask their bourgeois class-caste interests by disseminating communal ideologies, and mobilizing members of their respective ethno-religious communities on the basis of primordial myths. Consequently, in post-independence India, the gravediggers of capitalism have been transmuted into expendable pawns in the national elites' quest for material domination, and ideological hegemony.

During its prolonged campaign for regional autonomy, the SAD used religious appeals to garner support from Punjab's rural peasantry. By exploiting the illiteracy and orthodoxy of their principal electorate, the Sikh political leadership insisted that the preeminence of the community could only be guaranteed if the Indian government submitted to the ASR. The SAD emphasized the symbolic, theopolitical underpinnings of the resolution in order to distract underprivileged Sikhs from realizing some of its more insidious aims. These included the reassessment of minimum wage policies,

improvements in irrigation facilities, and liberalized credit to support greater agricultural

productivity (Singh, 1984: 45). In reality, the demands outlined in the resolution were

concerned with increasing the profitability of capital-intensive farming practices in

Punjab.

Since the ASR posed a threat to the status-quo, and the economic interests of the

Hindu bourgeoisie, the document was disparaged by Gandhi. During this time, ruling

class hegemony was also challenged in other parts of India, and the central government

was forced to declare a state of emergency. When the Sikhs, and other distinctive ethno-

religious groups that comprised the heterogeneous Indian population could no longer be

kept in line through the project of consensus building, Gandhi employed the state's

monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Security analysts recognized the profound

danger posed by Khalistan, so Gandhi appropriated the divide and rule tactics of the

colonizers, and positioned Bhindranwale as a counterweight against her political rivals in

the SAD (Singh and Fenech, 2014: 90).

The Prime Minister had planned to exploit the religious leader for her personal

political gains, but Bhindranwale managed to ingeniously outmaneuver both the Hindu,

and Sikh bourgeoisie (Tambiah, 1997: 106). Akin to the political leaders of the SAD, and

the INC, Bhindranwale was a rational actor with his own political-economic goals. Under

the patronage of the INC, Bhindranwale had unsuccessfully led an election campaign for

control of the SGPC (Gupte, 2012: 314). The elected committee of representatives, which

manages the finances and daily operations of all Sikh gurdwaras in India, *reported* an

annual budget of 993 crores ($1,955,846 CAD) in 2015 (The Times of India, 2015).

Although Bhindranwale had already become one of the central religious figures in the

community by this time, control over the SGPC would have also provided him with significant economic power.

The Sikh preacher's support base was generated as a result of the uneven development trajectory of the Green Revolution, which unequivocally benefitted the Sikh bourgeoisie (Brown, 1996: 155). Whereas Bhindranwale originated from the prosperous province of Malwa, Telford (1992: 976) maintains that his band of armed militants predominantly came from large, and relatively impoverished, Jat families in the Majha region. Rapid socioeconomic changes in the agricultural sectors of the bordering Gurdaspur and Amritsar areas of the Majha, had facilitated the pauperization of peasants with marginal landholdings (Singh, 1984: 43). Since alternate employment avenues were not available in the industrial sector, many peasants became landless, while others were subjected to conditions of chronic unemployment.

Prior to the implementation of the Nehruvian model of modernization, and the proliferation of agribusiness within the region of Punjab, the rural peasantry in these areas was self-sufficient and cohesive despite ethno-linguistic, cultural, and religious differences (Misra, 1995: 137). Though class and caste inequalities existed, a significant proportion of Punjabi families were able to maintain an adequate standard of living (Klein, 2009: 91). Even the Dalits and Mahzabis were able to achieve sufficient nutritional sustenance from religious shrines, like the Sikh gurdwara (temple), which instituted free communal kitchens. Following the inception of technologically intensive farming practices in Punjab, communal relations deteriorated, and social inequality increased drastically.

Mechanization, agro-chemicals, and hybridized seeds permitted higher cropping intensity however, famine, irrigation issues, and high debt burdens began to

disproportionally affect small landowners (Randhawa, 1975: 71). Thus, while the dominant Jat landlords were able to capitalize on technological innovation and accrue vast amounts of profit, smaller Sikh farmers were forcefully dispelled from their ancestral lands. The imbalanced experiences of the Green Revolution resulted in considerable political polarization in Punjab politics. For a short period of time, Jat peasants with small landholdings, and others who did not directly benefit from the Green Revolution, became aware of their objective position in relations of production.

Support for the Marxist branch of the Bharatiya Communist Party radically increased in Punjab's legislative assembly elections following capitalist modernization (Tatla, 1999: 18). The Naxalite movement was also born in this opportune economic, social, and political climate. Nonetheless, the cultivation of a genuine class consciousness amongst Punjab's agrarian peasantry was short-lived. Instead of making lasting economic links with Hindu peasants, or the landless Dalits and Mahzabis, small Jat landowners rallied around the fervently anti-communist Bhindranwale. The Sikh leader not only blamed the SAD and the INC for the plight of Punjab's downtrodden farmers, he also provided copious amounts of religious opiates to the hungry, landless, and impoverished (Singh, 1984: 44).

Initially, young Jat males from the AISSF joined Bhindranwale since they perceived allegiance to him as a form of Panthic sewa (community service). However, militancy began to represent an economically sound 'career opportunity' for Sikhs that belonged to lower-castes, and others who were unemployed, and propertyless (Telford, 1992: 986). When the activities of the pro-Khalistani factions eventually degenerated into extortion, kidnapping, and mass murder, Bal (2005: 3981) indicates that "…the socio-economic conditions of the families of militants improved dramatically… they purchased

agricultural land…built palatial houses, purchased vehicles, trucks and tractors". By this time, terrorist violence in the countryside had forced many average Sikh civilians to withdraw social, moral, and economic support to the militant outfits (Chopra, 2012: 43). Nevertheless, following the infiltration of the sacred Harmandir Sahib Complex, Bhindranwale gained the status of a 'martyr', and thousands of young men joined the 'holy war' against the Indian government. The Khalistani ethno-nationalist movement also gained considerable support among diasporic Sikhs.

SECTION IV: THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN THE CANADIAN SIKH DIASPORA

Shifting Nationalist Loyalties and the Air India Tragedy:

More than three decades have passed since the Indian Army's attack on the Harmandir Sahib Complex, but time has failed to heal the deep-seated wounds produced by the climate of political opportunism, ethnic entrepreneurship, and inter-communal violence which plagued post-independence Punjab. For Sikh communities' settled overseas, nationalist loyalties with Bharat Mata were severed following the execution of Operation Blue Star, and the anti-Sikh pogroms that took place after the political assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In Canada, the vast majority of Sikh immigrants had not identified with the imagined homeland of Khalistan, let alone supported efforts to achieve secession from India.

Nevertheless, Tatla (1999: 203; emphasis added) notes that the critical event at the Golden Temple "…brought *home* a new feeling of endangered and collective fate of the community scattered in many countries". When images of the carnage at the Harmandir Sahib Complex were circulated by the mainstream Canadian press, Sikhs congregated in gurdwaras (temples) to lament the sacrilege of the community's holiest

site of pilgrimage, and to mourn the loss of innocent life on a holy day. Four months later, when news of the Ghallughara reached the diaspora, sentiments of grief transmuted into cries for vengeance, holy war, and martyrdom.

On June 23rd 1985, Air India Flight-182 disintegrated over Irish Seas due to the midair detonation of a concealed bomb that had been loaded in the cargo hold of the Boeing 747 commercial airliner (Fitzgerald, 2011: 357). Out of the 329 passengers that were killed during the in-flight explosion, 278 were confirmed to be Canadian citizens (Bellarsi and Maufort, 2002: 98). Insurgents identifying with the international Babbar Khalsa outfit were deemed responsible for the bombing plot, and Canada was subsequently identified as a safe haven for Sikh extremists (Hoffman and Reinares, 2014: 144). Although the alleged perpetrators were eventually apprehended by law enforcement officials, they were exonerated due to inadequate evidence following one of the longest, and most expensive, criminal trials in Canadian history (Tatla, 2014: 508). The Air India Flight-182 tragedy affirmed that, as opposed to disappearing, the Khalistani ethno-nationalist movement had matured, and became intensified in the Canadian diasporic setting.

Today, Canada has become home to the one of the fastest growing Sikh populations outside of the contested homeland (Nesbitt, 2016: 3). From abroad, Sikh immigrants, and their Canadian-born descendants, have provided ideological coherency to the violent separatist movement, as well as economic and moral support to pro-Khalistani factions geographically situated in India and Pakistan (Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald, 2000: 329).Whereas the Indian government judiciously sidelined long-standing Sikh resentment against the 'secular' nation-state, and violently repressed insurgency

efforts, the favorable political climate in Canada has allowed the community to pursue its dream of homeland in a *predominantly* democratic fashion.

Unpleasant Truths and Comforting Lies: The Reality of Canada's 'Cultural Mosaic'

Sympathizers of the nationalist, political liberation movement remain concentrated within institutionally complete ethnic enclaves like 'Singhdale' and Surrey, where Sikhs reside in large numbers (Pitter and Lorinc, 2016; Nayar, 2004). Though these areas have received considerable attention in media reports, ethnic enclaves are not unique to the Sikh experience in Canada. Many well-established immigrant communities have managed partially to recreate elements of the old-country within major Canadian cities. Chinatown, Little Italy and Greektown are clear examples of the changing socio-cultural landscape of contemporary Canadian society.

Simmons (2010: 165) suggests that the clustering and clumping of ethno-cultural, or religious groups, within small geographic areas is non-random. Residential settlement patterns reveal that a significant proportion of immigrants voluntarily choose to live around their own *kind* - people that resemble them phenotypically, or share cultural, linguistic, or other similarities (Goering, 2007: 108). Although class position and economic resources ultimately dictate the quality of housing that is available to individuals or families in Canada, the existence of ethnic enclaves still speaks to the primordial ideas of home and belonging. The presence of familiar places, faces, foods, and music not only allow predictability, but they also provide a sense of security for members of diasporic groups that are settled in a foreign land.

While remaining committed to the struggle for Khalistan, members of the Sikh diaspora have attempted to create the familiar in an unfamiliar setting. In the Greater Vancouver, and Greater Toronto Area (GTA), community members have organized

large-scale nagar kirtans (parades) to commemorate the 'martyrdom' of Bhindranwale,
and the 'sacrifices' made for the quam by other Khalistani insurgents. In the past, Parmar,
the alleged mastermind of the Flight-182 tragedy, has been among those garlanded during
the annual religious processions (Barlow, 2015: 98). Overt cultural demonstrations like
the nagar kirtan attest that the Sikhs, like other major ethno-cultural and religious
communities in Canada, have generally rejected cultural assimilation in favour of
accommodation within the host country (Gibson, 1988: 24).

Officially, this adaptation pattern has been supported by the Canadian
government's commitment to inclusive citizenship which remains enshrined in the
official policy of multiculturalism. Yet, empirical realities reveal that some Canadians are
not equally as welcome to participate in the 'cultural mosaic' as others. The history of
Sikh migration and settlement within Canada is replete with implicit and explicit racial
discrimination, as well as profound economic exploitation. Akin to other visible minority
groups, the Sikhs were considered to be undesirable immigrants since their unfamiliar
cultural practices had the potential to rupture the delicate fabric of Canadian society, and
consequently threaten social stability (Singh, 2014: 527).

Exclusionary laws like the Continuous Journey Regulation were devised and
implemented in order to preserve the nation's ethnic and racial integrity. One of the first
challenges to Canada's xenophobic policy regime was posed by a group of Sikh
immigrants that arrived in the Vancouver harbor chartering the Japanese streamliner, the
Komagata Maru (Johnston, 2014: 9). These Sikhs unsuccessfully defied immigration
restrictions which granted free right of entry almost exclusively to Anglo immigrants, and
restricted admission to the socially, culturally, and morally 'inferior' Plinian races. The

Komagata Maru incident represents one of the many disgraceful blots in Canadian
history.

Discriminatory immigration policies were *only* amended due to shortages in
labour that arose when Canada ceased to represent an attractive destination for white
immigrants from Europe and America (Westhues, 2006: 355). Racialized labour was
subsequently imported from periphery countries like China and India under restrictive
quotas (Galabuzi, 2006: 79). The Sikhs, like most racial and ethnic 'others' that arrived in
Canada, were forced to work for lower wages than their native-born counterparts
(Hickman, 2014: 36). Moreover, they were ghettoized in the least desirable job sectors,
and often compelled to work under substandard employment conditions (Nayar, 2004:
16). In addition to enduring conditions of profound economic exploitation at the hands of
their employers, early Sikh immigrants were routinely subjected to racially-motivated
aggression due to their distinctive physical appearance (Seiple, Hoover, and Otis, 2013:
90).

Considering that economic opportunities were more readily available in Canada
than in their country of origin, most Sikh immigrants accepted the systemic racism,
ridicule and social segregation they were forced to confront within the host society.
Nevertheless, since neither the government, nor native-born population made an
emotional commitment to the community, most Sikhs remained in Canada exclusively to
make an economic living (Berry and Henderson, 2002: 72). Due to the peasant origins of
the pioneer Sikhs, most amassed capital with the dream of returning home and procuring
land in their ancestral villages which they considered to be a sign of prosperity and
success (Tatla, 1999: 64). A large proportion of their earnings were also remitted to
support dependents that were left behind. Until the eve of Operation Blue Star, the

majority of Sikh immigrants perceived themselves to be temporary settlers in a foreign, and alien land.

Though racial equality has vastly improved since the elimination of Canada's overt colour bar immigration policies, Sikhs continue to endure discrimination and xenophobic attitudes from the native-born population, as well as members of other visible minority groups. For baptized, orthodox Sikhs, who adorn the five external symbols of the Khalsa Panth, integration into the host society has proven to be exceptionally difficult. Following the deadly September 11th terror attacks on the World Trade Center, and recent spate of Islamic extremism in Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia, a sharp rise in hate crimes has been documented against members of overseas Sikh communities (Zanetti et al, 2014: 129). In the United States, confused and unintelligent Islamophobes have violently assaulted Sikhs and vandalized their places of worship under the mistaken assumption that they resemble the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks.

Even though Sikhs and Muslims belong to entirely different faiths, Orientalized depictions of 'Arabs' in the Western media continue to generate suspicion and mistrust of those with turbans, unshorn beards, distinctive cultural apparel, and brown skin. In the United States, Sikhs have become collateral damage in the lucrative war on terror, and the ideological project of terror racialization which has been undertaken by national security agencies and the entertainment media. In the wake of the deadly Oak Creek shooting rampage, overseas Sikh communities have become more aware of their vulnerable status in the post-9/11 world. In the Canadian context, violent victimization against Sikhs has also been reported, but at a comparatively lower incidence than in the United States (Nahon-Serfaty, 2014: 55).

Intergenerational Conflict and Cultural Inbetweenity:

Studies of immigrant experiences and adaptation patterns carry the risk of over-generalization, but there is evidence which suggests that norms of racism and cultural chauvinism also operate within the Sikh diaspora. In the migration literature, social scientists have used rates of intermarriage "…as a measure of decreasing social distance, declining prejudice, and changing group boundaries" (Lee and Bean, 2007: 382). Even though mixed unions have become more prevalent in Canada over the past several decades, the marital alliances of Sikhs continue to be organized around principles of caste endogamy, and clan exogamy (Partridge, 2005: 234). While a racialized hierarchy of dating preferences obviously exists among members of the native-born population, interethnic and interracial marriages with 'outsiders' are strongly discouraged in Sikh families, and prohibited by priests in highly orthodox gurdwaras (Rait, 2005: 162).

Since members of ethnic communities feel primordial affinities with their own 'kind', and considering that insecurity is biogenetically coded in humans, marriages with perceived outsiders may generate feelings of apprehension, angst, and exposure especially among religious leaders and older immigrants. Consequently, as in the old country, family izzat (honour) must be taken into careful consideration when selecting partners for dating and mating since certain boundaries are non-traversable even in the diasporic setting. Traditionalism is especially prevalent in strict orthodox Sikh families who geographically reside in Canada, but live their daily lives according to static ideas, norms, and values of Punjab.

Within the diaspora, young Sikh women disproportionately bear the burden of family izzat since they are required to police their plutonic and intimate relationships in accordance with the community's double standard of sexuality (Nayar, 2004: 101). In

some extreme Canadian cases, familial opposition to intermarriage has resulted in instances of brutal retaliation against Sikh women in the form of honour killings. Considering that these types of homicides are typically sanctioned or executed by the patriarch, or another high-status male figure within the family, a certain level of machismo is also present among Canadian diasporic Sikhs (Jakobsh, 2010; Warner, 2012; Kanwar, 2015). Though this contention goes beyond the scope of the present paper, it is important to note that gender is a perceptible source of division within the imagined Sikh community.

Sociologically, the Sikh community's cultural and sexual chauvinism may be explained by the profound cultural strains which are produced during the interrelated processes of resettlement and acculturation. Like their co-ethnics in Punjab, diasporic Sikhs choose to live in close proximity with their relatives and maintain close-knit, multigenerational family units (Ballantyne, 2006: 162). Even in the most foreign and unwelcoming land, these types of household arrangements can provide immigrants with support, safety, and predictability. Berkman and D'Ambruoso (2006: 207) acknowledge that traditional Sikh family life can provide social and economic anchorage, but they argue that cultural incongruence in multigenerational households can also lead to conflict. A wide body of scholarly literature substantiates that assimilation can generate conflict and threaten intimate consanguine relationships between descendants of immigrants and their families (Sachleben, 2014; Hawley, 2013; Orozco, Orozco, and Qin-Hilliard, 2012).

Social and economic resources, place of birth, and generation status determine the way in which experiences of physical uprooting and cultural dislocation are managed by diasporic Sikhs. Since first-generation Sikh immigrants are usually unwilling and unable to integrate into the Canadian mainstream, the norms and values of the country of origin

will often take precedence over that of the host society (Jhutti-Johal, 2011: 159).

However, cultural assimilation becomes more likely over multiple generations due to the

fact that the children, and grandchildren, of immigrants become exposed to schools, peer

groups, and other agents of socialization in the destination country (Jule, 2003: 61).

Hostilities may arise between members of the same household when younger generations

reject the identity and culture of 'home' in favour of more Westernized alternatives.

The existence of intergenerational conflict indicates that the Sikh community in

Canada is in a state of transition. Today, second and third-generation diasporic Sikhs are

critically challenging norms of traditionalism, and religious orthodoxy which their

parents expect them to blindly adhere to. Contestation is only one of the novel responses

that Canadian-born Sikhs have developed in response to the problem of cultural

"inbetweenity". Prevalent among descendants of immigrants, inbetweenity refers to the

emotional strain that is produced when individuals are forced to confront and adapt to

oppositional cultural formations (Ratele and Duncan, 2003: 124). While a small minority

have completely embraced the symbolic and spiritual insignias of the Khalsa

brotherhood, others have actively distanced themselves from the faith to maximize their

possibility of assimilation, and acceptance into the Canadian mainstream.

Rejecting both outright assimilation and regressive resegregation, the vast

majority of Sikh youth have attempted to strike a delicate balance between the two

irreconcilable, and often contradictory worlds they find themselves trapped between

(Sachleben, 2014: 90). Part of the growing number of Canadians who have assumed

hyphenated identities, these Sikh-Canadians (alternatively Punjabi-Canadians or Indo-

Canadians) are collectively forging a new creolized culture which bears little

resemblance to that of Punjab, or the adoptive country. Today, most Sikh-Canadians do

not keep their kesh (uncut hair), and many others live at total odds with the 'pure' way of life that is outlined in the Adi Granth. Considering that Mona (clean-shaven) and Sehajdari (Sikh Deism) identities have become more common in the diaspora, religious prohibitions against pre-marital sex, tobacco usage, and alcohol consumption are not strictly observed (Morjaria-Keval and Keval, 2015: 124).

Studies have found that problem drinking is widespread in many overseas Sikh communities (Cochrane, 1990; Sian, 2013). Lindrage, Dhillon, and Shah discovered that second-generation British-Sikhs mitigated the tension of cultural inbetweenity by rejecting both Punjabi and English values, while simultaneously creating an identity exclusively around alcoholism (Quoted in Jamal et al., 2015: 246). The changing subject matter of Punjabi folk music provides anecdotal support for the emergence of a distinctively Sikh drinking culture. Shifting societal norms, and large-scale changes in aesthetic preferences, have facilitated the popularization of songs like "ghar di sharab" (homemade liquor or moonshine), "Patiala peg" (triple shot), and "daru pee ke" (after drinking alcohol). Like their British-born counterparts, many Canadian-Sikhs do not observe religiously based restrictions against alcohol consumption. Recently, the manufacturers of Johnnie Walker nationally recognized residents of 'Singhdale' for their unparalleled fondness of Scotch whisky (Brampton Guardian, 2012).

Under his program of religious revivalism, Bhindranwale had attempted to eradicate evils like alcoholism which became prevalent among the Sikhs of Punjab in the wake of rural modernization. During puritanical sermons, the militant revolutionary frequently emasculated Sikh males who did not wear turbans, and vilified non-orthodox members of the community as equivalent to the Hindu enemy (Harley, 2009; Hume, 2013). At the zenith of his proselytizing crusade, Bhindranwale proffered a rhetorical

final solution to deal with Sikhs of lax faith: "[i]f I had my way, you know what I would do to all these Sardars who drink whisky-shisky every evening? I would douse them in kerosene oil and set fire to the bloody lot" (Quoted in Fernandes, 2011: 91).

Despite the fact that a significant proportion of Sikh-Canadians engage in one or more of the depravities prohibited by the Adi Granth, many continue to blindly support Bhindranwale, and glorify religious violence committed in the name of the Khalsa Panth (Kaminsky and Long, 2011: 632). These perceptible contradictions allude to the importance of narrative history for identity formation. Within the diaspora, the identity of many second and third-generation Sikh youth has been built upon a highly selective, and deeply emotive, episodic history of oppression, genocide, and martyrdom. The collective grief of the community has been enough to produce fictionalized ideas of 'home' among Canadian-Sikhs who remain willfully ignorant of the events leading up to the attack on the Harmandir Sahib Complex, and the politics of the Punjab problem.

Remember and Forgetting: Prerequisites for Instituting the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The desire for belonging, and the longing for home, has led to romanticized ideas about Khalistan among members of the Canadian Sikh diaspora. Even though identity formation and transformation are complex processes, identification with non-rational, non-class-based markers may be attributable to the need for in-group solidarity which arises as a consequence of perceived vulnerability in the receiving society (Hawley, 1993: 38). In the short-term, elevated levels of ethnic consciousness and solidarity may be conducive to managing the pervasive problems of racism and discrimination many immigrant communities encounter overseas. For minority group members attempting to consolidate their positions within unfamiliar lands, chances for economic survival may be maximized by remaining true to their own 'kind'. In the long-term, however, retreat into

religio-cultural exclusivity is neither a practical, nor sensible decision given that racial, ethnic, and religious communities do not constitute homogenous groups.

As with the Sikh population of Punjab, perceptible caste and class-based cleavages exist between members of the Canadian Sikh diaspora. Perplexingly, as a religious ideology, Sikhism is devoid of caste stratification (Jodhka, 2014: 585). Yet, notions of caste purity and pollution continue to permeate all aspects of social, political and religious life for members of the diaspora. The divisiveness of the imagined community is perhaps most perceptible when examined in relation to the organization, and political management of Canadian gurdwaras. In the diasporic setting, Sikh places of worship are primarily controlled by the two largest and most dominant caste groups; the Jats and Ramgarhias (Singh, 1984: 42).

For the devout, gurdwaras represent a critical site "…from which one seeks divine knowledge, spiritual guidance, bliss and peace of mind and soul" (Sikh Cultural Society of Great Britain, 1993: 19). Yet, within the institutionally complete communities of 'Singhdale' and Surrey, violent power struggles have routinely erupted inside these places of worship (Nayar, 2004; The Toronto Star, 2010). Considering that gurdwara management committees receive large amounts of cash in donations from members of their congregation, there is speculation that intra-ethnic violence may have underlying material and economic origins.

The Ontario Khalsa Darbar (OKD), one of the largest Sikh temples in Canada, has made national headlines on several occasions for allegations of corruption, and mismanagement of funds. In 2006, a small faction of the gurdwara's committee members took the financial directors of OKD to court for failing to account for nearly three million dollars in membership fees (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2007). The matter, which

remains unresolved a decade later, has not deterred members of the congregation from donating their hard-earned wages to the controversial temple.

Based on registered charity information submitted to Revenue Canada during the 2015 tax period, OKD *reported* an annual revenue of $1,988,204, and $13,834,598 in total assets (Canada Revenue Agency, 2015). Due to the strong presence of the Sikh-centric ethnic media in the GTA, members of the diaspora have at least minimal knowledge of the scandals, and problematic tendencies developing in their places of worship. Yet, most Sikhs tend to disregard instances of financial mismanagement as isolated occurrences, and fail to acknowledge the pervasive programs of ethnic, and religious entrepreneurship being pursued by elites within their community.

Like other segments of the Canadian population, many diasporic Sikhs have put aside rational understandings of class, and embraced the irrational elements of their ethno-religious identities. As a whole however, Canadians seem to be aware that social inequality exists, and that it has widened over the past several decades (Raphael, 2011; 92). Still, the vast majority possess either conservative, or highly ambivalent attitudes towards social change. Canadians rarely, if ever, actively organize in order to remedy their class-based grievances. Trotsky famously suggested that "…the mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection, if it were, the masses would always be in revolt" (Quoted in Swingewood, 1975: 129).

In Canada, attention is drawn away from the social disorders of the political-economic system by way of elaborate political distraction, and incessant mass media manipulation. For nearly a decade, the outgoing administration managed widening economic inequalities by removing class terminology from political discourse. Justifying the politics of erasure pursued by the Conservative party, ex-Prime Minister Stephen

Harper suggested: "[w]e don't believe in the politics of division and so-called *class warfare*" (Quoted in Freeman, 2015; emphasis added). Parallels can be drawn between Harper's tactics and that of the ruling Party in Orwell's dystopic novel "Nineteen Eighty-Four".

In the book, the official language of the totalitarian regime is designed to diminish the capacity for critical thought. As opposed to incorporating new words in to Newspeak, the Party actively sought to reduce the number of words its citizens could use. Enos (2013: 198) explains that this task was undertaken by the Party so that it "…would make it impossible for an individual even to have an idea in opposition to any government position, insofar as thought is dependent on words". Like Big Brother, transnational capitalist elites have a stake in removing class terminology from political discourse. For without the conception of class, there can be no collective working-class consciousness, and consequently no opportunity for revolutionary social change.

Today, while the vast majority of Canadians belong to the working-class in objective terms, most fail subjectively to recognize that their collective interests are juxtaposed to capital. Ironically, even though a highly polarized society has emerged, capitalism continues to be extolled as virtuous and egalitarian by some of the most disenfranchised and underprivileged populations. This anomaly may be attributable to the fact that Canadians are taught to explain, and even justify, the persistence of class-based inequalities individualistically, as opposed to structurally. While structural explanations shed light on inequality as a public issue, individualistic explanations presume that it is nothing more than a personal trouble (Mills, 1959: 3).

Members of the lay public tend to apply individualistic explanations in order to rationalize social stratification. These explanations tend to emphasize attributes that

individuals possess or lack, to explain why some people are more predisposed to conditions of material deprivation than others. Poverty is assumed to be a consequence of factors like individual laziness, lack of motivation or perhaps even cultural beliefs. From a sociological perspective, the individualistic explanation is deficient since it amounts to nothing more than victim-blaming. In contrast, structural explanations of inequality take into consideration the vast matrix of domination which persistently structures opportunities for the few, at the cost to the many. This approach effectively diverts blame from the individual to the political-economic system. The supreme manifestation of the victim-blaming discourse is the ideology of meritocracy which has been manufactured by transnational elites, and profusely disseminated by the political puppets of capital: the 'democratically' elected representatives of the nation-state.

Recently, news of the appointment of four Sikh cabinet ministers was widely circulated by domestic, and international media outlets. Sikhs, who had been the targets of state-sanctioned genocidal pogroms in India, had been actively incorporated into the Canadian political establishment. Symbolically, the new cabinet configuration provided a sense of legitimacy to members of the imagined community that were geographically dispersed across different parts of the globe. The collective sentiment of diasporic Sikhs was captured by a headline published in the Toronto Star: "*we* have arrived" (Woods, 2015: emphasis added). Despite evidence of class, caste, and gender divisions within the diaspora, many Sikhs still understood the cabinet appointments as community achievements, as opposed to individual accomplishments. Since their countrymen had been given a voice in the direction of their adoptive country, diasporic Sikhs felt that their interests would also be represented.

Considering that governments do not really govern in capitalist societies, this political arrangement can be understood as an elaborate attempt to appease ethnic voters, and maintain social stability (Allahar and Côté, 1998: 8). Sensationalized press coverage of upwardly-mobile Sikh immigrants not only perpetuates the illusory model minority stereotype, but it also selectively glosses over the fact that most members of the imagined community are far from affluent (Basran and Bolaria, 2004: 186). Though national data are not specifically collected on the employment trends of Sikhs, general extrapolations can be made from the labour force profiles of Canadians with East Indian origins.

According to Statistics Canada (2007: 7), East Indians are more than twice as likely to be employed in the declining manufacturing sector than any other group. Moreover, in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups, East Indians are more susceptible to conditions of unemployment and material deprivation. These trends are surprising considering that, when compared to other Canadian adults, a relatively larger proportion of East Indians hold a post- secondary college or university degree (Statistics Canada, 2007: 7).

The anomalous labour market profiles of East Indians not only dispel meritocracy as illusory, they also draw support for the vertical mosaic hypothesis. Like all other capitalist societies, Canada remains stratified on the basis of race, ethnicity, and social class (Porter, 2015; 73). In spite of the fact that wage stagnation and employment precarity have become common place for Sikhs, and many other working-class Canadians, the government recently issued a pay hike to cabinet ministers which brought their annual salaries up to $170,400 (Parliament of Canada, 2016). The celebration of symbolic victories, and elevated ethnic consciousness of diasporic Sikhs, must be contextualized in light of these contradictions. Today, primordial affinities continue to

distract many Punjabi-Sikhs from realizing the class interests which they share in common with most other Canadians.

Members of the native-born population may have material interests in common with immigrant populations, but many still perceive the changing face of Canada to be a real threat to the status-quo. Immigration Watch, a White nationalist group that has previously been investigated for the distribution of racist flyers in 'Singhdale', recently demanded an apology from the Canadian government for its continued support of "Sikh invasion" and white genocide (Brampton Guardian, 2015). Historically, racialized immigrant communities have been blamed for the economic, social, and political contradictions produced by neoliberal policies, and the endemic crises of global capitalism.

Anti-immigrant sentiments become especially pronounced during periods of bust when competition increases over scarce resources and jobs. Bonacich (1972: 547) corroborates that ethnic antagonism often arises from split labour markets which are typified by a three-way competition between capital, and two opposing ethnic or racial groups which are in competition for the same jobs, but differ fundamentally on the price they expect to be paid for their labour. Considering that the goal of all businesses is to accumulate maximal profit at minimal cost, cheaper labour will always displace higher priced labour when these types of conflicts occur.

In comparison to the embourgeoised proletariat of the affluent society, immigrants represent a highly exploitable, cheap, and docile labour force since conditions of uncertainty in the destination country place many under the compulsion of the whip of hunger (Allahar and Hick, 2011: 3). The vulnerable status of immigrants, which forces them to accept jobs at lower wages, also generates resentment among members of the

higher price, native-born labour group. When a price differential becomes present, white workers may espouse racist ideologies, or even resort to violence to protect their material interests. In this context, racism is instrumental and may be interpreted as a rational short-term decision on the part of a native-born white worker. By minimizing competition, racism allows the higher price labour group to retain their jobs and secure a wage from the capitalist class. However, in the long-term, this tactic endangers the entire working-class movement.

White workers perpetuate hate as response to perceived job 'theft' and wage undercutting, but they fail to realize that immigrants are *used* to "…regulate class conflict directly by undercutting the collective actions launched by domestic worker organizations, and indirectly by diverting the class hostilities rooted in the economy onto alien scapegoats" (Basran and Bolaria, 2004: 82). Thus, as opposed to the hyper-exploited racial and ethnic 'others' who make up the industrial reserve army of labour, the white workers' real enemy is the bourgeoisie. Consequently, whenever workers from the core countries use prejudice and racially motivated violence against their comrades who originate from the periphery, they are behaving in a falsely conscious manner, even if they are successful in supplanting them to protect their jobs. Today, trivial ethno-racial divisions fragment the labour movement by preventing the masses from developing a genuine class consciousness, and achieving their true revolutionary potential.

While native-born workers, visible minorities, women, gays, and other historically marginalized populations hierarchize the importance of various oppressions, and pursue efforts to retribalize and resegregate, the material conditions of capitalism – which allow the few to rule and keep the vast majority subordinate – remain unscathed. Considering that the struggle for human emancipation is intrinsically tied up with a

growing need for solidarity, identity politics is unconducive to progressive social change. Yet, under the larger project of revolutionary class struggle, racial, gender, and sexual antagonisms can be redressed, and eventually eradicated. In order to abolish private property, and achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat, oppressed groups must be prepared to engage in the politics of remembering and forgetting. Now more than ever, the similarities people share as global citizens must be selectively recalled, whereas trivial differences must be consigned to oblivion.

Nonetheless, the political acts of remembering and forgetting are intrinsically tied up with power and privilege (Allahar, 2011: 73). As aptly conveyed by Allahar (2011: 75), "…history is a bundle of silences…those who have power to construct the past normally have power to order the present". For ethno-religious groups like the Sikhs, overlooking the role of the state in ethnic cleansing and extra-judicial punishment is a painful experience. While these historical realities should not be forgotten, myths of common descent, heroic ancestries and chosen people, problematize any possibility of revolutionary class consciousness. Even though primordial identities are capable of evoking feelings of belonging sometimes as intense as consanguineal bonds, they can also ideologically distract people from the structural causes of subjugation.

SECTION V: CONCLUSION

This paper presented a conceptual sociological analysis of the diasporic politics of identity and homeland. While acknowledging the limitations associated with economic determinism, this paper demonstrated that ethno-racial markers of identity, and primordial religious mythologies, can be politically employed to distract members of oppressed groups from realizing the material conditions which perpetuate inequality in post-colonial societies. From the very outset, the imagined Sikh community's

independence struggle has been rooted in stark class, and caste-based, power differentials which have been generated by the political-economic contradictions of peripheral capitalist development.

Since the culmination of the insurgency period, the state of Punjab became plagued by conditions of abject poverty which forced farmers to commit suicide in the thousands (Bourne, 2015: 56). Despite the fact that the misery of the agrarian peasantry is intrinsically related to the intensification of globalization, and capitalist modernization, revolution seems unlikely. Romanticized visions of Khalistan have also become emotively embedded in the hearts and minds of many second and third-generation diasporic youth beyond the land five rivers. Perplexingly, while newer generations of Canadian-Sikhs support the imagined theocratic state of Khalistan, they selectively disregard the righteous way of life envisioned by the founders of the Khalsa Panth, and dismiss the spiritual guidance proffered in the Adi Granth. In both the core, and periphery countries, human emancipation necessitates a collective sense of forgetfulness and solidarity which remain at odds with the modern politics of identity.

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