

**“Don’t let them see a drink in my
hand”: An interpretative
phenomenological analysis of British
Sikh women’s experiences of alcohol**

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ABSTRACT

Despite alcohol consumption being prohibited within the Sikh community for religious reasons, it is well documented that this ruling is regularly transgressed. There is also now a rising body of evidence that suggests that there is an increase in consumption levels within this community (Wilsnack, Vogeltanz, Wilsnack and Harris, 2000; Heim, Hunter, Ross, Bakshi, Davies, Flatley and Meer, 2004; Brar and Moneta, 2009; Pannu, Zaman, Bhala, Zaman, 2009; Motune, 2011). It has been reported that female alcohol consumption has increased within the general population, with the Office of National Statistics (2011) reporting a 7.7% increase in alcohol unit consumption per week for women since 2008. There are also concerns about increased consumption amongst Sikh females and the prevalence of secret drinking behaviour amongst second generation British Sikh females (Bayley and Hurcombe, 2010; Motune, 2011). Increased consumption amongst females remains a cause for concern with the Institute of Alcohol Studies (2013) reporting that female drinking behaviour remains at historically high levels especially amongst young females.

This research study aimed to explore the experiences of British Sikh women with alcohol. In the current research 6 British born Sikh women were interviewed and the interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Semi structured interviews were used to explore the young women's experiences with alcohol; the methodological approach of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) allowed for a rich and detailed exploration of a taboo subject. Themes emerged relating to the nature of secret drinking behaviour including details of the lengths young women go in order to hide their drinking behaviour from their families. The interviews highlighted the participants' experiences of being British and fitting in with society whilst maintaining their cultural identity as Sikh women. The interviews also revealed a major element of upholding a public image to wider society as well hiding their drinking behaviour from parents and other family members. The participants engaged in constant renegotiating between what is traditional and what is modern: "who am I?" vs. "who am I supposed to be?"

The findings from this research can contribute to the development of culturally sensitive alcohol assessment measures and development of culturally sensitive alcohol treatment programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol consumption is widely accepted as normal within British culture; however there has become an increasing cause for concern with under-age drinking with a culture of 'binge' drinking emerging (Valentine, Holloway and Jayne, 2010). The Department of Health (2008) recommends the daily allowance for men is 3-4 units per day and for women it is 2-3 units per day. That said, research evidence and statistical information have reported that both men and women are consuming more than the recommended daily guidelines; 67% of men and 68% of women aged 16-24 regularly drank above the recommended level (Office for National Statistics, 2013).

The NHS Information Centre (2010) published a report on alcohol consumption and revealed that 19% of women reported drinking more than 14 units in an average week whereas 28% of men reported drinking more than 21 units in a week. The Health and Social Care Information Centre (2014) reported that females were more likely than males to be admitted to hospital with alcohol related admissions. Females accounted for 55% of alcohol-related hospital admissions. It appears that the increase in consumption is not only within the general population but also amongst ethnic minority groups (NHS Information Centre, 2010). Within these groups the research evidence reported the increase in consumption amongst Asian groups in comparison to the White British group. Contradictory evidence has historically reported that individuals from ethnic minority communities such as Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, consume less alcohol when compared to the White British population and this has been reported from various annual surveys in recent years (Pannu, Zaman, Bhala and Zaman, 2009). This research evidence highlights that there are inconsistencies within the data being reported; further highlighting the issue and identifying a need for further exploration into this topic area.

Bayley and Hurcombe (2010) reported that second generation British Asians drinking habits are now similar to those of the indigenous population however there are relatively few individuals from ethnic backgrounds present in alcohol services. The National Treatment Agency (2013) reported that individuals belonging to ethnic minority groups accounted for only 3% of the population in alcohol services. This may be as a result of individuals not wanting to disclose their alcohol consumption levels whether they drink in secret or if alcohol is prohibited within their culture and

therefore they are reluctant to share this information. Drinkaware (2014) reported that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds have higher rates of abstinence as a result of their religious beliefs; however this fails to take into consideration those that drink in secret. Within these studies researchers usually refer to the South Asian community as a whole; this community consists of Hindus, Sikhs, Bangladeshis and Muslims. Making such assumptions means that research studies do not portray an accurate representation of the ethnic groups. Alcohol consumption amongst these groups varies greatly so results reported cannot be generalised for the entire South Asian community (Pannu et al, 2009). Hurcombe, Bayley and Goodman (2010) carried out research into ethnic minority group alcohol consumption within the UK and found that individuals from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds were more likely to drink above recommended limits than other ethnic groups. This increased consumption was reported in individuals from Pakistani background despite alcohol being prohibited by the Muslim religion. The research also identified that Sikh men are overrepresented for liver cirrhosis and reports of Sikh females consuming alcohol have consistently increased since the 1990s. This demonstrates that the research evidence available cannot be regarded as an accurate representation of consumption levels. The research information sources available on this topic area vary from peer reviewed journal articles, media articles and national data sources, all of which publish varying information in relation to Sikh female alcohol consumption. There are many possible reasons for these inconsistencies; one of them may be participants not wishing to disclose information about their drinking habits to others; especially if consumption of alcohol is prohibited within their religion. For example, Muslims strictly prohibit alcohol consumption. There are also high levels of abstinence amongst the Hindu population (Bhopal, Vettini, Hunt, Wiebe, Hanna and Amos, 2004). Due to these restrictions it is common for secret drinking to take place within these groups; there are reports of hidden drinking behaviour amongst young Sikh females (Thom, Lloyd, Hurcombe, Bayley, Stone, Thickett and Watts, 2010). Research evidence such as the Health Survey for England and the National Survey for Ethnic minorities reported inconsistent findings for alcohol consumption in Sikh females with consumption rates varying from 18-35% of the population (Bhopal et al, 2004; Aspinall and Jacobsen, 2004).

Heim, Hunter, Ross, Bakshi, Davies, Flatley and Meer (2004) reported that the alcohol abstinence rate amongst the Indian ethnic group was estimated around 60%, it is important to note, once again, that this finding refers to the Indian ethnic group that consists of more than one community:- Hindus, Sikhs and some Muslims. Pannu et al (2009) reported that the South Asian population cost the NHS around £20 billion as a result of alcohol related admissions; with the highest consumption levels being found in the British Sikh population. Despite the public assumption of abstinence and denial of consumption amongst these groups, research evidence demonstrates the existence of high levels of consumption and even secret drinking amongst this community. With such high numbers of hospital admissions we could question how much is known about the secret drinking within this community. Thom et al (2010) argue that as consuming alcohol, particularly spirits, is culturally accepted within the Sikh community; there is a lack of awareness around drinking problems and the health risks associated. There is an identified need for alcohol services to take into consideration social, religious and cultural differences but also taking into consideration belief systems, health status and stigma. Boniface and Shelton (2013) explored the discrepancy between alcohol sales and reported consumption. The authors compared representative samples from the General Lifestyle survey (GLF) and the Health Survey for England (HSE) where individuals self-reported their alcohol consumption. The surveys were analysed in three hypothetical scenarios; for example, scenario 1 made reference to the Government drinking guidelines and the number of alcohol units permitted. It was reported that 80% of women would have drunk more than 3-4 units on their heaviest drinking day in comparison to men at 75%. The authors concluded that it is thought that individuals underestimate their consumption by 40-60%. Although Boniface and Shelton (2013) used hypothetical scenarios to illustrate their findings, their research highlights that there is not accurate information available regarding alcohol consumption levels within the UK, primarily as the research relied on individuals self-reporting and it is well known, (Midanik, 1982) that there are issues with the validity of self-reporting in relation to alcohol consumption. Individuals may also be reluctant to disclose their consumption to others as they are aware that it is a stigmatised behaviour within their culture.

Bayley and Hurcombe (2010) found that within the South Asian groups, Sikhs consume more alcohol when compared to those from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Research studies are also now indicating an increase in consumption by Sikh women but due to the topic area being a taboo, this behaviour may be under reported (Denscome and Drucquer, 2000; Ahuja, Orford and Copello, 2003; Bhopal et al, 2004; Lyons and Willott, 2008; Brar and Moneta, 2009). Bhopal et al (2004) carried out a review to assess the cross cultural adaptations of survey questions on self-reported alcohol and tobacco consumption with the UK. The authors reported that there are clear discrepancies within the research available about Sikh female consumption; one study reporting that 18% drink whereas another study reported that 35% of women identified themselves as regular drinkers (Bhopal et al, 2004). This research information again questions the validity of self-reported information and poses further questions as to whether alcohol consumption levels should be looked at with alternative methods.

The aim of this research study is to develop a more complete understanding of British Sikh women's experiences of alcohol and the internal conflicts they face of living in a British society whilst still maintaining their religious and cultural identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SIKH RELIGION

In this research study the term 'Sikh' is used to describe an Indian community that practices and follows the Sikh religion; the term 'Punjabi' will be used to refer to culture and language. To date there are limited studies available that specifically look in-depth at the Sikh population and the studies that have been carried out provide limited information (Bradby, 2006; Bayley and Hurcombe, 2010).

The Sikh community originates from the northern state of Punjab in India; although the Sikh community only make up 2% of India's whole population they are distinguished for their strong sense of being a separate community based on their religion; Sikhism, culture and the language, Punjabi. The Sikh religion was founded by the first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji in 1469 and as a religion became complete with the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1708. As instructed by the tenth guru the religion refers to the scriptures in the holy book; the Guru Granth Sahib (GGS), the

Sikh religion is based upon teachings of the holy book as documented by each of the ten gurus (Sikhs.org, 2011; Jaspal, 2013).

The GGS is an integral part of the Sikh religion and its presence within the Sikh community demands respect. When visiting the Gurdwara, men and women must take off their shoes and cover their heads before bowing in front of GGS as a mark of respect for what the gurus have taught and the invaluable information it possesses. The GGS is present for all Sikh rituals and ceremonies such as births, marriages and deaths. Sikh behaviour is based upon a code of conduct which all must observe and practice; according to the guru's teachings there are certain moral, social, religious and ethical principles intrinsic to Sikh belief and practice (Rait, 2005; Singh and Tatla, 2006; Sandhu, 2009; Sikhs.org, 2011). As well as the spiritual teachings being highlighted, the GGS also focuses on important social dimensions, for example the Sikh religion denounces and rejects any form of a caste system and emphasises social equality.

The Sikh community can be divided into two main groups; the baptised and the non-baptised. Baptised Sikhs can be identified through external symbols also known as the five K's. Kesh, the Sikh community believe that hair should not be cut and all efforts must be made to preserve the God-given form; for this reason many choose to wear a turban. It is undeniable that the turban has become the most identifiable article of the Sikh religion. Kangha, this is a comb used to keep one's image tidy and demonstrates clarity of mind; Kirpan; is a sword carried by Sikhs to symbolise justice and freedom. The Kara is a steel bangle often worn on the right hand to remind the individual of God's strength and infinity and the final K is Kaccha which are special shorts to emphasise one's commitment to purity (Rait, 2005; Gatrad, Jhutti-Johal, Gill and Sheikh, 2005; Jaspal, 2013). As well as external symbols baptised Sikhs also follow a set of strict rules in relation to living their daily lives, this is known as the '*Rahit Maryada*'. The key points of this discipline indicate that individuals practising the Sikh religion must only believe in the teachings of the Sikh gurus, they must pray daily and attend their local Gurdwara (temple), they must not consume any alcohol or other forms of intoxicants and no meat may be eaten. In practise it has been found that many Sikhs interpret this rule literally and are strict vegetarians and limit their diets to exclude meat, fish, eggs and animal fat (Nesbitt, 2005).

It is important to note that not all Sikhs are baptised, it is the individual's choice to make and many postpone this decision until later life when they are able to take on the responsibility and practice the full discipline required of them (Nesbitt, 2005; Jaspal, 2013). Rait (2005) reported that Sikh baptism or initiation only takes place when the individual understands the significance and vows to adhere to the ethical principles of Sikhism. Initiation is open to men and women from all ages and it is not forced upon individuals, "let them come forward when they are ready" (p.29). Those that are initiated are proud of their status and identities as *amritdhari* Sikhs (Rait, 2005).

SIKH MIGRATION TO THE UK

According to the 2011 Census there are approximately 430,000 Sikhs living in the United Kingdom (Office for National Statistics, 2011). The Sikh population are highly visible within Britain's multi-cultural society having migrated to the UK since the 1950s. The main migration occurred shortly after the India-Pakistan partition and Sikhs were drawn to employment opportunities in the UK as the British economy was developing during this time when there were labour shortages throughout the UK after the Second World War. There was also an influx of migrants from East Africa during the 1960s and 1970s (Singh and Tatla, 2006; British Sikh Report, 2013).

Since then they have established their own identity within a white British culture and the ever-expanding size of the Sikh community in Britain remains a magnet for Sikhs all over the world. It is important to note that there are differences between Sikhs that have migrated from India and Sikhs from East Africa. Sikhs that have migrated from India are found to hold onto traditional values more so than those from East Africa. East African Sikhs are described as 'twice-migrants' by Singh and Tatla (2006) as they initially migrated from India to Africa and then to the UK; providing them experience of adapting to new cultures and were found to be better educated and less likely to carry out manual labour jobs. Whether Sikhs have originated from India or Africa their presence within British society is well established and they have made tremendous efforts to establish their identity within the UK (Singh and Tatla, 2006).

ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The five K's can be described as symbols of religious identity, as well as this there are also cultural symbols by which Sikhs define themselves. These cultural symbols consist of the use of the language Punjabi and attending the Gurdwara (temple). Jaspal (2013) argues that cultural identity and religious identity are inter-linked and also contribute to the formation of a social identity.

The Sikh community can be described as patriarchal; this is not only evident amongst the Sikh community but most Asian communities. Singh and Tatla (2006) and Hall (2002) describe the family unit as central to the Sikh community; the family unit usually consists of father, mother and children. It is expected that the son takes care of his parents when they are of old age, takes over household responsibilities and fulfils family obligations. The marriage of females is said to be an event which involves the whole family and all steps are taken to ensure that females preserve their purity within the community as this demonstrates the family's honour. "Family honour is a quality possessed collectively it is reinforced or ruined in social situations" (Hall, 2002, 167). To some extent the Sikh community can be described as strict in terms of its upbringing of females as they are often restricted more than males due to them holding an increased responsibility to maintain family honour. Enhancing one's family status is a principal goal for many Sikh families and all efforts will be made to ensure that nothing taints this status (Lindridge and Hogg, 2006).

Ahuja, Orford and Copello (2003) reported that Sikh families in the UK have a very strong sense of community and feel a pressure to conform to their traditional values and beliefs. One reason for this could be due the migration of their parents from India; it is important for children to understand where their parents came from and hold on to the traditional values in an attempt to maintain a cultural identity. This conformity however has now become diluted through the younger generations and with the modernisation of society it appears that the younger generation may not hold these values in the same light as parents or elders. It can be said that there is an apparent 'culture clash' between Sikh values and British culture. Hall (2002) says second generation Sikhs are often caught between two cultures and face challenges every day in terms of behaviour. They negotiate boundaries, social expectations and social constraints as they live in a society that has much more relaxed and liberal

views of life than their own culture. Sikh youths described themselves as living between two worlds; all that is 'Sikh' or 'Indian' is associated with being traditional and all that that is 'western' or 'English' is associated with being modern. Alcohol consumption is considered a part of modern society and so youths associate this behaviour as part of their English world.

Bradby and Williams (2006) investigated the role of religion and culture in Punjabi teenagers when looking at alcohol consumption, smoking and substance misuse. Although Sikh females reported smoking and alcohol consumption they were also found to state religious reasons and cultural restrictions for them not engaging in such behaviours more regularly. The authors concluded that there is an element of religious membership that individuals use as motivators to not engage in such behaviours. This research also highlighted the gender differences that are prevalent within the Sikh community around alcohol consumption.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

To highlight gender equality within the community the tenth guru: Guru Gobind Singh provided males and females with names to reflect their Sikh identity. It is common for males to have the middle name "Singh" (king) and females to have the middle name "Kaur" (lioness); these names were given to demonstrate the gender equality between males and females (Singh and Tatla, 2006; Sandhu, 2009). Despite these religious teachings the Sikh culture can be described as patriarchal. Male supremacy is often re-enforced through the Punjabi culture especially within Punjabi songs and films. Within the Sikh community a preference is expressed for the birth of males/sons as they are the ones to carry on the family name and status/reputation.

Ratna (2011) says that emphasis is placed on female roles as they are seen as reproducers of family values and maintainers of cultural traditions. Females uphold family values whilst with their parents and will continue to follow the traditions in their marital homes as well. "Daughters are...sent as ambassadors for their...[family] where their moral and material worth will be interpreted as reflection on their parents code of honour" (Bradby & Williams, 2006) p.321). "*Laaj* (honour), *sharam* (shyness), and *izzat* (family prestige) are the words used for the women's

chastity, family prestige and honour...she should not lose them at any cost” (p.53). Although the GGS places emphasis on gender equality, women in this culture remain largely invisible; they are considered to be inferior to men and are viewed as property of their fathers and husbands (Hall, 2002; Ratna, 2011). Rait (2005) described the gender differences as ‘double standards’ as men are allowed more freedom whereas women’s social interactions are closely monitored by other members of the family and they are put under many social and cultural restraints. Negative behaviours such as alcohol, drugs or pre-marital sex will bring shame upon the family and taint the family image. If a Sikh woman is seen out drinking it is perceived that the parents have not taught their daughter how to behave properly. It is seen as the family’s responsibility to ensure that Sikh women have adequate knowledge and understanding of the culture and boundaries; for this reason weekly visits to the gurdwara are advised as a gentle reminder of their cultural background and religious teachings. Singh and Tatla (2006) argue that Sikh girls are particularly vulnerable to the freedom and general permissiveness of the British culture and for this reason parents reiterate the reasons for the strict upbringing. The strict upbringing also has positives for the family image as the ‘good’ behaviour of females is seen as a demonstration of respect for parents and traditional values contributing to overall family status. Lindridge and Hogg (2006) use the term parental ‘gate-keeping’ to describe the upbringing differences in genders; the gate is open for boys and closed for girls.

To protect family honour, Sikh girls are encouraged to practice their roles within the home carrying out domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning. It was assumed by most families that by encouraging domesticity girls would grow up to be able to successfully fulfil the role of a good wife and mother, Ratna (2011). It is for this reason that female socialising is limited by Sikh parents; social activities such as going clubbing or visiting the pub are frowned upon as they can be seen as opportunities to ‘misbehave’. However where males are concerned, parents often turned a blind eye and allowed them freedom. Sikh girls remain at home with the parents, unable to socialise and very much isolated from wider society. Bradby and Williams (2006) argues that the cultural restrictions placed on individuals during childhood/adolescence results in gendered social behaviours in adult life despite the religious teachings about equality for men and women.

Bradby (2007) researched ethnic identity in relation to alcohol consumption; semi-structured interviews revealed the role of ethnicity, religion and gender. It was found that young Asian women would 'experiment' with alcohol but would have to do so in secret due to fear of people talking about them and potentially having their reputation tarnished. Bradby (2007) found that in the Sikh community, drinking alcohol was found to be acceptable and those who drank regularly held a powerful status within the community. For example, Sikh men were described by participants as 'top drinkers' in comparison to other religious groups, this shows the status given to Sikh men who drink. One potential reason for this, is the image associated with alcohol i.e. in the Sikh community consuming alcohol is viewed as a 'man's' thing to do. Bloomfield, Gmel and Wilsnack (2006) looked at alcohol consumption across genders and cultures. It was reported that there are 'gender roles' within society and drinking alcohol is seen as a sign of masculinity in many cultures, whereas women who do not drink are admired as being strong as they have self-control and are able to abstain from alcohol. In the Sikh community, the abstention behaviour of females is rooted within deeper cultural values that restrict females socialising behaviour. This research evidence clearly illustrates the identity/status given to those who drink alcohol, particularly men and also highlights the gender differences within the Sikh community in relation to drinking behaviour. Despite religious restrictions on alcohol consumption, there is a contradiction within the culture; the Punjabi culture endorses alcohol as an illustration of masculinity within Punjabi songs, therefore young Sikhs growing up in the UK view alcohol not only as a norm of British culture but also as an 'aspect of their Punjabi identity and masculinity' (Sandhu, 2009; p.26). This behaviour and the consumption of alcohol are accepted in the Sikh community.

Bradby (2007) found that a Sikh male's reputation could be compensated for by his parents' honourable status, for example, if a Sikh boy had started smoking, his negative behaviour would not face harsh consequences as it would be overlooked because of his parents'/family status. In contrast, as well as fear of parents, Asian girls also fear the wider Asian community termed the "Auntie-ji surveillance network" (Bradby, 2007). This surveillance network operates within the wider Asian community and can be said to disclose consumption information of youths to their parents; for example, if a person is seen with a drink in their hands even if it is not alcoholic, the Auntie-ji network is known to report back to their parents and the individual will face the negative consequences. "Gossip ruins marriage chances –

people can say **anything**" (p.18). The main reason for hiding their consumption behaviour is the fear of discovery by parents and wider community; individuals fear the gossip networks that operate in the culture and fear the consequences of having a negative family reputation within the community i.e. impact on marriage prospects (Bradby, 2007).

In the Sikh community, there are clear differences in upbringing between males and females; there is a general expectation that women are not allowed to drink, smoke or use drugs due to concerns over being seen by others and damaging the family reputation. On the other hand, it is acceptable for men to be seen drinking. With such heavy cultural boundaries and social limitations placed on women, it is perhaps understandable why some may choose to drink in secret. When socialising with others, women may feel pressurised to drink in order to fit into modern day society. Sikh girls may also feel that they need an escape from their 'home-life' and therefore drink as a coping mechanism to deal with the tensions between cultural values and the pressure to conform to the society in which they live, (Becares, Nazroo and Stafford, 2011). As it is socially unacceptable for women to drink, this means that there is a clear misrepresentation of many ethnic minority groups as many may not disclose their drinking behaviour (Bhopal et al, 2004; Rait, 2005).

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN PUNJABI COMMUNITY

Although the Sikh religion prohibits alcohol consumption, it has become an integral part of modern day Punjabi culture in the UK. Alcohol is consumed on many occasions such as births, marriages, festivals and general socialising (Dingwall and Sidki, 2010). In India alcohol consumption is a status symbol; especially imported alcohol. Amongst the upper and middle classes, drinking imported alcohol illustrates that those who consume it are part of an elite lifestyle whereas those considered being from the lower or working class background would brew their own alcohol at home (Sandhu, 2009). It appears that these same ideologies have filtered through the migration population living in the UK today. Sandhu (2009) carried out research looking at the Sikh perspectives on substance misuse and alcohol. Sandhu's research detailed translations from the Sikh holy book '*Guru Granth Sahib*' (GGS) to demonstrate why the consumption of alcohol is prohibited. "One has a full bottle, and another fills the cup. By drinking (liquor), intelligence departs and madness enters

the mind...by drinking one forgets the Beloved, and is punished in heavenly court. If it is within your power do not consume the false intoxicant [Guru Amar Das, GGS, 554]" (p.28). This quote taken from the GGS illustrates why abstention from alcohol is an essential part of the religion.

Despite the religious teachings it is argued that alcohol consumption is part of the Punjabi culture. Nagra (2011) carried out research looking at modern Punjabi films and the messages they portray to wider society especially the UK Sikh youth. Typically the theme of these films includes the migration from India abroad to the UK or USA and the portrayal of masculine identity. In the majority of Punjabi films, alcohol is portrayed as a symbol of the Punjabi culture and the actor faces a conflict and struggles with his identity. It is argued that alcohol plays a symbolic role as it demonstrates the internal conflict many Sikhs face with regards to respect for their religious beliefs and wanting to portray an image as Punjabi males in a different country. Alcohol consumption is more likely if it is already considered to be a social norm within that culture. Individuals are aware that their religion prohibits consumption however with the pressures of being away from home and them wanting to maintain their perceived cultural identity many may consume alcohol to adapt to the culture.

Alcohol consumption is considered normal from adolescence onwards in the UK; first and second generation Sikhs adopt the norms of this culture and consume alcohol at the appropriate age; this is known as acculturation. By adapting to the norms and ways of British culture, individuals are able to associate themselves with their peers and feel a sense of belonging; they share the same experiences. Hall (2002) carried out an in-depth ethnographic study of Sikh youths in Britain and investigated their identity formation from migrants to British citizens. It was found that British youths expected Sikh individuals to 'share' cultures rather than differentiate between their Sikh identity and British identity. "Ethnic groups should not have to give up their culture, language or religion but neither should minority groups expect the British to change their culture for them" (Hall, 2002; p.114). This demonstrates an acceptance towards the UK Sikh community but highlights conflicts which may occur from having two identities; it is as if they have two lives: their traditional, cultural Sikh life and then their British, modern life. A research study was carried out by Denscombe and

Drucquer (2000) which looked at diversity within ethnic groups in relation to alcohol consumption and smoking behaviour within the youth population. Three ethnic groups were investigated from the South Asian population; Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. It was found that alcohol consumption had risen significantly between 1990 and 1997 amongst these ethnic groups; the authors suggested that changes in attitudes towards alcohol allowed the participants to move away from traditional or cultural prohibitions on alcohol consumption.

There have been numerous studies (Pannu et al, 2009; Brar and Moneta, 2009; Dingwall and Sidki, 2010) indicating the increased level of alcohol consumption and prevalence of alcohol related health concerns within the Sikh population; this increased consumption is reported more in Sikhs than in any other British Asian ethnic group. Second generation Sikhs have been found to be more likely to consume alcohol in a risky way such as engaging in binge drinking behaviour, (Stillwell, Boys and Marsden, 2004). With the emergence of a British-educated Sikh generation it can be said that there is an increased diversity within this community and it is evident that individuals adapt religious and cultural beliefs to suit/ meet their personal needs. It is apparent there has been a breakdown in traditional religious values which means that British born Sikhs i.e. second and third generations, now eat meat and consume alcohol frequently. It is suggested that this may be due to cultural expectations of living within the UK and individuals experiencing peer pressure in social groups to 'fit in', (Dingwall and Sidki, 2010; Jacobsen and Myrvold, 2011). However this also highlights the issue that if individuals are consistently trying to fit in are they then becoming less 'Sikh' and more 'British?' Hall (2002) argues that Sikh youths participate in various cultural fields and exercise their opportunity to 'act Indian' or 'act English'. For example, when at home within the family, visiting the gurdwara they behave according to their cultural norms and when in school, work or when socialising they have an opportunity to be 'English'. This demonstrates how Sikh youths are very skilful in negotiating identity in relation to social context.

Within the Sikh community there are clear contradictions; from one perspective alcohol consumption is perceived as a rejection of religious, family and community values however when living in a society that endorses and encourages alcohol

consumption the behaviour becomes normalised and Sikhs are often referred to as 'top drinkers' by others. Also as the Sikh religion does not expect all to become baptised many may choose to consume alcohol within their younger years and become abstinent in later life. This too could influence alcohol consumption as young people may not feel pressure of living within religious constraints and are aware they can choose their religious path in later life (Rait, 2005).

CHANGES IN SOCIETY

In recent years there has been wide scale research carried out looking at the changes in alcohol consumption in British culture. Valentine et al (2010) looked at generational differences in attitudes towards alcohol using intergenerational case studies; interviews with a British born Caucasian sample taking into consideration cultural and class differences. The authors found that the 'older generation' (teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s) had somewhat strict attitudes towards alcohol. Some participants recalled that it was socially unacceptable for women to be seen out drinking, but it was acceptable for young men to be out drinking as long as they were accompanied by their father. It was found that the current 'adolescent' generation has more relaxed attitudes towards alcohol consumption than the older generations. For example, teenagers would have the opportunity to openly discuss drinking alcohol with their parents and underage consumption was permitted as long as it was within the home. Teenagers who were allowed to drink within the home felt that their parents supported their drinking behaviour and they had very relaxed attitudes towards drinking.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN SIKH WOMEN

It is well documented (Bayley and Hurcombe, 2010; Pannu et al, 2009) that alcohol consumption occurs amongst Sikh females however what is not accurately known is the level of consumption; a true representation has not been successful as many women still hide their drinking behaviour. The increased consumption by females including Sikh females has led to somewhat of a moral panic within society; it poses questions of what is acceptable behaviour of females.

With the consumption increasing it is to be assumed that the gender gap within the young Sikh community is closing, (Sandhu, 2009). Denscombe and Drucquer (2000)

reported that the number of Sikh girls ever having consumed alcohol and those that reported drinking frequently increased during 1990-1997 decreasing the drinking gap between Asian girls and their white counterparts. Similarly Becker, Hills and Eren (2006) reported that frequent and heavy drinking rates increased for Sikh women during 1999-2004. Historically women's drinking behaviours have been more socially restricted due to them having a certain 'image' to maintain. Alcohol consumption portrays an image of a Sikh woman as being 'rebellious', 'out of control' and 'unsuitable marriage material' (Bradby, 2006). Sikh women have an image to uphold of being a 'good daughter' and potentially a 'good wife'; alcohol consumption threatens this image. For this reason it is likely that women may choose to hide their consumption from families and engage in secret drinking. Wilsnack, Vogeltanz, Wilsnack and Harris (2000) argue that increased levels of alcohol consumption amongst females conflicts with society's idea of how women should behave. Society's idea of Sikh women being traditional domestic homemakers is conflicted when Sikh women are seen intoxicated and with a clear lack of inhibitions. Alcohol consumption causes individuals to perceive the Sikh population in a different way as a result of the public behaviour displayed by some women.

Orford et al (2004) found that although Sikh women disclosed to the researchers about their consumption levels and drinking patterns, they were still reluctant to share this with others especially as the majority felt that their drinking behaviour was best kept hidden from parents. Forty four percent said that their fathers were unaware of their drinking behaviour and 43% reported that their mothers did not know. In addition there was reluctance to share this information with siblings with many stating that they would prefer if they did not find out. It is apparent that only friends should know about drinking behaviour. "In young Sikh women the use of alcohol demands extreme discretion" (Dingwall and Sidki, 2010, p.22). It can be said that drinking behaviour is hidden from family members as Sikh women have more of a responsibility to their religious and cultural traditions so alcohol consumption may jeopardise their family status.

In the UK alcohol consumption is viewed as a social event; it cements friendships and the association of alcohol with an occasion is common. Alcohol consumption is also seen as a 'rite of passage' as described by YWCA (2003). Sikh

females may also be under pressure to conform to social norms as reported by Valentine, Holloway and Jayne (2010) individuals from ethnic minority groups may be pressurised to drink by their peers in order to 'fit in' to social groups, however as alcohol consumption is prohibited this consumption would take place in secret or where they are sure no-one from the community is likely to see them. 'Secret' drinking behaviour is more likely to occur in social situations with friends rather than with family.

Motune (2011) a journalist writing in 'Drink and Drug News' Magazine for BME services highlighted the changes in Asian women's drinking behaviour, how the patterns of consumption have now changed and discusses the need for ethnic tailored services. Motune (2011) discusses a particular case study of a young Sikh female, Jas, who was unhappy within her marriage and then turned to alcohol; the cultural pressures upon her to stay within the marriage resulted in Jas consuming alcohol very heavily. When raising the issue of unhappiness with her mother, she felt obliged to stay in the marriage because she was told that if she broke away it would cause shame upon her family. Jas's drinking started with just a few glasses of wine but this soon escalated to several bottles a week; all this remain hidden from her family. When Jas sought help she was faced with inexperience from services because of her ethnicity; she kept being told how 'unusual' it was to see an Asian lady within the service. Such case studies are ever prevalent in society however many individuals suffer in silence as there is a lack of ethnically tailored services which take into consideration cultural backgrounds.

Academic research has suggested that the reason there has been a change in attitudes is a result of modernisation within society; British Asian women in society today have very different opportunities than twenty years ago i.e. university education opportunities, professional careers, opportunities to study away from home, opportunities to travel and have greater financial independence. This shift in power balance in a typically patriarchal society has enabled Sikh women to adapt to a more modern and liberal lifestyle compared to the restrictive and traditional lifestyle which is well known (Dingwall and Sidki, 2010). These opportunities have all contributed, to some extent, to the relaxation of Sikh traditions and may influence

British Asian women to adopt similar attitudes to those of white British origin and change their attitudes around certain behaviours including drinking alcohol.

It is apparent that there has been a change in patterns of female alcohol consumption due to the change of social roles of women in society. Although alcohol consumption by women in the general population has become more acceptable, it remains a hidden behaviour amongst British Sikh females. Prior research has indicated that not only are Sikh women consuming more alcohol but also they are doing so in a harmful way (Boniface and Shelton, 2013). Consuming alcohol in this way has subsequent impact on local primary care trusts as there are increased costs involved when treating physical health ailments as well as mental health issues that may be attributable to alcohol related admissions. If these individuals had been identified as alcohol users at an earlier stage the impact to both the healthcare economy and their individual health would have been significantly reduced (Department of Health, 2009).

The current qualitative research study explores the experiences young Sikh females have with alcohol whilst managing their cultural and religious identity and the contradictory beliefs that lie therein. This research study is unique as it focuses specifically on the female British Sikh population which have been identified as a key group in relation to this topic area due to the cultural beliefs and perceptions around alcohol consumption. It is known that Sikh females regularly consume alcohol (Pannu et al, 2009; Bayley and Hurcombe, 2010), however as accurate consumption levels are not known it raises concerns as these individuals may not be following health information in relation to safe drinking. Previous research has primarily been based on quantitative methods however these have been found to be inaccurate as many are reluctant to share and disclose this information (Bhopal et al, 2004). This study will use qualitative research methods in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of and develop an insight into British Sikh female drinking behaviour.

RATIONALE

This research study will focus on exploring experiences of young British Sikh women around alcohol in an attempt to overcome generalisations and limitations highlighted by previous quantitative research evidence. Quantitative research evidence that is available generalises between ethnic minority groups so an accurate representation is not available. This current research will attempt to add to the emerging body of research examining health behaviours of ethnic minority groups in the UK. The current study will draw upon qualitative research methodology with a view to gaining an understanding of experiences of Sikh women as they live through the culture clash of being British and Sikh. The study will explicate the ways in which these young women make sense of their experiences. The qualitative methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be used; this particular method offers insight into how an individual attempts to understand and attaches meaning to the phenomena in question; the experience of being a British Sikh female and consuming alcohol which is viewed as taboo within the community. IPA is a qualitative approach which enables detailed analysis of the phenomena i.e. alcohol under investigation and so aims to understand the phenomenon from the participant's unique point of view. Using semi structured interviews; data will be gathered from British Sikh females around their experiences with alcohol, their views and opinions on what it is like to be a Sikh woman in modern day Britain and how religion/culture plays a role within their British life. British Sikh women of different upbringings will be recruited and explorations will be made about how these women have made sense of their experiences and the meanings they have attached to these experiences.

There are several aims to be investigated; the aims of this research are:

1. Understand what it means to be a Sikh woman in the UK
2. Understand the religious and cultural aspects of being a Sikh woman
3. Explore the participants experiences of alcohol
4. Examine the various ways in which the findings can support current literature on health behaviours of Sikh females in the UK

METHOD

For this research study the researcher has attempted to understand Sikh women's' experiences with alcohol in order to provide an accurate representation of the role that alcohol plays for women of this age within this ethnic group. The design of this research was open-ended and inductive. Audio-recorded interviews were used as a method to gain insight into the experiences women had with alcohol. IPA was used to analyse their accounts.

Prior to its popularity within the field of psychology qualitative research was primarily used within nursing and social work. Since results were found to be successful and enabled a deeper understanding of health behaviours the method was adapted within psychology (Smith, 2004; Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Willig, 2008; Howitt, 2010).

Qualitative research offers a wide range of approaches; phenomenology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnography and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The common purpose in all these approaches is the emphasis placed on developing a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question. Researchers conducting qualitative research use analytic strategies that enable them to remain as close as possible to the interpretation of the phenomena thus enabling them to understand the systems individuals use to make sense of their world (Larkin, Watts & Clinton, 2006; Willig, 2008; Smith, 2008;

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research method developed by Jonathan Smith and is concerned with making detailed explorations into how individuals make sense of their personal and social world whilst placing an emphasis on the meaning individuals attach to experiences (Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2008).

PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology can be described as a philosophical approach to the study of peoples' experiences. Phenomenological research works to develop this understanding from the perspective of the participant's (Smith, 2008; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The origins of phenomenology can be traced back many years

however it became prominent as a philosophical movement under its founder Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century. Husserl (1859 – 1938) placed a huge emphasis on an individuals' experience and rejected other methods stating that human experiences cannot be understood by scientific methods alone, rather they must be understood through meanings (Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008; Smith, 2008; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Husserl identified human consciousness central to the analytic process and understanding of the human experience. He argued that through consciousness all human actions have a meaning and without these meanings it would not be possible to discuss and explore human experiences in such depth (Sadala and Adorno, 2002; Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006). The phenomenological method involves the individual describing a life experience or situation and from this description the researcher must then accept the experience as it has been described. The participant will be encouraged to disclose the meanings attached to this experience and also describe these to the researcher, from this information the researcher then takes a 'phenomenological stance' to enable deeper understanding of the experience as perceived by the individual (Sadala and Adorno, 2002; Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006).

IPA acknowledges the role of the researcher as a primary tool for interpretation however it is important that the researcher does not allow their own beliefs/views to interfere with the interpretation process. On the other hand, Fade (2004) argues that perhaps the researcher's beliefs/views may be essential during the understanding and interpretation process especially with individuals from the same ethnic background. Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty and Hendry (2011) suggest that there are difficulties for the researcher in disassociating themselves from prior knowledge of the topic area. During the analysis process researchers may be influenced, from the information gathered, to 'share' themes from one participant to the other; in this case it is argued that each participants experience is not viewed as their own and it could potentially be seen as a 'shared experience'. As IPA places an emphasis on individual experience; it is important that researchers attempt to remove any assumptions and to engage with the transcripts in a critical manner. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) suggest that researchers keep a diary during the analysis process to allow themselves to make notes relating to the interview and incorporate these notes into the transcription of the interviews.

Smith et al (2009) emphasised the importance of ensuring that participants' experiences are treated as individually as possible and themes are generated on a case by case basis.

INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

IPA has been described as a method that encapsulates 'the wholeness and the uniqueness of the individual' with a clear aim of providing a complete, detailed and in depth interpretation of their experience (Pringle et al, 2011, p.21). Phenomenology and symbolic interactionism have been identified as key features of the IPA method (Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006; Smith, 2008).

Smith (2011) describes the IPA process as a connection between a persons embodied experience, discussion of that experience, the meanings associated with the experience and the emotional attachments made to the experience to complete the understanding. The process of attaching meanings is known as symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism looks at the meanings individuals place on certain experiences; these meaning are placed through social interactions with others and the environment (Smith, 2009). This is an important feature within the interpretation process as it allows the researcher to understand the experience better by exploring how the individual has attached meaning to the experience. Typically IPA studies consist of a small number of participants as large sample sizes are associated with loss of meaning within the data. Larger sample sizes focus on providing generalised findings whereas smaller samples focus on providing a detailed insight for the researcher.

IPA has been described as a double hermeneutic approach as it involves two stages of interpretation simultaneously; the interview where the participant is trying to understand the experience and the analysis process where the researcher tries to understand the significance of events for the participant and place a meaning to these events (Smith, 2009). However an individual may not be able to understand their experience or what it means without the presence of a researcher offering prompts to gain insight to what the experience means (Smith, 2009). Access to an individuals' world is dependent on the researchers' ability to conceptualise and be

able to gain an insider's perspective through interpretative analysis (Brocki and Wearden, 2006).

BRACKETING

In order for IPA to be successful the researcher must allow participants to ascribe meaning to their own experiences and during the analysis process the researcher must attempt to put aside their own beliefs, judgements and opinions; this is known as 'bracketing'. Pringle et al (2011) acknowledge that it may be difficult for researchers to dissociate prior beliefs, knowledge and judgement towards the topic area. However Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) suggest researchers keep a diary during the interview process to overcome this.

Tufford (2012) suggests that bracketing is a key feature in qualitative research as researchers' preconceptions may taint the research process and interpretation of data. It is argued that researchers must ensure that the information collected from participants be as rich as possible without any influences from the researcher. Ramji (2008) found that there is a shared cultural identity between researcher and participant if they are of the same ethnic identity. This shared identity allows for a commonality between the two and can encourage participants to be more open thus enabling the researcher to be able to explore further. It has been said that when both researcher and participant are of the same culture there is a greater likelihood of accessing deeper information as the participant is more willing to share information due to the similarities and understanding of cultural practices. Ramji (2008) also reported that in her experiences of interviewing South Asian women participants would create 'insider/outsider' boundaries; for example by being the same culture meant that the researcher was an 'insider' however if the researcher was of a different ethnic background they would be described as an 'outsider. As the researcher was of the same ethnic background this enabled more sharing of information as the participants considered the researcher to be an 'insider'. Being an 'outsider' it was assumed that researchers did not understand the culture so any information provided would be misinterpreted. These difficulties were highlighted further by Egharevba (2001) when researching other ethnic groups; it was reported that when interviewing South Asian women as a researcher of African origin it was assumed that the researcher just 'did not know' about the culture and what it meant

to be women in their culture in terms of familial expectations and cultural boundaries. Although a cultured commonality was not possible Egharevba (2001) found that it was possible to create gendered commonality around being from ethnic minority groups in the UK however there was still some reluctance from participants to recognise this as they continuously pointed out differences.

Willig (2008) stated that compared to other qualitative methods IPA research allows more creativity and freedom to explore areas in greater detail especially amongst population groups that can be described as 'hard to reach'. IPA permits the researcher to delve into topic areas which may be deemed sensitive in nature by capturing the true lived experience of a small group. These experiences can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the hard to reach groups.

Nesbitt (1991) says that whilst the term 'Sikhism' is used to appropriately describe an individual's religious practice, their social attitudes, practises and morals may be more reflective of the British culture. This results in the individuals needing to reflect on their identity in various social situations. Keddie (2014) reported that individuals from an ethnic minority community have an identity that can be described as socially contingent'. Individuals may manipulate their identity as and when it suits them in relation to different situations; for example in relation to drinking behaviour Sikh women may choose to adopt social practices similar to those of the White British female population. Questions relating to identity were included within the interview schedule and participants were asked to reflect upon this during the interview. Identity reflection was managed by ensuring that participants were not judged during their discussions. With the researcher belonging to the same ethnic background, it allowed the participants to openly discuss the topic area without fear of judgement including reflections on their cultural identity.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS.

Semi-structured interviews have been a model data collection method for IPA research and the majority of IPA research has used this method. Semi-structured interviews maintain the primary aims of IPA research and allow the participants to be the experts on their experience (Smith and Osborn, 2008).

The main aim of the interview schedule is to provide the researcher with guidance during the interviews and provide open ended questions which would allow participants to provide more in-depth answers to the questions. Open ended questions were used to gather more than a 'yes' or 'no' response; the interview schedule also provides participants with control over the direction of the interview; this is important as they may wish to freely discuss issues around the topic area about which the researcher may not be aware. During some interviews, participants' responses enabled the researcher to ask further questions which may not have been in the included interview schedule. Using semi structured interviews in the current research allowed the researcher to be flexible with questions which may not have been possible with a structured interview schedule. In this way Smith (1995) describes semi-structured interviews as a 'natural fit' with qualitative research as a great amount of detail can be obtained from the interview. It is important to allow the participant to freely discuss information with minimal probes; it is also important to note how the interview effects the participant i.e. emotions when discussing certain topic areas; this information is included within the interview transcripts. This provides the researcher with additional information about the experiences and the meanings participants have attached.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.

Smith (1995) suggested that preparing an interview schedule permits the researcher to identify key points to be discussed within the interview relating to the topic area. It also provides the researcher with time to consider how to address sensitive topic areas and their wording.

This philosophy was adopted for this current research:

1. The initial stage of preparing the schedule involved identifying the topic area to be explored during the interview. This consisted of the experiences of Sikh women with alcohol. An emphasis was placed on individual experiences within the family and in social situations highlighting any cultural/religion influences.
2. The second stage was to identify the most appropriate sequence of questions. Smith (1995) suggested that this should be done in the most logical order with

respect to the sensitivity of the questions. When exploring such a topic area that is deemed to be sensitive to some extent all the questions may also be described as sensitive however it is suggested that those that are of greater sensitivity be placed during the later stages of the interview; this allows the researcher to build a rapport with the participant prior to asking sensitive questions.

3. Appropriate questions relating to the topic area. This was done whilst carrying out various literature searches on similar topic areas. However, Brocki and Wearden (2006) highlight that the researcher must not become too focused by using pre-existing knowledge and should primarily use such information as a guide.

Questions for the interview schedule were compiled on extensive background research see Appendix (4).

PARTICIPANTS.

Whilst IPA assumes there is no correct sample size traditionally a small sample size is accepted as a norm. The main purpose of qualitative research is to collect an in-depth analysis of a homogenous sample's account in relation to the topic area rather than provide a representative sample as quantitative research, (Smith, 1995; Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009).

For this research there were a total of six participants; Fade (2004) suggests that IPA is a suitable method for up to ten participants. Six participants were selected as the researcher felt that the information gathered from these six participants would be sufficient to analyse. Recruiting participants was found to be a difficult task as the topic was quite sensitive. Many were reluctant to engage and share information.

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling; extended friendship circles were approached with information about participation and they were asked to inform others unknown to the researcher about the research. Anybody that was interested was asked to come forward and make contact with the researcher. When making initial contact all participants were informed of the nature of research and it was

explained briefly about what their participation entailed (see Appendix 1). Those that participated gave a positive response towards the topic area and openly shared their experiences.

All participants were British born Sikh single females aged between 19 and 26; Sukhi, Amrita, Parminder, Manpreet, Simran and Gurpreet. .

Participants identified themselves in one of four categories;

1. 'Non-drinker' – never drinks alcohol or does so on rare occasions
2. 'Occasional drinker' – drinks alcohol once a week or less but more so on a night out
3. 'Regular drinker or social drinker' – drinks alcohol on more than one occasion a week
4. 'Secret drinker – drinks alcohol weekly but her consumption behaviour is not known to family

Sukhi is a 22 year old year pharmacy student, she lives at home with her parents elder brother and younger sister; during the academic year she lives away from home. Sukhi holds strong religious beliefs, traditional values towards family and has an open relationship with her parents. Sukhi would describe herself as a social drinker with both friends and family.

Amrita is a 19 year old business studies student; she lives at home with her parents and younger brother. Amrita would describe herself as a secret drinker within her family but a social drinker with friends. Amrita would not describe herself as religious or traditional but maintains strong cultural values; her relationship with her parents is problematic and her drinking behaviour is often out of rebellion. She regularly drinks with her friends but will hide this behaviour from her parents and wider family members.

Parminder is a 22 year old finance graduate who lives at home with her parents and has no siblings. Parminder does not hold any religious, traditional or cultural beliefs and has a very open minded approach towards life; she has a good open

relationship with parents. Parminder would describe herself as a non-drinker but occasionally drinks with friends when in social situations.

Manpreet is a 25 year old health professional; she lives at home with her parents. She has an older sister who is married. Manpreet does not hold any religious beliefs but has strong cultural beliefs. She would describe herself as an occasional drinker with both friends and family.

Simran is a 22 year old student on a gap year and working within the field of banking; she lives at home with her mum as her father passed away when she was quite young. She has an older sister who is married. Simran has strong religious beliefs as well as traditional cultural values and regularly practices the Sikh religion. She would describe herself as a social drinker with both friends and family.

Gurpreet is a 26 year old glamour model; her parents are divorced and she lives at home with her mum and younger brother. Gurpreet has an elder sister who lives away from home. Gurpreet has very strong religious and cultural beliefs and as a result of these beliefs she would describe herself as a non-drinker.

The research was carried out in the Greater London area, United Kingdom. All interviews were held in a public setting such as the local coffee shop to the participants and the researcher ensured that the participants could not be heard whilst the interview was being recorded. A location towards the back of the coffee shop away from passing customers was chosen; this was to ensure no disturbances during the interview and that so the conversation could not be heard by others. The names of all participants were changed to protect their anonymity. All participants were given pseudonyms and the researcher selected 'Indian' names as the main focus of the research was about the cultural group and by selecting non-Indian names, it may have taken away from the research. In all cases when it came to the recording of interviews all efforts were made to ensure the interviews' remained confidential and that the conversation itself was not overheard especially when in public places.

ETHICS

Before the collection of data took place, a research proposal was submitted to the London Metropolitan University Ethics Committee. The research proposal was approved by the committee and carried out according to the guidelines of the British Psychological Society.

This submission took place in early 2012 and ethical approval was granted in June 2012.

PROCEDURE.

Data collection commenced in September 2012 and continued till December 2012. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling; extended friends circles were approached in various social settings, for participation and they were asked to inform others about the research. Anybody that was interested was asked to come forward and make contact with the researcher. Upon participants coming forward the researcher informed them about the study; many at this point were reluctant to share information as they were fearful their identity would be revealed and so chose not to participate. In total seven participants were recruited, the initial interview was used as a pilot interview. When making initial contact with the participants primarily via telephone or email, the researcher provided all participants with an information sheet (see Appendix 1). The information sheet described the purpose of the study and informed potential participants that they would be required to meet with the researcher to complete the interview. All participants were made aware that this research would involve an audio-recorded interview. All participants were provided with the option of choosing where to meet the researcher; this was to ensure that participants were as comfortable as possible and reduced any feeling of participants having to go 'out of their way' to participate in their study. All participants were interviewed within three weeks of making initial contact.

Upon contact with the researcher participants were then provided a consent form (see Appendix 2). Participants were asked if they had any further questions relating to the research and if they were happy to continue they were asked to sign the consent form. Participants were reminded that they were free to withdraw at any time, their information will remain confidential and that they will provided with

pseudonyms during analysis write up. The interviews pertained to the participants' personal experiences around alcohol. During the interview the researcher was mindful of providing participants with sufficient time to answer the questions before moving onto the next question. Notes were made by the researcher about participants' behaviour, gestures and phrases during the interview; all of which were incorporated within the analysis of transcripts.

Following the interview participants were provided with a de-briefing sheet (see Appendix 3); this provided them with details of external agencies to contact if they needed additional information about alcohol issues.

The length of the interviews varied from twenty to fifty minutes.

PILOT INTERVIEW

The pilot interview was held in September 2012. The pilot interview was an opportunity for the researcher to familiarise herself with the questions, build a rapport with the participant and become familiar with the interview technique.

The pilot interview itself did not last very long and the participant did not provide sufficient data to be taken further for analysis. However this still provided a good opportunity to evaluate the questions and it was found some of the questions may be too closed so the participant may have been unable to share information. Following the pilot interview the researcher made changes to the questions such as the sequencing of the questions, re-wording some questions (see Appendix 4). Questions were constructed to be more open ended and including additional questions which then enabled the researcher to explore the topic area further and collect more in-depth information. Following the pilot interview the interview schedule was revised and included prompts for the researcher to use (see Appendix 5).

DE-BRIEFING AND TRANSCRIPTION

Once the interview had been completed participants were provided with a de-briefing sheet (see Appendix 3) which provided them with information such as the purpose of the research. The de-briefing sheet provided participants with the researcher's contact information should they feel that they wish to withdraw or contact the

researcher, university supervisor's contact information and also external organisation information such as helplines to contact.

All participants were contacted again prior to the analysis stages beginning to ensure that they were still happy for the information to be used. Psychological distress was minimised by reassuring participants that all information provided would remain confidential; information on external agencies (see Appendix 3) was also provided should the participants feel the need to contact them regarding the issues discussed

The researcher transcribed the interviews at the semantic level, Smith (2007).

Semantic transcription involves typing all spoken words by the participant and other recorded information such as false starts, long pauses, laughter, all which may be relevant to the interview.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

To analyse the transcripts the researcher must form an interpretative relationship with the transcripts; enabling the researcher to understand the participants' world. The analysis process in IPA research is intended to allow the researcher an 'insider's perspective' about the participants experience and allows the researcher to interpret what the experience means for the individual (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005). From this, the researcher develops an understanding of the meanings and separating the text into themes. These themes will identify commonalities, differences and contradictions for all participants in the study. Brocki and Wearden (2008) emphasise that this process is not for the categorisation of data rather the analysis stages is an in-depth process engaging both researcher and participant into a world of experience.

DESCRIPTION OF ANALYTIC PROCESS

This IPA analysis consists of six steps, as suggested by Smith (2009), Howitt and Cramer, (2008) and Reid et al (2005). Step 1 involves reading through the transcripts a number of times to allow the researcher to become familiar with the text and gain a better level of understanding of what the participants are trying to say. This can also be described as free textual analysis. Through the process of reading and re-reading the researcher is able to identify recurrent themes emerging from the transcripts. In

the initial stages of transcription the researcher took time to become familiar with the transcripts and with the content by engaging in continuous reading and allowing herself to become immersed within the interview.

Step 2 involves the researcher taking each transcript and making small initial notes on the left hand side and identifying possible themes on the right hand side. Smith (2009) suggests that Step 2 is similar to a free text analysis, in which there are no real boundaries about what can be commented on and there is no requirement to divide the transcripts into themes. During this stage the researcher made initial notes/comments and questions around the transcripts about what individuals were coming forward and saying. Comments made by participants were highlighted and phrases. Questions were raised when making notes about comments and these were noted down in a notebook during the transcription process for further exploration.

Step 3 is the analysis part where the researcher can begin developing themes, building clusters and looking for connections within the transcripts. Themes are built upon using participants' quotes from the transcripts as evidence. Smith (2009) identified this process as 'abstraction'. He suggests that researchers begin identifying the connections between the themes which then lead to the development of a 'super-ordinate' theme. In this stage of analysis, similar sayings or phrases were grouped together which then became themes. Themes were grouped according to relevancy of content. In the interviews, participants did not divert off topic and only discussed matters which were related to the topic of alcohol consumption.

Step 4 of the analysis process is when the themes were put together in a table. This table consists of superordinate themes and subordinate themes. This table includes necessary information such as transcript number, page number and line number to show where this information was found and how the theme has been developed.

Step 5 involves the researcher again looking through the transcripts and identifying any further themes or supporting sub themes. After continuous reading the researcher was able to understand what the participants were trying to say in relation to the topic area and cultural elements were becoming more prominent. These themes can be found across all participants or between participants. Step 6 is the

writing up stage of the analysis. The super-ordinate themes are discussed and quotes are used as supporting evidence. It is in this stage that the researcher is able to express their opinions on what they believe the participant has understood about their experience.

ANALYSIS

IPA analysis led to four themes emerging from the interview transcripts. These four super-ordinate themes each have a number of sub-themes presented in the table below (table 1). An inductive process of analysing the data and coding took place to identify themes that emerged using the interpretative phenomenological approach.

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
<p>RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS</p>	<p>“I WAS ALWAYS VERY OPEN ABOUT IT”</p> <p>“TO ME IT’S A PART OF GROWING UP”</p>
<p>IDENTITY: WHO AM I VS. WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE?</p>	<p>GENDER IDENTITY</p> <p>ME VS.THEM</p> <p>SOCIAL DRINKING</p>
<p>SIKHISM IS THE RELIGION, PUNJABI IS THE CULTURE</p>	<p>AWARENESS OF RELIGION</p> <p>CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS</p>
<p>PUBLIC IMAGE: SHALL I PUT MY MASK ON?</p>	<p>FEAR OF JUDGEMENT</p> <p>FAMILY REPUTATION</p> <p>‘WE DON’T DRINK LIKE THEY DO’: A SOCIAL PROBLEM</p> <p>SECRET DRINKING – ‘IT’S LIKE THEY’RE LEADING SEPARATE LIVES’</p>

Table 1: Master Themes and subthemes

1. PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Parents were found to be key figures in all participants’ lives and many mentioned the guidance from their parents as key sources of information for their

upbringing. It is known that the family unit is central to the Sikh community (Singh and Tatla, 2006; Hall, 2002) so it can be understood how parents have an influential role. These transcripts provided an insider's perspective of Sikh family life and from this master theme two subthemes emerged; *'I was always very open about it' and 'to me it's a part of growing up'*.

“I WAS ALWAYS VERY OPEN ABOUT IT”: Despite research evidence indicating that the Sikh family is very strict and traditional (Hall, 2002; Singh and Tatla, 2006; Lindrage and Hogg, 2006), it is apparent that there has been a dilution of traditions over time so that the younger generations have grown up in a more modern society. The majority of the participants felt that they had a positive upbringing which created an open, comfortable atmosphere where alcohol and boyfriends can be discussed within the family. Talking about such topics was a pivotal factor and influenced participants' behaviour around alcohol consumption,

“my parents have just accepted that this [drinking alcohol] is part of life today and rather than us doing it behind their backs they are happy to discuss it with us” (Sukhi,3.63-67).

“they won't say 'you're not allowed to drink' but obviously they will say like with boundaries” (Sukhi,9.253-255).

Sukhi discusses her parents' acceptance of her drinking alcohol but mentions that they still place boundaries on this behaviour. Manpreet spoke about how her parents accepting the British culture including drinking,

“they come from a traditional family but once they settled into this country they've adapted to the western way to life” (1.12--14).

Manpreet refers to the western way as British cultural norms as her parents originate from the East. She also discusses her mixing with other genders, something which has been prohibited within the Sikh culture:

“they give us freedom to go out and socialise with other genders” (1.20-22).

Manpreet discusses the dilution of traditions from her parents' perspective and their acceptance of alcohol consumption. Socialising with other genders has been strictly prohibited for many generations (Singh and Tatla, 2006) however in this family there is parental acceptance on such activities. Simran discussed the positives of being able to discuss alcohol within her family saying:

“when it came to me drinking and stuff I was always very open about it and I would be able to drink within the family so I’ve always been comfortable being able to have the open-ness about it” (1.30-34)

“some of friends that don’t have that freedom with their families like they drink in secret so I suppose I am quite lucky in that way” (2.62-65)

Simran describes how her drinking behaviour puts her mother's mind at ease as she is aware of her behaviour and also has the comfort of being able to openly discuss alcohol. This enables Simran to relax and not feel restricted in any way. Positive upbringing was demonstrated through the parents accepting the ways of British culture and allowing the young women freedom to make their own choices about alcohol consumption. As well as discussing their upbringing many of the participants also talked about the relationship they had with their parents; this too formed a very important role in relation to discussions of alcohol. Parminder spoke very positively of her parental relationship,

“I’m able to discuss things with them that I know most of my friends wouldn’t be able to such as drinking, having boyfriends” (1.15-18).

Parminder compares her parental relationship with her friends' relationships with their parents and acknowledges that her relationship is more open, highlighting those that may withhold information about relationships and alcohol consumption. Similarly, Gurpreet speaks of the positive relationship she has with her mother and how she too encourages discussions.

“I mean my mum obviously felt like she had more of a responsibility so she made sure we all spoke about it. She just said if we wanted to do either of

these [drink alcohol and have boyfriends] that we should tell her” (Gurpreet, 3.78-81)

Gurpreet’s parents are divorced and in the above extracts she describes about how she feels her mother had more of a responsibility to ensure that Gurpreet and her siblings did not drink in secret or have relationships behind her back. As a result she encouraged discussions about alcohol and relationships maintaining a positive relationship. However on the opposite side, Amrita describes the nature of her relationship with her parents, it has already been noted that her parents have strict views on alcohol but Amrita reveals how their strict boundaries affect her;

“It actually upsets me sometimes cos I just wana be normal and do things like my friends and they’re always trying to restrict me” (2.51-54).

This illustrates the internal frustration and strained relationship Amrita has with her parents, she feels excluded within her social group as she is prohibited from engaging in socialising activities. She has the opinion that alcohol consumption is a ‘normal’ practice and expresses her frustration towards her mother for restricting her;

“She’s [mother] really the one who against it. I mean my dad was bought up here so I guess he understands more about what it’s like growing up but she just doesn’t understand any of it” (Amrita, 7.219-222)

Amrita mentions her father being more likely to understand her as he was bought up in the UK so is aware of British lifestyle and the transition from adolescence to adulthood around alcohol consumption. The mention of parents being raised in other cultures emerged from the majority of participants. Many felt that in order for parents to understand them better, the parents needed to understand what British culture was like and how they are influenced by it. Robinson (2005) reported that first generation Sikhs separated themselves from the mainstream British society when migrating as a result of the language barrier, lifestyle and cultural values. Whereas second generation Sikhs integrate with British society. It is argued that first generation Sikhs identified themselves as ‘Sikh’ whereas second generation Sikhs now identify themselves as ‘British-Sikh’.

This first theme concentrates primarily around the familial unit with parents being the focal point. These quotes highlight the important role parents play and also how their upbringing either positive or negative can influence drinking behaviour. Visser, de Winter and Reijneveld (2012) reported that it is common for alcohol consumption to be used as rebellious behaviour against parents' strict rules and overprotection. It is important to note that this behaviour can become problematic when individuals begin to hide their drinking behaviour and it will also begin to affect the relationship the individual has with their parents. Research findings from Ledoux, Miller, Choquet and Plant (2002) suggest that individuals that have experienced parental divorce are more likely to turn to alcohol or substances during their adolescence thus increasing the likelihood of consumption in adult life. These reported findings contradict with Gurpreet's interview as although her parents are divorced she does not drink alcohol at all nor has she experimented with other substances. It can be argued that there may be cultural or religious influences on her abstinent behaviour as suggested by Hall (2002).

“TO ME IT’S A PART OF GROWING UP”: Despite some participants speaking of parental acceptance and describing cultural shifts of traditions to modern values this is not the case for all. Amrita's experiences largely remain attached to her parents' strict traditional values that have been mentioned in research (Hall, 2002; Ratna, 2011). Amrita spoke of her negative family experiences and how she feels restricted by her parents,

“they’d always kind of nag at me ‘don’t do this, don’t do that’ and I’d say as I’ve got older and moved onto uni I feel they’ve just got worse”. (1.23-26)

“I mean to me it’s [drinking alcohol] a part of growing up [sighs]...I just wish they’d chill out a bit more” (2.37-39).

Amrita expresses her views as many young people from different backgrounds would; she only knows the culture around her and that is a British culture where alcohol consumption is a norm (Valentine et al, 2010) so when she is restricted this results in her developing a negative attitude towards her parents.

“the more they say to me don’t drink, don’t go meeting boys, don’t go clubbing it just makes me want to do it more” (2.51-64).

As a result of the restrictions placed on her by her parents: Amrita develops a rebellious attitude. Along with the restrictions placed on her Amrita’s parents are not forthcoming with discussing such behaviours with her,

“mine are so anti like ‘don’t even talk about alcohol’ like type of thing and it really annoys me” 7.200-202).

As there is a reluctance to discuss such important issues it is understandable why she rebels. Amrita speaks of her frustration towards her parents’ ‘nagging’ behaviour and dismissal of discussing alcohol. This emphasises the importance of having a good relationship with parents and how a positive/negative relationship influences the participants’ decision to consume alcohol; where alcohol is openly discussed within the family there is a relaxed atmosphere around consumption.

2. IDENTITY: WHO AM I VS. WHO AM I SUPPOSED TO BE?

British Sikh women born in the UK are a mix of Sikh values and traditions and British cultures and behaviours, as a result of this many of the participants questioned their identity and where they ‘fitted in’. The first subtheme to emerge within this was ‘gender roles; the participants felt that they had to behave in a particular way to conform to the gender identity that was expected of them.

GENDER ROLES: Gender roles were strongly defined within the Sikh community; all of the participants’ were aware of their gender roles that they have to portray and maintain within the community. Sukhi lives away from home during the academic year and discusses her living arrangements,

“it’s not a done thing cos girls live with girls” (1.15-16).

It is as if society will accept that women want to go into further education and live away from home but there appear to be boundaries in terms of living arrangements. Sukhi lives with two boys and it appears this practice is still deemed unacceptable as

socialisation with opposite genders is prohibited in Sikh culture (Singh and Tatla, 2006). These boundaries continue further into alcohol consumption.

“with girls drinking like parents seem to have a bit of...there’s a stigma attached” (3.86-89).

Despite her parents knowledge of her alcohol consumption there is still a reluctance to accept this behaviour; Sukhi goes on to question the differences between girls and boys;

“what’s so different why do you frown upon the girls drinking but then your pouring a young boy a drink” (8.255-257).

It is evident that alcohol consumption is a part of Sukhi’s family life however it is not void of judgement and gender differences as also found in other research (Hall, 2002; Rait, 2006). Gurpreet discusses the female gender roles in the Sikh culture;

“you know women should be women” (7.218-219)

“drinking and smoking is not a womanly thing to do” (7.220-221).

“it [drinking alcohol] was always kind of seen as a man’s thing to do like all the men will be sitting in the front room drinking and the women will be in the kitchen cooking” (5.148-151).

Gurpreet expresses very strong ideas about the role women have and how they should behave, she also highlights some clear gender roles within the family unit according to alcohol consumption; women will be cooking whilst men drink in one room, it appears that these roles have never been questioned. However she also acknowledges that society has now changed and as the younger generations have grown up there has been a change in women’s role within society;

“here women are gonna wanna be educated, they wanna get jobs, they wanna buy cars, they wanna buy houses...they wanna live equally because that’s what we see here” (6.187-190).

Gurpreet reflects on how the role of women has changed within society and this too is relevant to Sikh women; they are brought up in a society which claims to be more equal with males and yet their culture remains largely patriarchal as highlighted by Hall (2002) and Singh and Tatla (2006). Gurpreet highlights this issue by saying;

“this society accepts a woman drinking so it’s our culture hasn’t caught up yet” (8.250-252).

She also makes a reference to the elder generation and again highlights how the role of women has changed within society.

“back in our parents’ generation it wasn’t socially acceptable for women to be seen drinking and that I think is now changed” (1.340-342).

From these extracts it appears Gurpreet holds very strong beliefs about the female role within the Sikh community; she acknowledges that Sikh women nowadays want the same perceived independence as their white British counterparts and places the blame on religion and a strict culture for prohibiting social activities such as drinking alcohol. She also talks about how the Sikh culture is somewhat behind in terms of accepting female drinking behaviour despite living in the UK for several years. Manpreet talks about the gender stereotype her mother holds for women in the Sikh culture:

“my mother she’s very ‘Indian girls shouldn’t go out and drink” (2. 75-77).

She continues further by explaining the roles;

“women are basically seen as the cooks of the household so I guess in some ways she’s lucky cos I know aunties that don’t eat meat but still have to cook it for their husbands and family etc” (5.189-193).

Manpreet illustrates the gender roles for females as being housewives and being of service to men, she also comments that her mother is fortunate not to have to cook meat as it is against her beliefs despite her father drinking and eating meat,

“my dad respects my mother’s beliefs and so doesn’t even ask her to cook meat he does it himself, she doesn’t mind him drinking” (5.178-181).

Manpreet highlights her mothers’ view on the way Indian girls should be expected to behave and also her parents’ gender roles within the house and reveals that due to her mothers’ religious beliefs she chooses not to eat meat and drink. Manpreet describes other Sikh women who still conform to the traditional gender roles of cooks within the household. It is evident from these quotes that her parents have mutual respect for each other’s beliefs and there has been a shift in family roles. As well gender roles within the household Manpreet also highlighted the gender differences experienced with regards to alcohol

“I know that with my mum she’s like ‘oh it doesn’t matter he’s a boy” (4.148-149).

Although this extract details her mother’s perspective it provides an insight into the general assumptions made about gender within the Sikh community i.e. it doesn’t look nice for girls but it does not matter as he is a boy. These extracts support the findings of Lindrage and Hogg (2006) where they pointed out the differences in upbringing of Sikh males and females. Parminder describes her gender difference experiences within the family;

“with the female members and with myself we will be asked ‘do you want a drink?’ whereas with the males it’s just handed to them assuming that every guy is going to drink” (6.210-212).

It is understandable why alcohol consumption is considered the norm amongst the Sikh population, however Parminder’s extracts also highlight that perhaps the cultural boundaries for females are changing; rather than being ignored they are being offered alcohol. However it is still not an assumption for females to drink as it is with males. It could be argued that such behaviour may influence Sikh males to perceive alcohol consumption as a sign of masculinity as pointed out by Bloomfield et al (2006) and Sandhu (2009). However asking females if they would like a drink could also be viewed as a positive, where elders encourage females to drink openly

and prevent secret drinking behaviour. In Amrita's extracts she describes the gender discrimination she experiences,

"I'm not supposed to drink cos I'm a female" (6.172-174).

This extract illustrates that as she is a female Amrita is prohibited from consuming alcohol. Alcohol is typically viewed as a masculine driven activity within Punjabi culture and as a result Sikh women are restricted in their consumption (Nagra, 2011). Alcohol consumption is typically seen as a White British cultural norm and as indicated by Becares et al (2011), alcohol consumption by Sikh females may be used as a coping mechanism from cultural pressures. Amrita feels pressurised to conform to the gender role expected of her by her mother;

"she has this like very strong idea about the way Indian girls should be...but that's just not me" (7.222-225).

This extract details Amrita's mother's expectations of her and Amrita fears that she is not able to conform to this gender role identity. As highlighted by Hall (2002) Amrita experiences a culture clash between the British culture and traditional Sikh values and the expectations of her as a Sikh female,

"I just wana be normal and do things like my friends and they're always trying to restrict me" (2.55-57)

This pressure to be British and Sikh influences Amrita's alcohol consumption as she wants to be social and fit in with her friends however also faces cultural restrictions. The cultural restrictions Amrita faces are largely influenced by her mothers' expectations; resulting in Amrita hiding her drinking behaviour. Amrita questions the cultural gender differences around relationships;

"a guy can go have a ...girlfriend...but a girl can't...what's that all about?" (9.289-291).

As well as strict prohibitions around alcohol consumption there are also restrictions on socialising with males and having intimate relationships before marriage. However it appears that restrictions are only amongst females. The above extracts detail the strong cultural restrictions placed on females and clear gender differences in upbringing between Sikh males and females. It is apparent from the interview extracts that the gender differences are strongly connected to Sikh values making it difficult for Sikh women to build an identity as they are in a clash between Sikh values and British culture. Manpreet and Amrita both highlighted their mothers as the main influence for gender role behaviour; this supports research evidence by Salant and Lauderdale (2003) that claim women take longer to acculturate and maintain traditional roles longer than men. For Sikh mothers they may feel that they have an increased responsibility to maintain their ethnic identity whilst living in the UK, as they hope their daughters will hold the same values.

ME VS.THEM

The second subtheme to emerge within the Identity theme was the theme 'me vs. them'. The participants talked about a distinction between themselves and others; namely other Asian girls. Manpreet describes her drinking behaviour;

"they [parents] trust us when we go out not to be one of 'those' girls" (2.70-72).

Manpreet refers to other girls as a comparison and suggests that other girls may not be able to control themselves whilst drinking and she does not want to be associated with that group. Manpreet explicitly identifies other Asian girls as a comparison:

"the worst thing with Asian girls especially is that they have this kind of attitude about them and it's that they know they shouldn't be doing things like this" (2.53-56).

Manpreet discusses her experiences with other Asian girls; it is interesting to note that despite her drinking alcohol she has a judgemental attitude towards others drinking and views their drinking behaviour as wrong and something they should not be doing. Sukhi too formed several identities; she begins with her schooling;

"I find that the culture here especially being to a girls school and like private school in particular...I think that has played a role in me drinking" (4.102-106).

Sukhi reveals a group identity within private school suggesting a drinking culture within this group and how this group had an influence on her own drinking behaviour.

"where money was an excess with some people so alcohol was always a must for most of them. It didn't have to be like that but for them it was" (4.128-5.131).

This is supported by Percy et al (2011) who reported that a drinking culture exists among private prep school students as they have extra disposable income. Within this group identity it appears that disposable income influences their alcohol consumption, as Sukhi went to a private school she too did consume alcohol but states that for these girls it was different;

"I just don't find it as fun...not that I don't enjoy a drink but maybe not the same as others" (5.144-146).

Sukhi's drinking behaviour has now changed and she believes that others may enjoy it more but perhaps because they may consume more and engage in binge drinking behaviour. Suggesting that in comparison to her own drinking behaviour others consume more and find drinking more fun. Simran too began forming a group identity with herself and other Asian girls and makes reference to their drinking behaviour and comments on the differences;

"I've never thought of it as a big deal so when I went to uni I could never kinda understand why these girls were going crazy for it" (2.41-44).

Simran believes other Asian girls are over-excited about alcohol and to them drinking is a big deal; perhaps because alcohol consumption is normalised within her family environment she does not see it as a big issue. However for those girls where alcohol is prohibited and they are not able to drink at home when they are out drinking is their main priority and so they may drink in excess to enjoy it. Simran

separates herself from this group, she continues further by describing the general attitude of this group;

“the way Asian people are nowadays, like 10 years ago there’s no way a kid would talk to their parents the way they do now” (3.95-98).

Simran expresses her frustrations towards the young Sikhs and believes there has been a loss of respect for the older generation due to the rebellious nature of many Sikh youths:

“these people don’t realise that they have a lot of freedom than what our parents did and should appreciate it more” (3.98-100).

Simran feels that the Sikh youth should be more appreciative and respectful of elders and treat them fairly. Robinson (2005) found that it appears that with the second generations becoming more influenced by British culture they have lost respect for their cultural traditions and values. However this could also be viewed as generational changes in attitudes; Gubernskaya (2010) reported that there have been changes in attitudes amongst young people towards marriage, family life and - child bearing within general society. It appears that these changes in attitudes have also filtered through to the Sikh community. With family being the centre of the Sikh community Simran feels disheartened to witness the loss of respect for elders and traditional values, especially with the wider British Sikh community working so hard to maintain their cultural identity (Hall, 2002; Singh and Tatla, 2006; Jaspal, 2013). Parminder discusses the differences she found with other Asian girls and their behaviour; she first mentions the secret drinking girls;

“it’s like they’re leading separate lives (2.46-47).

She compares herself to these girls and as she has a very open relationship with her family and their knowledge of boyfriends and her drinking behaviour however for those who have to hide their behaviour it is not the same as hers. Parminder continues to discuss alcohol in relation to consumption levels;

“in terms of knowing your limit, people don’t know that” (2.55-56), “they wouldn’t know when to stop” (2.62-63).

Parminder believes that others are not aware of their limits when drinking and suggests that excess drinking is a concern as they are unable to control themselves whilst drinking. Research evidence by Percy et al (2011) found that consuming excess amounts appeared to demonstrate higher tolerance levels therefore boosting one’s social status within the group. It can therefore be argued that many young women do not observe their tolerance levels as the more they drink the more popular they become as they are viewed as ‘being able to handle their drink’ as their male counterparts.

As Amrita hides her drinking behaviour she makes comparisons with those that she considers have fewer parental boundaries;

“I think they all have it so easy compared to me” (1.25-26).

She feels increased pressures as she has to lie about her drinking and feels that others do not have to worry about covering up their behaviour. She may also feel differently towards this group as they may not face the negative consequences if her drinking habits are ever found out. Another group identity formed is within her own family;

“they’re [cousins] sitting with my dad and having a drink and it’s just like ‘oh I wanna do that’. Like I wish I could just be like can I have a drink and it’s like if they can do it, why can’t I?” (5.148-151).

This extract relates to her upbringing and the boundaries imposed on her, she feels excluded within her own family as there is acceptance of her cousins drinking and yet restrictions are placed on her. She questions this injustice.

All participants made social comparisons in relation to drinking behaviour and formed a group identity between themselves and others; many of these related to internal conflicts they experienced. Robinson (2009) carried out an in-depth study exploring cultural identities of second generation Asian’s; it was found that in comparison to

other ethnic groups Sikhs were more likely to adopt an integration strategy with UK culture. The integration strategy, as highlighted by Berry (1990, as cited in Robinson, 2009), states that individuals will identify with both their ethnic group as well as the majority group i.e. British culture. The behaviour of British youths is perceived as excessive binge drinking behaviour and it appears that despite their own consumption they did not want to be associated with the negatives of alcohol such as; binge drinking, high intoxication and the stereotypes attached to such behaviour. Bhatia (2002) found that to form identity ethnic minority individuals will create multiple representations of themselves depending upon others or the situations; these representations will be to gain social approval and conform to what is acceptable. This can be said for the Sikh females; when in the presence of family they identify themselves as Sikh females and conform to the values and traditions and when out with friends they change their behaviour and conform to the values of the UK culture and alter their identity; in both cases it is to seek acceptance. However it is argued that this constant altering of identities i.e. British vs. Sikh causes individuals to feel separated and isolated, questioning their true identity.

SOCIAL DRINKING: The third sub-theme to emerge was the role alcohol played in providing people with social fulfilment. Many participants saw alcohol in a positive way and associate it with occasional drinking' to celebrate an event. Alcohol was viewed as an enjoyable social activity and individuals that consumed identified themselves as sociable. Gurpreet describes the role alcohol plays within occasions:

“you associate with celebration like a birthday or a wedding, something happy and people will bring out the alcohol” (9.281-283).

“it’s a good thing, it’s fun, people are together...when you’re in a family its fine” (9.286-287).

Gurpreet describes the positive role alcohol plays when celebrating occasions or an event, events concerning alcohol within the familial setting are viewed as a positive where everyone enjoys themselves. Sukhi also talks about the presence of alcohol at social events and describes her own drinking behaviour;

“if someone had a birthday party they’ll always be alcohol just there, even if it meant champagne or punch” (4.110-114).

“I’ll maybe have a drink with dinner or something but not drinking the way I used to” (5.136-138).

Sukhi says that alcohol has always been readily available at social gatherings; she also mentions here that her own drinking behaviours have changed and she now enjoys drinking with a meal rather than her previous excess consumption. This may be to do with her growing up and being away from home; she perhaps wants to consume alcohol in a safer way. Amrita described her drinking behaviour in different social contexts;

“if I’m going out to dinner I might have a wine or something like that but I’ll never get pissed” (3.99-101)

“if I’m going out to like a club or something then the full works like I will sort of get hammered” (3.101-4.103).

Amrita describes her drinking behaviour in two different contexts. From both Sukhi’s and Amrita’s transcripts, there appears to be a social imagery of alcoholic beverages; a report compiled by the Social Issues Research Centre (1998) discussed the symbolic role of alcoholic drinks. For example, the presence of champagne is associated with an occasion or celebration; similarly wine is considered as an appropriate accompaniment to a meal and beers are thought to be most appropriate for casual occasions. This was found with Amrita as she discussed that when going out for a meal she will be found drinking wine whereas compared to going clubbing she will be seen perhaps drinking other types of alcoholic drinks and is more likely to binge drink. Within these extracts alcohol is seen as a very positive, enjoyable substance and encourages a social environment and bringing people together to celebrate occasions. Alcohol is enjoyed with both family and friends and it is viewed as a part of socialising. Some participants also mentioned feeling pressurised to a certain extent when in their social groups to drink to portray/maintain a public image. This social pressure was pointed out primarily in

social situations with friends; Amrita discusses the pressures she feels to drink when with friends:

“Pretty much everybody I know drinks and if you don’t drink you’re a bit of a like [funny voice] ‘you don’t drink?’ (3.82-84).

It appears as if there is a certain image to uphold within society as well as conforming to social group norms. Amrita highlights that she does not want to be excluded from her social group;

“when you with your friends and everyone’s taking shots...you don’t wanna be the odd one” (8.249-252).

In the above quotes Amrita describes the pressures she feels to drink in order to be able to fit in within her group of friends, she comments that those that drink stand out from the crowd. It is clear that her drinking behaviour is directly influenced by those around her and her need of wanting to be included amongst her group of friends. She wants to have the identity of a social drinker. Sukhi admits giving into peer pressure;

“at college I did think I was pressurised a little bit to fit in and drink” (4.122-123)

“so I used to go out, especially going to a girls’ school an going to schools where like, not in a bad way, where money was an excess with some people so alcohol was always a must” (4-5.126-130).

Sukhi mentions the pressures of drinking to fit in to a girls school environment, she mentions that there is some financial influence on the drinking behaviour of others and to identify with this group she too had to drink. Parminder’s drinking behaviour was also the result of peer pressure, although Parminder described herself as a non-drinker she reveals that in social situations she does consume alcohol;

“I feel to fit in and socialise yes I should drink” (3.95).

“I personally don’t drink alcohol but if I’m with my friends etc socialising I’ll probably tend to have a drink because they are” (3.86-88).

“if we’re out and they’re having fun I guess they just want me to enjoy myself as well so they’ll be like ‘have a drink’” (3.99-102).

“I’ll only have like maybe one or two just because everybody else is and you know I don’t really wanna be the only one not drinking” (3.108-11).

Parminder is influenced by the group of friends she socialises with and occasionally drinks with them as a result of peer pressure. It appears she feels a pressure to conform to social norms and justifies their persistence to encourage her to drink. Within her peer pressure Parminder also feels that she has to uphold a public image:

“it looks a bit weird if you’re out in a group and everyone’s drinking but then one person isn’t” (3.112-114).

Parminder highlights that she will only have minimal consumption however it is consumption none the less, from the extracts it also seems as if she wants to identify herself as a ‘fun girl that drinks’.

These transcripts highlight the increased influence these young women face when in the presence of their social circles. All these women held the beliefs that in order to be socially included they must consume alcohol. Jamison and Myers (2008) reported that perceived pressure from friends is a significant and independent predictor of an individual’s behavioural intentions to consume alcohol. Excess alcohol consumption was related to gaining acceptance and social approval within the groups. Kiuru, Burk, Laursen, Salmela-Aro and Nurmi (2010) identified peer pressure in many different ways; being offered a drink, verbal encouragement from peers, teasing from peers when declining offers. With interactions such as this it can be said that these young women may feel internal pressure to drink and conform to the social/group norms to gain social approval from those around them. Sukhi highlighted the ‘private school girls’ group as influencing her behaviour and said this was directly related to available funds. Supporting research evidence was documented by Percy, Wilson,

McCartan and McCrystal's (2011) where they examined various drinking cultures. This report found that girls from a private prep school have more disposable income than their peers and as a result consume more alcohol. It appears that there is a drinking culture within such school environments where levels of alcohol consumption are directly related to monetary funds and as Sukhi was a part of this social environment she felt to be accepted alcohol consumption was expected of her. The main cause of this peer pressure was the need to fit in and conform to social norms. Lyons and Willott (2008) carried out a qualitative study and reported that female drinking behaviours were associated with being fun and pleasurable, excess drinking was linked with being equals to males. Perhaps these young women wanted to portray a public image to represent this and conform.

The only person who was found not influenced by others was Gurpreet, she describes herself as a non-drinker and not easily influenced by others:

"all of my friends, people around me drink, very few don't...some people think they can't have a good night without drinking alcohol" (4, 125-129).

Despite everyone around her drinking this did not influence her behaviour at all;

"it doesn't change my views, my views won't ever change because of other people" (4.133-134).

Gurpreet presents herself as a very strong minded individual who is not easily influenced by others, however she acknowledges the social pressures within society and understands why individuals may mimic the behaviour of their peers;

"especially if your friends are doing it it's seen as a cool thing to do" (3.257-258).

Gurpreet's states that although she is surrounded by alcohol this does not influence her to consume, she understands why others can be influenced; because of the image it portrays but this does not deter her from her beliefs. It is evident that Gurpreet's values are very deep rooted and as they hold a great deal of moral

significance for her: she remains abstinent. In spite of this, it is apparent that Gurpreet still has a vibrant social life with her friends but alcohol plays no significant role in her socialising experience.

3. SIKH IS THE RELIGION; PUNJABI IS THE CULTURE

All of the participants identified themselves as Sikh females; however it can be difficult to separate religion from culture especially in relation to values and traditions. Within this theme emerged two subthemes: Religious Awareness and Cultural Expectations.

RELIGIOUS AWARENESS: This subtheme detailed participants understanding of the Sikh religion whilst being raised as UK British citizens. Sukhi describes her upbringing in relation to the Sikh teachings;

“I come from a traditional background in the sense that my parents have always made us aware of our culture and traditions...when we were younger we would go to the temple every week. That has kind of been imprinted in me and even when I’m away from home and at uni I still follow the same rules” (2.36-44).

“growing up in a Sikh family you brought up with certain beliefs that you shouldn’t drink alcohol, you shouldn’t cut your hair...we go to the temple every Sunday; gurdwara and like we are brought up with certain morals” (3.80-86)

Sukhi details the Sikh traditions as taught to her by her parents and wider family members; throughout her upbringing she has been taught the importance of religion and she treats these values with great respect. Even whilst away from home she maintains her traditions and visits the local temple. Simran too identified herself as religious and engaged in religious activities in her own time, she feels that religion is important to her;

“as a family we’re not overly religious but individually you know I read up on things and I’m actively quite religious you know I go to the temple and I’ll do that sort of thing” (2.79-83).

This demonstrates Simran's personal connection with religion and her actively pursuing information on the Sikh religion to understand it better. Gurdwaras serve a dual purpose; it is a meeting place for religious minded people and also serves as a centre for religious discussion; making it the ideal place to attend to find out more about the religion and ask questions (Rait, 2005; Singh and Tatla, 2006). Although Simran's family do not place much emphasis on religion she is very pro-active and is keen to learn about her religious background and its teachings. She feels that it is important to be religious and maintain a connection to those beliefs.

"Religion has lost its significance over time and quite a lot of the old traditions and beliefs have been filtered down" (2.86-89)

Through the acculturation process Simran feels that religion has lost its significance and the true Sikh values are no longer held with the same respect. Robinson (2005) argues that second generation Sikhs are not dismissive of their heritage and they do want to retain some cultural elements but ideally they would like to live in an "ethnically mixed way".

"I feel like having those traditional values is very important" (3.92-94)
"Punjabi people have always been known to have strong values and their kids just don't appreciate their own culture" (3.111-113).

Simran highlights some negative consequences of the acculturation process and feels it is important to practice religion to maintain religious identity within the UK. As highlighted by Robinson (2009) Asian adolescents in the UK are more aware of their ethnic identity as a result of the ethnic minority group status. Hence many individuals emphasising their religious identity and ensuring it is visible within the UK. She comments on her experiences with the British Sikh youth and discusses how many youngsters do not understand their ethnic background and religious identity and behave in an ignorant manner. Parminder states:

"I don't follow the traditions of don't cut your hair, don't drink...don't eat meat but in terms of my beliefs I still have my identity as a Sikh" (4.130-14).

Parminder was raised with a relaxed upbringing and demonstrates awareness of the Sikh teachings. Parminder discusses the role of religion in her life and does not follow the traditions but maintains a Sikh identity. She later contradicts herself:

“by following the rules of Sikhism people are like demonstrating their beliefs” (4.144-146).

Despite being aware of the Sikh teachings Parminder does not practice these teachings. This too was found with Amrita:

“I respect my religion; I believe that I’m Sikh and I believe in God” (4.113-114),

“Not a lot of people know but we’re [Sikhs] not really supposed to drink alcohol” (4.97-98).

In her comments Amrita suggests that many are unaware of this religious rule; this uncommon knowledge may be due to wider society knowing that Sikhs consume alcohol regularly and ignorance towards religious teachings (Dingwall and Sidki, 2010). Amrita explicitly states:

“In our holy book it actually says we’re not supposed to drink so...but like you only live once so why not enjoy it” (4.100-103).

This demonstrates a disregard of religious teachings and values in favour for the popular cultural norm of consumption. Despite her knowledge of the religious prohibitions she questions:

“I don’t see how a substance can like determine whether or not we sort of go to God or we go to heaven and hell whatever” (4.115-118).

Amrita demonstrates contradictory behaviour; despite having knowledge of the Sikh teachings and understanding of their significance she favours the modern culture of drinking and even questions how alcohol and religion are related. Amrita’s

consumption may be out of rebellion again towards her parents as they have been the main educators of religion:

“I’m not even 100% sure it even says in our holy book like I’ve heard that it’s interpreted in a way which says we’re not supposed to drink alcohol” (4.122-126). Amrita expresses that the holy scriptures around prohibition of alcohol have been interpreted in a way so restrict individuals from consuming.

“But I respect my religion but I just kinda push it to the back a bit cos it’s not something that’s really that important to me at the moment” (5.138-141).

Rait (2005) carried out in depth interviews on Sikh women who had migrated to the UK and explored their religious and cultural values in comparison to British born Sikh females. She found in her research that British born Sikh women had very basic understanding about the fundamentals of the Sikh religion; this too can be said for some of the participants. However it can be argued that amongst families where religion plays an important role this is reinforced through childhood upbringing and younger generations are made aware of their religious identity (Rait, 2005). It can be said that despite having knowledge of the religious teachings very few actively practised the Sikh religion. This was found within Manpreet’s extracts:

“I guess it’s like I know religion is important and everything but I just feel at this particular moment in time it doesn’t have that place in my life. I think religion comes to you at a certain point...it hasn’t appealed to me as of yet” (3.106-112)

“I think I’m a bit naïve and I don’t know much about religion but...I’m trying to learn things but it’s not something that I’m drawn to at the moment” (4.121-124)

“I don’t really know where it’s said that we can’t drink because there is that hypocritical side of it that you got people that are religious but they drink” (4.138-141)

Manpreet explores the topic of religion and highlights some key issues around its understanding; she puts religious teachings aside knowing that she can return to it when the time is right for her. As Sikh initiation is not forced upon individuals many families may have a laid-back approach and accept this (Nesbitt, 2005; Rait, 2005; Jaspal, 2013). Despite her having little knowledge she demonstrates learning about religion however does not include it within her life nor does it play any role. It was interesting however that she still identified as a Sikh despite it not playing a role in her life.

It is well documented that the Sikh religion is central to family life (Hall, 2002; Nesbitt, 2005; Rait, 2005; Singh and Tatla, 2006; Sandhu, 2009; Jaspal, 2013) and the extracts highlight the importance of family upbringing in understanding the fundamentals of religions. It is important to note that none of the participants identified themselves as baptised Sikhs despite them all identifying with the religion. Regardless of baptism Sikhs are still instructed to refrain from consuming alcohol, (Gatrad et al, 2005), however what was found was that alcohol consumption was a common factor amongst all. Jaspal (2013) argues that British Sikhs are well known for being pioneers of British multiculturalism as they have fought to maintain their religious identity through displaying the religious symbols i.e. the turban. Yet it is evident that the fundamentals of the religion and traditional values are not held with the same respect amongst the British Sikh youth. There are unclear boundaries between religious and cultural identity; as many participants did not practice the religion but still identified themselves as Sikhs. Religious identity can be used to refer to the system of religious beliefs and practice whereas to others it may be used to form a cultural identity. Jaspal (2013) states "Sikhism manifested in cultural and institutional terms is primarily a social identity, given in the general absence of a personal, spiritual relationship with God" (p.228). It can be said that this was true for the majority of our participants; in the absence of a religious connection alcohol consumption was deemed acceptable behaviour. The extracts also identified parents as the main influence on religious beliefs and practice and many now seem to have relaxed views as they too consume alcohol. The British Sikh Report (2013) reported that Sikhs youth wanted to find out more about the Sikh culture but through more mainstream means rather than traditional institutions such as the gurdwara. This suggests that there is a need to engage with Sikh youths about the cultural traditions

and religious values but perhaps in more modern formats such as smartphone applications.

These extracts highlight the multiple negotiations these Sikh women experienced in relation to their Sikh identity; they illustrate negotiations between oneself, with God and even with the researcher; each negotiation seeking acceptance and justification for their behaviour. It is as if the participants are unsure of what it means to be a Sikh female and therefore are unsure of how to behave in a way that best demonstrates this identity. Lindridge and Dhillon (2005) found that individuals who had no belief or limited religious knowledge experienced a loss of cultural identity with some reporting cognitive and emotional distress. Individuals felt isolated from their communities as they were unable to engage/interact and even experienced in-group discrimination. Due to distress experienced many choose to isolate themselves from the mainstream Sikh community, this causes concerns as individuals have difficulty fitting in within wider British society. In comparison, Robinson (2005) reported that some second generation Sikhs felt alienated from British culture and perceived it to be hostile in comparison to their own culture which is family-centred. This illustrates that individuals may feel lost and are unsure of their belonging; as they may not be 'in-touch' with their ethnic side nor their British cultural side; causing them to question where do they fit in?

CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS: The second subtheme to emerge was cultural expectations. Rait (2005) highlights that there are many pressures placed on Sikh females to conform to the cultural identity and role as they are seen as responsible for upholding family honour. Amrita revealed strong expectations of her within the culture;

"I'm not supposed to drink cos I'm a female and like I'm a Sikh" (6.187-7.188).

Amrita states that due to her gender and religious identity she is prohibited from drinking indicating that Sikh females are expected to be abstinent. Bloomfield et al (2006) reported that abstention from alcohol is a common behaviour amongst Sikh females and there are deeply rooted cultural values tied within this. These cultural values relate to the rite of passage for many Sikh females: marriage.

“I mean everybody’ going to get married one day anyway” (2.47-49).

This comment reveals an accepted trajectory within the culture and applicable to all females;

“we have to eventually get married, I mean what family is gonna want a girl that is known to have been with other people” (11.334-337).

This identifies the reasons for restrictions on females; having pre-marital relationships endangers prospective marriage proposals which reflect negatively upon the family (Hall, 2002). There is also a cultural expectation on a group level of the Sikh community;

“people think of Sikhs as fun people, like we have a reputation for throwing big weddings” (6.172-174)

“everyone knows when you go to a Sikh wedding there’s gonna be booze there and we often have free bars so obviously people go crazy with it”(6.173-182)

Amrita’s extracts detail the expectations placed upon on the Sikh community both internal and external. There are internal expectations of Sikh families to throw large celebrations especially weddings. Rait (2005) said that with time the celebrations especially weddings have become more grand and expensive; it has been argued there is an element of competitiveness within the culture and Sikh families trying to outperform others. Weddings are a reflection upon the family unit and convey an important message within the community; well established families in the UK demonstrate their wealth through elaborate and grandiose marriage celebrations. In Gurpreet’s discussion she details the expectations placed on her as a female;

“I know I will have to do certain things which is fine I’m happy to do that” (8.219-221).

Although Gurpreet does not clearly state what is expected of her there are expectations within the culture nonetheless perhaps relating to marriage and what is expected of her in her wife role; she demonstrates that she is willing to comply to these expectation. She does however describe what is not accepted saying:

“you know drinking and smoking is not a womanly thing to do, I think it’s, in this day and age and especially in our culture” (8.239-242).

Gurpreet emphasises that negative health behaviours such as smoking and consuming alcohol are prohibited and as a female this behaviour is not accepted. The cultural expectations explored revolve largely around the issue of protecting one’s family honour; this is carried out through the institution of marriage and prohibition of alcohol consumption. Marriage was deemed to be as central to the culture as the family unit, despite the modernisation and acculturation of the Sikh community this tradition remained intact. Evidently there is leniency with religious practice but marriage is considered a must for most Sikh women. All of the parental restrictions navigate to this life event and the fear that any untoward behaviour may jeopardise their family status. Prohibition of alcohol to maintain one’s family status can be viewed as a stronger deterrent than abstaining in the name of religion.

It appears that for the sake of the family individuals are not willing to take any risks however the same cannot be said for religion. Is this a process of acculturation?

4. PUBLIC IMAGE: SHALL I PUT MY MASK ON?

The final superordinate identified from the transcripts was surrounding public image, this consisted of five subthemes: Fear of Judgement, Family Reputation, Social Problem, Social Drinking and Secret Drinking. Many participants disclosed that they had to display a performative role of themselves in order to appease the wider community.

FEAR OF JUDGEMENT: This was the first subtheme to be identified; many of the participants felt an increased pressure to conform to the cultural norms and gender role expectations to avoid being judged by the wider Sikh community. Bradby (2007) identified the ‘Auntie-ji surveillance network’ which works within the Sikh community;

they are known to provide information to elder member of the family about their children's whereabouts and behaviour.

Dingwall and Sidki (2010) indicate that there has been a shift from strict upbringing amongst parents however it was found that many participants experienced fear of judgement from parents. Sukhi says:

“you know like with girls drinking like they...parents seem to have a bit of a stigma attached” (4.94-98).

Sukhi details the fear of parental judgement she experiences as she knows it is acceptable for males to drink yet for females there is a judgemental element. It can be said that there is an expectation for males to drink so when females drink although parents acknowledge this behaviour they still view it differently which may be perceived as judgemental.

“they [parents] expect us to have limits as in like if I came home drunk they wouldn't be happy but I wouldn't do that in the first place” (9.259-261).

It can be said that acknowledging drinking behaviour is one aspect of parenthood yet drunken behaviour or intoxication is something that is generally not seen as acceptable for parents. Sukhi fears the reaction from her parents if she is seen drunk. However these women not only experience judgement fears from parents, it is common amongst other Asian girls as well. It is not just the Auntie-ji network that can go and report back to family members other girls are capable too. Manpreet explains this saying:

“The worst thing is with Asian girls especially is that they have this kind of attitude about them and it's that they know they shouldn't be doing things like this so when they see another Asian girl out I guess deep down they're worried that their parents etc will find out so they act all tough and bitchy” (2.53-60)

Manpreet reveals that other Asian girls behave in a negative way out of fear of other informing parents or family members of their behaviour. Rather than having a shared identity with other Asian girls there is almost a competitive streak; a need to present others in a more negative way so that one's behaviour is not deemed as inappropriate, highlighting a downward social comparison. However Manpreet was able to empathise and relate to this fear stating:

“if I was drunk and acting stupid and I saw a distant family friend see me or just someone who knows my family I'd be worried that they'd say stuff” (2.62-65).

These extracts illustrate that these Sikh women are always wary of others seeing them and the true extent of their behaviour being revealed, as a result of this it can be said that these young women portray a composed 'sensible' image. However this too has a lot of implications as these young women are not free to express themselves socially, it could be suggested that the pressure of maintaining a composed image may influence secret drinking especially if the pressure mounts. This fear of being seen by others also isolates females resulting in them hiding their drinking behaviour.

Research evidence by Bradby (2007) highlighted a fear of the wider Sikh community however what was revealed was that the majority of participants actually experienced fear of judgement from their parents. They held the belief that if they are seen intoxicated their parents will have negative views of them, despite many parents accepting their consumption. It is as if there is an element of appeasement with parents and there is an image to uphold towards them i.e. the 'good daughter'. These extracts support research findings as reported by Measham (2002), as cited in Lyons and Willot (2008), who claim that when drinking many women avoided becoming too intoxicated as they feared social disapproval and embarrassment.

The fear of judgement lies not only within the contexts of alcohol consumption but also in relation to the family unit. Gurpreet's parents are divorced and discusses the implications of this in wider Sikh community;

“in the Asian culture the backlash of divorce is so bad that even if a relationship breaks down they won’t divorce cos of all the negativity attached to it” (1.16-20).

Gurpreet highlights that the fear of judgement is so extreme that individuals will not divorce despite them being unhappy or the relationship breaking down. She discusses her own experiences as being a child of divorced parents;

“you know people judge you...as soon as you say ‘my parents are divorced they think ‘oh’ [makes a pity look] cos it’s like the unknown almost and people don’t understand it” (2.38-43).

“especially while we were growing up we found it difficult amongst our friends” (3.65-66).

Gurpreet believes it is the wider community’s naivety that causes them to pass judgement. Gurpreet highlights the stigma and judgement she and her siblings felt from the wider community as a result of her parents’ divorce. Although divorce is considered a taboo topic there has been an increase in Sikh marriages breaking down. Rait (2005) suggests that in previous generations’ lack of finances and low education levels made it nearly impossible for women to break away from the traditional marriage bond as well as the emotional blackmail of protecting the family reputation. This raises concerns as many may be turning to alcohol as a coping mechanism and yet again drinking in secret due to fear of people finding out, (Motune, 2011).

FAMILY REPUTATION: Hall (2002) and Singh and Tatla (2006) detailed the strict upbringing of females within the Sikh community to maintain their family reputation and uphold their social status. As a result of family image and reputation these women felt pressurised by what was expected of them as there is a clash between their traditional values and modern culture. Amrita describes that she has to portray a certain image to the wider Sikh society;

“You have to be portrayed as the good girl who doesn’t drink” (10.298-299)

“with the girls drinking it’s like the girl has to be seen as pure”. (11.337-338),

Amrita describes the reasons for cultural prohibitions and highlights the responsibilities placed on females to maintain their image and uphold family honour. These extracts illustrate that alcohol is attached with a negative image of women and it is important to portray an innocent image and Amrita relates this to marriage prospects;

“when you get introduced to somebody you wana be introduced as like ‘oh she doesn’t drink, she doesn’t do this, like she doesn’t do that”.

“alcohol is linked to like maybe looking like a slag or a rebel, not listening to your parents” (10.306-308).

This extract details the importance of presenting oneself as abstinent as it boosts one’s image and therefore attracts more marriage proposals. The marriage of females is viewed as an important rite of passage and one that demonstrates family status amongst the wider Sikh community; enhancing the family’s social status is viewed as a principle goal for many Sikhs (Lindridge and Hogg, 2006).

Bradby and Williams (2006) and Singh and Tatla (2006) highlighted that the behaviour of females is a reflection upon the parents and so if a Sikh female is out drinking it is perceived that she has little respect for her parents, the culture and religious beliefs. Amrita states the consequences of any negative behaviour:

“if a girl does one thing wrong she can be disowned” (11.328-329).

Amrita highlights that by engaging in behaviours that are deemed inappropriate such as; smoking, drinking, pre-marital relationships and pre-marital sex Sikh female risk losing her family and being excluded. Being disowned by the family unit taints a young woman’s image as she will no longer be deemed respectable in society. The consequences include no marriage prospects and this brings upon great shame to the family, (Baker, Guthrie, Hutchinson, Kane and Wellings, 2007). Singh and Tatla (2006) argue that Sikh females are vulnerable to engaging in such behaviours as they are influenced by the freedom and acceptance of such behaviours amongst

British culture, reiterating the importance of strict parental upbringing to maintain family image. Manpreet reveals the parental pressure she experiences to uphold family image;

“They’ve [parents] got strict rules in terms of how we present ourselves to other people” (1.-23-25)

“me and my sister have been brought up to present ourselves in a sensible manner so even if we do go out and drink we know to ‘behave ourselves” (2.48-51)

“My dad’s very ‘be responsible’ and not to, not to come across in a way that your inhibitions have gone” (3.86-88).

“I if I was drunk and acting stupid and I saw a distant family friend see me or just someone who knows my family I’d be worried that they’d say stuff” (2.62-65).

Manpreet’s parents acknowledge her drinking behaviour however still place boundaries and an element of control over her behaviour, she remains mindful when drinking to maintain a good image and not appear too intoxicated. It can be said that with her parents placing strict rules of upholding image on her if these rules indirectly influence her consumption. Manpreet is aware that she must not behave in a drunken manner so perhaps she drinks less when she is out in order to avoid behaving inappropriately. If she is seen out there is the fear that her parents will find out and this will affect the family image.

Sikh women are raised in the UK with the expectation that they will uphold the family honour through their moral code of conduct and behaviour (Hall, 2002; Rait, 2005). However when these young women live in a society where alcohol consumption is culturally accepted: the boundaries become blurred. Motune (2011) reported that women who drink are viewed in the community as undesirable marriage prospects which can be seen as the ultimate shame for a Sikh family. This increased pressure may also influence their alcohol consumption as it increases their level of curiosity towards this substance; the perceived threat of tainting family image may actually

encourage secret drinking as women may not be able to perform as well as their family's would hope.

“WE DON'T DRINK LIKE THEY DO”: The third subtheme to be examined is 'alcohol as a social problem'; all participants spoke openly about their concerns about increased alcohol consumption of others. Participants highlighted particular groups whom they perceived to be perpetrators of negative portrayals of alcohol consumption. Sukhi says

“A lot of young people consume alcohol to an excess on a regular basis...and its encouraged by advertising campaigns” (6.179-182).

She believes the younger generations are more influenced by the media to consume excess amounts as well the excess drinking behaviour of others. She continues by describing how parents drinking behaviour may also influence younger generations to consume excess amounts. Sukhi describes how alcohol consumption may be normalised within the family which then encourages individuals to start drinking.

“there's like the kind of traits will be passed on to children and they tend to drink more alcohol and they see it as OK, that it's OK to drink and they do it to excess” (6.193-197).

“people aged 16 and adults to 25 years like they drink a lot and they'll binge especially while at uni” (Sukhi, 7.208-210).

“females who are stuck at home turn to alcohol for help” (Sukhi, 6.188-189)

Sukhi points out the student population as being the main perpetrators of engaging in binge drinking behaviour and highlights their consumption levels as excessive. It appears that the student population have been identified as the key perpetrators of portraying a negative image to the wider public around alcohol consumption; assumptions are made that all youths drink to an excess. Interestingly Sukhi also identifies the stay-at-home mothers' alcohol consumption as a social concern. This is supported by evidence from YWCA (2003) where it was found that women turn to

alcohol as a coping mechanism for their role as parents. Women are often exhausted and isolated within parenthood, especially at the beginning, and may drink to help them ease their stress. Holloway, Valentine and Jayne (2009) argue that where public drinking spaces have been predominantly male coded it leaves women with no choice but to drink within the home. Sukhi suggests that this particular group of women may use alcohol as an attention seeking behaviour for help with other problems. These women may be consuming alcohol as a coping mechanism however as their drinking is hidden their consumption levels are not known; they may consume large quantities without acknowledging a concern. Gurpreet comments on the current financial situation and how it influences alcohol consumption,

“there’s no hope for people, jobs are low um you know money’s low...it’s almost going through like a depression so alcohol I guess...people turn to different things” (3.89-94).

Gurpreet believes that because of the economic crises individuals may be increasing their consumption levels as a method of coping. Gurpreet also identifies the student population as having increased levels of consumption,

“with students its readily available it’s um you know marketed in that way...it’s so cheap” (4.105-106).

“you see stories in the news about students rolling out of clubs puking and bingeing (4.115-116).

Gurpreet places the blame with the media and marketing strategies used to promote alcohol for influencing students’ alcohol consumption and her comments reflect assumptions the general population may have of students as a result of their alcohol consumption; thus portraying a negative public image for all youths. She also highlights the media’s role in relaying important health information in a negative way. The news stories may be trying to raise awareness of dangerous drinking behaviour but with the images presented the general public may just form a stereotypical

assumption about the student population. Simran states that overall excess consumption is a concern;

“it’s getting worse as the generations go on” (2.48-49).

“it’s quite bad for teenagers obviously alcohol is more available for younger kids to go and purchase or they get older people to get it for them” (2.50-53).

“especially within uni life and the price of alcohol in like student bars and just what some pubs offer like 2 for 1” (1.29-31).

“in the last couple of years seems like it has gone a bit downhill like even on a Friday night just seeing people in a state really” (1.32-35).

Manpreet comments on the price of alcohol and how this may influence consumption levels within the student groups; she voices her opinions about drinking behaviour and how there has been a decline in individuals being aware of their limits, and so behaving in a way which is deemed as inappropriate. Parminder shares her concerns for the youth’s drinking behaviour and discusses tolerance levels:

“within my age group of friends they wouldn’t know when to stop and for people who are like maybe 18 years old and just started drinking they don’t know what level they can handle” (2.61-65)

Parminder continues by discussing the risky behaviours individuals engage in as a result of their drinking behaviour;

“she was drinking so much, I kept saying to her do you know you have to drive home and she kept saying ‘no I’m OK I know how much I can handle but she clearly didn’t” (2.70-73).

Parminder’s comments are largely related to individuals not being aware of their alcohol tolerance levels; she acknowledges that individuals may behave in a risk way as a result of high consumption. The drinking behaviour reported by the participants’, mirrors what is being found within research evidence; Seaman and Ikegwuonu

(2010) state that excessive alcohol consumption has become a norm within the youth population; aged 18 to 25. The authors revealed that the many youngsters held the belief that young adulthood was a temporary life phase which fuelled excessive consumption. The youngsters did not think ahead in terms of how their consumption may affect their long term health; their primary focus was just to enjoy themselves. The price and availability of alcohol also influenced increased consumption and resulted in greater intoxication. Alcohol intoxication was seen as primary way of socialising and interacting within social groups; many reported that after a few drinks they were able to 'let down barriers' and 'be more open'; thus portraying a perceived positive social image. This was an important factor for individuals who had moved away from home whilst at university and wanting to build new social circles. Mintel (2010) also revealed that binge drinking behaviour is more prevalent with those aged 18-24 years old; many are unaware that they are engaging in binge drinking behaviour. This highlights the need for awareness and the promotion of health safety messages. It was also reported that due to economic crisis individuals have had to change their drinking behaviours i.e. purchase cheaper alcohol but then consume more to get the same effects, and more students chose to stay in and drink rather than go out. However it was found that when students were going out they were consuming more and spending more money. It appears the consumption behaviour reported by participants has been adopted by individuals in the Sikh community and there are no differences in what is being reported except the possibility of parents and family members not being aware of drinking behaviour.

SECRET DRINKING: Secret drinking behaviour has been identified within the Sikh culture and when discussing with this with participants it was all common knowledge. Many of the participants had knowledge of people engaging in this type of drinking behaviour. Parminder spoke about her experiences of her friends' secret drinking;

"my friends they tend to do stuff behind their parents back" (1.25-27)

"girls I go to uni with and stuff will have to stay around their friends' house just cos they can't go home drunk. It's like they're leading separate lives" (3.44-47)

She explained that her friends hide their drinking as their parents are too strict and prohibit consumption. In the extracts Parminder discusses the lengths these young women have to go in order avoid their parents finding out about their drinking habits. Friends play an important role in this secret drinking as they too are expected to lie about their friends' drinking behaviour and not to tell parents of their social actions. This could potentially lead to problems especially if the individuals' alcohol consumption becomes excessive and causes a concern. Parminder mentions that this particular behaviour is common in women whose parents are stricter and assumingly prohibit consumption as these families are seen as traditional. Simran discusses hiding drinking behaviour from wider family members;

“some of my friends don't have that freedom with their families like they drink in secret” (2.60-62)

“because they're not allowed to do it within their families so therefore they go out and do it behind their parents, brothers, cousins whatever's back” (3.116-119).

Simran places the main cause of secret drinking on the families and strict upbringing as being restrictive of alcohol consumption. Simran acknowledges that this secret drinking behaviour is now becoming a concern;

“I know that the older generation probably still snuck around and drank in secret...but it's nothing compared to what people do now” (5.183-186).

Simran mentions the strictness within other families and understands why her friends drink in secret; the women that drink in secret must ensure that their drinking behaviour is not seen by any of their family. She also comments about how she assumes this behaviour has been going on from elder generations however emphasises that now there is a concern due to her witnessing excessive secret consumption within her social circle. Individuals that drink in secret now are more than likely consuming more alcohol and perhaps consuming it more regularly. Sukhi talks about the secret drinking behaviour of her first cousins, saying;

“my chachaji (uncle) is very strict on my cousins so they will often do things behind his back” (2.42-44).

it’s not the same for them they just do it behind his back” (2.48-49)

During the interview she acknowledges that there are clear differences in upbringing for her siblings and her cousins and as there are differences, Simran and her sister often get caught up in the lying;

“we (me and my sister) usually have to cover for them especially if we go out together” (2.50-51).

While Simran has an open relationship with her parents who are aware of her drinking there are clear familial differences and Simran gets caught up in lying to her family because of her cousins’, she reveals that as they socialise together often Sukhi and her sister will have to cover up for their cousins drinking behaviour. Simran feels worried about her cousins drinking and places the blame with the elders for their behaviour:

“if they’re strict kids will just rebel and do things behind their back which can be quite dangerous as you know when you’re at uni and binge drinking anything could happen” (10.313-317).

Due to her uncles strict nature she understands their secret drinking behaviour and views it as an act of rebellion and highlights the dangers of parents being unaware of alcohol consumption and the potential negative consequences from binge drinking behaviour. Gurpreet talks about details of secret drinking behaviour at a recent wedding she attended:

“women do hide it I went to a wedding a few months ago and some of the elder girls, aunties and cousins etc were drunk but you would never see them with a drink in their hand” (7.223-226)

“it’s not a thing to do, who wants to sit there with a bottle of vodka on the table broadcasting it pouring shots for themselves...they wouldn’t do it” (7.228-231)

“they probably have done in the toilets or sneakily but not out in the open where everyone can see...they would never show they had been drinking” (7.231-235)

Similar to Simran, Gurpreet too highlights the need for families to acknowledge drinking behaviour;

“if families were more accepting then people wouldn’t do it in secret” (12.365-366).

In the above extracts Gurpreet explicitly describes the lengths women go to in order to hide their alcohol consumption despite being seen as intoxicated. As highlighted by Gurpreet, Sikh women fear being seen with alcohol. Women are trying to enjoy themselves and have fun at the wedding; it is assumed that others are drinking so it makes us question why do women feel the need to hide this. Gurpreet points out that its the family unit as not accepting females drinking rather than the parents, as mentioned by the other participants as well as research evidence (Hall, 2002; Rait, 2005; Lindridge and Hogg, 2006; Bradby, 2007). It was also revealed that Sikh women formed a secret drinking group to make it easier to hide their consumption. Hurcombe, Bayley and Goodman (2010) argue that due to gender discrimination and the fear of retaliation within the community this behaviour is often not disclosed.

Amrita disclosed that she herself is a secret drinker and discusses what fuels her consumption:

“I have a good time and it’s just like I’m not doing stuff that’s like crazy like I’m not beating somebody up” (4.103-105).

“I’m just doing it to have a good time” (4.107-108),

Amrita justifies her drinking behaviour as fun and enjoyable and even compares it to other behaviours. Although she drinks in a social context Amrita does acknowledge that her consumption levels may be considered excessive to others, she also experiences feelings of guilt for hiding this behaviour;

“sometimes though I do feel a bit scared and a bit bad like ‘oh my god, drink drink’ you know whatever” (7.201-203).

“I started drinking when I was 14, I had my first so called ‘session’ at 14 and then at 16 I got more so” (10.321-323

Amrita feels guilty about her excess drinking behaviour and shows concern with regards to her consumption levels; she also disclosed that she began drinking at a very early age. Amrita describes her secret drinking behaviour as an enjoyable, fun experience and even compares her drinking behaviour to other ‘negative’ behaviours such as physical violence to gain justification for her behaviour. Amrita reveals she first began drinking at aged 14 during a ‘session’. Percy et al (2011) state that a drinking session is a social opportunity for individuals to ‘practice their drinking skills’; drinking sessions often occur when individuals are just beginning to become familiar with alcohol. Amrita here also displays a more vulnerable side and expresses guilt for drinking the way she does indicating a conflict between her behaviour and her values.

These extracts fully illustrate the extent of secret drinking behaviour in the Sikh community. It is apparent that this behaviour is common knowledge amongst the participants and all knew someone who engaged in this drinking behaviour. This suggests that perhaps that secret drinking amongst females has become a taboo subject within the Sikh community and remains not discussed; as openly discussing this topic will bring shame or embarrassment upon the family. The majority of the participants placed the blame with parents stating that they were too strict on these young women and understood why these women drank in secret; it was interesting to discover that secret drinkers may form a group and drink together however this just highlights the extent to which women will go to in order to hide their behaviour. On the other hand, it can be argued that this group formation should be seen as a

positive as it means these women are not drinking alone and that it remains a social activity. Information from the participants and research evidence raises awareness of the secret drinking culture within the female Sikh community. Motune (2011) describe how the cultural pressures placed on females can result in hidden drinking behaviour especially as they are seen as protectors of family honour they may find themselves under increased pressure to conform to cultural practices such as arranged marriage. Bloomfield et al (2006) identified gender roles for women within this culture and reported that women in Sikh marriages generally do not drink and their abstinent behaviour is regarded as strength of character. These findings are also associated with the deep rooted cultural values and the need for Sikh women to portray a positive 'good girl' image. Despite the research evidence pointing towards increased female independence and freedom for non-Sikh women, it is apparent that Sikh women remain bound within the culture and perhaps it is the cultural pressures influencing on drinking behaviour. However Rait (2005) argues that living in a British culture has weakened the Sikh cultures and traditions resulting in a huge change in traditional behaviour; women are no longer willing to be submissive to cultural traditions for the sake of maintaining izzat and family honour. It could therefore be argued that there is a combination of both adapting to British drinking culture and experiencing some fear of cultural exposure that encourages secret drinking behaviour.

SUMMARY

The themes that emerged from the participant interviews emphasise the importance of obtaining a personal and detailed perspective on alcohol consumption within the British Sikh community in particular the women in this community. Through the use of qualitative research methods this study has an important role in deepening our understanding of alcohol consumption by Sikh women, as experienced by Sikh women; a population and topic area that has previously not been explored to this extent. From engaging with the participants' experiences, the interviews highlighted details of drinking behaviour were revealed as well as highlighting key issues around the multiple identities formed by Sikh women. Many of the participants spoke about the internal struggles they experienced about being a Sikh female in British culture and the constant pressure they felt about portraying a public image to the wider Sikh community. There was a constant negotiating between what is traditional and what is modern: "who am I?" vs. "who am I supposed to be?" The qualitative nature of this research allowed the researcher to explore the means by which the participants underwent an identity reflection where they evaluated themselves in terms of their beliefs, values and their behaviour, and in some cases manipulate their belief structure to suit their needs. Such information highlights the complexity of a culturally rich population. The importance of parental relationships was highlighted and many of the participants felt that their parents had an influence on their drinking behaviour. Many participants held the belief that if parents encouraged conversations and acknowledged drinking behaviour fewer people would hide their alcohol consumption.

Previous research evidence has been largely carried out using quantitative methods but these have not explicitly looked at the Sikh community rather generalised to the Asian population as a whole (Pannu et al, 2009). Although such research does provide solid information, qualitative approaches, as adopted in this current study, provide the potential to deepen and clarify assumptions made of the Sikh population. As highlighted in research evidence by Bayley and Hurcombe (2010) the drinking habits of the Sikh population have become very similar to those of the general indigenous British population. This too emerged from the interviews as five out of the six participants disclosed that they were regular drinkers and some even revealing excessive/binge drinking behaviour. It can be said that there has been an increase in

Sikh female alcohol consumption and this research study highlighted some aspects of drinking behaviour amongst Sikh females. This raises concerns about excess consumption especially if family and friends do not know.

This research has highlighted the value of exploring the experiences of Sikh women with alcohol using qualitative methods. The research only looked at Sikh women living in the Greater London area. The 2011 Census data revealed that there are 126,000 Sikhs living in London accounting for 1.6% of London's population.

Research evidence collected from this study provides a small but significant insight into secret drinking behaviour amongst British Sikh women.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This research study contributes to the field of study of ethnic health behaviours and provides an in-depth insight into Sikh females' relationship with alcohol, their peers, their family and both British and Sikh identities. Such information is currently limited as those from an ethnic minority background are unwilling to share this information due to taboo association. Gathering such qualitative information though is difficult is a necessity to understanding health behaviours of such communities. Once they were comfortable in the research interview setting, the participants willingly shared a variety of experiences around alcohol highlighting the taboo nature of female consumption and as a result shedding light onto 'secret drinking behaviour'. They openly discussed the cultural restrictions between males and females and religious principles around drinking behaviour.

This research also emphasises the importance of using qualitative methods to gather sensitive in-depth information, which may not be accessible using quantitative methods (Pannu et al, 2009) alone. Whilst quantitative research methods have been successful in measuring and highlighting that there is a cause for concern regarding alcohol consumption, they do not provide the detailed and in-depth perspective as found with qualitative methods. When exploring a sensitive subject such as this within a community where it is viewed as a taboo, quantitative methods in isolation are not appropriate and unlikely to yield accurate results.

This research study demonstrates an argument that there is a need for more ethnically tailored services to help individuals who may have a dependency on

alcohol and have difficulties discussing this with others. With the drinking behaviour of Sikh females now being almost similar to those of the general indigenous British female population (Motune, 2011), this research forms the foundations for further research into this topic area to be carried out in the future.

LIMITATIONS

Whilst this research study provided an in-depth perspective on alcohol consumption in the Sikh community it is not without its limitations. The following limitations can be addressed by means of further research. Although valuable information was found from the interviews the findings may not be reflective of all Sikh women. Individuals that experience alcohol abuse within the family may provide a different perspective on their experience and may highlight other issues. A larger study population may yield different results.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TREATMENT

Results from further research studies could be used for the development of alcohol treatment programmes. Assumptions made in society about women not drinking a lot could lead to alcohol misuse problems being underrepresented (Bloomfield et al, 2006). As identified by Motune (2011) alcohol consumption is a taboo topic within the female Sikh community so many women may be excessively drinking but are not able to seek help. The results found can be applied to a gender and culture sensitive alcohol treatment programme for those who may be misusing. Marjaria-Keval (2006) highlighted that those from ethnic minority backgrounds are under-represented as users of services such as Alcoholics Anonymous so by developing a culture specific treatment programme enables increased awareness of alcohol misuse problems and makes it easier for those to seek help. Orford et al (2004) highlighted the reluctance of ethnic minority groups in seeking help for their alcohol consumption outside their main social network i.e. they would only go to friends and family not specialist services due to fear of discrimination within society. The authors also revealed that participants expressed a preference to seek help from religious leaders or community groups rather than specialised services. Religious leaders play an important role within the Sikh community. This indicates that there is a need for the development of specialised services within the ethnic minority groups and rather than looking at mainstream services perhaps community services may be more

appropriate especially in groups where fear of gossip or stigma being attached is high.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research looking at generational differences amongst Sikh women in their experiences with alcohol would give more quantitative and qualitative information to develop appropriate and targeted services. This will also provide an opportunity to explore if Sikh women's values and traditional beliefs differ through generations and how they identify themselves in modern British society.

Similarly further research can be carried out to contribute to the development of gender specific alcohol treatment programmes. As identified by Motune (2011) alcohol consumption with the female Sikh population is a taboo subject, which means that these women have nowhere to go for help as there is a constant fear of being discriminated against within their community. It is important for the cultural aspect to be acknowledged as well as the likelihood of gender discrimination.

The National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (2011) reported that in 2010 there were 314 females and 488 males, within the London area, aged between 18-24 who used alcohol treatment services; 88% of this sample was White British. This information suggests that although there are specialist treatment services available, these services are being predominantly used by the White British population. Perhaps, as these treatment interventions are not culturally tailored towards ethnic minority communities this may be the reason that these communities remain to be under-represented.

Specialist agencies such as Alcoholics Anonymous could assist in developing materials for the young Sikh population, as a brief intervention, highlighting the risks and consequences of engaging in alcohol consumption from an early age. This intervention can be carried out in schools and local community and religious leaders can also assist in this to ensure that the up and coming generation are not putting their health in danger.

CONCLUSION

In this research, the experience of being a British born Sikh female was found to be a struggle in many ways; the participants experienced an internal conflict with their cultural and religious values and their identity. It could be said that the drinking behaviour discussed was to some extent a manifestation of the ongoing culture conflict; which may also be present in other ethnic minority backgrounds. Alcohol consumption is ever prominent and requires urgent attention, especially of those from an ethnic background such as Sikh women who may be putting their health at great risk as the true extent of their alcohol consumption remains unknown.

REFLEXIVITY

During the background research and literature research, I found that I learnt a lot of valuable information about the Sikh religion that I was not aware of. Throughout the literature review process, I was able to read up and research on so many aspects of the Sikh religion. As I am a Sikh, I have been brought up and taught certain things but have never questioned the meanings behind these actions; this research really gave me an insight and also improved my understanding of the traditions. I could say that prior to this research I had a somewhat naïve understanding of Sikhism and its teachings however throughout this whole research I feel that I am more engaged with the traditions and culture and can understand the elders' emphasis on maintaining these traditions.

As I am from the same cultural background I have often questioned the behaviour of my community in relation to the religious teachings. Within my own group of friends I have seen varying behaviour, for example, some friends have very strong religious beliefs and will not eat meat but then consume alcohol in social situations. I noticed these situations more with females rather than men as they would make extra effort to hide this behaviour. I have always questioned this and ultimately this became the foundation of my research idea. As I carried out my literature search I discovered that there are great health concerns with Sikh females consuming excess amounts which encouraged me to further explore this topic area. I also wanted to highlight the cultural boundaries Sikh women endure and to make society aware about why they hide this behaviour.

My cultural background helped me to recruit my participants which was helpful as I was undertaking detailed research into a under researched community. Prior to conducting my interviews, I had spoken to all participants on the phone and I was pleased that I received a positive reaction from participants about taking part in the research and many said that the topic area was very interesting. I noticed that during the meetings arranged for interviews some participants spoke using odd Punjabi phrases during our conversation, I felt that this was to perhaps to seek familiarity or common ground or to test how 'Sikh' I was. Generally if individuals can speak the Punjabi language it is thought that their upbringing is traditional and many may have used phrases to see if my upbringing was similar to theirs. I have noticed this

behaviour before when meeting new girls in college, university and Punjabi phrases are used to gain familiarity and build social relationships. I treated the interviews as a similar process, of social relationships, as the participants sought familiarity with me in order for me to be able to relate them. Looking back I feel that many of the participants were open and willing to discuss issues with myself with great ease but I did feel that one participant held back a great deal. I felt that this was due to her wanting to be perceived in a different way to that which her behaviour demonstrated and during the interview I jotted down notes about her behaviour especially when she hesitated when answering questions. Again looking back at this highlights the negotiation of identities that was a consistent issue for all participants.

I found the interview process initially quite daunting as I was unfamiliar with the IPA process and was nervous about my interview skills. The pilot interview definitely helped me evaluate my researcher/interview skills and when listening back I was able to identify areas of improvements. After the pilot interview, I also made a few changes to the interview schedule such as changing the sequencing of the questions to help further interviews to flow better and I focused on making them more open-ended. All interviews were held in a social setting such as the local coffee shop to the participants and I ensured that the participants could not be heard whilst the interview was being recorded. This was done by sitting towards the rear of the coffee shop away from passing customers; this was to ensure we were not disturbed and so the conversation could not be heard. During the initial interviews, I noticed that on occasions there were awkward silences and sometimes felt that I perhaps 'jump in' too quickly with the next question to try and maintain a good interview pace and also demonstrate that I was a competent interviewer. I chose to revise the interview schedule as it was very short; I took this opportunity to reword some of the questions to encourage participants to share more information. I also included additional prompts for myself to maintain a good interview pace and ensure there were no pauses. However after the first two interviews I felt more comfortable with the process and generally found the interviews began to flow very well and I did not feel as nervous during the silences. I enjoyed the interviews and felt that I learned a great deal from all of the women I interviewed and felt that I was able to build a good rapport. Often after the participant had finished, I would summarise their response to ensure that they were aware that I understood the information being received. I also

felt it was necessary to demonstrate empathy when participants were speaking. Prompts were used throughout the interview to encourage the participant to expand on a particular topic and provide more information. These prompts include comments/questions such as, "could you please explain what you meant when you said ...?" I also chose to keep a small diary to jot down notes during the interview; this helped me to make comments on behaviour during the interviews. For example, one participant would hesitate and begin looking around the shop when answering questions about alcohol consumption. These notes were then incorporated within the transcripts. Generally I feel that the interviews went very well and I was pleased with the depth of information that I was able to collect. I was pleased and also slightly surprised with the willingness of the participants to share such information as I am from the same culture I was worried that individuals may not disclose or share as much due to the fear of judgement from others. I sensed some hesitance from some of the women initially regarding their alcohol consumption however as the interview went on I found that they disclosed information more openly. It seemed as if there was a fear of judgement as I am from the same community so again they did not want their drinking behaviour to be known by wider family. There was an element of finding out whether I knew any of the participants personally or people that they knew and the initial resistance may have been out of fear that their behaviour may have been disclosed to others. However I found that being from the same culture as an advantage as there was a sense of mutual understanding between myself and the participants which perhaps made it easier for them to share. I enjoyed the interview process as I feel that I learned a great deal from the women I interviewed. All six interviews varied so much in information and I learned different aspects about my own culture that I was really never aware of. All six experiences differed so much that it gave me the opportunity to view things from a different perspective and what made the interviews more valuable for me was the fact that they were real experiences.

Initially I selected what can be described as 'English' pseudonyms for the six participants as it was an almost automatic action to change the names to English names however after having discussions with my supervisor I decided to change these names to Indian names. I initially chose English names as I had concerns that readers may not believe that participants names had been changed; however when I

discussed the issue with my supervisor she questioned the same about changing English names. I then gave this some further thought and chose to use Indian names. I can say that perhaps my selection of English names was based on my naivety and unfamiliarity with the qualitative methodological approach. However as I began to analyse and immersed myself within the texts I noticed the identity issues that were arising and it made me question why I chose English names. The participants evidently had issues trying to establish their personal, cultural and religious identity and I felt that by giving them English names I too was taking away their identity to some extent. I also initially chose English names as many of the participants introduced themselves to me with shortened names which sounded British; Gurpreet for example works as a glamour model so when she introduced herself to me she gave me her 'model' name. This made me question whether she was perhaps ashamed of relating her work with her ethnic background due to the cultural restrictions and perceived image of women. I felt that by changing their names to English names I was taking away from the main purpose of the research and also taking away their identity; it was also important as there is not much research available looking specifically at the Sikh population and it almost felt injustice to not give the participants Indian names. By giving Indian pseudonyms I have established the identity of the participants as Sikh females.

It was interesting to see that despite many of the participants not following the traditional beliefs they still maintained a Sikh identity; this was difficult for me to understand as well. Many of the participants had basic awareness and understanding of the Sikh teachings yet still chose to engage in the prohibited behaviour of consuming alcohol. It did feel almost as if these young women were leading separate lives; their Sikh identity was for when with their family and their British identity was for when with their friends and so they behaved accordingly. The secret drinking behaviour discussed really provided an insight into the behaviour patterns and highlighted the potential negative consequences. It was obvious for all women that this behaviour was well known in the community but very much under-discussed; many remain unaware of it, which makes one question how long it has been going on and also how women have become so good at hiding it.

Initially I found the analysis quite scary as I was unfamiliar with the process; I sought the guidance of various literature materials as well as my supervisor for assistance to better understand the process. However as I continued and the analysis progressed I found myself becoming immersed within the data and enjoyed the explorative nature of the analysis process. Each time I re-read a transcript I found new topics to explore and this heightened my interest further in the research. I felt that in some ways I could relate to the participants when they discussed topics such as judgement within the community as I have personal experience with this. Yet it was interesting to see their perspectives and how they connected this within the culture.

Throughout the analysis process I found myself learning and questioning so much about the religion and the culture despite belonging to this ethnic group. The research highlighted for me the struggles these women and I suppose many others face belonging to an ethnic group in a different culture. To some extent it made me think about myself and how I behave within my social group. For example, when with friends I would say I am more British and would have more open discussions about taboo topics such as alcohol, relationships and sexual relationships. Whereas within the family environment, I am more mindful of the cultural values and try to conform to these values by behaving in a more modest and somewhat acceptable manner. It's as if there is an invisible force of cultural values that holds you back. It also made me question everyone's identity and if people really know who they are. Are they Sikh or are they British? How do they decide how to behave?

It appears that many of these questions will remain unanswered and many will struggle with internal battle between their British identity and their Sikh heritage. Through the process of acculturation we have seen a dilution of the Sikh heritage within the UK. If no one is reinforcing their identity, how do these young women know who they are and where they belong? I believe that it is up to the religious institutions and families to educate British Sikh, reassuring them of their identity and their culture.

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APPENDICES

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Study Title: Alcohol Use in the female UK Sikh population: an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Information sheet

I am a trainee Health Psychologist at London Metropolitan University; this research project is an element of my Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology programme. Thank you for showing interest in participating in this study. This sheet will describe the purpose of the study and what your participation will involve. Please carefully read over the documents before your final decision to participate is made. This study will explore young Sikh women's experiences around alcohol. I am specifically interested in the experiences of upbringing, religious and cultural influences, lifestyle changes, and other influencing factors. This study is focusing on women's experiences as to date there has been very limited research carried out in this area. By intently listening to what the participant is sharing the researcher can interpret the data in a manner that permits deeper insight of their individual experience. You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview; this interview will have around 16 questions and will last approximately half an hour to 45 minutes. If at any time you wish to stop recording, please let me know so we can take a break. Also, if you would like to withdraw your participation, please bring this to my attention and I will bring the interview to an end. You are free to withdraw at any time and without any reason.

This interview is confidential, meaning that everything you say will remain anonymous including your true identity. I will refer to you by a fictitious name throughout the entire study. Your contact information will remain on a secure file and the information shared will remain within London Metropolitan University's psychology department.

If there are any further queries about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email [REDACTED]. Alternatively you can contact my supervisor Jo Semlyen at [REDACTED]

Thank You
Ravinder Gill



Study Title: Alcohol Use in the female UK Sikh population: an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Consent (please complete and return)

- I have read the information sheet regarding the study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that I will be required to participate in an audio recorded interview.
- I agree to be contacted by the researcher; Ravinder Gill
- I understand that my personal details, which I provided, are being stored on a secure file.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care being affected in any way.

Signed

Print.....

Date

The researcher confirms that the details of the study and interview process have been explained and described in writing to the person named above and have been understood by her.

Signed.....

Print.....

Date

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PILOT.

1. Can you please describe your family upbringing?
2. Is religion an important factor in your life?
3. Are there any cultural influences on your views about alcohol?
4. What are your perceptions about the wider Sikh community and their views towards young Sikh women's alcohol consumption?
5. Can you please describe any situations where you have felt that you are somewhat treated differently to the male members of your family such as brothers and cousins where alcohol consumption is concerned?
6. How do you think the drinking habits of the youth today are different from your parents' generation?
7. What are your views on alcohol consumption in the UK?
8. How does alcohol play a role within your social life?
9. What are your thoughts on the 'binge' drinking' culture emerging in society today?

FINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.

1. Can you please describe your family upbringing? Would you say you come from a traditional family background?

2. Is religion an important factor in your life?
 - 2a. If so, how is it an important factor in your life?
 - 2b. If not, why is it not an important part of your life?

3. Can you tell me about any cultural influences on your views about alcohol?

4. What are your perceptions about the wider Sikh community and their views towards young Sikh women's alcohol consumption?

5. How do your parents feel about your drinking behaviour?

6. Can you please describe any situations where you have felt that you are somewhat treated differently to the male members of your family such as brothers and cousins where alcohol consumption is concerned?
 - 6a. If yes, in what way do you feel you are treated differently?

7. How do you think the drinking habits of the youth today are different from your parents' generation?

8. What are your views on alcohol consumption in the UK?

9. How does alcohol play a role within your social life?

10. What are your thoughts on the 'binge' drinking' culture emerging in society today?