

At the Center of Their Lives: Indo Canadian Women, Their Families and Leisure

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The purpose of this research was to determine how important or central leisure was in the lives of women immigrants from India. Ten Indo Canadian women were interviewed about their lives in India and Canada, about their families and their work, and about aspects of their lives that provide satisfaction, fulfillment, relaxation and enjoyment. Rather than start with a pre-determined, western definition of leisure, the study was exploratory, and aimed at developing an understanding of leisure from the perspective of the participants. This qualitative study used participants' comments to develop an understanding of their lifestyle. A model was developed which illustrates the centrality of family and the lack of importance of private time and personal leisure. The study showed that private time, which is often associated with the opportunity for leisure was not viewed as something positive or desirable for the women in the study.

KEYWORDS: *Women, ethnicity, family, India, leisure*

Introduction

Researchers have spent considerable time and effort examining the nature of the leisure experience. From the literature we have a good sense of which aspects of an experience lead a person to define that experience as leisure. Freedom of choice (Neulinger, 1974; Iso-Ahola, 1979; Kelly, 1982, 1983; Shaw 1985) is believed to be a concept that is central to the leisure experience but other characteristics of leisure have also been identified. Those who have studied women's leisure have found that women look to their leisure in order to realize a sense of autonomy and self determination (Samuel, 1992; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992) as well as for freedom of choice. Shaw (1985) and Samdahl (1988) have identified enjoyment, relaxation, intrinsic motivation, lack of evaluation, lack of constraints, sense of involvement and self expression as factors that North Americans find to be important components of their leisure. Wearing (1991) found that women, and particularly women who are mothers, actively seek time and space for themselves in order to pursue their own leisure and research in Canada confirms

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that many women feel that their opportunities for personal freedom and leisure are constrained (Harrington, 1996). Samdahl (1991) concludes that the connotative meaning of leisure relates most closely to one's sense of perceived freedom and self-expression. Thus, the leisure literature provides considerable insight into the meaning of leisure for both men and women. However, this research has been done primarily with white, North American populations. It is not known whether this notion of leisure is relevant for people from other cultures or if, in fact, the notion of leisure even exists in other cultures.

The literature that has looked at the question of ethnicity indicates that different ethnic groups hold distinct orientations towards such concepts as time and space, general life values and competition and co-operation (Allison, 1988). For newcomers to North America, life experiences may have been shaped in ways that are vastly different from what is considered to be the norm in North America. Notions such as family and citizenship have different meanings for people from third world situations and culture, class, religion, nationality and gender have a particular impact on women's lives (Maynard, 1994). Values ascribed to marriage, to family and to one's sense of modesty and morality, shape the behaviors and beliefs of immigrants (Afshar, 1994). Since these and other aspects of life are culturally dependent, and vary considerably between cultures, people who are not North American in origin may not relate to and may have difficulty with the dominant meaning of leisure. In fact, even some Canadian born people of ethnic minority groups may not relate to the Western view of leisure.

Research on the leisure of women from diverse cultures cannot be based on the assumption that leisure meanings are the same as the North American conceptualization of leisure. Rather, a better approach for research with minority cultural groups might be to explore concepts that relate to the notion of leisure such as satisfaction, fulfilment, relaxation and enjoyment without directly addressing what the term leisure means. Moreover, since leisure cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of social life, the application of these leisure related concepts to all aspects of life may be a useful way to explore the potential relevance of leisure in the lives of immigrant women. Such an approach can help to determine what is central in the lives of women from different cultural backgrounds. It can also help to determine the extent to which leisure defined as freedom of choice, autonomy, intrinsic motivation, lack of constraints, and lack of evaluation is relevant or important in the lives of immigrant women.

Literature about women's work has contributed to our understanding of the leisure opportunities and constraints faced by North American women. Coontz and Henderson (1986) discussed the historical role of women's work as activity that was required every day and was essential for the sustenance of the family when men failed to bring home goods. The nature of women's work has historically meant that women had to be in the home much of the time and that women have had to be on call to meet the needs of others in the household. However, with the increasing democratization of family relations, many North American women have realized gains associated

with expanded work opportunities outside of the home (Coontz, 1992). Since the 1960's, North American women have entered the workplace in unprecedented numbers, a move fueled by an "ideological revolution" in which women began to demand gender equality in the work place and recognized work as an important component of life satisfaction separate from work within the home (Coontz, 1992). This literature has made an important contribution to our understanding of the nature of life satisfaction for North American women. It is still not known however, if similar trends have contributed to life satisfaction for those who are immigrants to North America. Thus exploring important aspects of satisfaction and enjoyment in immigrant women's lives and the centrality of different life spheres requires exploration of paid work and family as well as free time.

Historically, quantitative methodologies have been used to investigate and explain leisure (Iso-Ahola, 1979; Neulinger, 1974). This conceptual and methodological approach tends to focus on leisure as an individual experience or activity, and means that typically little attention is directed towards the social context or social meaning of leisure. We have attempted to understand personal experience divorced from the contexts in which these phenomenon have occurred. This approach, then, is not very useful for understanding the leisure in the lives of immigrant women. Instead, a qualitative, exploratory approach which avoids the western "mindframe" and seeks to reflect the meaning, significance, value and role of leisure in the lives of people who are marginalized by ethnic identity or by cultural heritage (Hughes, Seidman & Williams, 1993) is more appropriate. In order to determine the meaning of leisure for these groups, methodology that is different from the traditional, individualized, quantitative approach is preferable.

This paper presents the findings of a study that examined the lives of people who are immigrants to Canada and who have lived in Canada long enough to gain some understanding of what leisure means for North Americans. The study focused on women immigrants from India because immigrants from India make up a significant proportion of newcomers to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1994) and because they are from a very different cultural background. The purpose of the study was to determine if women from India had an understanding and appreciation of the North American concept of leisure and to determine what life concepts were most central to them.

The proposal for this study was reviewed by a professor from the Indo Canadian community who was familiar with qualitative research methods. She confirmed that the terms relaxation, enjoyment, fulfilment and satisfaction, which are used by Canadians to describe their leisure experiences, would be meaningful and understandable for this population group. She also suggested that the use of the terms leisure, hobbies and recreation be avoided as they were likely to be interpreted differently or misunderstood by this group.

The study was designed to explore all aspects of life that the women found to provide a sense of satisfaction, fulfilment, enjoyment and relaxation. The participants were asked to identify aspects of their lives that pro-

vided a sense of satisfaction, enjoyment, fulfilment and relaxation and from their responses the researchers were then able to make comparisons with the North American conceptualisation of leisure. From this, a model was developed to help explain the importance and centrality of different life components, and the relationship between these components.

Method

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1991-92. While there is not a large immigrant population in this east coast Canadian city, immigrants from Asia were the largest immigrant group from non-European countries as noted in the 1986 Census data (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988). Given the size of this population group, and the fact that they had likely been raised in circumstances that were different from the typical North American experience, it was decided to focus on this group. In recruiting participants for the study, members of the local Indo Canadian community agreed to assist in recruiting women who met the criteria for the study. Indo Canadian women were specifically recruited for the study in order to narrow the study to one segment of the community.

A phenomenological approach based on in-depth interviews was used to explore these questions. Phenomenological studies examine human experiences through the detailed descriptions provided by the people being studied (Creswell, 1994). Sensitising concepts were used in order to provide a general sense of reference, or direction for the analysis of the data (Patton, 1990) including the concepts of satisfaction, enjoyment, fulfilment and relaxation.

Halifax, Nova Scotia is located on the Atlantic seaboard of Canada in what has been described as a neglected part of the country due to the region's poor economy which is based primarily on the fishing and transportation industries (Ralston, 1988). Halifax, the capital city of the province of Nova Scotia, is the largest metropolitan area in the province and is more economically stable than other areas of the province. The economy of the city of Halifax is strengthened by the presence of a large, Canadian naval base, and because Halifax is the major metropolitan center east of Montreal. Halifax is the location of several federal government regional offices, it is the major medical research and health services center for Eastern Canada, it has several universities and colleges of higher learning and it is the largest, ice-free container port in Eastern Canada (Ralston, 1988).

Nova Scotia has been settled primarily by First Nations people and people of British and French origin (Burnet & Palmer, 1988). Since Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces have not experienced strong economic growth, immigrants have primarily gone to regions in central and western Canada where jobs were more plentiful and where immigrants were likely to find support from others from their homeland (Jabbra, 1988). For most of this century, the Atlantic region experienced outward migration and very slow population growth (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988).

The first immigrants from India arrived on the West coast of Canada in 1903 and in spite of the overt discrimination they faced in terms of laws limiting immigration from Asian countries, Indian immigrants continued to pursue a life in Canada, primarily in the western provinces (Buchignani, Indra & Srivastava, 1985; Jabbra & Cosper, 1988). Following World War Two, census data indicate that there were small numbers of immigrants to Atlantic Canada from Europe and Asia, although the numbers of Asians remained low (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988). In 1967 the federal government legislated a point system for immigrants which favoured those with professional qualifications and consequently there was a growth in the number of South Asian immigrants to the Atlantic region (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988). By 1986, there were 3,797 South Asians in Nova Scotia, whose total population at that time was over 800,000 (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988). In 1993, 20,298 immigrants from India arrive in Canada, representing the second largest group of immigrants to Canada from a single country next to those from Hong Kong (Kalbach, 1990).

South Asians in Nova Scotia tend to be well educated; they are higher than average income earners, and South Asian women are highly represented in health, teaching, management and clerical occupation groups (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988). The high level of education is probably related to immigration policy of the past few decades which gave preference to those who had professional qualifications (Jabbra & Cosper, 1988).

The Participants

All of the women in this study were immigrants from India who had been in Canada for at least five years. Because of this inclusion criteria, all the women were able to speak English well and were able to discuss their views on life in Canada. Another criteria for inclusion was that all of the women had children, and consequently they faced common interests and challenges that could be compared and contrasted. Participants for this study were selected purposefully in order to gain in-depth information from a small number of information rich cases (Patton, 1990). A snowball sampling technique was used (Patton, 1990). The Indo Canadian Seniors Club of Halifax provided the names of people who were initially contacted for the interviews. Each interview participant was asked if she knew women who would be interested in the study and those people were also contacted.

Ten women were interviewed for this study. Six of the participants agreed to have their interviews recorded on audio tape. The first participant to have a taped interview was the mother of two young sons, ages 11 and 9 at the time of the interview. She had immigrated to Canada at the time of her arranged marriage to an engineer. The family had returned to India for an eighteen month visit in order for her husband to experience life in India. Her husband had been born in India but his family left the country when he was very young. This woman had trained as a doctor in India and while the family lived there, she worked in a clinic while her husband stayed home with their two sons. She had been in Canada for eleven years but had not

qualified to practice medicine in her new country. At the time of the interview she was beginning to study for her Canadian medical exams and hoped to practice medicine once her children were older.

The second taped interview was with a woman who had been widowed during the previous year. She had three children; a daughter, age 7, and two sons ages 5 and 3. She was trained as a nursing assistant and worked part time in her home providing care for a disabled man. She had been in Canada for ten years and had an income level below the average for families in Nova Scotia. Her marriage had been arranged and she immigrated to Canada in order to be with her husband who had been a taxi driver.

The next participant was a university professor who was the mother of one child, a daughter, age 7 at the time of the interview. She had been in Canada for 16 years and had returned to India during her Ph.D. program for an extended period of time. This participant was married to a professor and they had not had an arranged marriage.

The fourth participant was a woman who had come to Canada as an unmarried woman after completing her nursing training in India, in order to experience life abroad. She stayed in Canada for several years but returned to India often, in order to alleviate her homesickness. On one of her visits to India her brother introduced her to the man she eventually married. She says the marriage was not arranged and in fact his parents forbade the marriage because she was Christian and his family was Hindu. The families eventually resolved their differences after the marriage had taken place. This couple had two sons, ages 10 and 14 at the time of the interview. She worked part time as a nurse in a local hospital and her husband was an insurance salesman.

The next taped interview was with a woman who was a department head in a local hospital. She had been in Canada for 15 years and had two daughters ages 8 and 10. She did not have an arranged marriage. This woman's husband was a pharmaceutical salesman who often worked away from home.

The last taped interview was with a woman who owned a dress shop. Her husband was a taxi driver. Although she described the family income as being below the average for Nova Scotia, she described their financial circumstances as being very comfortable since they owned several investment properties. She had an arranged marriage and had lived in England for five years before immigrating to Canada. At the time of the interview she had been in Canada for 22 years.

Data from the other four participants were documented during and immediately following informal conversations and taped interviews. This group of women would not agree to the longer taped interview for several reasons. One who ran a restaurant said she did not have time to sit down to be interviewed, but she was available to be interviewed in the restaurant as she prepared food early one morning. One woman was very dissatisfied with her life in Canada and how it has impacted on her children and preferred to speak informally. One woman ran an Asian food store and said that although she lived many years in India, she had been born in Afghanistan and did not feel she met the criteria for the study. A fourth woman discussed her

situation informally and initially agreed to be interviewed on tape. She was widow and was responsible for looking after her children as well as several elderly in-laws. She also had to work in the store owned by her husbands' parents. Informally she expressed great sadness for the loss of her husband and for being away from her sisters who still lived in India. She did not expect to ever see them again. When the researcher arrived to conduct the interview she declined to participate in the taped interview. All of the women participants had children. All of the husbands of the participants were by birth, Indian.

Procedures

Several research questions were used to explore the nature of lived experience and the centrality and importance of different life components for the participants: First, what aspects of life were most important to the participants? Second, what factors constrained their efforts to achieve satisfaction in these aspects of life and what aspirations did they have for overcoming these constraints? Third, what components of life contributed the most to the women's sense of satisfaction, fulfilment, relaxation and enjoyment?

The women were asked to talk about their experience of living in both India and Canada, about their families, their children and about what it is in their lives that offers a sense of satisfaction, fulfilment, relaxation and enjoyment. There were also questions about what expectations their families had of them in the home, and what they expected of the family members in terms of household responsibilities. The women discussed child care arrangements that they had used both for work and for non-work related activities. They spoke of their jobs, their hobbies, and the cultural activity in which they participated, their communities and their involvement with church and religion. The women were asked about the aspects of their lives that were most meaningful and what it is that contributes to this sense of meaningfulness. Those factors that constrained or enhanced their opportunities for meaningful activity were also discussed.

The constant comparison method was used to analyze the data. While the data from the six in-depth, taped interviews were the primary source of data used for the analysis, information from the informal conversations and untaped interviews was also used to inform the analysis process as appropriate. Analysis was done as soon as possible after each interview and the data were divided into small segments according to categories. The categories changed and grew in number as the interviews progressed, and certain categories emerged as more important than others. Those categories that emerged as most important were subsequently used to develop a theoretical model to describe what was most important or central and to depict the relationship between these aspects of the participants' lives.

Results

The participants in the study had much to say about the lives they left behind in India, about Canada, their children, their husbands, their ex-

tended family and friends. The participants were primarily of middle class households and had been raised in comfortable circumstances in India. Most of this group had few complaints about their lives and hoped for continued prosperity in the future. However, several of the women were not as comfortable and expressed a sense of loneliness for sisters, parents and other aspects of life that were left behind in India. They referred to themselves as Indian women even though many had been in Canada for most of their adult lives and had Canadian citizenship. From the interviews, a picture began to develop about the lives of the immigrant women and this led to some understanding of their views on leisure.

The study participants spoke of many aspects of their lives that were important to them. The main themes that emerged had to do with their families, their work, the cultural traditions of both India and Canada, aspects of life that the women found to be intrusive and their sense of privacy and private time.

The Centrality of Family

All of the participants in the study spoke of their families as being central to their lives. Children, husbands and extended family members were considered to be of utmost importance to all participants. Many of the women said that it was common in Indo Canadian families, for children and elderly members to be cared for by female relatives. Young married couples would often live in the home of the husband's parents. Parents would arrange the marriages of their children. The women interviewed spoke primarily of the advantages of the close family networks they had been raised within.

The participants explained that the extended family is a friendship and support network. The existence of extended families allowed women to work outside of the home without having to use baby-sitters who were not family members. It provided companionship and social support in times of need. One participant grew up within the household of her mother's extended family following the death of her father at a very early age. She had only her husband and son living with her and longed for more family members to live with her. At the time of the interview she was arranging the marriage of her son and planned that the son and his new wife would live in her home. The issue of being separated from extended family networks was central to the discussion for most of the participants.

For me I always live with the joint family when I was small, because my uncle and grandparents and their families lived with us. But even here I stay alone but I like the company. If there is two, three people like my husband and kids in the house it's fine but I still get bored. I like more. (Shop owner; son, 26 and daughter, 24)

We really miss family here. Like we have other things like the standard of life is definitely better in Canada and the cost of living is good, like you can afford a lot of things that you cannot afford in India. But the family ties are so great for Indians and we really miss it when we are here. (Medical Doctor; sons, ages 11 and 9)

Family closeness was the best thing about living in India. They say when you have good times you don't miss [family] but when you have hard times you miss your relatives. . . . This is our home but the only thing we miss is all of our family. (Registered Nurse, sons, ages 14 and 10)

For most participants, life in Canada has offered opportunities that may not have existed in India. For those women who have benefited from these new opportunities and for those who have had faced challenging situations related to their settlement in Canada, closeness to family has remained central to their sense of fulfilment. Since immigrating to Canada the women had fewer opportunities for involvement with their extended families and consequently missed an aspect of their lives that would have provided a sense of fulfilment had they stayed in India.

Throughout the discussions, the women expressed satisfaction with their relationships with their husbands. In India and in a traditional marriage they would have had little choice in major decisions facing the family. One woman explained that she had an arranged marriage to a man who had been born in India but was raised outside of India. They were married in India after knowing each other for only two weeks and she moved to Canada several months later. After four years they returned to India with their two young sons for an eighteen month stay in order for her husband to experience the culture of India:

I really admired his courage for doing that. I just follow him because in India we are taught to obey our husbands and we are told that our dignity comes from following the husband. (Medical Doctor; sons ages 11 and 9)

Other women had developed relationships with their husbands which allowed them more freedom and more involvement in family decision making.

My husband talks about me obeying him, but I don't. I guess when I first met my husband that's one of the things we talked about quite a bit. His philosophy of a mother and a wife who would be home and would not be working. At that time I was (studying) and I said, "Why the hell am I studying, why am I doing this if I cannot be a career women." So now coming here I guess that hasn't changed and sometimes I wish he would tell me to stay home. (Department Head, daughters ages 8 and 10)

I am more independent from the beginning. That's why marriages work. Because he can do anything he wants and I can do anything I want. I don't mean that I can spend a night outside with somebody else. It's not like that. But still. If I want to buy something for the house I can buy. If he wants to buy something he can buy it. We don't have to ask each other . . . He is not the head of the family. That is what I mean. (Shop Owner; son, 26, daughter, 24)

We have divided the work I think fairly evenly. I do the cooking, most of the time but my husband does the cleaning. I am a better cook and he is a better cleaner . . . He does the dishwashing, vacuuming, cleaning. He does his own laundry, I do my laundry and my daughter's. (Professor; daughter, age 6)

Life in Canada had provided opportunities for many of the women to develop ways of coping with the tasks of raising children, caring for their homes and working outside of the home that are different from the way life

would have been in India. In the absence of extended family members who would have traditionally provided support, some women shared household responsibilities with their husbands and children in a way that would be considered unconventional by Indian standards. Other women, like those who were widowed, had few supports and bore the burden of caring for the home, children, and elderly family members just as they would have been required to do in India.

Like many Canadian women, the women interviewed had planned their lives to meet the needs of their children, husbands and other family members who were nearby (Horna, 1989). Women in Canada and throughout North America are constrained by their sense of lack of entitlement to leisure and by placing the leisure needs of others before their own (Harrington, Dawson & Bolla, 1992; Hunter and Whitson, 1992; Bella, 1992). However, the extensive commitments made by the Indo Canadian women to their families and the influence of their cultural roots on their present day lifestyles meant that they placed little or no emphasis on their own personal interests. This neglect of personal leisure seemed to be more extreme than it would be for many Anglo Canadian women who do seek time for leisure (Harrington, 1996). Leisure opportunities for this group were certainly complicated by the expectations placed on them by their culture. One woman described the lifestyle changes she and her husband had made since the birth of their daughter:

. . . Maybe I would go to the movies more often. That is something we never get around to doing *because family comes first* (emphasis in the original). We never like to leave our daughter on Saturdays or Sundays. That is something that you will probably find common among Indian families. We have a real hang up about taking time off for yourself. We don't at all feel comfortable leaving her because we feel she is left after school at the day care. So we go only to those places where we can take her. (Professor; daughter, age 6)

I do knitting and reading. I don't watch TV except for the news. I go out shopping and for a walk in my neighbourhood, visit friends, go to church and ladies from the church, church activities. Out of Nova Scotia we have a lot of Canadian friends. We go for the weekend. We do things when we can be most with the kids. I don't like to leave the kids out. (Registered Nurse; sons, ages 14 and 10)

Unlike most Anglo Canadian women, the women interviewed were not inclined to use baby-sitters. They said that in traditional Indian households, children would be looked after by grandparents and relatives. The participants explained that since they did not have extended family networks in Canada, they planned activities that always included their husbands and children.

I always have friends here. Every Saturday and Sunday I have someone coming in the house. I don't like to go to their house, because kids don't go. I like to spend more time with my boy. Even though he's older, but still. That's why I invite everybody over to my house. . . . I think children should stay with their parents. When mine were small, if somebody say okay only couples, I refuse to

go. So I don't believe that. I think if parents want to enjoy the evening, I don't believe kids should stay with a baby-sitter. (Shop owner; son 26, daughter 24)
When the kids were small I didn't go away anywhere and I always used to think about the children. You know you don't like to leave them. You are so attached to them. (Registered Nurse, sons, ages 14 and 10)

Other participants expressed disapproval of Canadian friends or work colleagues who had held parties or social functions that did not include the children. All of the participants emphasized the importance of children and believed that it was essential that they, the parents, must be responsible for care of their own children. One woman said:

North American culture is a very selfish culture. It's all I, me and myself comes first. Whereas in India you do not think of yourself first. You think of your family, your parents. I mean sometime your parents come even before your wife and husband do. And children are really important. Whereas here, I think when you look at it culturally, it is very much I come first. If it suits me I will do it. They grow up with that. And even little kids talk that way. I hope it doesn't rub off on (my kids). (Department head; daughters, ages 8 and 10)

The centrality of children, husbands and extended family emerged as the most important aspect of life for the participants. It is this that provided their primary source of satisfaction, fulfilment, enjoyment and relaxation.

The Importance of Work

Work was an important aspect of life for the women who participated in the study. All of the women in the study were employed at the time of the interviews except for the medical doctor who was studying for exams that would allow her to practise in Canada. They worked outside of the home in order to fulfil their own desire for challenge and to contribute to the well being of their families. Some said that in Canada they had more choices over what they do in their jobs and had had employment opportunities in Canada that they would not have had in India:

We are far more flexible here in Canada. We have chosen that because if my daughter is sick one of us can stay home, or she can come here (the office) with me. She is here more than some of my students. It hasn't been too bad when she has been sick. We have been able to cope, but it is the nature of the job. (Professor; daughter, age 6)

This participant was able to plan her teaching schedule around two or three days each week. Her husband, also a professor, taught on alternate days.

I worked because when I had my oldest one, my husband did not have a job . . . After I got married and kids I always said that my job is not my priority. I keep my job (part time) and I like to do the best when I am there but when I am home it is my family. So my job can't go above my family. Now we work out this way that either I am home or my husband is. I said that I would work only two days a week so my husband makes sure that he goes out when the kids are at school and he comes home when it is their supper time and they are home. (Registered Nurse; sons, ages 14 and 10)

Sometimes I would rather work (outside of the home) than staying home. This is my first time staying home. I never stayed home for the past ten years. You don't have contact with so many people, friends and new people. And of course money. And your life is not in routine. I am happy about the children . . . because I have never been with them before. I was always working and my mom used to look after them, until last year. (Nursing Assistant; sons, ages 5 and 3, daughter, age 7)

I guess I get a lot of satisfaction from work and the people at work and that has increased my network of people. Just contacts, adult iconcontacts. I'm not sure that if I didn't work I'd have the same kind of contacts. I would miss work. It doesn't matter what kind of work; I could work anywhere. (Department Head; daughters, ages 8 and 10)

I want to do something that I was trained for, to use my education . . . My husband is very supportive of me going back to work . . . Even now he says that if you go back to work and you are doing well I will resign and stay home with the kids. (Medical Doctor; sons. Ages 11 and 9)

Although work was important for the women, it did not have the same degree of importance as did children, husbands and extended family members of the women interviewed. Work provided them with income, a sense of satisfaction, challenge and friendships. Despite the advantages of paid work, it was clear that the women viewed the family and home life as central to their well-being. When asked what was most important in their lives, the women all spoke of their families.

The Influences of the Extended Family

The fourth theme that emerged from the data had to do with those aspects of life from both Canada and India that the women found intrusive, bothersome and which they would have preferred to live without. Although some of the women continue to practise some aspects of their traditional culture, they feel that they have moderated the severity of the controls that would have been enforced had they stayed in India. One woman described how she believes her children will come to be married:

My daughter is going to be twenty five in March and she is not going to get married until she is going to finish her Ph.D. But if she was in India, just seventeen or eighteen years old. That's it. No, the time is different. They (her children) agree to get married the way we want it. Like just to pick someone and we will settle good family, friends. It's not like, pick someone from India or anywhere else. No. They know each other before and they have time to get together. (Shop Owner, son, age 26, daughter age 24)

The custom that North Americans would likely find most intrusive is the arranging of marriages by parents. Half of the women interviewed had arranged marriages and one woman was in the process of arranging the marriage of one of her children. However, one woman whose marriage was not arranged discussed her views of this custom:

There are many really positive points to an arranged marriage. I guess it's because they take a lot of factors into consideration. Family background, families being compatible. In India when you marry, you don't marry the individual.

You get married to the individual and the family, so you get into another family. So I guess in order to survive the stresses of marriage you've got to be able to get along with the rest of the family. (Department Head; two daughters, ages 8 and 10)

I feel that in Canadian culture it is really good that there is no family pressure. I find that Canadian culture is once you get married you are left alone to do your own thing. And that is good to a point. (Registered Nurse, sons, 14 and 10)

According to the participants, in an arranged marriage, women join their husband's family, often living with them from the time of the marriage. Such an arrangement ensures that when the groom's parents become aged and in need of care, they will be looked after by their son's wife. Therefore it is very important for an Indian woman to have a son. The pressure from relatives for women to bear male children is one aspect of life that some of the Indo Canadian women resent:

I have two daughters. And when I go back (to India) there is always that pressure. I mean the first time it was very annoying because we had just had the first one and it was like, when are you going to have the next one. And the second time when I was pregnant all of the letters said how they hoped I would be blessed with a son. I mean if you take it literally, it means that if you have a daughter, He has not blessed me. But I guess you have to take it with a pinch of salt because culturally it is important for them to have sons and they just don't realise the situation we are in. I am not sure if they were here, would they understand our culture here or whether they would impose. (Department Head, daughters, 8 and 10)

Regardless of the extent of interference or imposition the women felt from their parents and in-laws, they had a tremendous sense of respect for their relatives. They aimed to please the relatives as much as possible and to instill this sense of respect for elders in their children.

Cultural Traditions of India and Canada

The participants said that in India they would have had to abide by the social rules of the communities they lived in. This life would have been very constraining for some and consequently many were quite glad to be able to live their lives in Canada. For some of the participants, life in Canada meant that they had an opportunity to adopt some new traditions as well as to hold on to some of the traditions they value from their homeland. One woman described the sense of freedom she enjoyed in Canada compared with the way life was in India:

. . . When you are living in a close community everybody knows everybody else's business. So when you decide to go out with a certain person everybody knows that and of course everybody has something to say about that. Everybody has an opinion. Whether or not you want to hear it, you get to hear the opinion. . . . Here you have a sense of freedom, freedom in the clothes you wear, if you want to go out with somebody it's basically your choice. . . . In India you are controlled. You are controlled by traditions. You are controlled by community

expectations and by family expectations. But here nobody knows me. I can be my own self. (Department Head; daughters, 8 and 10)

Traditionally, when women marry, they are responsible for caring for their husbands' parents and not their own. One woman had visits from her own parents, who were not totally comfortable visiting and staying in her home:

My mother, she don't stay here (in my house). She say, "No, this is not nice." She came last year she brought everything from over there. Like vegetables, and things like that." I said, "Why?" And my grandfather said, "This is not nice. This is girl's house." I said, "This is Canada. I work more than my husband does, so what's the difference, girl's or boy's house." And he said, "No, this is Indian custom." (Shop Owner, son, 26, daughter, 24)

Some aspects of life in India like those just described are part of the cultural traditions that the women have happily left behind them. Other cultural traditions, such as close family ties are often missed by the women.

I feel that in Canadian culture it is really good that there is no family pressure . . . I find the Canadian culture is once you get married you are left alone to do your own thing and to a point that is good. But at the same time, if I had small children and I like to go somewhere and I have nobody. I would like to leave (my children) with my mother-in-law. (Registered Nurse; sons, 14 and 10) Friendships were very different there (In India). When you have friends there, they are real friends. Here they are more like acquaintances. People tend to keep more to themselves. Whereas in India you really get to know people as people and you can call on them easily and they can call on you and you don't worry about it. The ethics are different here. You call before you come. You make sure that you are not intruding on someone's time and you don't go at meal time and all those things. And there it didn't matter. You would go over any time and if you were sitting down to eat you would say well join us. (Department Head, daughters, 8 and 10)

Many of the participants were thankful for having an opportunity to adopt new traditions, such as the freedom to wear what they wanted to wear and to have fewer restrictions within their marriages. However, again this aspect of life was not their top priority and took second place to fulfilling their roles as wives, mothers and daughters. The importance of privacy in the lives of Canadians was raised by most of the participants as an aspect of life that they found difficult to accept and indicative of a selfish society.

Privacy and Private Time

The idea of private time for one's own interests was the most troubling aspect of Canadian life for the participants. The Indo Canadian women were critical of those Canadians who placed the needs of the individual above the needs of the family:

. . . I guess here (in Canada) you have a lot of privacy. Now we are just not used to that privacy. No one talked about having that privacy. Even as kids we didn't have our own bedrooms. We all slept in the same bedroom. It was hui-mongous and we all slept there together. I guess it's just little things like that.

Here there is such a big thing on privacy. Kids want their own space and their own time. Initially it's really hard to adjust to that because when you really do have that time and space you don't know what to do. You are quite lonely. You never felt lonely there. At least I can't ever remember feeling lonely there. (Department Head; two daughters, ages 8 and 10)

The women had little regard for private space and time for themselves. In fact, they often referred to being lonely and even depressed when they were on their own without children, husbands or extended family members present. One participant said that she thinks her need to constantly be with other people stems from having been raised in an extended family home.

I always lived with the joint family when I was small . . . but even here I stay alone, but I like the company. I don't like to stay alone, like by myself. If there is two three people like my husband and kids in the house it is fine. But still I get bored. I like more. (Shop Owner, son, 26, daughter, 24)

I find that with the friends we have at work a lot of them complain that their husbands are out with the boys and husbands having their own social life, things like your social life, my social life and our social life. I think we end up always having our social life rather than yours mine and ours. . . . I think it comes from your upbringing. *You need that time to yourself, your space and your time for you as a person*, (emphasis in the original) whereas in India you don't. You don't have that and so you always end up doing things together. You don't crave that time alone. (Department Head; two daughters, ages 8 and 10)

The attitude towards privacy as described by the women was different from the dominant North American view. While many of the women were happy to be free of the more intrusive pressures from extended family members in India, they also missed the social aspects of living close to or within a large family group and did not value private time or express a desire for time for themselves.

The Lifestyle Circle

Based on these emerging themes, a model was developed consisting of three concentric circles. These circles represent the components of life which were more or less central to the lives of the women in the study with the inner circle being the most important and the outer circles being progressively less central. Accordingly, the inner circle depicts the part of life that had the potential to provide fulfilment, enjoyment, satisfaction and relaxation: husbands, children, extended family and home are located in this inner circle. The women had centred their lives around these aspects of life.

The second ring of the circle depicts the factors in the lives of the women that were important, but not central to sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, enjoyment and relaxation. Within this ring are traditions that the women chose to accept and the customs from India that they continued and will continue to practice. This included traditions from both Canada and India. Employment or work outside of the home is also located in this circle. The women were employed in challenging, and mostly professional occupations and their work was important to them. However, work was not as



Figure 1. The Lifestyle Circle: Potential for fulfilment, satisfaction, enjoyment and relaxation is at center.

central to their sense of fulfilment as was family. For the women in this study, work was something that could be changed, or discontinued without affecting their sense of fulfilment.

The outer ring of the circle represents those factors that were peripheral in the lives of the women in terms of providing the potential for fulfilment. In this ring are the traditions from India that they had chosen to no longer practice and those from Canada that the women have chosen not to adopt. For example freedom from the demands of relatives, especially those who hold traditional views from India were located in this circle. The women found it easier to ignore the interference and criticisms of relatives who are

thousands of miles away, especially when they were being pressured to have more children.

In addition the women were offended by some of the values held by North American women toward private time and time away from children, husbands and extended family. For example, they were unable to accept that their North American colleagues would plan and attend social gatherings like Christmas parties that did not include children. The women did not want private time for themselves. They expressed preference for activity that involved their children and husbands and had rejected the notion of having time and space for doing their own activity.

Most of the women who were interviewed on tape were well off financially, and had succeeded in establishing the inner circle life aspects that gave them a sense of fulfilment. Their husbands were supportive of the lives they led and their children had respect for them. They were not unduly isolated by the absence of extended family members. Thus, for these women, the inner circle of satisfaction was fulfilled, the middle circle of important traditions was also satisfactory, if less important, and the outer circle of peripheral traditions did not impinge negatively to any great extent on their lives.

For some of the other women who were not interviewed on tape, the conditions of their lives were less satisfactory, and they longed for changes that may occur within their lives that would restore the centrality of family. One of these women hoped her children would learn to appreciate the customs of India and that they would not assimilate Canadian traditions which she believed were leading them to lose their respect for the importance of family. She explained that the boys wanted to play sports after school instead of going home to work in the family restaurant. Another woman who would not agree to be taped was responsible for the care of her in-laws who were quite elderly. Being a widow she would not have the opportunity to return to India where her sisters live. She missed her own family members and expected she would have few opportunities to ever see them again.

However, although these women had little opportunity to experience satisfaction, fulfilment, enjoyment or relaxation within their lives the Lifestyle Circle is still applicable. The inner circle of family and home was still the most central aspect of their lives, even though they gained less satisfaction from these components than they wished. Moreover, since family, children, husbands and home remained central in their lives, they were unlikely to find other aspects in their lives that would replace the positive aspects of their ideal families and homes. Thus, for this group, the inner circle of the Lifestyle Circle depicting their lives represents only the small degree of satisfaction they are experiencing in those aspects of life that are most important to them. The other circles representing important traditions and those that are peripheral to their lives may play a greater part in their lives, but do not provide the same satisfying qualities as would their ideal family and home.

Discussion and Conclusions

In many ways the lives of the women who were interviewed for this study were like the lives of most Canadian women. The women had primary responsibility for their children, they took care of their homes, they often worked outside of the home and they had little time for activities of their own. However, the women interviewed were different from most Canadian women in several aspects of their lives.

The participants did not seek time away from their families for relaxation and enjoyment. They called it "private time." Since families, children and husbands were their source or desired source of fulfilment, enjoyment, satisfaction and relaxation they had little need for time for themselves. This reluctance and disregard for time for themselves is the core factor that differentiates the lives of this group of immigrant women, from the lives of most North American women and suggests that they may be seeking "vicarious leisure" through their children and family (Allison & Duncan, 1987). Other aspects of life, such as: work, social networks, community and church were important to them but were not central as was the family.

The Indo Canadian women tended to be group oriented and the group they were most inclined to be with was their family. Many of the participants said that they gained a sense of relaxation from this group involvement even though this often meant that the women were responsible for a great deal of work associated with entertaining in their homes. When without their family and friendship groups, the participants experienced loneliness and in some cases depression. Aspects of their lives that other women might have seen as constraining, or that might inhibit leisure participation, such as intensive family involvement, were not an issue for the participants. In fact, most of the participants expressed a sense of freedom from the constraints they would have faced had they lived their lives in India.

This model represents the women's lives at a specific point in time. Thus, it should not be interpreted as a static model but it will change with time and as circumstances change. The dynamic nature of the model will be evident as the women age and as their children grow up in Canada. As they experience more customs and traditions, the women may choose to adopt them. Some women over time may want private time for themselves. Their children may choose to adopt traditions of the dominant North American culture, especially in relation to friends, dating and marriage. These changes will have important repercussions in the lives of the women who immigrated from India. It is possible that the aspects of life in the outer circle will take on greater importance as time progresses and may even affect the stability of the factors in the inner circle.

The results of this study showed that for this group of Canadian women of Indian origin, meanings of leisure and leisure behavior differ from the North American norm, as it tends to be portrayed in the literature. It was not possible in this study, given the small and restricted sample, to determine whether these findings might be generalizable to other non-European cul-

tures or other Asian cultures. Also, this study shows that even though there is some commonality of meaning of leisure among Canadian and North American women, such a conceptualization cannot be generalized to women from other cultural backgrounds. Further, this study focused on the lives of women only. The lives of men from different cultures also need to be better understood in terms of how they view leisure.

The results of this study indicate that for some immigrants cultural traditions from the person's country of origin continue to hold tremendous importance in the person's life. In this study concepts relating to the importance of immediate and extended family continue to be central to the women's sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, relaxation and enjoyment. Those who are unable to experience the benefits of close ties with immediate and extended families may have difficulty achieving a sense of satisfaction in their overall lifestyle.

Another implication of the study is that newcomers may not appreciate all of the traditions of their new country. In this study the women viewed the concept of private time as negative, and indicative of a selfish, self centered society. For Canadians and other North Americans, private time allows the opportunity for self actualization and tends to be highly valued. Therefore we cannot assume that the Western view of leisure will be viewed positively by people of diverse ethnic backgrounds who have different life experiences. Certain aspects of life are not viewed the same by people of all cultures. The example of private time as an aspect of life that is not enjoyed by the Indo Canadian women may be just one of many aspects that leisure researchers will find worthy of further investigation. Further research will help us to better understand marginalized groups and how they conceptualize the notion of leisure in their lives.

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