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**“WE ARE A VOLUNTEERING RELIGION”
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SECOND GENERATION SIKHS’
VOLUNTEERING PRACTICES IN SOUTH EASTERN MICHIGAN**

by

NAVKIRAN PAL KAUR

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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2014

MAJOR: SOCIOLOGY

Approved By:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation, ““We are Volunteering Religion” A Qualitative Study of Second Generation Sikhs’ Volunteering Practices in Southeastern Michigan’, to my late mother, Sardarni Jaswant Kaur, who believed in One God (Akalpurkh) and showed me the path of Gurbani (Guru’s Bani), my father, Sardar Santokh Singh, who always inculcated love and dedication to education in our family. By completion of this dissertation, I made a very little effort to tell the intellectual community that Gurbani and Sri Guru Granth Sahib shows us the path to human service and peace on the earth besides betterment of entire creation. Thanks

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CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTION

Asian Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group within United States. This racial-ethnic group has increased in size by 43.3% between the years 2000-2010 (www.census.gov/2010data). Existing studies on religion and immigrants discuss the role of religion and religious organizations in easing the adaptation process for first generation immigrants and discuss religious connections as a form of social capital for immigrants, but they rarely examine how religion informs the civic action of second generation immigrants. A handful of studies that examine immigration and religion indicate that both “being religiously involved” and “being American” play important roles in determining the civic lives of both first and second generation immigrants (Foley and Hoge, 2007, Cadge & Ecklund, 2007: 367, Kniss & Numrich, 2007). Yet how religion actually involves second generation immigrants in volunteering or how religion might affect the meanings of volunteering is not clearly understood. Existing studies have not included a sufficient number of second generation participants when examining how religion informs volunteering, and have not focused on the second generation. In order to understand what religious association means to second generation immigrants and how they connect religion to their civic participation within the United States, the current study employed qualitative interviews with twenty-nine second generation Sikh immigrants in southeastern Michigan.

Second generation Sikhs living in southeastern Michigan are the unit of the analysis for the current study. There are a number of reasons why the current study focuses on Sikhs. Previous studies on religion and civic engagement among immigrant

populations have not included Sikhs. Second, the Sikh population is one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the U.S., particularly in Southeastern Michigan. Originating in Punjab, the Northern-Western province in India, Sikhs began migrating to the U.S in the late 1890s and have continued throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Almost 300,000 Sikhs have made “America, their home,” thereby contributing to the “religious diversity of American society” (Eck, 2001: 74-76). The number of Sikh Worship centers has recently increased from two to five in Southeastern Michigan alone between years 2000-2010, with an estimated membership of ten thousand individuals in total. It is important to note, however, that Sikhs still remain a significant ethnic and religious minority within the U.S. and southeastern Michigan. Double minority status may impact the way religious values and beliefs are preserved by a minority religious group and impact “community volunteerism” as shown by previous researchers (e.g., Euckland & Park, 2007). In particular, it may be even more important for a double minority to show U.S. citizens that they “belong” and “give back” to their community, to ward against anti-minority and anti-immigrant sentiment. A systematic exploration into how religious beliefs and practices impact civic action among a religious minority group like Sikhs may provide important insights into the issues and identities that remain important for contemporary ethnic and religious minorities in the U.S. context.

The existing literature reveals contradictions about whether and how religion is important for first and second generation immigrants. One stream of literature acknowledges the positive role of religious participation for the adaptation of new immigrants and their children (Foley & Hoge, 2007, Foner & Alba, 2008, Jensen, 2008).

Scholars point out that religious participation is a pathway for adaptation by immigrant communities. Another stream of literature indicates that religion plays a negative role in promoting civic engagement of immigrants (Paul & Numrich, 2007, Ecklund & Cadge 2007). These studies show that sometimes religious participation may provide individuals with links to their immigrant communities but forbid immigrants' connections with a broader U.S. society. . All these studies touch on issues related to second generation immigrant experiences but do not provide in-depth information about or specifically analyze this generation. We know little about religious involvement or civic engagement via religious participation among the second generation. The social context within which religious association becomes meaningful for second generation and whether religious association augments their civic involvement (and vice versa) is the aim and focus of this research.

The study is empirically significant because recent scholarship does not offer a clear understanding about connections between second generation's religiosity and volunteering practices. For instance, Sundeen Garcia and Wang (2007) suggest that a majority of Asians volunteer at religious centers. Jensen (2008) also argues that religious organizations have a profound impact on the civic engagement of second generation young adults and found that worship attendance has a stronger impact on volunteering practices than on second generation individuals' reports of spirituality or beliefs in religious texts or theology. It is important to explore whether religious teachings, religious ideals become meaningless for second generation or not, or whether they are still having an effect through civic engagement. The easiest way to look at civic

engagement is through individuals' volunteering practices and the meanings they place on these practices.

Definitions of Volunteering

Volunteering is a type of civic action concerned with the common good, but is not necessarily aimed at a specific economic benefit (Cadge & Ecklund 2007). Volunteering can be either informal or formal. Informal volunteering occurs when help is extended informally to others like running errands. Informal volunteering is not connected to a structured program with a designated time and place to provide assistance. Sharing a ride or helping an elderly person is also examples of informal volunteering? Formal volunteering occurs when a member becomes affiliated with a formal organization that provides structured opportunities for individuals to volunteer and/or serve others. For example, teaching at a Sunday school at a religious organization, organizing certain events in the neighborhood, and volunteering for community events, or volunteering in an organizational setting on a regularly scheduled day are all examples of formal volunteering (Sundeen, Garcia & Wang: 2007; Ecklund & Park: 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Several theories guide this research. First, the explanation that religious association can be voluntary and can link individuals to communities is a basis for the current study. As Alexis De Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America* (1840/1945), religion is a voluntary association, which connects individuals to communities. Religious associations are “free spaces” that provide humans liberty, responsibility and

interdependence for achieving common goals. By participating in these religious associations, members learn to develop civic skills to voluntarily help each other (Tocqueville 1840/1945:126-127). The aim of this current research is not to test the theory of Tocqueville but to use it as a theoretical framework for understanding how religious associations influence second generation Sikh adults to engage in community service or individual acts of volunteering.

Second, Herberg's theory of religion (1955) also suggests that second generation immigrants may leave behind language and ethnic roots but they will retain their religious roots (Herberg, 1965: 23). Herberg further suggested that the second generation may utilize religion to "be American" (Herberg, 1965: 74). For example, Herberg believed that adherence to the Christian faith was important for 2nd generation European immigrants' integration within mainstream American society because they were following the same religious beliefs and were observing similar national holidays like Christmas, Thanks giving, etc. Therefore, this theory is relevant because it provides an explanation of how Second European immigrants may have been integrated initially into U.S. society. Within Herberg's context, however, second generation immigrants were integrated into a dominant, somewhat homogeneous religious context (Judeo Christianity); this is a very different scenario than what second generation Sikhs (a double minority) in southeastern Michigan might experience in the U.S context. Second generation Sikh immigrants are integrating into a U.S. society that is defined by a completely different, more dominant religion which means automatically that their religious affiliation is different and marginalized. Nonetheless, we can still explore

whether second generation individuals who adhere to a non-Christian religion and hold a double minority status may use their religious connections to bridge the gap between themselves and the broader U.S. society.

Third, it is important to think about the ways in which religious affiliation and strong religious beliefs might become a form of social capital for second generation Sikhs. Putnam (2000), in his book "*Bowling Alone*," talks about role of social capital in building the communities. Putnam's theory is an important theoretical frame work which can be used to understand the "community building" that occurs among second generation Sikhs and the ways in which initial religious affiliations or associations help build and/or provide this social capital for individuals. Putnam explained the connection of individual to a robust community and how communication and cooperation among members of a community are often facilitated by common affiliations and associations (such as religion). Social capital, as presented by Putnam, is an "intangible resource" for members of particular communities, because of their connections to those communities and their ability to pull upon common identities and common resources. Without community attachment, individuals are "helpless socially" whereas connections to communities (such as religious communities) can mean the accumulation of social capital for individuals. Social capital develops "into good will, fellowship and sympathy towards each other," making the community a "social unit" that identifies and functions together. Since the religious center can be a central location or second home for second generation Sikhs, then it is possible to examine common religious affiliation and attachment to a common religious center as a facilitator of community and cooperation among second

generation Sikhs. In addition, attachment to these religious locations and associations may ease their engagement with the larger U.S. society, as my data show.

The existing studies on immigrant volunteering do not explain how religion plays a different role for first and second generations. For instance, Foley and Hoge (2007) examined various immigrant populations, including Salvadorian, African and Asian immigrants in the Washington D.C area, to understand the role of religion in their civic engagement. According to Foley and Hoge (2007), “worship communities” can contribute to the “civic incorporation” of immigrants in multiple ways. Worship communities are pools of social capital, determinants of civil actors and serve as channels for civic participation among immigrant communities (24; see also Putnam, 2000). Three main factors operate to determine the extent of civic participation among immigrant communities: “circumstances of reception of immigrants”, “organizational structure of religious communities”, and the “religious traditions” to which immigrants belong. According to the authors, these three factors mainly impact social capital “which ultimately impacts civic life of immigrants. Social capital is the social ties or norms of reciprocity that form the basis of cooperation among members” (Foley & Hoge, 2007: 51-53). Occasionally, volunteers engage in social services to satisfy needs of their own members but lack connections to larger society; however this is not the norm. Foley and Hoge identified the role of social capital within religious networks in involving immigrants in civic engagement but these authors do not identify how many first and second generation participants were included in their study. Secondly, there is no indication of how religious beliefs and teachings impacted religious involvement or civic

involvement of first or second generation immigrants. I argue that perhaps second generation individuals may want to connect to the larger U.S. society more than first generation individuals do, and see the benefits of these connections outside of their own immigrant communities. Particularly within a post-September 11th environment in which some individuals may fear anti-immigrant sentiment, second generation individuals may feel that it is important to connect to broader U.S. society to ward against this sentiment. Thus, connections to religious, immigrant communities, and broader U.S. society may be fostered by civic involvement or volunteering. These are gaps in the literature which need to be filled with the current study.

Existing literature offers ample information about the religious assemblies of Asian immigrants but lacks information on second generation immigrants and their religious involvement as the basis for their informal or formal volunteering. For instance, a study by Kniss and Numrich (2007) referred to the role of religion and religious assemblies for “low and high civic engagement” among immigrant groups. “Low civic engagement” signifies immigrant communities which serve the needs of their own community members. Both a reluctance to connect to wider society and self-interested involvement in volunteering (simply to improve one’s own skills) may be indicators for low civic participation. High civic engagement may represent openness to participate in a larger society and a willingness to indulge in neighborhood issues or larger community concerns outside of one’s congregation and a disinclination to portray a “narrow religious identity” (Kniss & Numrich, 2007: 152-153). For high civic engagement, collective activities are arranged by volunteers without any supervision. According to Kniss and

Numrich (2007), religious congregations may differ in terms of both religious teachings and traditions for high and low civic engagement. It does not become clear how religious teachings and congregational involvement inform low and high civic engagement for second generation immigrants. The study initiated the discussion of how religion and religious assemblies influence the civic life of immigrants and their children. However, the findings did not clearly disclose how second generation participants get involved in religious activities and whether religious involvement impacts their low or high civic engagement. It is important to have a second generation perspective and to understand how and why religious involvement impacts their volunteering efforts. Religion may impact second generation individuals differently and/or second generation individuals may use connections to religious communities differently than other generations before them. Volunteering activity, then, may also look different among the second generation.

The current study will address four research questions:

1. What types of volunteering experiences do second generation Sikhs report (informal or formal)?
2. How do 2nd generation Sikh explain the reasons for their volunteering experiences?
3. What role does religion play in informing the volunteer behavior of second generation Sikh immigrants?
4. To what extent does volunteering expand beyond the Sikh community to include wider participation within U.S. society?

The current study includes data collection on religiosity in order to examine the connections between religious association/religious involvement and the volunteering practices of second generation Sikhs. Previous studies have repeatedly focused on how religious centers provide opportunities for volunteering or facilitate training members in civic skills, such as public speaking, planning events and conducting meetings (Foley & Hoge, 2007; Eck, 2001). The current study aims to include second generation participants who are volunteers to examine how volunteering action is motivated by different dimensions of religion (e.g., faith or religious identity, religious beliefs, teachings, the religious center, or religious organizations for informal and formal volunteering, etc.). The current study aims to explore both the informal and formal volunteering experiences of second generation Sikhs as well as how their volunteering experiences extend beyond the community for wider participation into U.S. society.

The capacity of religion to influence individual volunteering is a phenomenon that requires qualitative interviewing. Qualitatively-based inquiry is best suited if we seek to gain an in-depth understanding of religious association/involvement and the second generation's informal and formal volunteering experiences, as it can explore the subjective meanings behind religious association/involvement and the purposes of volunteering for each individual (Creswell, 1997; Esterberg, 2004). Most studies on religious involvement are comparative in nature and also quantitative. Subgroup comparisons are interesting and relevant for the study of attitudinal or behavioral trends, the substance of religious beliefs, involvement, and practices may be overlooked, and it might be difficult to determine exactly how an individual makes use of religious

association or involvement in daily life, or how religion may be a facilitator of positive views towards civic engagement. A qualitative study of a single religious group may be a better alternative to comparative studies in this case, as it can provide better information about how individuals make sense of their religious beliefs and volunteering experiences.

To systematically proceed with any social inquiry about second generation Sikhs in the U.S., information about the demographic background of this immigrant group becomes necessary.

Background of Sikh Migrants

There are two waves of Sikh migrants to the U.S. The early Sikh migration started in the late 1890s and continues to the present day. Between 80-90% of these immigrants were “Jat Sikhs”, hailing from a peasant community in Punjab, who migrated to California via Hong Kong. They became employed in the United States as sugarcane planters, mining workers and other farm laborers. These early migrants were from rural backgrounds and did not possess an extensive education. According to Leonard (1987), early immigrant Sikhs were denied citizenship and they suffered a lot of discrimination before they actually attained land ownership rights in the United States (Leonard 1987).

The second wave of Punjabi immigrants in Southern California occurred after 1965. By contrast, post-1965 Punjabi immigrants in Southern California were significantly different from pioneer settlers. Post-1965 Sikh immigrants owned large tracts of land in California and were prolific planters of fruits and other commercial crops. The point Leonard makes is that “culture, religion and ethnicity have different meanings for people in different contexts and at different times in their lives” (Leonard, 1987: 12). Even

though their “tradition was reinvented” in a new context, pioneer Punjabi Sikhs had always considered themselves Americans (Leonard, 1987: 13). Leonard’s account gives us information about early Sikh migrants but identifies the role of ethnicity in the lives of early pioneers without dissecting the role of religion for pioneer settlers and recent migrants. In order to clarify the role of religion and to avoid confusion between “ethnicity” and religion, the current study aims to explore the connections between religious involvement and volunteering practices of second generation Sikhs.

Hawley & Mann, in their book, *Studying the Sikh: Issues for North America*, add that the local communities of Sikhs are a rich resource for studying the world’s religions. This is because “Sikhs enjoy talking about their beliefs and customs; a field trip to a local Sikh temple Gurdwara “the Guru’s place”) will enliven a presentation of Sikh tradition” (Hawley & Mann, 1993:21). Gurdwara is a place where Sikhs associate in a Sangat (a community) for Nam Japna (meditation on God’s name) and to indulge in religious practices like Sewa (selfless service to humanity), and Langar (a community kitchen open to everyone). Gurdwara is also the place where regular weekly announcements for various religious and community events are often made. The findings from the current study suggest that announcements regarding volunteering events are also made through Gurdwara.

Helweg suggests that one of the concerns for scholars who study ethnicity and religion should be able to address how the “ideological constellations and behaviors” become alike in the sacred institution of Sikhs (Helweg, 1993 in the Hawley and Mann

Eds). Before examining how ideology becomes practice among the Sikh religious assembly, it is important to discuss the different classes of Sikh immigrants in the U.S.

Sikhs and Hindus of Indian origin who settle in the United States tend to be members of the professional class with higher salaries. The majority of the Sikh population of the United States resides in the California region and Leonard confirmed that post-1965 immigrants are more established and own large tracts of land within that region. Since Sikh religion has been identified as a sect of Hinduism within United States, it is difficult to assess a mean income of Sikhs, as well as a comparison to other immigrants and even Americans as a whole. Foley and Hoge (2007) discusses the income and class characteristics of Asian immigrant communities like Sikhs and Hindus in areas such as Maryland, Washington D.C. They note that one out of three Sikh congregations report that over 20% of their members gain high salaries like \$100000 a year (Foley and Hoge, 2007, p, 106). The authors also indicate that within that region Sikhs are highly educated and possess advanced professional degrees. Fifty six percent of Sikhs had college degrees. Only six percent of Sikh population is without college degree. At this point, it is important to discuss the religious beliefs of Sikhs.

Sikhs, Religion and Religious Beliefs

The word *Sikh* is a Punjabi word which means a “learner” or a “disciple”. Sikhs follow the principles of the Sikh religion, founded by Guru Nanak. Born in 1469 in Punjab, to a family of modest means, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) belonged to the age of Vasco de Gama, Martin Luther, Columbus, Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci and Sir Thomas More’s Utopia (Singh & Singh, 2012). Guru Nanak was the first religious leader

to question the status quo of the Caste systems, the false rituals and the symbols possessed by religious systems in India. Guru Nanak spread the message of universal love, spiritual attainment by devotion on the name of God: the timeless, omnipresent, and the omnipotent. He became the voice for equality and an advocate for the respect of women in the society. “Jap Ji”, the Sikh early morning prayer, is the essence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and is a Sikh scripture and holy book which was composed by Guru Nanak and other Gurus. The “Holy book “Sri Guru Granth Sahib” begins with the words: “there is one God”. The Holy book for Sikhs is an everlasting guide and source of teaching for Sikhs. “Sri Guru Granth Sahib” has Gurbani written by Sikh Gurus in the Gurumukhi script.

The idea of Sikhism is a disciplined, organized approach to life. The emphasis is not on the worship, but staying pure amidst worldly impurities. Besides five Ks (Kara, Kesh, Kachera, Karpan, Kangi) Sikhism carries a message that humans can develop the best in themselves by the realization of truth, The God and by performing good actions. “Naam” and “Sewa” are the pillars of the Sikh faith. Naam (deep devotional singing praises of God) makes a human conscious of God’s presence at all times, whereas practice of Sewa (selfless service) makes life pure, worthy, and humble. The building of character is fundamental to Sikh ideology and is based on the values of truth, love, and equality (Singh& Singh, 2012).

The main Sikh principles are Kirat Karni (living through earnest means), Nam Japna (meditating upon the name of God), and Wand Ke Shakna (sharing with the needy). Standing against ritualism and asceticism, Guru Nanak warned humans against

the five vices of human life (lust, anger, greed, attachment and egoism). Guru Nanak taught the message that human life should be lived with simple virtues like truthfulness, righteousness, peace, humility and self-realization, which are only attainable by meditating on the name of God (Naam). Adherence to Shabad (words) by gurus is important. The practice of Sikh ideology makes us humane, as well as accountable in this world.

Mann (1993) suggests that Guru Nanak's vision of Sikhism is not just about "meditation on God's name" but a "nourishment of community with spiritual, social and ethical concerns". To be part of a Sangat or community, Sikhs follow certain social and spiritual responsibilities. A shared kitchen (Langar), the ethic of hard work (Ghal Khai), sharing with needy (Dan) and living an honorable life (Mann, 1993) are key principles of Sikh life. Sikh philosophy encourages Sikhs to look beyond color, gender, religion while serving the community. Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, is kept with great reverence in the religious center, Gurdwara. The earliest Sikh shrine is the Golden Temple, in Amritsar Punjab, India. The Golden Temple has four doors to the main location (Sachkhand), where the sacred scripture is placed. The four doors symbolize the presence of God in all four directions.

According to Sikh history and the holy book of Sikhs women are placed equal to men. They participate in community events along with their men counterparts. Women, according to Guru Nanak Devji (1469-1539) should be respected. He is the first religious figure to raise a voice against disrespect or inequality against women. He wrote in Guru Granth Sahib:

“So why call her bad? From her, kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all. (Guru Nanak, Raag Aasaa Mehal 1, P. 473; Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

Guru Nanak protected women and explained that she is the creator of everyone, whether kings or another woman, the initiator of creation. In writing this in a holy book, the highest authority in Sikh belief, he laid the foundation for the egalitarian society for Sikh community. If members of Sikh community do not follow this principle and disrespect their sisters, wife, or keep any woman deprived of any rights related to community involvement, they defy Sikhism. This is important for understanding why gender differences may not be found in the current study.

Community building is also important part of Sikh religious teachings. The word “*Sangat*” means “community bonding,” as defined by Sikh Gurus. Within the “*Sangat*”, no single person makes the ultimate decision about issues but, rather, decisions are made collectively by a larger group. This is one of the basic pillars of Sikhism. “*Vichar*” is emphasized in “*Sangat*” and refers to the exchange of ideas and communication, instead of direct orders by any single person possessing an authority position. Another important aspect for the *Sangat* is “equality,” which means that no single person can be treated in special ways compared to others, as all are equals. Shared values also formulate the basis for community sentiment among members of the Sikh congregation.

Religious identity and religious beliefs hold distinct collective meaning for Sikhs. I asked questions to second generation Sikhs to explore how religious identity, beliefs,

and their religious organizations motivate them towards volunteering within the Sikh community and beyond.

The next chapter reviews literature on types of volunteering and religious affiliation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I divide the literature review into three main sections: (1) Volunteerism within U.S society, (2) Religion and informal volunteering, (3) Religion and Formal Volunteering. In all sections the focus is on volunteering practices among religious immigrant communities.

What is Volunteerism?

The words *volunteering* and *civic participation* have been used interchangeably in recent social science literature. Volunteering involves giving time generously and freely for the benefit of another individual, group or cause. The amount of hours which people volunteer in any nation indicates the vitality of its “civil society” (Sundeen, Garcia and Wang, 2007:243). Volunteers are defined as adults aged sixteen and older who perform unpaid volunteer activities for or through an organization ([Volunteering in America](#), 2011). In 2002, about fifty-nine million people volunteered in U.S. This number increased to sixty-three million in the year 2009. A plurality of volunteering occurs through religious communities. Almost 35% of volunteering occurs through religious organizations or religious communities within U.S. society. Volunteers are not the only crucial assets that provide priceless social and economic value to non-profit organizations and communities, but they also provide immense psychological, social and leisure benefits to individuals (Sundeen, Garcia & Raskoff, 2008: 929).

In the past, volunteering has been identified as both informal and formal (Littlepage et al 2005). According to these authors, formal volunteering involves with an affiliation to an organization whereas informal volunteering is helping out by running errands or doing yard work for people not living with you. Sundeen Garcia and Wang (2007) indicate that among Asian immigrant communities, there is an emphasis on obligations to clan members, family and

communities. Some groups such as Chinese, Filipinos and others are likely to volunteer in an informal setting rather than engage in formal volunteering. Engagement in informal volunteering includes activities such as helping neighbors and extended families (Sundeen, Garcia and Wang, 2007: 255). In contrast, formal volunteering relates to performing unpaid volunteer activities with an affiliation to a formal organization of a civic, political, professional, social, and community nature. International educational, youth service, and environmental services are examples of formal volunteering. Existing studies lack information as to why an individual favors informal over formal volunteering and fail to establish a connection between volunteering acts and the importance or relevance of religion.

Since religion provides moral guidance for helping others, scholars have started to examine the ways in which religion promotes volunteering among immigrants. As immigrants become “American,” they become more religious and this may influence their civic identity and practices (Ecklund and Cadge, 2007:366-367). The national rate of volunteering is 28.8%, whereas 23% of all Asian Americans engage in formal volunteering (Sundeen Garcia and Wang, 2007: 262). Gender does not impact the volunteering tendencies of Asian Indians and Asian Chinese volunteer the least among these three groups (Sundeen, Garcia & Wang, 2007). Differences among religious practices often contribute to varied rates of volunteering among immigrant groups and it is important to understand those differences among various Asian groups. Asian populations come from diverse historical and religious backgrounds which determine their volunteering practices. The next section will focus on previous studies to understand informal volunteering among Asian immigrants.

Religion and Informal Volunteering

Religious organizations provide the primary push to motivate Asian immigrants and their subsequent generations to volunteer in the United States (Jensen, 2008). Most volunteering occurs at religious centers and religious adherence is the foremost reason for volunteering among Asian immigrant populations. The recent scholarship on the civic involvement of immigrant communities also documents that community volunteerism is the most common form of volunteering among Asian populations (Ecklund & Park, 2005). The concerns over the nature of such volunteering and whether the acts should be qualified as informal or formal are fairly recent. Similarly, the discussion of whether second generation Asian immigrants volunteer due to religious reasons or acculturation is also a recent debate.

Volunteering is defined as informal when help is offered to members of society without tangible benefit to the person giving such help, such as giving a ride or helping with errands (Little Page et.al, 2005). Sundeen, Garcia and Wang (2007) indicate that recent researchers have now realized that for Asian immigrants, history, language and culture play distinct role in understanding actions such as volunteering. The exploration of whether religious communities offer ample volunteering opportunities to second generation immigrants or whether they decide to volunteer due to religious reasons, add to the data of Asian immigrant civic participation in the United States. The fact is that small religious communities and/or least studied immigrant groups, like Sikhs, cannot be amalgamated with dominant Asian groups, like Chinese or Hindu populations, that are much bigger in size when compared to Sikh populations.

Previous studies offer several arguments regarding the religious and civic involvement of Asian immigrant populations. However, a clear picture of how second generation are drawn to religious participation and how it helps them link to their community and at society at large has

been neglected. The early studies on immigrant populations examine the informal support systems that exist for new immigrants and their subsequent generations. But why such “informal ties” are meaningful for second generation’s religious involvement is absent from those studies. For instance, Ebaugh and Curry (2000) indicated that “fictive kin relation” is the most frequently occurring form of networking and support systems among diverse immigrant populations. The members from similar religious background or immigrants from similar geographical origin provide networking as well as emotional, psychological support to new immigrants (Ebaugh & Curry). However, how informal support is offered by “fictive kin relationship”, how that support draws second generation immigrants to religion or how religious associations become an important source for adaptation for second generation immigrants are key missing links which the current study aims to provide.

Yang and Ebaugh (2001) talked about how religious organizations were transformed within a U.S. context to provide not only a place of worship, but also a numerous of civic comforts like sports facilities and other amusement and cultural services to their members. The study was based on 13 ethnographic studies of different immigrant religious institutions in Houston, Texas. Yet, the authors revealed little about how a second generation’s religious involvement at worship centers is different or transformed from their predecessors. However, it was indicated that second generations always practice their religious teachings in the purest form since they often consult the main religious texts. Since second generation participants were not included in the study, it becomes difficult to understand why second generation immigrants consult religious texts or how religious organizations recruit second generation participants to offer services to the new immigrant members. Another drawback of the study is that there was more information offered about religious organizations and their transformed dimension, yet

little was offered to explain how religious organizations recruit members of second generation immigrants or how they provide services to their own members and beyond. This means that the study could not present a clear picture about second generation's religious involvement or how religious organizations interact or train second generation members for civic involvement.

Eckland and Park (2005) argued that for Asian Americans, religion becomes the principle source for "community volunteerism". Eckland & Park also suggested that religious affiliation becomes the most significant factor in promoting community volunteerism among Asian populations, even more than education, income or gender. It is also suggested that religious adherence is the most effective source for "pro civic behavior" (18). The meaning of "pro civic behavior" is not very clear from the study and it was also difficult to gain a clear meaning of "religious adherence". Does the "religious adherence" refer to adherence to religious leaders, religious values or religious ideals or teachings or religious imperatives? It is unclear whether the meanings of "religious imperatives" such religious beliefs, values and messages of religious text have become meaningless for second generation immigrants. It is also unclear whether gender, income, or education influences second generation immigrants' religious beliefs and what impact this aspect of religious involvement holds for its members. An inquiry into religious involvement and the meanings of volunteering experiences of second generation immigrants is important in order to understand significance of "religious adherence" and to identify the role of civic involvement in second generation Asian immigrants.

The existing literature also provides ample evidence that religion and religious participation helps to ease the adaption process for immigrant and subsequent generations. Scholars on religion and immigration suggest that religious involvement makes the integration process easier for immigrants and their generations (Foner & Alba, 2008) Participation in

religion or in any religious activity gives immigrants and their generations the sense of “belonging to community”. Foner and Alba (2008) evaluates the social science literature on immigration and religion within United States and Western Europe to conclude that immigrants’ religions help to ease the adaptation process within United States as compared to Western Europe. However, an exploration of what mechanisms exist for second generation immigrants to aid in the adaptation process is a gap in the study. A systematic inquiry into the processes used by religious organizations to gain the interest of second generation participants is needed in order to discover whether it is the voluntary membership or volunteering experiences at the religious center that eases the adaptation process for second generation members. In addition, the study overlooks an inquiry into the motivations of second generations’ religious involvement, their volunteering experiences, and how religion provides a context for their volunteering experiences.

The researcher is aware of only one study written by Jensen (2008), which provided information about the connections between second generation members and their civic involvement. Jensen explored the “individual motives” and “institutional contexts” for assessing civic engagement among Asian Indians and immigrants from El Salvador. The inquiry was based on questions such as: to what degree immigrants were aware of civic issues and whether religious motives or religious organizations engaged second generation adolescents in civic issues. The findings suggest that religious affiliation is the most significant element for immigrant civic engagement. It is not the spiritual motives but, rather, the religious organizations that play a profound role in engaging second generation immigrants to be involved in civic issues (Jensen 2008, 16). Jensen mentioned the role of religious organizations but failed to answer how religious organizations recruit second generation members. The study explained the meanings behind religious teachings which are encouraged, what kind of civic involvement is encouraged

and what incentives exist for second generation members for participation in religious organizations. In the current researcher's opinion, it is more important to identify the range of activities or even whether the religious organizations arranges volunteering programs in order to link them to society or whether the nature of volunteering is within same religious community.

There are several questions which need to be addressed in order to assess second generation immigrants' religious involvement and volunteering practices. How do religious organizations motivate second generation members for volunteering? What are the types of volunteering? What methods do religious organizations use to offer volunteering opportunities and/or recruit second generations? There are studies on the second generation's religious involvement and they provide information about how it is benefitting individual members but does not show how volunteering connects second generations to wider American society. Moreover, being Sikh, the researcher understands that Sikh religion, ideologically and historically motivates action like selfless service (Sewa). It becomes important to examine and understand how a religious center and religious organization can facilitate the second generation's awareness of their religious ideologies and practices, and encourage participation within wide American society.

Second Generation Studies

Previous researchers often refer to the term "silent exodus" to describe the religious involvement of second generation immigrants. The meaning of the term "silent exodus" is unclear as to whether it means a non-explanatory withdrawal or something else. For Asian immigrants and second generations, religious involvement has been identified as a mechanism for individual career advancement. For instance, Bankston and Zhou (1996) and Cao (2005) suggested that second generation immigrants attend religious centers to achieve economic and

educational success. Cao (2005) suggested that religious communities also offer parental/surrogate support. In examining how religious involvement and volunteering experiences connect second generation Asian immigrants to U.S. society, it is important to examine a second generation's perspective as to whether their volunteering is centered in the community or extends beyond. Another concern which merits attention is whether volunteering is an outcome of religion participation within formal organizations. Now, I turn to an examination of past studies and their analysis of religion in relation to formal volunteering.

Suggestions for New Directions in Second Generation Studies

Ecklund and Cadge (2007) reviewed the entire body of literature on religion and immigrants since the 1990s. The authors identified the major drawbacks of these studies and suggested directions to future studies. The main drawbacks Ecklund and Cadge identified with such studies was the consistent focus on religious centers. Whether the scholars studied the adaptations of immigrants, organizational structure, ethnic identities or second generation immigrants, the focus has been completely on religious centers. According to the authors, scholars have paid the least attention to the relationship between individual centers and their broader religious context. To understand fully how immigrants participate in religious life within the United States, it is more important to understand religious practices of immigrants across countries and across generations. The authors pointed out that it is important to gauge the religious practices of immigrants because religious practices and religious identities are indicators of how immigrants will think and behave within the United States' context.

Religion and Formal Volunteering

The studies on formal volunteering among Asian immigrant religious communities put forward several important arguments. Asian Americans are more likely to volunteer at their religious places than at other venues. Religious communities also provide opportunities for volunteering in order to link members to formal organizations and to help them participate widely within American society. Yet, these studies do not identify clearly whether individuals are encouraged by their religious leaders, friends from their place of worship, from announcements, e-mails to engage in volunteering or whether they volunteer due to religious reasons. However, the religious communities that only engage in community volunteering for their own benefit tend to have low civic participation (Kniss & Numrich, 2007). Religious centers that involve their members in diverse public issues and projects of wider community seem to be more civically engaged. The worship settings with low civic participation are less concerned about large public projects and tend to focus more on individualistic, competitive, goals (36).

Foley and Hoge, in *“Civic Life of New Immigrants”* (2007), examined two hundred religious assemblies of various immigrant populations, including El Salvador, African & Asians. In the Washington, D.C, Maryland area, the authors studied several Asian worship communities such as Hindus, Sikhs and Christians to examine how religion plays a significant role in the civic incorporation of immigrants. Foley and Hoge stated that “worship communities” can contribute to the “civic incorporation” of immigrants in multiple ways. Civic incorporation refers to the degree to which members of immigrant communities are willing to attend and participate in public causes (28). Worship communities are pools of social capital, determinants of civic actors, and serve as channels for civic participation among immigrant communities. Three main factors

operate to determine the extent of civic participation among immigrant communities: “circumstances of reception of immigrants,” “organizational structure”, and the “religious tradition” which determines the social capital of immigrant civic incorporation. “Social Capital” is termed as access to resources, networking and interaction which repeats through face to face interaction among members. Hierarchically organized religious structures contribute more to “worship” routines. Lay people are less involved in community related projects but there is more emphasis is on worship. The study by Foley and Hoge (2007) identified the role of social capital “among religious networks for involving first and second generation immigrants for civic incorporation.” The authors indicated that Catholic and Protestant religious communities within the United States recruit volunteers for their social services through their places of worship. According to the study, volunteers at the religious center are given opportunities to plan out events, organize several programs or events for the community. These are also the opportunities for the volunteers to develop leadership skills and organizing skills. The study by Foley and Hoge (2007) identified the role of social capital “among religious networks for involving first and second generation immigrants for civic incorporation.” The study provided ample information about civic incorporation of immigrant communities and how members at religious center are given opportunities to develop skills. But the question remains, how do second generation individuals utilize these skills to participate in civic projects outside their religious center? Furthermore, how does religion or religious organizations provide second generations with motivations and incentives to engage in worship services? The study did not provide answers to these important questions.

Another study by Kniss and Numrich (2007) also referred to the role of "religious heritage" for “low and high civic engagement” among congregations of immigrant groups. Civic

engagement was identified as public participation of members in organizations, institutions and associations of society (10). “Low civic engagement” means a minimum involvement beyond one's own ethnic / religious immigrant communities. Reluctance to connect to wider society and an individual involvement for volunteering just to improve one’s own skills may be indicators of low civic participation. High civic engagement may represent an openness to the larger society, a disinclination to portray a “narrow religious identity” and a willingness to indulge in neighborhood issues or larger community concerns outside of one’s congregation (Kniss & Numrich, 2007:152-153). The authors make the point that irregular volunteering or volunteering just to achieve skills for personal objectives is different from collectivistic and regular, frequent volunteering. The authors also indicate that if civic engagement is part of a “religious heritage”, the members of community will be more likely to volunteer. The authors identified the role of religious heritage in directing “moral projects” in which the religious communities chose to participate (Kniss and Numrich, 2007: 199). Individualistic, informal and irregular participation by members as a solution to civic issues is termed as low civic participation whereas collaborative, formal and permanent type of participation in civic issues is considered high civic engagement (Kniss & Numrich,2007:203). Again, the study indicated that “religious heritage” may impact the volunteers with both low and high civic engagement. However, the study did not include second generation participants to examine how religious heritage, religious practices, religious stories motivate second generation members in their civic awakening and participation.

Another issue that persistently exists with existing studies is that the studies are quantitative in nature and offer more comparative analysis of subgroups to show rates of volunteering, predictors of volunteering rather than examining the meaning behind volunteering experiences. For instance, a study by Sandeen, Garcia and Wang (2007) compared subgroups

like Filipinos, Asian Indians and Chinese to discover rates of volunteering in formal organizations or the voluntary organizations. The research also focused on predictors of volunteering among these sub-groups. A large sample was collected from a U.S. population survey with 1859 Asian Americans and 1138 Asian immigrants. The respondents were asked if they had performed unpaid volunteer activities through one of the eight organizations: civic; political or professional international; educational or youth oriented services; environmental or animal care; hospital or other health service; religious or community service between September 2003 and September 2004. The authors found that Asian Americans volunteered an average of 113.6 hours at formal organizations. Filipinos were found to have volunteered for the most hours (158.3), while thirty-four percent of all Asian Americans volunteered at religious organizations, followed by volunteering at children's educational institutions. These three groups gave the least time to social service organizations. Filipinos volunteered the highest (26%) to formal organizations, followed by Asian Indians (21%) and Chinese (19%). The overall volunteering percentage for immigrants was 2% lower than the national average. All three Asian groups most frequently volunteer at religious organizations, but Asian Indians engage in religious volunteering the least when compared to Filipino and Chinese populations. The study did not disclose much about meanings behind volunteering experiences for second generation immigrants and it was identified that for second generation participants, the acculturation process cannot be ignored. Acculturation refers to the process by which immigrants adopt the values of other groups while retaining their own. The study failed to provide information about what service projects second generation Asians volunteered with and why. The study concluded that future studies of civic behavior must include indicators of religiosity and group history in order to explore the decision for engaging in volunteering.

CHAPTER 3 :RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Approach

The goal of this research is to qualitatively assess volunteering experiences of second generation Sikhs and how religiosity and connections with a Sikh religious center affects these volunteering experiences. The aim is to understand how religious teachings and/or religion informs formal and informal volunteering among second generation Sikhs; how volunteering occurs within the community, as well as to participate widely within the society of the United States. Qualitative research design is best suited to assess subjective understanding of each participant to identify connections between the “being Sikh” and “being American” for volunteering experiences. Recent researchers examining volunteering have realized that the volunteering behaviors of each immigrant group are informed by language, culture, history, religious beliefs and reasons for migration, as well as acculturation (Sundeen Garcia & Wang, 2007, 243). To assess how participants explain volunteering experiences more fully, a qualitative research design has been chosen (Creswell, 2003, 186, Table 10.2)

In-depth interviewing has been chosen as the specific qualitative method to understand the second generation Sikh perspective on religiosity and how it influences them in volunteering for the community, as well as participating widely in U.S. society. As Patten (1990) explains, in-depth interviewing is a method which allows for understanding others’ perspectives in detail. In this case in-depth interviewing helped us understand how religiosity and volunteering are meaningful from a second generation Sikh perspective. The phenomenological approach also makes sense as per the research questions I was asking. In qualitative analysis the phenomenological approach is meant for understanding the “essence of lived human experiences” and “giving voice.” In this study I made sure to allow participants to describe the

phenomenon of volunteering and religious affiliation and identity in their own words, and I took their lead in what to analyze in their interviews (Creswell, 2000:15). I asked the following research questions.

1. What types of volunteering experiences do second generation Sikhs report (informal or formal)?
2. How do 2nd generation Sikh explain the reasons for their volunteering experiences?
3. What role does religion play in informing the volunteer behavior of second generation Sikh immigrants?
4. To what extent does volunteering expand beyond the Sikh community to include wider participation within U.S. society?

Data collection and analysis has been carried out to highlight the meanings that both religion and volunteering have for individuals (Creswell, 198: 147). I tried to find non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements” (Creswell, 198: 147) to illustrate the meanings of religion and volunteering for individuals in my study. The main aim of this dissertation is to understand the phenomenon of volunteering and the influence of religion as described by the participants. My goal is to present the essence of the attitudes and experiences of second generation and not just my own interpretation of the data.

Data Sources

I recruited second generation Sikh participants from a Sikh Religious Center, or “Gurdwara”. For background, I will describe this setting. It is a building with a huge parking lot. The building includes a main entrance area, Deewan Hall, Langer Hall, A Sikh Library, and a few classrooms for teaching children Punjabi and Sikh history. The entrance hall is where people

place their belongings, remove shoes, wash hands to proceed to Deewan Hall. Deewan Hall is where prayers are held. Sikh Sangat (communion) is held in Deewan Hall, where individuals sit for two hours and listen to Gurbani (the Sikh Guru's words) and gather guidance for life. After prayers, announcements about forthcoming events are made. People proceed to Langer Hall (a place for community food), where they all are served food. Anyone is welcome at the Gurdwara. The organizers of activities and volunteering experiences will always be found making announcements and coordinating activities in Deewan Hall and/or Langer Hall. I found this Gurdwara to be a very welcoming setting for my research project, and therefore I made it the base of my recruitment.

There are about ten thousand Sikh families in South East Michigan. After consulting with resourceful individuals in the community, I found that there are five religious centres in this area. I selected just one religious center for recruitment, however. The religious center that I chose has a website that provides all information about all the committees and interfaith organizations or whom to contact for any help (i.e., religious counseling, volunteering committee, health and care committee, educational committee, etc.). The religious center website also contains pictures of the building, and a stanza from Gurbani is often displayed on the Gurdwara website emphasizing worth of Sikh teachings in a Sikh's life. The agenda for forthcoming events and other important announcements are also available on religious center website.

Recruitment and Access to Religious Sites

Qualitative interviews with two religious leaders from this Sikh religious center were the means of access to the recruitment site, and these leaders then allowed access to the second generation volunteers who attended their centers. Interviews with leaders of this religious organization were helpful to understand their agenda as well as ideological perspective for

organizing volunteering projects, motivations offered for organizing volunteering to second generation Sikhs. Religious leaders were asked about when the center was established, the main volunteering projects operated by the center, why the center provided volunteering opportunities for second generation Sikhs, how the members are encouraged/motivated to volunteer, how they are informed about volunteering opportunities, and the significance of volunteering programs. The researcher also probed about how volunteering programs connected second generation members to communities and organizations outside of the religious center.

I was able to attend religious gatherings at the center and an announcement of my project was made by the religious leaders while I was there. This was important because it showed congregational members that the leaders and the center approved of my study. The interviewer also attended a Sikh Heritage Dinner in the local area in 2011, to get access to participants and become familiar with people in the religious center before starting interviews. My identity as a Sikh researcher was not questioned; rather my status as a researcher in the center was approved and praised by the leaders at the religious center. Members of the board of trustees gave authorization to conduct this research. Weekly congregations and a youth camp have been attended to gain familiarity with the volunteer projects in which second generation are placed. Also, monthly newsletters have been analyzed to take note of current volunteer projects as further evidence.

Second generation participants were then recruited via snowball sampling procedures. This involved participants informing the researcher of other potential participants via their friendships, school, or other social networks. The researcher, being an immigrant Sikh, had access to Sikh religious center as an “insider” or group member. Being a member of the group allowed the researcher to establish and maintain trust and good rapport with the research

participants throughout the recruitment and interviewing process. At the same time it is the responsibility of researcher to give accurate findings about second generation Sikhs, their religious involvement and volunteering. The researcher's identity as a Sikh helped to understand Sikh's perspective about religiosity and volunteering. This means the researcher became part of second generation's world and by interacting with their situation and tried to bring out participant's perspective about religion and volunteering. The aim is to describe the situation of second generation Sikhs, their experiences and perceptions. The researcher paid attention to particular instances that draw second generation towards religiosity and volunteering.

The researcher aims to report the findings of their research with the participants under study at the conclusion of the project.

Context and Setting

Twenty nine participants were recruited from Sikh religious center in southeastern Michigan. This center has been chosen because of two reasons. Firstly, the center is easily accessible to the researcher and secondly, the religious center web site explains various volunteering programs organized from time to time, activities along with images relating to the volunteering programs organized in the past by this center. For instance there is a volunteering committee that meets at the religious center as well. The official website of this Sikh religious center has information about youth camps, and other volunteering services that Sikh volunteers are involved in, making it clear that there is an emphasis on volunteering within this religious organization. The center's volunteering committee was contacted to get further information about second generation participants, and those identified as volunteers were then contacted. Participants were included who had volunteered at least once a year in any program like summer

camp, blood donation camps, career guiding workshops, free medical consultations to the elderly, dental care, free eye surgical camps or any other services to the community or society.

Eligibility Criteria and Description of the Participants

The researcher aimed to recruit second generation participants from either 2.0 or 2.5 cohorts. The cohort 2.0 refers to the generation born within United States to the foreign born parents. The cohort 2.5 refers to the generation born within United States with at least one parent born within United States (Rumbaut, 2004 as quoted by Sundeen et.a l (2008). Sikh participants included in the study had to be born in the United States themselves, or had to migrate when they were very young (before 3 years of age). That is, to be included in this sample, participants had to have lived in the United States since their birth or migrated very soon after that. Only those participants who are willing to record their interviews in English have been included. This means that the researcher conducted all the interviews in English.

A majority of the participants included in this study (25) are born within United States, but four participants migrated with their parents when they were small children (between the ages of 18 months and 3 years). All participants included were eighteen years old or older at the time of the interview and had either one parent born in U.S or both parents born abroad (Rumbaut, 2004). Fifteen participants are men and 14 are women. Thirteen participants are ages 18-19 years; eight participants are ages 20-21. Five participants are ages 23-25. Two participants are between ages 28-29 years. One participant is 42 years old. Educational level varies. Eighteen participants are earning undergraduate degrees. Two participants have law degrees, three are medical students and three have graduate degrees in business administration. Overall, this is a very well-educated sample. For basic demographic profile, please refer to Appendix C.

All individuals agreed to be interviewed, and the researcher followed informed consent procedures prior to the interviews as specified by the university's IRB. All participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and were given information about the study before they consented to the interviews. The researcher did all interviews with participants regardless of the gender of the participant. Interviews occurred at the time and location most preferred by the participants.

Interview Questions

A variety of open-ended questions were asked of the participants, to thoroughly evaluate the reasons for the participants' religiosity and volunteering. Questions about volunteering experiences covered both informal and formal volunteering experiences. Questions were also asked about religion. Some questions were asked about the meanings of religious identities and teachings, and the other questions asked about organizational affiliations in both religious and non-religious contexts. The entire interview guide for this study can be found in Appendix B.

The first four interview questions were regarding initial volunteering experiences about volunteering; like when they started to volunteer, motivations, how often and type of projects they volunteered to. The subsequent section inquired about goal of the organization, the target group for volunteering, if they engaged in formal and informal volunteering, and what their responsibilities were as a volunteer. The questions on meanings of religious identity, religious teachings, involvement in congregational services, role of religious center and whether the religious center provided incentives to engage in volunteering were explored. Participants were asked about the types of organizations in which they volunteered and how their volunteering patterns changed over time (if at all). The participants were also asked whether and how volunteering is a channel to participate in the wider U.S. society. The last set of interview

questions asked about demographics which covered their age, gender, educational level, and the year parents migrated to U.S.

Overall, the interview questions were meant to explore three constructs or concepts. The first two constructs related to the volunteering experiences of participants. For instance, the research asked general questions on motivations behind volunteering, and the reasons why they volunteered. For instance, did friends, parents or religious associations encourage them to participate in volunteering? The second construct also related to volunteering but explored the types of organization, purposes and benefits it gives to participants. As a third construct, religiosity was explored. This is a particularly important aspect of this study on Sikh individuals, since Sewa (or “selfless service to humanity”) is both religious practice and a core principle and teaching of the Sikh religious practice system. By looking into religiosity the researcher could identify whether and how participants are motivated to volunteer by religious involvement. The second and third construct can also be an indicator of how volunteering extends beyond religious activities to connect participants with larger U.S. communities and/or the Sikh community at large.

Interviewing Experiences

Interviews were conducted between September 2011 and March 2012. All participants were interviewed face to face. Five participants were interviewed at the religious center, fourteen in public settings on a local university’s campus, two in a public library, three at fast food restaurants, three in university campus housing, and two more at their work place. A journal of interviews and other meetings associated with this research was kept for a record of the interviews and the researcher’s experience of the data collection process.

Each participant was told in the beginning that their participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were told that that it was a study addressing second generation Sikhs and their volunteering experiences. Their response was a surprise: delight rather than abrupt refusal. The reason for this could be that this interview took them outside of their daily routines (routines most likely structured around education) and I was talking to them about their religion or volunteering, which they identified as an important topic. At least one person told the researcher that they heard from their friend that it was a very interesting interview to complete and decided to participate after that, thinking, “So probably this kind of research is new but interesting.” However, occasionally (at least three or four times), the researcher sat at the designated place for a scheduled interview but people would call and tell that they could not come that day. This experience was frustrating. Most interviews lasted for 35-45 minutes but some interviews were short or longer. Shorter interviews were with a man who was age 18 and a woman who reported that she did not attend the religious center very often. Most second generation Sikh participants were comfortable answering all questions and did want to share their experiences, however. People shared their religious as well as volunteering experiences. Overall, it was not very difficult to recruit and complete interviews. After one interview the participant gifted the researcher the book, *Asians in Southeastern Michigan*, by Helwig. Only two participants actively refused to participate in the study. It should be noted that a few of the interview questions were difficult for participants to answer at first. For instance, twenty four participants asked the researcher the question, “What does informal volunteering mean?”, when asked about this type of volunteering activity. After the researcher explained the meaning of informal volunteering, the participants provided instances of informal volunteering. In many cases informal volunteering also occurred in formal settings, such as volunteering for soup kitchens, food banks or informally

helping at local hospitals. In general, the distinction between informal and formal volunteering was hard for some participants to understand, so the interviewer had to probe further and reword the questions until participants understood.

Data Analysis

Inductive, qualitative data analysis has been employed to draw meaning from the findings. All the interviews have been recorded with a digital voice recorder purchased by the researcher. Qualitative experts have defined qualitative data analysis in varying ways but, according to Lofland et.al (2006: 195), “data analysis involves a kind of transformative process in which empirical findings are turned into findings or results”. Patterns and themes may emerge at the data collection stage but qualitative experts generally divide it into two stages. The first stage is called “initial coding” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61-74) and the second stage is called the “focused coding”. The first stage may involve dividing information into main categories, i.e. by reading each and every line and dividing information into main categories. The second stage involves more of a selective process so that the analysis is more focused. The researcher wanted to obtain firsthand experience with qualitative analysis, and therefore did all analysis by hand and without help in the first round. Since the transcribed interviews were less than three hundred pages, it was possible to manage the data by hand (Creswell, 1997). In the second round of coding, three undergraduate students, two second generation Sikh non-participants, and a non-Sikh, Indian student read the transcribed the verbatim of interviews. The researcher insured that there was no way these coders could know who the participants were so that the identities of the participants were not endangered. In a third round of coding a member of the dissertation committee helped refine the coding strategies. Pseudonyms were given to all interviewees during

transcription so that other coders would not be able to link transcripts to the actual participants. Pseudonyms are also used in all written analyses.

The researcher used open coding and focused coding to identify emerging themes from the transcribed interviews (Brumley, 2012). For the open coding the researcher tried to understand what volunteering projects second generation Sikhs participated in, and whether participants engage in formal volunteering. The researcher tried to distinguish whether participants volunteered at the religious center, religious organizations, and whether other, non-religious volunteering projects were reported. Attention has been paid how the participants described the meanings of their religious identity. For instance, what does it mean to be Sikh? How religious ideal of Sewa is meaningful for volunteering? How congregational services at the religious center involved them in any formal and informal volunteering? How did Sikh organizations play a role in volunteering activities? And what were the key benefits or rewards for volunteering, according to the participants? The researcher then attempted to find connections between religious affiliation and religious activity and the types of volunteering they did. The researcher also tried to look at possible connections between the meanings as benefits attached to volunteering and the ways in which participants discussed religion. Since they were born in the United States and have remained in this country their entire lives, the aim of the study is to deeply explore the ways in which volunteering is an outcome of religiosity, and whether being religious and volunteering are somehow connected. In data analysis the researcher tried to find ways to fulfill this aim. One question that further made this research very meaningful is that each participant has been asked how religion and religious organization provided incentives to engage in any volunteering. The researcher attempted to analyze evidence of formal volunteering within and outside the Sikh community, as well as informal activities. For instance, if the

participant explained volunteering with *Paint the Town*, a local organization that builds houses for low income people, the researcher coded this as an example of formal volunteering beyond the Sikh community. Examples of formal volunteering were also represented in examples of volunteering with or within formal organization (whether religious or other), such as going with a religious organization to work at a shelter or soup kitchen on a scheduled day. An example of informal volunteering is the non-scheduled help given or extended by the participant in assisting a stranger in an emergency situation such as a lost child in a grocery store. The researcher counted the number of formal volunteering activities to identify participants' types of activities. The researcher also paid close attention to each and every case of volunteering (and the context within which that volunteering took place and was initiated) in order to understand why and how participants volunteered in formal and informal settings. For instance if the participants explained the meanings of "being Sikh" as community involvement, the researcher looked for projects at the community level at the religious center as well as in the contexts outside the Sikh community such as settings such as schools or college campuses and activities related to that setting.

Coding Scheme

To understand volunteering experiences of Second generation Sikhs , the questions such as what does it mean to be Sikh, how is the religious ideal of Sewa is meaningful for volunteering and how weekly congregational services involve you in volunteering were coded to understand the meanings of being Sikh, religious involvement and connections to their volunteering experiences. A three step process was followed. First, all the words or phrases that were most commonly used by participants were used as initial codes. The researcher then differentiated the responses of males in one section and the responses females in another section,

to check for possible gender differences (which, for the most part, remained undetected in the findings). The most commonly occurring themes identified in participants' interviews were about community involvement, the importance of helping others and achieving equality, and the importance of religious teachings and religious association in shaping their volunteering practices.

Many participants wanted to talk about how "Being Sikh is who I am" and about how their actions hopefully represented the tenants of Sikhism. For that reason I am continuously involved in community, volunteering is doing something for community, Sewa is a personal worthiness. Reports of volunteering and reports about the importance of Sewa went hand in hand in interview conversations. Participants also talked plenty about bringing community together through engagement in service. An emphasis on achieving equality through civic engagement was found in many interviews as well. The themes presented in the findings chapters in this dissertation relate to the themes in interview questions, and represent the most commonly reported ideas about the importance of religious association and involvement and types of volunteering.

Validity Check

Validity in qualitative research can be checked using several steps. According to Creswell, however "validity is the strength of the qualitative researcher but it is used to determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint view of the researcher, the participant or the readers of an account" (Creswell & Miller (2000), as quoted by Creswell (2003: 195-196). The face validity of the research has been checked by few acquaintances and mentors (undergraduates and dissertation committee members) who are non-Sikhs/non-participants helped the researcher to verify whether coding was right and analysis seemed on

accurate path. In addition the researcher heard similar things from many respondents which made the researcher believe data saturation was reached. Due to same reason, the researcher believes that analysis accurately portrays the feelings and activities of Second generation Sikh immigrants.

Limitations and Contributions of the Study

There are two limitations to this study. First, the sample for this study is a purposeful, convenient, sample. So the findings of the study might not be truly representative of the entire second generation Sikh population within United States. This could be a limitation of the study. Secondly, the researcher aims to report a value free findings but being a Sikh, an unintentional bias may have penetrated the study. In addition, the fact that I recruited only from a religious center and therefore only interviewed second generation Sikhs with religious affiliations is a more limitation of this study. Non-practicing Sikhs or Sikhs less attached to the religious center may not be represented by this study. Despite the limitation the study does contribute to sociology of religion as well as immigration studies, in particular, second generation studies. The study examined the volunteering experiences of second generation Sikhs, and identified the meanings of religious identity, connections to religious organizations, and whether members engage in formal or informal volunteering acts or both.

In the chapters that follow, I describe the major findings in this study. Chapter Four describes interview data on Sikh religious identities. Chapter Five presents data on volunteering experiences. Chapter Six includes data on participants' reasons for volunteering.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SIKH

The meanings of Sikh identity are embedded in community involvement, helping others and following the Sikh teachings such as Sewa (selfless service). Each section in this chapter covers meanings of Sikh identity and concludes with the summary of findings.

Community Involvement

“Getting connected to the community”, “doing something for the community,” “involvement in the community,” and “giving back to community” are often used by second generation Sikh participants in the study when they tried to voice the meanings attached to being Sikh. Not only did participants often refer to themselves as “we” often, but the basis of their community involvement is in the action of this “we”. In conversation, then, it was clear that the strong “we” identity translated into “we” (community) action. The meaning of their “we” (Sikh) identities was seen best by them in what Sikh individuals did together, as a community. Half the participants explain the meaning of Sikh identity as community involvement. For instance, Jajjit, a 24 year old woman, explains the meaning of Sikh identity, a major motivator for her action at community level.

“For me being Sikh is who I am. I cannot separate those things from the fact that I am a Sikh. I know some people like to compartmentalize what I am here and what I am there but for me I never saw myself separate from being Sikh. Yes, it does define my actions because my actions hopefully represent tenets of Sikhism. It was a big factor for me for the fact that I was continuously involved in the community and being Sikh I saw volunteering as Sewa doing something for the community as being Sikh it is a personal worthy and Sewa and volunteering went hand in hand”.

The participant identifies that her identity as a Sikh is not separate from who she is.

Being Sikh implies there is a single meaning to her identity and action. This means there is one

meaning to her being Sikh and it is the same no matter where she is. The participant indicates integrity (or reliability of action and character) inform her thoughts and actions at all times. It is the actions she engages in that makes her Sikh identity meaningful to her, and she is clear that she does not see herself as separate from her Sikh identity. The basis of her action is living Sikh tenets like Sewa: “doing something for the community.” For her, Sewa and volunteering are the same.

Similarly, Upjot, a 25 year old woman, also points out that the spirit of community lies in the community’s action, and that Sikh individuals were able to identify themselves through their joint action. She explains:

To me Sikh is following to possess five symbols of Sikhism. These are symbols to bring the community together; to identify each other. As far as religiously, I think Sikh religion is a modern religion. It means to think and live freely. It really means to live in the spirit of community. Sewa (selfless service) is a huge part of it. It is beyond our traditional institution of Gurdwara (religious center). Going to Gurdwara is for your personal satisfaction but it is the action and interaction with other people.”

According to Upjot, the five Sikh symbols also allow Sikh individuals to recognize each other and identity as one “we”. The “Five Ks” are Kes (unshorn hair), Kanga (a hair comb), Karpan (a small sword), Kara(an iron bangle), and Kachera (small undergarment). These are symbols within religious teachings that connect Sikhs and strengthen the bonds of community. (Along with the symbols also comes an important awareness of Sikh history and language, two indispensable parts of Sikh culture. The learning of Punjabi is as important as the Sikh holy book appears in Gurumukhi and, if children cannot learn the language, they cannot read the Sikh holy book. Even though all text appears in English as well as in Punjabi on the projector at the religious center during prayers, learning the language means understanding the true essence of the religious message because it can be read in its original context. Punjabi language and Sikh history classes are also run in the religious center by volunteers not only to make children

understand the importance of Sikh events in the history but also to explain children how each Guru period spread the message of universal brotherhood, survived hardship collectively, and learned to be in peace.)

The collectivity of action is emphasized to make the point that being in community does not forbid individual independence of thought or action. But the “spirit of community” and the meanings attached to Sikh identity (e.g., selfless action, service, and being equal to others) perhaps also instills and brings cooperation of action. Upjot very clearly indicates that it is not the presence at the religious center that is important to Sikh identity but the action of Sewa or service that is the most important aspect of Sikh identity. Actions associated with Sewa are more important in Sikh identity than mere presence at the religious center or interaction among the members.

Seerat, a 42 year old woman, explains the spiritual and other dimensions of Sikh identity more clearly than younger counterparts. The sentiment of community is expressed again by use of the term “we” to explain community sentiment and responsibility and how one can establish within community. She explains

The spiritual dimension, ideally, it means to be engaged in all the things of the world, like family, work and at the same time it is some detachment. I guess when things go good you are ok with it and when things go low you are also ok with it. It is accepting ups and down of life, so more a happiness and equipoise in life. Well, I think that as I guess I am using the word proactive a lot. I feel that Sikh religion is very active religion and that we are mandated not to be just doing prayers but also to be productive to better the creation around us and just not better yourself only but also to see yourself as a part of larger community or creation we do if we do not do something to improve around us is just like not always keep taking but also give back. Like we walk on the earth, we use Gurdwara, we use utilities, so we have to give back in order to really establish that we belong here.

According to Seerat, both the spiritual dimension of being Sikh as well as responsibility to community at large is an active part of being Sikh. The spiritual dimension of Sikh identity includes living in the positive and establishing high spirits despite the odds or hardships one

faces. Seerat also explains that Sikhism instructs action above worship. The responsibility to give back is emphasized by Seerat almost as a duty and as an act of reciprocity to the earth -- to “better” “the creation around us.”

The call to community action that seems to come with Sikh identity goes well beyond the Sikh community as well. Six participants utilized the term community service while explaining their volunteering experiences, as will become clearer in Chapters Five and Six, and the “we” actions that were taken often took Sikh individuals in this study outside the safety of their own communities, allowing them contact with the larger U.S. society. Participants made it clear that Sikh identity translated to a responsibility to serve all others. For instance, Dialjit, an 18 year old man, mentioned the Detroit community when discussing his Sikh identity, suggesting that “all the people from [the] Detroit community will walk together.”

Helping Others and Acceptance of All (Equality)

More than one quarter of the participants agreed that being Sikh meant the acceptance of others, equal treatment of all human beings, and perhaps (at times) a blending of individuals. Ravinder, a 24 year old man and a doctor, explains: “Being Sikh means giving respect to elders or young, rich or poor and giving positive help to whenever wherever you can”. This participant understands that being Sikh means treating everyone equally. He also suggests that part of Sikh identity is also providing positive help to everyone whenever possible; thus, beyond the belief of equality, being Sikh means trying to insure that others have what they need to survive.

The Sikh identity does not allow second generation Sikhs to embrace the distinctiveness of their own individual identities or to discriminate in any form. Binat, an 18-year-old woman, explained:

“I do not distinguish people on other’s religion or race. I feel everyone is equal. If someone ask me what my religion is I am proud to tell them that I am a Sikh, like about the five Ks, like, and our history. I am also very big about the Bhangra aspect. I am proud to tell about [our] Bhangra group (Punjabi folk dance) but I do not distinguish people based on religion and race.”

It is explained that equal treatment of everyone is important, as is the awareness about Sikh history, Sikh symbols. In Binat’s explanation, we can see that belief in the fair treatment of all fellow beings is akin to beliefs in other Sikh customs and that equal weight is placed on the importance of being fair or equal and the importance of Sikh religion or history.

It should be noted that it not easy for second generation Sikhs to explain to members from other communities what Sikh identity is. Sometimes they explain the equality principle by explaining the example of “Langer Sewa” (the concept of community kitchen) and at other times they explain other simple principles within Sikh faith. For instance, Dharamjit, a 19 year old man, thinks it is hard to define in a single definition what Sikh is, but he tries to explain by expressing how hard it is to explain to others who are not aware about Sikh community. He continued:

“Oh that is hard one. You have to define something. My view point is being Sikh means to help. Our duty as a religion is kind of helping everyone and it is very accepting religion. If, you need help, we will be there. We are not very arguing kind. Not take but give more. We kind of help everyone. We are a volunteering religion. We might have adopted from other religions because our religion came into existence quite late and might have taken ideas from other religion. But I guess we are more a benevolent religion.”

The participant explains how helping others is central to Sikh ideology. The term is defined in the concept of “we” and “our” religion; the idea of helping others and the idea of equality in community is deeply rooted in the “we” concept. Accepting, giving and benevolence are activities described through the definition of being Sikh. The participant brings the point that “we are kind of helping everyone,”we are a more benevolent religion. The participant further

explains that if help is expected of Sikhs, they provide help without arguing. The participant explains later that Sikh religion does not stress adherence of certain rituals or traditional worship patterns. Rather, living and practicing teachings in day to day life is the essence of Sikh life. Consideration for others, doing good to others and helping everyone, is the core value of Sikh religion. Dharamjit goes so far as to say, “*We are a volunteering religion.*”

Ravijot, a 20 year old woman, explains the connections between her volunteering and how religion influences strongly.

“A Sikh. . .it is a strong religion and our religion and we do put lot of emphasis on helping others and volunteer work which is another reason I volunteer. Well, I do think it is important to help people in the community who do not have maybe what you have in life. I think like not everyone comes to life like with things you have, think about the people around you who do not have the resources what you have, you should be in a position to help others. I think it is important to help peoplewhat you have so that is the number one reason I am volunteering”.

Ravijot explains that Sikh religion is a strong religion because it places emphasis on helping others and that volunteering is the way to do that. The appearance of the word “we” consistently occurs to emphasize community sentiment, as mentioned earlier. The participant further explains that another important aspect of helping others is taking care of less resourceful people. Being Sikh also means to help those members who are less resourceful or who need help.

Sewa, A Fundamental Sikh Teaching

One quarter of participants explained that being Sikh means following the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which translates to doing humanitarian work and selfless service (or, Sewa). Being Sikh also means applying Sikh teaching in day to day life. Karam, a 21 year old woman, explains meanings of being Sikh by mentioning Sewa.

“When you look at the word Sikh it literally it means a learner. So you are supposed to learn from Guru’s teachings. There are two fundamentals of Sikhism: Simran and Sewa. Volunteering comes from Sewa, so we are taught to be selfless and help others in need,

without expecting something in back. I feel as a Sikh you should not only volunteer but do it from heart. You do not feel that you are obligated to do it. But it should come naturally to you and you should find peace doing it.”

The connections between Guru’s teachings, Sewa, and learning this selfless service are central to Sikh identity. Karam explained that Sikh individuals learn from the teachings of the Guru (Gurbani). She explains that there are two foundations of Sikh faith: Simran (meditation on God ‘s name) and Sewa. Volunteering drives from individuals’ socialization to Sewa, or selfless service to others. Karam also clarified that, once learned, Sewa should occur to Sikhs without any expectations or hesitancies. The actions of Sewa should give peace rather than any tangible benefit. The ideal of Sewa and its relevance and important are fundamental to Sikh history, Sikh philosophy, and practice at religious centers. Nihal, a 28 year old man, explains how Sewa became part of him.

“Just growing up and going to Gurdwara, Sewa is going around. As soon as you walk in there are always people doing things that is Sewa and Sewa related. You might not notice it but your body kind of picks it up. Sewa is a natural and it becomes a part of who you are. You learn from Sikh history and you hear from Sakhis, the Gurus, the type the type of service they did for the Sikh religion. It just empowers you to continue the tradition. I think a lot of it has to do with Sikh history and What Sikh Gurus did.”

Sewa is practiced at the religious center and members automatically get engaged in Sewa because it is a Sikh core value. Sewa becomes part of individual Sikhs once they enter the threshold of Sikh Gurdwara (the religious center). The religious center is the main place where Sewa initiates, as the Sikh Gurus teach this core value in that setting. The participant explained that the concept of Sewa can also be learned in reading Sikh history and stories about Sikh religion.

Sewa is oriented towards service to all, and brings peace to individuals when it is practiced, without the gain of tangible benefits in return. Talwinder, a 21 year old man, explains

how being Sikh means continuous adoption of positive and rightful behavior in their lives and discarding negative and wrong behavior. According to Talwinder,

“To me personally, in this age, in this society, the world is a learner. There is an interaction going around you both positive and negative. So, it is an understanding to follow the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and incorporate in your life and understandings.”

Being Sikh, according to this participant, is following the teachings of the Sikh holy book and rejecting the other, negative (non-Sikh) values around them. Following the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is to make life positively meaningful. According to Talwind, being Sikh means continuously discarding negative behavior around them and incorporating values given by Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Nihal, a 28 year old man, suggests:

“To me I guess the way I was grown up, being a Sikh is someone who is honest, truthful, and willing to help those in need? Sewa is always doing the right, always going to be learning. None of us are perfect, but a Sikh is someone who is willing to learn. None of us is perfect, but Sikh is who is willing to learn. Go out there and help those in need, honesty and doing the right thing.”

This further highlights how Sikh identity definitely does not refer to the upkeep of certain exterior symbols or material possessions but, rather, possession of certain internal qualities that make individuals humane and socially responsible. Aspiration to learn and to become better every day is also a part of Sikh identity, according to my participants.

Binat , an 18 year old woman, highlights how quality of service is also connected to the equality principle that is central to Sewa. She explains:

“I think Sewa is many aspects of Sikhism that is really good. Because we are welcoming people to Gurdwara but we also offer free meal which other cultures do not have in their place of worship and it is like just that kids serve the meal to anyone who comes to Gurdwara. Serve the meal no matter what their background may be, they do not have food to eat and that one meal might be whole lot for that person. And they are not paying anything and that the same time they are connecting to the God. So I think Sewa is big aspect of Sikhism”.

Sewa is often practiced in the form of Langer Sewa (services of cooking and distribution of community food at Gurdwara (religious center)). The religious center is not only a place of worship or community center for the amusement for the members of the community but also a place where young Sikh children learn Sikh values. It is setting within which Sikh values are practiced and witnessed. Hospitality, acts of giving and serving, start at the young age at Gurdwara. The participant highlights how Langer Sewa is a way to teach kids the principle of equality, a principle that is foundational in Sewa and Sikh identity overall.

All participants in this study understood Sewa as meaning service as well, but five participants distinguished Sewa from volunteering. According to these five participants, Sewa is selfless service and gives humans peace but volunteering may involve some self-interest, such as learning some skill. Thus, while some volunteering activities may exemplify Sewa, not all volunteering activities are indicative of Sewa. The purpose of the volunteering (and how selfless or self-interested it might be in nature) is key in determining whether it represents Sewa. In order to clarify further, all participants were asked about how the Sewa ideal informed their volunteering activities.

The meanings of Sewa and how it informs volunteering is illustrated by Iqbal, a 20 year old man. He explains being Sikh means making the world a better place every day. Yet, “volunteering can be out of kindness, goodwill, or motivation or for any incentive but Sikhism teaches us selfless service.” Dialjit, a 19 year old man, also explains how Sewa is different from volunteering as well.

“For me, Sewa and volunteering are different. Sewa is definitely to give back to community but volunteering may have ulterior motive like going to school like individual motive to it. I mean Sewa makes you feel good. Volunteering is to know something to benefit people you know, you can do it to learn stuff but Sewa is different it gives you peace; it is serving everybody who is out there. It has no culture orientation to it”.

Volunteering may have an objective of learning some skills thing but Sewa is the selfless service to serve everyone (without any cultural orientation). Sewa is for peace as well as service to all.

For many participants in this study, then, Sewa is more encompassing than volunteering. Iqbal distinguishes Sewa from goodwill, kindness, and incentives which all identify human's expectation or have social and pragmatic goals. Second generation Sikhs like Ravijot, who are more aware of Sikhism, may understand the difference between volunteering and Sewa and the fact that not all volunteering activity may represent religious teachings or core values. Parents and others at the religious center both play a primary role in introducing young Sikhs meanings of Sewa, how it is a cherished value of Sikhs making young Sikhs responsible towards community, and service to all; however, once second generation Sikhs begin volunteering on their own, they might not always be practicing Sewa in those activities.

Parents' Influences on Children's Learning of Sikh Principles

Some participants believed that Sikh identity also consists of values given to them by their parents, such as Sewa, belief in one God, doing good to others. According to participants in this study, parents also taught them to be proud of who they are (be proud of their Sikh identity), share their resources with the needy, and never forget those values which have been part of their heritage for the long term. Aman, an 18 year old woman, explains:

“To be a Sikh is that you are carrying on the values of your parents and that God has given you. Just always be proud of who you are never forget that. Even though moving on to a new culture, not in India, you should not forget where your roots are what kind of values your parents want you to have in you. And I would say just being selfless and helping wherever you can.

In this case Aman suggests that “being selfless” and helping others are the cherished values they learned from their parents as well as religious leaders. Thus, first generation parents reinforce

Sikh religious values and teachings, because these values are their “roots.” It is the responsibility of subsequent generations – even though they are far from their countries of origin – to stay close to those religious values and be proud of those values. Parents insure that second generation individuals know that it is their responsibility to learn and carry on these teachings. Tajinder, a 25 year old woman, further explains her mother’s influence:

“Even Guru Granth Sahib (Holy book of Sikhs) always teaches us that you can’t just believe God but you have to give back to the community. My mom always raised me to believe in volunteering to give back to community. Now, I am grown up and look up for opportunities. You are happiest when you are volunteering.

The parental role in bringing awareness about Sikh tenets or beliefs is pivotal in learning about Sewa, as well as Sikh identity in general. Participants in this study explain that it does not comprise at one particular stage of life but a regular part of Sikh life at all stages, whether childhood, youth or old age. Always giving back to community is like a continuity of action. However, parents have a strong influence in setting the tone for later volunteering and participants clearly acknowledge this fact.

In at least nine cases parents became a role model for how to engage in Sewa.

Upjot, a 25 year old woman and a medical student, suggests: “My parents, my dad always told that Sewa is a fundamental Sikh belief and has put endless hours in Gurdwara.” It should be noted that not only do the parents explain about Sewa but also they practice Sewa at the Gurdwara (putting endless hours in at the Gurdwara).

Komal, a 22 year old man, explained: “I think I answered it above that Gurdwara is the first place where you learn Sewa. It is devotional, as well as giving back to community.” The participant explains that the religious center is the first place where Sewa is learned and parents make sure that second generation individuals have a connection to the religious center.

Aman, a 19 year old woman, explains how parents are her primary inspiration.

“Sewa is meaningful for volunteering because you know that it is expected. For me, it is never disappointing parents. Really just living up to them and doing as much as you can so that they can trust you . For example , if I am doing something, if I am volunteering and I know I am doing good and my parents will think it is good, then I will be happy. That is Sewa for me”.

For Aman, then, Sewa and Sikh identity more largely is about understanding the values of parents. If parents think that values of doing right things like volunteering make them trustworthy, that is also Sewa for this participant. Sehaj, a 19 year old woman, thinks that it is not only the continuous attendance at the religious center that reminds them of right and wrong but also it is the reciting of Sikh scriptures or Gurbani, and that the latter is more important. She remembers attending the religious center with her parents. Sehaj further explains:

“When I was little I and mom used to go to Gurdwara a lot. When I grew older, I kind of stopped going. My dad always taught that me That religion does not mean going to Gurdwara but thinking about your religion in your mind and keep yourself in check when you have to follow your religion. Keeping in mind what is right and wrong. I cannot sleep without prayers.

The fact that parents become counsel for children, and encourage the teachings of Sewa, make the second generation understand the role of religion in their lives and instill their own Sikh identities. According to participant religion (and parents it seems) keeps second generation individuals “in check.” Sehaj explains that it is important for her to consult Sikh teachings every night by engaging in the prayers and follows that routine consistently, but that this routine is reinforced by her parents as well as the activities she attends at the religious center. Japjit, a 24 year old woman, responded that Sewa is part of faith and makes one creative and responsible, but Sewa does need to be reinforced by others around you to “encourage and keep [you] doing [it].”.

“I think I became part of people of my age got involved into Sewa because it was part of your faith and also they liked it. We do enjoy doing community service and they continued doing it because they were motivated by the fact that at the end of the day there is a satisfaction that you have and see a finished product or being creative and also people around you encourage and you keep doing”.

Several factors contribute to how Sewa is encouraged, inculcated, and continuously practiced as explained by this participant and others above. It is clear from the above examples that parents motivate and encourage Sikhs to engage in Sewa. Yet, stepping back from the influence of parents, it seems that the first or foremost motivation for Sewa is that it is part of the Sikh faith so, in order to be religious and faithful, one must practice Sewa. Secondly, Sewa is also practiced, and this is a value which is lived in concert with other peers. Sehaj and others in the study suggest that another motivation of young Sikhs is to be with other Sikh peers, who also engage in Sewa. So peer influence is another factor in encouraging young Sikhs engage in Sewa. Second generation Sikhs also receive some influence from other adults at the religious center (separate from parents). In fact, just being at the religious center encouraged acts of volunteering among second generation individuals in this study. Karam, a 21 year old woman, explains:

“I think, I started at an early age. My first experience with volunteering was at the Gurdwara. You know as a little kid we would pass out the napkins to the Sangat (communion) or would set up the plates and cups and things like that. That was when I was younger. [Then] when I was in middle school or high school I joined student organizations for volunteering activities in school. We would teach younger kids, raise money for families that were in need. We would do canned food drives and so on.”

The religious center helps in initiating the process of volunteering and also eases the process of service and contributing while connecting individuals to other organizations. Karam explained the diverse activities of volunteering. Serving food to others, tutoring younger kids and packing food for needy families are the types of volunteering they engaged in while at the religious center. The events at the religious center also included attending Sikh Camps which occur in the summer months. Sikh summer camps (Camp Khalsa) are week-long overnight camps and older Sikhs (age 18 and older) act as camp counselors (campers are typically age 8 to 18). Four participants explained the importance of learning how to volunteer at a Sikh camp. At the

religious center and at summer camps, young Sikhs learn the Punjabi language, Sikh values, how to engage with those who have same values, and how to live “life in the right way”. According to Nihal, a 28 year old man, those values are instilled by ages 14-15 and older children come back to teach the younger children the same values they learned at the summer camps. This transition from young camper to camp counselor allows young adults to have an active role in the education of the younger generation and continue to give back themselves. Vir, an 18 year old man, explained the importance of Sikh camp in the U.S. context.

“Like I was very young when I went to school I was looked down upon. Teachers asked me whoWas I was where my mother and father are from and what they did. I was always asked unusual questions. I know I was looked down upon. Then I went to Camp Khalsa. I was taken care by elder Sikh brothers and sisters, like cousins. They taught me Gurumukhi. They told me what it means to have long hair; I applied those learnings to my life in every situation I faced. I know now how to defend myself, I never could fight back. I was never like that before I went to Camp Khalsa. Then September 11 happened. I used to wear turban in the school and I was looked down in the class. I wascontinuously asked what my mother and father did By attending the camp Khalsa I knew that how important the self-defense is. Now I am proud of who I am.”

The participant above explains that Sikh identity sometimes brings strangeness and negativity from others. He provided an example of the experience with his teacher in elementary school. This was a difficult situation for young Sikh because it was hard for him to explain meanings of who he was. Attending Camp Khalsa made him feel good about his identity, made him understand language and meanings behind their identity, and equipped him with how to voice who he was and be proud of a Sikh identity and heritage.

The young adult camp counselors help to teach the young children the significance of being Sikh, having a Sikh identity, to be proud of that identity and how to apply their Sikh identity in their daily lives. The summer camp helps to allow young adults to help the younger children manage with situations which may derive from living in a world that is visibly different

from their own. As Sikhs, the children are readily identifiable as “different” based on their appearance. As a result of this difference, Sikh students can be singled out as distinct which can lead to discrimination in their U.S. school environment, especially in the aftermath of the terrorism act of September 11, 2001. Sikh camps play an important role to help the children learn how to deal with discrimination and/or difference in American society.

Religious participation and the adoption of a Sikh identity has a foundational role in setting the stage for second generation individuals’ volunteering activity at the community level. The small acts of volunteering start at the religious center at a young age, even as young as age five or six. Further volunteering participation in Sikh youth camps, community health fairs, weekly congregational service, etc., at the religious center, initiates a sense of responsibility towards the Sikh community and at the same time prepares Sikh children to volunteer outside of the Sikh community. Religious organizations and the religious center both play role in establishing Sikh unity and engaging members in volunteering projects of various kinds. Religious participation also brings awareness of religious ideals and beliefs and formulates one’s willingness to help beyond the Sikh community, providing a solid substructure for the participation at the broader level. For instance, Komal, a 22 year old man, connects the links among the religious center, community involvement activities, and the value of service in Sikh’s life.

Well the religious center (Gurdwara, is like a family center. You come to Gurdwara it is like growing up and coming in a family where you start volunteering at very young age. At young age the kids start distributing napkins. At that young age they do not understand what is giving back to community but it is basically giving back to community. Next step may be to do Chaur Sewa and Langer Sewa (types of services). It is basically telling kids to serve and give back to community.”

Positive Sikh identity, attention to Sewa, and involvement in volunteering, then, is based in continued socialization by way of parents, peers, and the religious center.

Summary

To understand the reasons and types of volunteering experiences that second generation Sikh participants in this study report, it was necessary to describe how participants describe Sikh identity and the ways in which serving others is a strong part of this identity. Not only is selfless service to others a core value in Sikh religion, it is also part and parcel of how second generation Sikh children grow up and are socialized. As one second generation participant, Dharamjit, explained, “We are a volunteering religion.” In this next chapter I discuss the types of volunteering that participants reported in this study.

CHAPTER 5: TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

FORMAL/INFORMAL AND SIKH/NON-SIKH

The first section of Chapter Five acts as a summary of the types of volunteering experiences that participants in my sample engaged in. In later sections of the chapter, I describe formal and informal volunteering in more detail, as well as the connections that participants made between the practice of Sewa and each type of volunteering.

Types of Volunteering

Affiliations to Sikh foundation, at the religious center or Sikh organizations of Metro Detroit become the basis of volunteering among the second generation Sikh participants. All 29 participant numbers engaged in volunteering acts at the religious center and participated in Sikh organizations and projects to engage in projects for needy or less resourceful populations of Detroit. On a wider community level, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, Paint the Town, and American Red Cross blood donation camps were the common examples of volunteering among participants in this study. Being active with food banks and soup kitchens were also very common examples of formal volunteering for those with an affiliation to the Sikh foundation at the religious center.

Volunteering occurred at and through various local schools and colleges as well, while participants simultaneously fulfilled educational requirements, built their resumes` or explored careers. School-based volunteering occurred when participants joined key clubs in the schools for teaching younger children, such as assisting them in subjects they needed help with. Counseling kids against destructive decisions or behavior was also an example of volunteering. At the college level, volunteering occurred when participants desired to gain career experiences

(such as medical experiences in a hospital setting), or earn educational credits necessary for pursuing the career they want to pursue. A participant could engage in volunteering for a hospital or medical organization, for instance, because they need certain hours of credits for their resume or career they want to pursue in future; in these cases the volunteering would occur out of self-interest as much as any desire to help a larger community. College-aged participants in this study also volunteered at law offices or a Magistrate's office, if they wanted to pursue a law career. In total, nine participants volunteered in hospitals or law-related offices for these reasons. At least three participants were explicit in their feelings that they wanted to join medical or law profession and were working in these settings to gain the necessary experience.

Volunteers also engaged in volunteering in order to support particular social causes. Participants in this study taught concepts through Detroit Fellows, supported environmental causes, joined organizations to help with natural disasters in Japan and Haiti, and even helped out in Detroit's free health clinics. Besides these types of outreach, 18 participants in the study volunteered regularly at or through the religious center for weekly community projects, such as in health camps, Sikh youth camps and blood donation camps.

It is this researcher's opinion that second generation Sikhs engaged in a range of volunteering activities, both for self-interest (to be involved in positive action for themselves and their goals), as well as for society and community (to help communities avoid dangers and decrease negative or destructive behaviors such as violence, drugs, etc.). It is important to note that much of their volunteering was driven by the fact that they had been raised to believe it was important in a religious setting a part of who they were as individuals, as was discussed in Chapter Four. Thus, much of their volunteering activity could be classified as selfless service, or Sewa. Nonetheless, most participants agreed (n=21) that they became affiliated with several

organizations because they were exploring their prospective careers, as well as because of any commitment to Sewa and Sikh identity. When asked how their experiences in the past helped them volunteering outside Sikh organizations, most participants agreed that their experiences have been with diverse organizations. Medical and medicine related careers are preferred in most cases, however. More on each participant's exact volunteering activities can be found in Appendix A.

Formal Volunteering

This section presents findings from twenty nine cases to explore formal volunteering practices among second generation Sikhs. For the purposes of this dissertation, I am defining formal volunteering as the volunteering that takes place through one's affiliation to an organization or institution. I first describe how schools and colleges become venues for volunteering within non-Sikh context. I also explore how community volunteering at the religious center, participation in congregational services, religious teachings, and affiliation to Sikh organizations impacts volunteering practices within Sikh community and beyond.

Sikh participants' formal volunteering can be divided into two other categories as well: volunteering within non Sikh context and volunteering within Sikh context. Volunteering in a non-Sikh context is represented in part by the volunteering that participants did in school settings.

Volunteering in Schools

Second generation Sikhs start to volunteer in formal ways in a non-Sikh context at the school by participation in the key clubs in middle school or high school. In only three cases did formal volunteering begin in elementary school? Parents encourage their children because

participation is seen as service opportunity for both parents as well as children. Religious participation encourages Sewa at the religious center earlier, which helps put children at ease when they start to volunteer at their schools, when they are in middle or high school. For instance, Sehaj, a 19 year old woman, explains that her initial volunteering experience was in a school and she was motivated to volunteer to improve her self-esteem while also assisting the community. Sehaj recalled her involvement into volunteering during elementary school:

“I started volunteering in the elementary school through this program called “Gate” (Gifted and Talented Education) and we are like a...it was in California and when you are advanced in the subject they will take you out and put you in that program and through that way we Volunteered a lot and we did different activities, like to help out our community and elementary school children. When I got to middle school we used our gate program to help specifically elementary students like to teach them American history or any subject they needed help with.”

The participant also explained that she was not limited to volunteer with a specific organization and she did volunteering work with several organizations. However, helping the community and teaching the younger students is a common form of volunteering within Sikh context. In high school, volunteering occurs because of participants’ affiliations with several organizations. For instance, Nivaan, a 21 year old man, explains:

“I started volunteering with the local religious center that is Gurdwara, and it was mostly related to religious volunteering like passing out the Langer (community food) and distributing napkins, in high school it changed into more than religious, during high school it was all over. We participated in an environmental protection initiative. It was a structured way to volunteer and a lot of it was hospitalrelated to look good on the resume. Volunteering at the Harper Hospital, volunteering with Red Cross, it continued along with volunteering at Gurdwara (the religious center). Now it was religious as well as outside religious.”

The participant explained that his initial volunteering at the religious center progressed to volunteering outside of the religious context.

Volunteering in College

Besides volunteering in elementary and secondary school, affiliation to Sikh organizations shaped how participants reported volunteering in college. In total, 11 participants reported they affiliated with a Sikh organization called “Sikh Cess” in the metropolitan Detroit area, to engage in formal volunteering. Sikh Cess not only provides opportunities to engage in Sewa at the Gurdwara but also it helps to smooth individuals’ transition and adaptation in a college setting. Tajinder, a 25 year old woman, agreed her start at a local university was assisted through her connections to Sikh Cess. She explained:

“When I joined the college, I was not familiar with the area around there so I joined the Sikh student organization at [a local university]. We would go to [a local] Gurdwara for community service, like health screening for diabetes and other health issues for members. We would offer members [information about] good nutritional food habits and exercise routines. Diabetes was the main thing. After that experience I decided that after my undergrad I will give oneyear to Detroit Schools. There was this program called City Year and I [worked at an urban high school and did] counseling.”

This is an example which demonstrates how Sikh organizations play vital role in connecting college-aged Sikh youth to the larger community by giving service opportunities in the Gurdwara as well as in the campuses. This is an important role that a Sikh organization plays since often college students, especially in a new area, can feel disconnected from the community. This Sikh organization helps to re-establish those connections to each other and to the community through volunteering activities. After that experience of volunteering service, participants such as Binat are likely to engage in volunteering experiences on their own for the remainder of their college years.

Another example of a Sikh Cess experience in college was given by Nihal, a 28 year old man.

“Once I got to the college, I had an opportunity to work with organizations that gave me opportunity to meet with other Sikhs and share experiences with them. . . . I guess I already touched on Gurdwara. . . [and] the Sikh

youth camp that was held every year. In college, [I participated in] the Sikh students association, which was a student run organization. [Also] Sikh Cess, which is a Greater Detroit organization. That was the way to stay active and get involved in the community.”

The participant above stated that volunteering in college gave him chance the chance to get involved with other Sikhs as well share his volunteering experiences. These connections to Sikh organizations was the way to stay active in the community. Iqbal, a 20 year old man, also confirmed that he had got involved with Sikh Cess, a Detroit based volunteering organization which collaborates with other organizations at university level to engage Sikhs in volunteering activities. When asked to explain about Sikh Cess, Iqbal continued,

“Sikh Cess. Yeah.... They do a bunch of volunteering activities around metro Detroit. They team up with campus groups like the Indian Student Association. They do food drives. They do bunch of different kinds of things but I volunteered mostly through the tutoring center”.

As evidenced by the above quote, Sikh Cess was not the only organization through which college-aged students volunteered. Amrita, a 21 year old woman, explains that the reason for her volunteering is not only to learn specific skills but also to become familiar with her community. She explains that she is affiliated with various programs.

“When I came here [a local university], I was doing stuff, I cannot remember many but the last one I did that I really liked was The Greening of the Detroit ,and we planted the trees in parks in Mexican town. These projects seem more fulfilling. I am [living in a] city where people need help and there is so much wrong and so many things need to be done, so I thought these are small things I could do”.

Amrita acknowledged that her perspective for volunteering changed after she started volunteering. She finds it fulfilling to engage in those projects because she volunteered where help was actually needed. Amrita explained that, when she was volunteering at a local hospital she was doing everything like drawing blood sample, checking blood glucose levels, checking patients in and out, and making records. She said in response volunteering she is not running

things but she has the responsibility. Volunteering is not only the pathway to achieve knowledge about the field or career the participants want to proceed with but also it is also fulfilling because the participant feels that the participant is providing help where help is needed. Thus, volunteering in college sometimes started as a way to connect to other Sikhs and feel community, but eventually college students realized that there were skills to be gained from volunteering that could help them in the long run in pursuing careers.

Upjot, a 25 year old woman, had always volunteered with non-Sikh organizations like volunteering at Detroit Free Clinics also at the Harper hospital but she recently started volunteering with a Sikh organization at the National and International level. One example of her work with a non-Sikh organization was her work as a medical student in the Metro Detroit free clinics. She regularly volunteered with non-Sikh groups but it was only recently she decided to volunteer with an organization based in New York, which assists larger causes.

“Yes, there is an organization in New York and they are all started by second-generation Sikhs. We have this Sikh organization and they went to Heiti for volunteering. I think weneed help in Punjab in India. It is nice to see other communities to go out and helping outside because we all pretty well off here.”

This is another example where volunteering is based in a Sikh organization, but is not necessarily within the Sikh context. This organization most likely has a national and international base for helping the people in natural calamities.

Formal Volunteering within Religious Contexts

Besides providing weekly congregational events, the Sikh religious center links Sikhs to the wider American society by arranging various volunteering events for connecting second generation Sikhs to larger American society. The religious center helps to link interested volunteers to organizations through announcements about forthcoming community events by

sending emails, information about the newsletter for the forthcoming volunteering events. Blood donation camps are organized and affiliated to Red Cross Society of America and considered a big event to give back by second generation Sikhs. Vir explained his formal volunteering experience at the Sikh religious center at the blood donation camp which was organized by the Sikh community. He was able to help doctors and nurses draw blood and with which he could assist.

Seven participants recalled that they volunteered at events for either Paint the Town (n=5) or Habitat for Humanity (n=5) in their volunteering activities. (Paint the Town is an organization that paints or repairs home for poor communities in Detroit.) Both organizations help to build houses for the less resourceful people in the Detroit. Gurdit, 29 year old man, recalls an event of Paint the Town as the most memorable experience of his young life.

“We used to have the Paint the Town Event and one Uncle from Gurdwara organized it. There were 30-40 people from our community will go and do the painting for the needy the whole day”.

At least five participants reported this event as an interesting community event, which allowed them to assist those in need as a member of the community. Gurajan (a 22 year old man), Upjot (a 25 year old woman) and Jatinder (an 18 year old man) all talked about involvement in these events. Upjot gave the example of different projects she participated in through the Gurdwara.

“Programs through Gurdwara were Habitat for Humanity, for making homes, and soup kitchens. Habitat for humanity is an organization that exists for 10 -20 years. The initiative was in urban areas to provide people houses in the urban areas. People are doing good work and have families but do not have potential to buy houses. It is not that people are not working but they do not have sufficient [money to buy a home]. These brand new homes are given to these people. Supplies are provided by the organization to build homes for helping people to become self-sufficient. A grass root effort was to make them self-sufficient.”

Jatinder also recalled the Paint the Town event and reported that more often he volunteers within Sikh organizations because it is easier than trying to find a volunteering activity on his own. The Sikh community makes it easier to find available volunteering events than it is to find as an individual, not associated with a specific group. The religious center also organizes programs such as soup kitchens and also food banks, where members of the congregation can help to pack the food to help the poor and other needy individuals in society. The reasons for volunteering through Sikh organizations (and not just as an individual, disconnected from communities) are explained by Nihal:

I guess whether it is a Sikh organization or any other organization, there is always going to be little bit of ...I do not want to say awkwardness, but a little bit of difficulty in trying something new and try something different. People want to stick to their comfort zones or do something that is little bit more they are used to doing. I got involved at young age because I enjoyed volunteering in the past and the outcome of every event I did how successful I was and that pushed me to stay active later on in my life”.

Nihal explained how joining Sikh organizations make volunteering a little bit more comfortable for people because they feel comfortable in their religious communities and can practice Sewa easily in those forums. When they join something new and join something different there is some uneasiness, so volunteering through Sikh religious organizations provides a gateway to the larger U.S. community in some cases.

At the broader community level, participants reported participating in health fairs. Four participants reported that they had assisted with work at a health fair at the Sikh religious center. Japjit explained how the health fair served the Sikh community but offered help to everyone in the surrounding area as well.

“[The] Medical Health Fair is the huge event we have every year in Gurdwara ; it does not focus on the Sikhs in the area, [it] is open to the entire public in the South East Michigan area. We publicize it for everybody in the South east Michigan area. It is easy for us to target the Sikh community but anybody is welcome. We have people come from all over the area. We provided medical services like blood work or medical attention to

medically uninsured, underprivileged, or other medically underserved. Provide resources and medical services. This obviously goes hand in hand with the Sikh philosophy. It was absolutely for anyone who needed help or whatever resources we could provide.”

As the participant described above, medical fairs are not targeted to the Sikh community specifically since everyone is welcome but it is initiated within the religious organization, creating a formal volunteering opportunity for second generation individuals.

Sometimes, then, formal volunteering was just “easy” when participants were affiliated with religious centers. All participants reported that they received information about upcoming volunteering from the Sunday congregational meeting at the religious center. Information about volunteering events is announced after weekly prayers, is also easily accessible at the religious center web site and by the monthly newsletters. Flyers are often displayed on the notice board at the religious center notice board. Participation in congregational services provides participants in this sample with the ability to connect with their culture as well as their communities. Congregational services help to connect Sikhs to Sikh organizations like Sikh Cess, within which they could connect to other volunteering projects run by places like Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, or simply collecting items to help the needy.

The majority of the participants (n=23) make the point that they visit their religious center to get involved in community as well as for spiritual involvement. There are no material benefits expected or encouraged by the religious center to get second generation individuals involved in the Sewa. “Working together” and “making a difference” in the community are the sole motivations behind Sikhs engaging in volunteering, at least according to the participants in this sample. Japjit, a 24 year old woman, explained:

“There was no incentive. The biggest incentive was growing up in this community. It was more you think you are part of that community and you

own it and feel responsibility towards it. There was no external push but I think you are part of it and if you think some part of it needs to be fixed, you will work together and make [a] difference.”

The participant explained that she was involved in making a difference in the community, not for any material benefit or benefit for the religious center, but rather to be part of individuals working together for a common cause. In other words, after growing up as part of the Sikh community, both Sewa and volunteering come naturally to Sikhs and they perform the action solely because they know they should do it. According to Ravinder, a 24 year old male, “No incentives were given. I mean coming to Gurdwara, listening to Gurbani [religious hymns]. . . . It tells you to be selfless, so that is the biggest incentive.”

Veer, Nihal, and Binat also confirmed that while performing Sewa they gain useful utilitarian skills. Most importantly, while engaged in Sewa they benefit from the social aspect of formal volunteer work as Sikhs work together and share and learn from each other’s experiences.

The majority (n=23) of the participants in this study who have either volunteered through a Sikh organization or non-Sikh organization have also done significant fundraising for the American Cancer Society, have always participated in blood donation camps for American Red Cross or made homes for poor through the organization called Habitat for Humanity. In researcher’s opinion that second generations Sikhs are amongst the group of immigrant communities with highest civic participation within American society. As mentioned in the last chapter, Dharamjit agreed in suggesting, “We are a volunteering religion.”

As members of American society, second generation Sikh immigrants engage in various acts of formal volunteering. At an early age, the American education system becomes the venue for early volunteering experiences. At the college level, volunteering occurs for college applications, career exploration or resume building purposes but it is not limited to career

applications only. At the same time, a Sikh religious center is also a primary institution for engaging second generation Sikhs in early acts of religious as well as civic volunteering. Second Generation Sikh participants in this sample indicated that religious involvement meant participation in volunteering for community outreach projects.

Informal Volunteering

After analysis of the direct quotes from all twenty nine cases, being Sikh means to live in the spirit of community, following Sikh beliefs and action of community service or Sewa. In the U.S. context, Sikh beliefs are striving to following teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib for the self-improvement and betterment of entire creation. For second generation Sikhs, Sikh beliefs are learned at the religious center and become meaningful for community service at the community level and when individuals begin to participate in the communities within which they work and live. Treating everyone equally and willingness to help anyone, even strangers, is also an outcome of religious beliefs as well as within the pro-volunteering social contexts they are located.

Sewa is important again here since it motivates second generation Sikhs in their informal volunteering practices. Participants who acknowledged the importance of Sewa provided examples of informal as well as formal volunteering activities. Participants responded volunteering “humbles us” (n= 5), allows us to see different perspectives (n=9), “raises us above our personal horizons” (n=1), and links us to different non-profit organizations (n=7). Binat, an 18 year old woman, for example, suggested:

“[I]t is great way to link not only to meet new people [and] become familiar with different situations . . . , you know, it is one person making huge difference in many people’s lives. It links you to different people.”

Dharamjit, a 19 year old man, gave a similar response. Second generation Sikh participants acknowledged that Sikh religion teaches Sikhs to appreciate different people and cultures and, also, by volunteering makes fellow Americans know that Sikhs are friendly and understand different perspective.

Willingness to Help Strangers

Sikh foundational beliefs provide a basis for our understanding of why participants might help strangers as well as members of their own groups. Religious upbringing also plays role. According to a Komal, a 22 year old man, Sewa is the value learned first at Gurdwara that he carries out in his daily life:

“Volunteering, it can be any day, any week. You see a lady crossing the road [with her] hand full of bags....any week. You can help ... I am helping you [referring to the reason he participated in the interview]. You are doing your project and hopefully it is great project, but I am helping you because I think I should help you any way.”

According to Amrita, a 21 year old woman, Sikh religion is about Sikh values and beliefs. Sewa is also a value as well as a belief. When asked the kind of informal volunteering in which the participant was engaged, the participant explained her informal volunteering experiences in a college setting. She described that she helps anyone, regardless of background, even strangers.

“Definitely, there are always people on the campus that need help sometimes to go somewhere. Sometimes some people need help with computer or for printing materials. Even in [a local city] there are people who need place to stay or they are new to the society they do not know what to do where to go. That kind of things happen[s] all the time”.

Amrita explains that she helps people out on the campus. She will assist them with directions or even just general helpful advice. The participant also explained the common situation of new immigrants, when they are new to the society and do not know where to go and

what to do in their newly adopted city. These instances of offering assistance occur often, according to this participant.

Bikram, a 19 year old man, suggested that Sewa built the foundation for his volunteering activities. He started by passing out napkins at Gurdwara and as a result of that simple practice, he now feels comfortable to volunteer and help anyone who is in need. When asked about his informal volunteering, Bikram responded, “Ah . . . going to Gurdwara Sahib is common or volunteering for shoveling the snow for neighbors, mowing the lawn, helping any family or neighbor or helping anyone who needs help”.

When she was asked what type of informal volunteering activities she is involved, Jyot, a 23 year old woman, explained that it is not just about doing Sewa in the Gurdwara but helping anyone. She explained that they were standing in the line waiting for their turn and a girl fainted and fell. There were some Sikh girls and we gave her bottle of water and the bottle was metal bottle and nice we told her to keep it. They looked at us surprisingly like.” Jyot also explained an instance of doing yard work at the Gurdwara, which was a common activity for her, and also “in the hospital when [I saw] someone uncomfortable, I helped”.

Because they have the spirit of community involvement, participants in this sample reported many instances of informal volunteering in which they unconsciously help others, even strangers. Ravinder, a 24 year old man, suggested, “Oh, yes, I grew up on Veteran’s ground so we were helping all the time, like if someone is in the wheelchair or needs some help we will help and walk with them.” That is, Ravinder grew up on military base so he would often assist people in wheelchairs or provide physical assistance by taking a walk with them.

Nivaan, a 21 year old man, identified his informal volunteering as listening and trying to help others find a solution to their problems: “It was interacting, listening to the problems of

people, and helping where they could not help.” He suggests that you can often listen and assist others by seeing a solution which they cannot see themselves, since you have an outsider’s perspective and are not emotionally involved.

Gurdit, a 29 year old man, provided two examples of informal volunteering experiences where he helped strangers.

“It is the way I am brought up. An easy example that I am a runner and there is an old lady. She is keeping her Garbage cans and cannot handle that. So I stopped and said “Can I help you?”, and I placed all the garbage cans back in her garage. I am still very active at Langer Sewa in [the Gurdwara]. The part of your identity is that you always outstand. Beard and turban. Sikh always outstands. I was travelling to India and I was in Amsterdam. There was this old man from India, a Sikh fellow and he did not know where to go. He came to me and I gave him direction. So Sikhs always stand out”.

Gurdit’s examples make it clear that he helps other Sikhs but also non-Sikhs, extending aid to any person who needs help, even strangers. Gurdit makes it clear too, that Sikhs understand that all other Sikhs will provide them aid and will seek out others with their same background for help in certain situations. Thus, Sikhs learn that individually they should help others and they also learn that the entire Sikh community can be counted on for help and aid.

Aman, an 18 year old woman, asserts that for her it is very important her to carry on the same values of her parents. Therefore she and her parents work together at informal volunteering activities.

“I have mowed the lawn of our neighbors. Our neighbor across the street, her dad had died and me [and] my mother made Indian food and sent it over. Even at Gurdwara, just help, like everyone is eating, like giving food or utensils.”

Other participants also provided examples where they went out of their way to helping people in need. For instance, Dharamjit, a 19 year old man, explained that Sikhs help people in need without considering whom they are helping.

“. . . I have helped people in certain situations. Where I did not need to help or volunteering was not needed. Like I was in the grocery store and the kid lost his mom and I took him to aisle where the call was on. It was September, I was walking to the bank to cash my check. This man could not get up because he was losing consciousness. Like, he could not get himself up. I could not get him, myself, me, and his wife and few other people and we called ambulance, that’s what I did.”

The participant explained the situation where he helped strangers, even when he was not needed. Yet, he felt a desire to make use of himself to help another person. In this case, it was calling an ambulance or reuniting a lost child with her/his mother. Karam, a 21 year old woman, explained that she helped a new immigrant who is a student just like her, but a stranger. She helped her because the new student was reserved and in a state of cultural shock. They became friends and Karam tried to help her new friend within a non-Sikh context.

“Yeah, I would say so. Actually right now, I met this foreign exchange student from Malaysia. And when she first came here she was very confused. It is like a cultural shock. She did not know many people and she was very reserved. So I kind of helped her get her accustomed to the lifestyle here and I offered . . . I visit her every week. So I go to her apartment and sometimes we cook together and if she needs a ride to somewhere, I usually take her”.

The participant helped make this Malaysian student comfortable in her new U.S. environment. The participant also provided transportation and spent time at her new friend’s apartment in order to help her acclimate to her to new situation.

Informal Volunteering at the Religious Center

The examples of informal volunteering at the Gurdwara were many. The religious center is a hub for community events and volunteer opportunities, making it very simple for participants to find ways to integrate themselves into these activities. Weekly Sewa teachings are a routine part of everyday life at the Gurdwara (and informal volunteering can happen during these times) but volunteers also organize many events and activities for bringing Sikh youth and community together. Participants take and teach language and history classes, and second generation Sikhs

are involved in events like Sikh camps, seminars, health fairs, and other community events to help the Sikh community as well as bring the youth and community together. Yet, most of these activities would represent more formal types of volunteering. Thus, I explored other ways in which they might contribute to the Gurdwara and become involved in informal volunteering at that same site. Japjit, a 24-year old woman, described that her informal volunteering at the Gurdwara ranges from organizing or arranging help for people as a community service to cleaning and maintaining the setting.

“I think at the Gurdwara, we will always have any kind and thing that if someone needs some kind of help. It is like someone brings to the attention that someone in the community needs certain help and we would organize and arrange help. Not only donations but also cleaning and maintenance of Gurdwara or making yourself available to any body that needs help of any sort. We would organize something for whoever needs help. It is part of coming to that environment there every week and growing up in that community you feel responsible to give to your community.”

Two other participants also referred to informal volunteering as a community service at the religious center for the Sikh community. Seerat, 42 year old woman, further explained that “Informal volunteering will also surround some sort of service [during a] community seminar. . .” Upjot, a 25 year old woman, also agreed that she would engage in any service necessary at the religious center: “Just anything, cleaning the bushes, and staying back in the Gurdwara. Maintenance-related things, like vacuuming the carpet and organizing events, meeting with people from different organizations, and arranging events. . . .”

Overall, 19 participants explain that practicing Sewa includes serving food during weekly communion and everything else within the Gurdwara, even tasks like cleaning, maintaining, yard work, etc. Vir, an 18 year old man, explains:

“I always do Langer Sewa [food service]. I put food on people’s plates. Langer is the stage in the weekly prayers, after reciting the Shabad (Gurbani, holy hymns) from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. After Hukamnama, we will all sit together and have lunch. There is no big and small but we

all are equals.”

Talwinder, a 21 year old man, also mentioned that he was always involved in practicing Sewa (every week since he was a child) and explained this instance an example of his informal volunteering. He continued:

“As soon as I got the driving license, it was sometimes elderly at Gurdwara. After prayers some elderly stay at Gurdwara. I will give ride to elderly. Sometimes [volunteering] was cultural based. I will give training in classic music because I had progressed far. Sometimes it was organizing some sports together as a youth”.

These participants show that helping others in informal ways, helping maintain the Gurdwara, and participating in religious services, are all examples of informal volunteering within the religious setting.

Informal Volunteering Makes You Feel Like You Are a “Good Person”

There are also examples of informal volunteering when participants engage in volunteering simply to be “good people” or “good Sikhs.” Aman, an 18 year old woman, provides this example of informal volunteering:

“Actually I really like helping people. It makes me feel good and I always help the people around whenever I can. My grandmother always taught me to help \people. I remember over the break me and Aman went to Pioneer seniors home because elderly needed some help or needed company. We played games with them [and] provided them company. It was not for any organization but just for us. Like, for school, I would stay longer to help my teacher grade papers or anything else I could help with.”

The case described above is an example of a woman’s informal volunteering to be a good person and assist others, and there is no alternative motivation. Preetinder, a 21 year old woman, also believes that by volunteering you become a “responsible person” and a “good Sikh”: “Doing volunteer work is doing the Sewa. Now when I do volunteering it does not mean to me that I have done my part of Sewa. It just means you are responsible and [it] makes you a good Sikh”.

Vir, a 18 year old man, also explains his volunteering as an example of being “good Sikh”: “Well, usually we try to contribute to the world or to the area around you in a small way, [it] does not have to be drastic. You know just to be a good person and making the people around you feel good”.

Being Sikh means engaging in actions of “helping others”. Fourteen participants agreed that being Sikh means helping others in an informal, everyday way. Within the social context they are located, helping others or helping each other is also fundamental for the service to the Sikh community and beyond. The religious beliefs and teachings become more meaningful in the context they are placed. Amrita, a 20 year old woman, thinks Sikh religion is a strong religion because it puts lot emphasis on helping others: “Um, Sikh religion is a strong religion which puts lot of emphasis on “helping others” that’s probably the reason I volunteer.”

Iqbal, a 20 year old man, further explains the meaning of being a good Sikh and a “better” person: “. . . It means following lessons of the Gurus, following Gurbani to the best of your abilities. But there is also humanitarian aspect. Just trying to be better person every day, you know making the world a better place every day.” According to Iqbal, the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are important because they direct Sikhs to become “a better person every day,” in an effort to “make the world a better place every day.” Overall, Sikhism leads many participants to informal volunteering practices, because it is in informal volunteering that they can really feel like “good” or “better” individuals.

Driven by religious teachings, then, Sikh participants in this sample knew that participation in more unorganized volunteer activities simply made them good, responsible people and allowed them to represent the Sikh community in that way. As evidenced in Chapter Four, many participants identified strongly with what it meant to be Sikh, and participation in

informal volunteering was one way to link oneself with this larger identity and community. To be Sikh is to volunteer and to volunteer is to be Sikh, according to many second generation Sikhs in this study.

Summary

Overall, it is clear from the results that membership in a religious organization and identification with a Sikh community could present opportunities and desires for both formal and informal volunteering for participants in this sample. Yet the second generation Sikhs described about their formal and informal volunteering experience as an outcome of religious identity as well as about the contexts and settings in which they are placed. Volunteering in the schools and colleges mostly occur for the functional reasons like learning the skill, helping causes they believe and helping all they can. Formal volunteering at the religious center also connects Sikhs to several Sikh and non-Sikh organizations. Those ways they are able volunteer in many non-profit organizations support the causes and help those who actually need help at the same time. The examples of informal volunteering experiences demonstrate the fact that help is extended both for reasons related to self-interest and also for the purpose of making the world better and more equal.

CHAPTER 6 :BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Each section in chapter six explains the benefits of volunteering for second generation Sikhs in this study. The first section describes how volunteering is a process of acquiring new skills. Volunteering is also a phenomenon which connects individuals to communities and is explained in next section. The last section illustrates how volunteering helps second generation Sikh individuals provide a positive image within the U.S. context.

Volunteering Presents Opportunities to Learn, Improve Career Skills and Become a Better Person

Participants talked about many instances where they participated in formal and informal volunteering and simultaneously learned new skills. For instance, participants could be learning the skills of event planning, how to successfully navigate a leadership role, or other skills related to teaching or the profession to which they aspire in the near future. For instance, Ravijot, a 20 year old woman, explains:

“[W]ell, I am a volunteer at Wayne State. They have the medical association and I am volunteer chair actually for the organization, so I do lead others in at Wayne State helping them find other volunteer opportunities, so I volunteer to lot of organizations like Gleaners Food Bank and other small volunteer organizations in the Detroit community, so, I help organize in those ways. So I help also to use my time to set up volunteering opportunities for others”.

The participant above is referring to a medical association where she helps to organize volunteering opportunities for other volunteers in the related medical field. This case is an example of becoming involved in an organization which is based in a field in which she is interested for a future career. At the same time, the participant also refers to her involvement in Gleaners Food Bank, which is selfless volunteering and not directly related to the medical

profession. Therefore, any participant could be involved in volunteering, both for career reasons and for more selfless reasons at the same time.

Upjot, a 25 year old woman, also acknowledges her professional involvement in several organizations as well as her more informal involvement in the soup kitchens. Upjot is a third year medical student. Though she participated in Sewa and other informal volunteering at and through the Gurdwara purely for religious reasons, she also mentions several health-related organizations which helped her to acquire certain skills and professional experience. Dialjit, an 18 year old man, explained that his informal volunteering is related to teaching (his career choice): “I have taught Bhangra (Punjabi folk dance), basketball, other exercise [activities], and [helped with] education [of] younger kids.”

These examples demonstrate, regardless of gender, both men and women may volunteer at religious centers for community or religious reasons, but may also volunteer in other ways out of self-interest as they think about their future potential careers.

At a personal level, volunteering allows individuals to learn about different cultures, appreciate diversity and see life from a different perspective. Participants also mention how volunteering provides social and leisure benefits to the individual and helps them to become a better people. For instance, Binat, an 18 year old woman, explained that through volunteering she became a more social person and willing to help anyone in their community and beyond. More than a quarter of the participants pointed out that volunteering is a way to learn about different cultures and also helps them to appreciate and accept diversity. Vikram, a 19 year old man, explained that he joined a local fraternity club. Besides assisting with fundraising and spreading awareness about cancer they also learned to appreciate different cultures and perspectives and how to address various situations. Volunteering enables participants put aside

their ego to work with a wide variety of people to benefit the community or cause which is the goal of the organization. Talwinder, a 21 year old man, states that “by volunteering one is able to cooperate with other people for common goal[s]”. Volunteering also helps to extend their services to the broader community.

Volunteering Builds Community and Reinforces Sikh Identities

In the majority of cases, participants explain that volunteering is a way to get involved in the community. This is same whether volunteering occurs at the religious center or beyond. Komal, a 22 year old man, explained how the religious center provides an environment to initiate small acts of volunteering. He explained that Gurdwara is similar to a family center, or a familial environment, where kids start volunteering at young age. The children become familiar with the concept of service, Sewa and giving back to the community through little chores such as distributing napkins (Chour Sewa, Krah Prasad Sewa). Continuous involvement in this practice helps to build the bigger blocks of giving back to community. The participants provided various examples of community involvement within Sikh community and beyond.

Being members of Sikh community, the range of volunteering is explained by Japjit, a 24 year old woman.

“There were things both within the Sikh community but also there were things at the broader level, outreach projects. At the broader level we would do an annual health clinic and fair. That is a big project that is going on for almost nine years now. I also volunteered at Sikh youth Camp. Sikh youth Camp, is once a yearly thing. You have to stay overnight. There was also Habitat for Humanity projects like working in soup kitchens and other food drives. Always creating projects to do services and bring Sikh community and Sikh youth together. As a Camp counselor you basically take care of younger kids, help them organize activities, communicate with them as they come every year . So they see us and we are like role model. My role as a mentor [is] focused on young kids. We mostly work with Sikh foundation, but Gurdwara was the main big organization I volunteered the most.

Within Sikh community, the religious center is the main hub for volunteering and available opportunities within the community at large. It ranges from working within Sikh youth camps, mentoring younger children, inculcating Sikh values and making members aware about community issues. Health fairs are an example of outreach projects, which provide medical care services to Sikh population and beyond. Several doctors and medical organizations support that event. Sikh youths get to participate as they do tasks such as registering patients and taking measurements of weight and height.

The participant, Japjit, a 24 year old woman, when asked about her motivations the for community involvement same participant responded:

“There were no incentives. The biggest incentive was growing up in that community. It was that you think you are part of that community and you own it, and you feel responsibility towards it. There was no external push but I think you are part of it, if some part of it needs to be fixed you will work together and make difference to it. Volunteering was something I really enjoyed doing volunteering. Doing community work was part of who I was. It teaches you a lot, you meet different kinds of people and it helps you raise your own personal horizons and it teaches a lot about world around you. There is no money involved and it makes us proactive than reactive.

The participant clearly describes that there were no incentives for her to get involved in the community projects. Community involvement and feelings of responsibility for her community was for the largest incentive for her to engage in these community projects. The participant feels that there was no pressure to involve in any community projects; rather, Sikhs enjoy doing community service and are enthusiastic about selfless service because they value community involvement.

The meaning of community service does not always relate to service in the Sikh community, but can be extended to larger U.S. communities to which members belong. Binat, an 18 year old woman, was asked: “what do you mean when you say ‘to be in community?’” Community service, according to Binat, is not always focused on the Sikh community and

includes providing services to area around which she lives. The participant explained involvement in educational volunteering and helping to build the houses in Detroit. She differentiated between service at the religious center, which involved projects related to blood drive by American Red Cross, and participation in health fairs in the larger community. For example, “parents [will] push small children to distribute napkins in Sangat [communion]. They think they are doing it for fun but they are actually helping and such small acts lead them to bigger blocks” of volunteering in the future. Binat presented her opinion that small acts are the ways to link young Sikhs to communion and the community at large.

Seerat, a 42 year old woman, explained that Sikhs are a relatively smaller faith group within U.S. society. Gurdwara deals with the learning of language, scriptures and understanding the teachings of and then the Sewa is taught and practiced. She explained:

“Gurdwara balances the spiritual aspect and Sewa, the tenant of Sikhism. Langer is one example. So every week volunteers get together and make food for the entire community. There is education for the children which is run by volunteers and there is daily upkeep and maintenance of Gurdwara, that is all done by volunteers. So there are various aspects within the physical building and itself and various outreach activities to tell the American community who Sikhs are to do interfaith activities to just to maintain the connection with all society so that American society understands who Sikhs are so there are no misconceptions of that aspect is within and without the building.”

Seerat explained that volunteers keep the practice of Sewa alive by engaging Sikh youth in various types of Sewa. Seerat also explained that besides weekly Sewa, volunteers’ involvement in interfaith activities is also the way they are linked to the U.S. community. The connection with U.S. society is important so that volunteers can help the U.S. community to understand their beliefs as well as participate in the U.S. community.

Vir, an 18 year old man, explains that going to the religious center is meaningful for him because “it gives us (Sikhs) a sense of community”. Apart from the fact that the religious center teaches Sikh values, it also links Sikhs to several non-profit organizations so they can feel

connected to the larger American society. Volunteering provides leadership roles to many young Sikhs, as well as a chance to support various social and environmental causes. Nivaan, a 21 year old man, explained that even though he always volunteers at Gurdwara but his initiative to work with an environmental organization, in a more structured form of volunteering, gave him a different experience. Sewa at the religious center allowed him to occupy a leadership role and his experiences with volunteering at hospitals helped him to learn some skills. The volunteering at Detroit Fellows gave him opportunity to support the cause of quality education which he supports. He concluded:

“Being in Gurdwara, involvement in Sewa reinforced the Sewa part alive. It reinforces the practice and keeps the Sewa part alive. Sometimes, the religious center informs us to serve the Sikh community, and sometimes it is all religious center affiliate to different religious organizations to involve in Sewa (service)”.

Nivaan describes that his involvement at the religious center strengthens the teachings of Sewa. He also explains that sometimes service occurred to serve the Sikh community and other times they affiliated with different religious organization to engage in service. This indicates that second generation Sikhs living in the U.S. learn to volunteer in the spirit of community and service to all. Nivaan also mentions that the goal of economic self-worth is also central to Sikh religion. It also suggests that Sikh religion advocates instrumental realities, not just the spiritual benefits, but also a way to become socially responsible at the same time.

Volunteering provides second generation Sikhs a sense of peacefulness. At least five participants brought up that Sewa gives them peace. The religious teachings of the Guru Grant Sahib Sikh show humans how to be in peace with themselves, others, and in their lives through their actions. These actions involve meditation on the name of God (in self-reflection), Sewa (selfless service irrespective of color, status or gender), Sangat (commune), and Pangat (equality). When the participants visit a religious center or perform volunteering outside a Sikh

context, they still see themselves as performing their beliefs of who and what they are. It is these acts, which follow their religious and personal beliefs, that lead to the sense of satisfaction and/or peace in the second generation Sikhs in this study.

Volunteering Protects and Redefines the Sikh Community

Since September 11, 2001, Sikh volunteering participation has increased in U.S. At least five participants have mentioned that volunteering is the way to educate about the true beliefs of Sikhs to their fellow Americans. Through their volunteering they aim to increase awareness about Sikhs, what meaning their religion brings to their lives in order to decrease the hate crimes against Sikhs among other reasons. Religious leaders at religious centers make Sikhs aware and concerned about the positive image of Sikhism they embody so that they may prevent hate crimes against the greater Sikh community. Volunteering is the path that may increase the positive image of Sikhs in U.S. society.

Dialjit, a 18 year old man, observed that: “It is the way we can tell American people who we are. Volunteering does not hurt [the Sikh] image. I mean, it has certainly improved [in the] last 10-12 years. It helps people fit in[to] American society. Now most people know who Sikh[s are]. It is to tell people who we are.”

Dialjit responded to the question posed by the researcher as to how volunteering is a way to participate in the wider U.S. society. Dialjit responded that actions such as volunteering can bring about awareness about Sikhs participating in U.S. society. His answers also mention that the awareness about Sikhs in U.S. culture has increased in the last decade or so and believes volunteering is an important method to educate U.S. citizens about the Sikh faith.

Komal, a 22 year old man and law school graduate, recalled his most recent volunteering project with the SALDEF (American Sikh Advocacy Legal Defense and Educational Fund) in

Washington, D.C. He explained that the SALDEF is working upon several issues but a primary focus of the organization is evident in their mission statement: to “help and restore *positive Sikh image through media monitoring.*” He further explained that there are some Sikh organizations that are working to restore positive Sikh images within American society and he decided to work for one of these organizations because he believes that it is one of the major concerns of the Sikh community in the U.S. He goes on to say that part of this image work is done through volunteering in the larger community: “Working with organizations that help people in need, like food banks or homeless shelters or organizations for interfaith or working with communities larger than Sikh community.”

Jyot, a 23 year old woman, also notes that volunteering is the method to educate U.S. citizens about Sikhism and its tenet of service to others. She states: “People from diverse communities will know who Sikhs are and [that] they are people who help others.” Two things can be noticed from Jyot’s argument. First, the participant is aware that not many people know about this faith group. Secondly, people from “diverse communities” are mentioned. This goes along with the principle of equality which demonstrates that Sikhs help everyone. By helping diverse communities, Sikhs help to spread awareness about Sikhism.

Nivaan, a 21 year old man, answered: “Religion and religious community make Sikh aware and concerned about a positive Sikh image and makes efforts to prevent hate crimes against the Sikh community.” Nivaan also brings to the mind that religious communities play an important role in protecting communities and by creating awareness about certain issues, particularly to young second generation Sikhs. It also becomes apparent that hate crimes against Sikhs is a serious concern for the Sikh community. Religious organizations make an effort to motivate individuals so that positive image of its members can be restored and maintained.

These quotes show us the importance of recognizing the context of a post-September 11th era and how this event weighs heavily on the Sikh community (perhaps weighing most heavily on second generation individuals because of their desire for connection to a larger U.S. society as well as their own immigrant and religious communities), because of the potential for negativity from non-Sikhs in the U.S. This means that practicing Sewa within the larger U.S. community becomes extremely important for elevating the positive presence of the Sikh community and showing outsiders that Sikh individuals are good, responsible, helpful people and not linked to terrorists around the world. Portraying this positive image for the larger society, then, becomes an important goal for the Sikh community and protects them from the potential prejudice, discrimination, and violence that come from a social and political context that is defined by the unfortunate event of September 11th. Protecting the Sikh community becomes a very positive outcome of volunteering activities, according to participants in this sample. Participants reported volunteering at the religious center, get affiliated to Sikh organizations for volunteering within non-Sikh contexts. Gurdit, a 29 year old man, explained:

“My volunteering experiences are vast. Volunteering at Gurdwara Sahib made me open minded, diversified and comfortable with different sorts of organizations. I am connected with United Way, South Eastern Michigan Society where teens, Asians, African American, people of age 50 and above are working together. By volunteering you become integrated [and] at the same time it is leaving more positive impact.”

Gurdit explains how volunteering at the religious center opened him to and allowed him to be connected to several organizations, making him integrated so that he could leave more positive impact for other people. Nihal, a 28 year old man, also reported that young Sikh adults purposely balance out their volunteering activities in Sikh and non-Sikh contexts so that they are participating equally in both contexts, belonging to both U.S. and Sikh cultures. He expressed

how volunteering is a channel to participate in wider U.S. society as well as a way to stay connect to other Sikhs.

“You know being a second generation Sikh we look at ourselves as being Sikh and American at the same time. I guess we balance out in several ways. I know being a youth, through college years I was active with Sikh organizations but that has also given me confidence to expand and try to get involved with several other organizations at the same time to send the message of whom I am as a Sikh and how important is to share our values with the larger community because it is important for us to spread who we are to make sure people are aware that Sikhs are here”.

The participant above explained how he initiated his volunteering with Sikh organizations and how such volunteering allowed him to connect to several other organizations . The participant also demonstrates they get involved with diverse organizations to share Sikh values with larger community so that other people know their presence. But he also pushes past these reasons and also described his dual identity and his desire to remain connected to both Sikh and non-Sikh (“American”) communities. Because second generation individuals feel as if they belong to both communities, then, second generation Sikh individuals in this study emphasize how important it is to be connected to the wider U.S. society through volunteering.

Summary

The section illustrates the instances of second generation Sikh explaining the benefits of volunteering. The first section talked about the volunteering in the non-Sikh context, which occurs for connecting to local communities for skill learning, as well as leisure and social benefits. The second section illustrates how volunteering helps participants contribute to community building. Within a religious context, at the religious center, religious teachings also play role to reinforce the practice of service. The last section presents the most serious concern for the Sikh community, the potential for hate crimes by those who misunderstand the Sikh

religion and identity. According to the participants, volunteering is the way to bring awareness about Sikh community as well as to restore positive image of Sikhs.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study is based on twenty-nine second generation Sikh participants and their volunteering experiences. The members were recruited by snowball and convenience sampling procedures from a Sikh religious center in Southeastern Michigan. Face to face interviews investigated four important aspects of second generation Sikh individuals' volunteering experiences:

1. What types of volunteering experiences do second generation Sikhs report (informal or formal)?
2. How do 2nd generation Sikh explain the reasons for their volunteering experiences?
3. What role does religion play in informing the volunteer behavior of second generation Sikh immigrants?
4. To what extent does volunteering expand beyond the Sikh community to include wider participation within U.S. society?

The researcher asked the respondents various questions about their religious and cultural identities, the types of volunteering experiences they had, and their connections to both religious and non-religious communities in the U.S. A phenomenological approach was used in data collection and analysis to give participants voice and so that their lived experiences could be highlighted. Major findings in this dissertation are highlighted below.

Summary of Findings

Religion and religious affiliation still seem to have a substantial influence on second generation Sikhs in my study and Sikh identity is, in large part, the identification with certain

religious teachings that are passed down from generation to generation. Being Sikh, then, means, being affiliated with religious organizations and a religious center at least in part. However, being Sikh in a larger context means practicing religious values, such as Sewa, or selfless service to others. Thus, regardless of how connected to religious centers and religious beliefs second generation Sikh individuals might remain, they appear to remain connected to a strong “we” identity, to living in the spirit of community, and to valuing Sewa. In other words, helping others is the basis for, or spirit of, Sikh religion, and thus, attention to Sewa remains even when second generation individuals step outside the Sikh community. I also found that parents’ influence and the religious center’s role to be foundational in socializing second generation individuals to the practice of Sewa and in making second generation individuals in my study think about volunteering or community service as an everyday practice.

Religious organization and affiliations become the basis for both informal and formal volunteering among second generation Sikhs as well, according to my study. In the category of formal volunteering, participants in my sample reported volunteering at events at the religious center; as well as programs, events, and camps organized by the religious center in the larger community, by schools and colleges, and by other non-profit or professional organizations. They also reported being involved in Sikh organizations, such as Sikh Cess, a college student organization that connects Sikh individuals to each as well as professional development opportunities. Participants in this study were sometimes quick to point out that not all formal volunteering would meet the definition of Sewa, or selfless service. At times, participants would engage in formal volunteering in order to learn some skills, gain experience in a chosen career field (e.g., medicine or law), or meet other Sikhs in a college community or a new city. At other times, however, formal volunteering experiences did meet the definition of Sewa (or, giving to

one's community without taking back). Examples in the latter category might include involvement in a local Paint the Town or Greening of Detroit event, to help less resourceful people in Detroit or to support environmental causes. Other formal volunteering activity included regular service to soup kitchens and food banks, regular participation in programs such as Habitat for Humanity, or Red Cross programs, that could make them responsible to community at large. These activities were often, but did not always have to be, initiated by Sikh religious organizations or the religious center. Participation in Sikh Youth Camps at the religious center also played a special role in keeping second generation Sikhs protected from negative stigma, and many participants were dedicated to helping out/giving back to these camps (and other similar efforts) because of this benefit to their community. In general, participants seemed self-motivated to do a lot of this volunteering activity and community service; however, friends, family members, and other members of their religious communities encouraged this practice as well. As some participants in this study voiced, to be Sikh was to be community oriented, and to be community oriented was to be Sikh. Formal volunteering activity was often a key way in which community was built, reinforced, and protected, and thus commitment to Sewa and volunteering in general was a commonality among all participants.

Participants in this study also provided many examples of informal volunteering, therefore illustrating that commitment to selfless service and Sikh identity meant helping others in non-formal ways (unorganized, more random) ways as well. For example, participants in this study volunteered informally by: assisting neighbors by shoveling snow, helping the elderly with transportation issues, and even helping strangers in many different situations. The examples of informal volunteering demonstrate that members of the second generation Sikh community aspired to be good citizens and "good Sikhs."

Theoretical Application

Three theoretical frameworks formed a basis for this inquiry. First, the idea that religious association can be voluntary and can individuals to communities is a basis for the current study. As Alexis De Tocqueville observed in *Democracy in America* (1840/ 1945), religion is a voluntary association, which connects individuals to communities. Religious associations are “free spaces” that provide humans liberty, responsibility and interdependence for achieving common goals. By participating in these religious associations, members learn to develop civic skills to voluntarily help each other (Tocqueville1840/1945:126-127). The aim of this current research is not to test the theory of Tocqueville but to use it as a theoretical framework for understanding how religious associations influence second generation Sikh adults to engage in community service or individual acts of volunteering.

The findings of my research are similar to De Tocqueville’s theory, because he suggests that religious associations are voluntary associations that connect individuals to “communities”. De Tocqueville’s theory also suggests that religious involvement has the capacity to induce cooperative action, and my findings confirm that second generation Sikhs are indeed involved in community action in large part because of their religious and cultural identities. Religious organizations have a role in engaging second generation Sikhs by information by emails, newsletters and web site, and by putting them into situations in which volunteering is easy, established, and learned as a positive core value.

Second, Herberg’s theory of religion (1955) also suggests that second generation immigrants may leave behind language and ethnic roots but they will retain their religious roots (Herberg, 1965: 23). Herberg further suggested that the second generation may utilize religion to “be American” (Herberg, 1965: 74). For example, Herberg believed that adherence to the

Christian faith was important for 2nd generation European immigrants' integration within mainstream American society because they were following the same religious beliefs and were observing similar national holidays like Christmas, Thanks giving etc. Therefore, this theory is relevant because it provides an explanation of how second generation European immigrants may have been integrated initially into U.S. society. Within Herberg's context, however, second generation immigrants were integrated into a dominant, somewhat homogeneous religious context (Judeo Christianity); this is a very different scenario than what second generation Sikhs in southeastern Michigan might experience. Second generation Sikh immigrants are integrating into a U.S. society that is defined by a completely different, more dominant religion which means automatically that their religious affiliation is different and marginalized. Nonetheless, we can still explore whether second generation individuals may use their religious connections bridge the gap between themselves and the broader U.S. society.

There is no doubt that my research parallels Herberg's in that it also establishes that second generation individuals utilize their religious roots in their efforts to join U.S. society and engage in community involvement. In my study, individuals engage in volunteering to be good Sikhs but also good people, and to connect themselves to other non-Sikh communities. My study also suggests that second generation Sikhs also engage in formal volunteering for the acquisition of skills that may prove useful for their future career; thus, at times there are non-religious and more self-interested reasons for volunteering activity. While religion and religious affiliation may form the initial incentive and reasons for volunteering activity, there are other reasons that individuals in my study volunteer as well.

Third, it is important to think about the ways in which religious affiliation and strong religious beliefs might become a form of social capital for second generation Sikhs. Putnam

(2000), in his book “*Bowling Alone*,” talks about role of social capital in building the communities. Putnam’s theory is an important theoretical frame work which can be used to understand the “community building” that occurs among second generation Sikhs and the ways in which initial religious affiliations or associations help build and/or provide this social capital for individuals. Putnam explained the connection of individual to a robust community and how communication and cooperation among members of a community are often facilitated by common affiliations and associations (such as religion). Social capital, as presented by Putnam, is an “intangible resource” for members of particular communities, because of their connections to those communities and their ability to pull upon common identities and common resources. Without community attachment, individuals are “helpless socially” whereas connections to communities (such as religious communities) can mean the accumulation of social capital for individuals. Social capital develops “into good will, fellowship and sympathy towards each other,” making the community a “social unit” that identifies and functions together. Since the religious center can be a central location or second home for second generation Sikhs, then it is possible to examine common religious affiliation and attachment to a common religious center as a facilitator of community and cooperation among second generation Sikhs. In addition, attachment to these religious locations and associations may ease their engagement with the larger U.S. society. My findings confirm that Sikh identity and beliefs both play significant role in how they connect to their own and other communities. Sikh community is a small community in United States, but members extend the boundaries of cooperative action beyond the religious community to share their beliefs as well as to maintain the connection with the larger society; they do so often by using ready-made Sikh connections to communities.

Contributions to the Literature and Suggestions for Future Research

The current research inquiry is different from previous research in several ways. Previous studies focus on first generation Sikhs but this study attempts to present the lived experiences of a second generation cohort who was born within United States. This study also focused on only one religiously-defined group rather than comparison groups, so that more detailed information on how second generation Sikh identity informs informal and formal volunteering activities could be collected. This study also centers the analysis on a religious minority group within the U.S. context, allowing us to explore whether religious identity remains a root of second generation identity when second generation individuals reside in a country with a different major religion. The inquiry also assesses whether volunteering activities extend beyond Sikh religious purposes and beyond the Sikh community. The study not only focused on how religious identity and association informs formal volunteerism but also assessed how religion informs volunteering that ties individuals to the larger U.S. society.

Previous studies have focused more on how religious communities preserve ethnic identities but this study also explored how religious identity shaped second generation individuals' volunteering within both the Sikh and non-Sikh community. I found that the participants agreed that being Sikh means does not only mean doing service in the Sikh community but also service to broader U.S. society within which they live. Living and practicing Sewa is more important than remaining within the religious community for second generation Sikhs.

The study is different from previous studies on religion, community service, and ethnic identity since this study has wider implications. Small immigrant communities, such as Sikh communities, may engage in positive community action (such as formal and informal

volunteering) to serve and extend the boundaries of their community. Participants in this study volunteer to both know and appreciate diversity of U.S. society and educate other communities about Sikhs. Showing U.S. society that Sikh communities are “good” and that Sikh individuals are selfless -- through volunteering – is another key to understanding volunteering is important for participants in this study. At the same time, volunteering is the means by which participants in this study see and understand the diverse perspectives of members of other U.S. communities.

Future studies of religious identity, immigrant status, ethnic communities, and volunteering activity should continue to focus on the second generation, and how religious identities inform everyday behaviors. Future research should also explore how religious identities become salient for second generation immigrants. In addition, more research is needed on how organizations such as Sikh Cess shape second generation individuals’ college and community experiences, and whether there are age and gender differences in volunteering. This study did not find enough gender or age differences to conclude about differences among second generation individuals. Future studies should ask more questions about the agenda of religious organizations which prepare youth for volunteering, and interview a broader range of individuals connected and disconnected to those religious organizations. The effects of events such as September 11th should also be taken into consideration, more than was done so in this study; all mention of September 11th in my interviews was unprompted and clearly this event weighed heavily on some participants in the study. There are many aspects of religious and ethnic identity, religious organizations, second generation identity, and volunteering practices that still need to be understood more fully.

APPENDIX A

Participant#1: Japjit, 24, female, medical student, parents migrated in 1984-1986

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara (Religious center), Sikh foundation. Gurdwara, main hub for volunteering.

Non Sikh Contexts: Medical Missions Abroad, Central America. College: United Nations organization, humans rights organization.

Benefits: Rise above personal horizons.

Participant #2: Tajinder, 25, female, grad student, parents migrated in 1970

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara (Religious center) Sikh Cess

Non Sikh Contexts: Threw dance for mentally disabled elderly at nursing homes, soup kitchens, food banks. Provided services in the community around the area she lives. Involved in youth counseling for Detroit high schools.

Benefits: Humbles us.

Participant#3: Binat, 18, female, a freshman, parents migrated in 1980

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara (Religious center), Sikh foundation

Non Sikh Contexts: Northville community in several ways, teaching kids, Habitat for Humanity, America Red Cross. College: SADD

Benefits: learning, and one person making huge difference in many people's lives.

Participant#4: Seerat, 42, female, a law graduate, parents migrated in late 1960s

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara (weekly Langer Sewa, projects related to youth, interfaith organizations, organizing classes).

Non Sikh Contexts: Soup kitchens, food banks. Homeless shelters, and working with community larger than Sikh community.

Benefits: Volunteering is the way to give back.

Participant#5: Upjot, 25, female, a third year medical student, parents migrated in 1984

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, Second Generation Sikh medical group

Non Sikh Contexts: Karmanos Cancer Institute, New York based organization to create health manuals, soup kitchens, food banks. Habitat for Humanity, shelters, working with organizations larger than Sikh community, like Paint the Town and Detroit Free Clinics, also HIV challenge.

Benefits: Great way to do service for people who need help, the way to get Sikh image out there.

Participant#6: Ravijot, 21, female, medical student, parents migrated in late 1980s

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara

Non Sikh Contexts: Children's hospital, Food banks, Wayne State Medical Association Chair.

Benefits: opportunity to give time and efforts to those who need help(less resourceful).

Participant#7: Dialjit, 18, male, premed student (undergraduate), parents migrated in 1980s

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, weekly Sewa, Sikh youth camps

Non Sikh Contexts: American Red Cross, Oakwood and Saint Mary's hospitals, walk for cause like, American Cancer Society, raise money for homeless people, can food drives, raised money for Tsunami victims.

Benefits: Volunteering help to get image of Sikhs, way to tell who Sikhs are, a way to fit in U.S. Society and be "American."

Participant#8: Jyot, 23, female, undergraduate student, parents migrated in 1973

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, health fair, yard work

Non Sikh Contexts: In the school, teaching elementary school kids, English and math, or any subject they lacked understanding in. In the hospitals as well.

Benefits: Interact with different communities, away to tell them who Sikhs are.

Participant#9: Ravinder, 24, male, doctor, parents migrated in 1978

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara

Non Sikh Contexts: YMCA, food drives, dances to raise the money, Detroit Free Clinics, Detroit Free Clinics, HIV clinics.

Benefits: If volunteering to Gurdwara, I am opening up to Sikh population but if I volunteer a local hospital I am opening up to other populations as well.

Participant#10: Komal, 22, male, a law student, and parents migrated in 1984

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, weekly Sewa, SALDEF, Detroit Sikh Youth Student Chair.

Non Sikh Contexts: Paint the Town, High school teen program against bullying ,

Benefits: Volunteering is a way to get connected to non-profit organizations.

Participant#11: Iqbal, 20, male, undergraduate student, parents migrated in 1984

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, weekly Sewa, Sikh Youth Camps, SikhCess.

Non Sikh Contexts: Detroit impact Centre, Nursing homes.

Benefits: It is networking in the sense that you might get useful links for future.

Participant#12: Nivaan, 21, male, a law student, parents migrated in 1984-85

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, weekly Sewa

Non Sikh Contexts: Environmental initiative, Wayne State University, Harper hospital, American Red Cross.

Benefits: Volunteering is a way to get connected to Sikh community as well as to American community.

Participant#13: Vir, 18, male, freshman, parents migrated in 1987

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, Camp Khalsa, teaching kids, musical instruments, weekly Sewa, SALDEF, Detroit Sikh Youth student Chair.

Non Sikh Contexts: American Red Cross and Detroit medical center.

Benefits: By Volunteering I got a leadership role, also learned communication skills and decreased differences.

Participant#14: Nihal, 28, male, MBA student, parents migrated in 1986

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, weekly Sewa, Camper, Sikh Youth Counselor, SikhCess.

Non Sikh Contexts: Salvation Army, local fundraising events in Detroit and Atlanta.

Benefits: Volunteering is a way to tell larger community who Sikhs are. It is the way to balance out how can they be Sikhs and American at the same time.

Participant#15: Gurdit, 29, male, MBA student, parents migrated in 1979

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, Langer Sewa, Sikh youth camp

Non Sikh Contexts: Paint the Town, Student organizations in college, All South Eastern Michigan society.

Benefits: It makes you integrated since you work with people from diverse background.

Participant# 16: Aman, 18, female, freshman, parents migrated in 1994

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, once a month Langer Sewa

Non Sikh Contexts: National Honors society, Habitat for humanity, Trip to Haiti for volunteering, Chair Student Ambassador program, organizations in college.

Benefits: It broadens your own perspective, makes you integrated, opening you up to different cultures.

Participant # 17: Talwinder, 21, male, undergraduate, parents migrated in 1994

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Langer Sewa, Langer Sewa, teaching kid's Sikh musical instrument, Translation of Gurbani (Sikh religious in English).

Non Sikh Contexts: Music performances in various religious centers, Christians, Catholics and Jewish, training in sports.

Benefits: Sikhs are small community within U.S. great way to link with other communities.

Participant #18: Bikram, 19, male, undergraduate, parents migrated in 1997

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, Langer Sewa, weekly.

Non Sikh Contexts: Schools, SADD, food banks, hospitals, local fraternity, fundraising for several events, awareness about cancer.

Benefits: helps how we take care of others, help others.

Participant #19: Dharamjit, 19, male, undergraduate (sophomore), parents migrated in 1996

Sikh Contexts : Gurdwara, Langer Sewa, once a month.

Non Sikh Contexts: United pre health organization, Humane Society, soup kitchens, food banks, project related to cleaning and greening of Detroit, PISO, AHMSA medical related organizations.

Benefits: helps you interact with wide variety of people. Learn about different cultures.

Participant #20: Sehaj, 19, female, undergraduate (sophomore), parents migrated in 1988

Sikh Contexts: Religious Centre, when young went every week, not any more

Non Sikh Contexts: Key Clubs in California, helping elementary school children in U.S. History and other subjects they needed help with, Hospitals such as Macomb, Henry Ford hospitals, American Cancer society, etc. In College: Alpha phi Mega.

Benefits: It is sort of giving back to community.

Participant #21: Ratinder, 19, male, an undergraduate, parents migrated in 1980s

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara started distributing napkins, Langer Sewa.

Non Sikh Contexts: Food Banks, Indiana Polis Safety Club, Hospitals.

Benefits: It is an individual decision to do good to others, gives you to contribute to large American society because it gives you ease volunteer.

Participant# 22: Gurleen, 20, male, undergraduate (junior), parents migrated in 1986

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Langer sewa.

Non Sikh Contexts: Food Banks and a hospital.

Benefits: Unclear from interview.

Participant # 23: Amrita, 21, female, an undergraduate, parents migrated in 1980s

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara health camp.

Non Sikh Contexts: Volunteering section, pharmacy at Oakwood hospitals, minority students Association for medical students, DMC(Detroit medical center), Greening of Detroit, American Red Cross.

Benefits: It is a great way to get involved in your community. You become aware of all the other programs in the community.

Participant# 24: Karam, 21, female, undergraduate student, parents migrated in 1970s

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Langer Sewa, cleaning and landscaping Gurdwara.

Non Sikh Contexts: I was also involved in community related projects around area I lived. Volunteered at the hospital as well as soup kitchens, “We Change We Change” program at local university, Michigan Association of Physicians from India. School: Different organizations in school,

Benefits: Helps you become better part of society, to help and change society.

Participant#25: Kalwinder, 18, female, undergraduate (freshman), parents migrated in 1986-87

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Langer Sewa, cleaning and vacuuming.

Non Sikh Contexts: Hospitals and Volunteering organizations in school.

Benefits: It can change your perspective of life.

Participant# 26: Benajit, 18, male, undergraduate (freshman), parents migrated in 1985

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Langer Sewa since I was six years old. Also Sikh Youth Organization of Metro Detroit.

Non Sikh Contexts: National Honors society, one hospital. School: Key Clubs.

Benefits: You learn to work together no matter what background you have.

Participant# 27: Jatinder, 19, male, undergraduate (freshman), parents migrated in 1989

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Sikh Camp, Langer sewa.

Non Sikh Contexts: City Library to shelf books, also we arranged different events for children, Food banks, National Honors society, homeless shelters, hospital just at the flower shop, Paint the Town. School: Key Clubs.

Benefits: The more I volunteer within Sikh community, easier it becomes to volunteer outside. Volunteering makes us a better person.

Participant# 28: Navreet, 19, female, undergraduate (freshman), parents migrated in 1984-85

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara, Sikh youth camp, Langer Sewa.

Non Sikh Contexts: Detroit Institute of Arts, Benevolence Society, William Beaumont Hospital. Detroit Institute of Arts.

Benefits: It prepared me to volunteer outside the Sikh community.

Participant# 29: Preetinder, 21, female, MBA student, parents migrated in 1980s

Sikh Contexts: Gurdwara

Non Sikh Contexts: Food Banks, Paint the Town event, a law firm. School: key clubs.

Benefits: It makes you a good Sikh. We volunteer as a community which makes it a comfortable experience.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Section A. Background Questions:

1. Please tell me how you first became a volunteer?
2. What were your motivations for volunteering?
3. How often you engaged in volunteering projects?
4. What kinds of projects you volunteered to?

Section B. Volunteering Activities:

5. Tell me purpose or goal of organization you volunteered to?
6. What was target group for volunteering? Was it elderly, kids or some other population?
7. What other informal volunteering activities you were engaged?
8. What was your responsibility as a volunteer?

Section C. Religiosity and volunteering:

9. What does it mean to be Sikh?
10. How does the religious center inform you about “Sewa”(selfless service to humanity.
11. How does the Sikh religious ideal of “Sewa” (selfless service to humanity) is meaningful for volunteering?
12. Who directs you for volunteering?
13. How does participation in weekly congregational services at religious center get you involved into any volunteering?
14. Please tell me how religion or religious organization provided incentives to engage in volunteering?

Section: D Influence beyond religious volunteering activities:

15. What different organizations you volunteered to?
16. How do you think your volunteering pattern has changed over time?

17. How do think your experiences in the past helped you to get engaged in any other organization than Sikh?
18. How do you think volunteering is a channel to participate in wider American society?

Section E Socio Demographic Factors:

19. Please identify your age?
20. Please identify your gender?
21. Please identify your educational level?
22. When did your parents migrate to the U.S.?

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age	18-42 years of age
Men	15
Women	14
Education	Undergraduate School (18) Graduate School (3) Law(3) Medical (4)
Parents Migration	Average time period: 1980s (Range: late 1960s to mid 1990s)

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ABSTRACT
“WE ARE A VOLUNTEERING RELIGION”
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SECONDCGENERATION SIKHS’ VOLUNTEERING
PRACTICES IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

by

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May 2014

Advisor: Dr. Heather E. Dillaway

Major: Sociology

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Recent social science literature has devoted serious attention to the role of religion in the life of Asian immigrants, however less explored is the civic action and volunteering practices of second generation immigrants. This study examined what role religion or religious organizations play in involving second generation Sikhs in volunteering. Although diverse Asian immigrant populations have been studied to explain how religion impacts the adaptation processes for the first generation, or how religious centers operate to preserve ethnic or religious identity for immigrants, less information is available about the second generation. The overwhelming focus has been on the identification of organizational characteristics of immigrant religions, or the structural transformations that occur to immigrant religions over time. Instead the current study examines the volunteering experiences of second generation Sikhs, to explore how religion informs formal or informal volunteering practices. In the current study I also explore how engagement in formal and informal volunteering allows second generation Sikhs the opportunity to move beyond the Sikh community and participate in the larger U.S. society.

The target population for the study is Second Generation Sikh adults in Southeastern Michigan. This research was qualitative and exploratory in nature and I used snowball sampling procedures to recruit participants. Twenty nine second generation Sikh adults participated in the study. Qualitative, face to face interviews were conducted between September 2011 and March 2012. A phenomenological approach facilitated qualitative analysis to identify important themes and give participants voice in the study. The meanings participants attached to religious identity and religious beliefs, as well as the meanings they attach to formal and informal volunteering practices and their involvement in volunteering is assessed.

The findings from this study indicate that feelings about what it means to be Sikh are deeply embedded in participants' reasons for community involvement. On the one hand, community involvement brings sense of responsibility to each other and reinforces Sikh beliefs and identity; on the other hand, Sikh teachings such as Sewa urge service to Sikh community and beyond. The findings also suggest that the religious center provides a dynamic venue for volunteering opportunities, and also a gateway to volunteering outside the community.

The results also indicate that second generation Sikhs engage in both formal and informal volunteering. These volunteering activities benefit second generation Sikhs in this study at both the individual and community level. Volunteering activities may give personal and social benefits to the individual volunteer, but it also helps build communities. In the U.S. context Sikh involvement in volunteering also builds a positive Sikh image so that non-Sikh individuals in the U.S. know about the Sikh community and understand their beliefs.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I am and always will be a sociologist. I have always been appreciative and felt gratitude towards the world around me but I never looked at things very critically. For my Masters degree in Sociology in India, I studied economic realities. I have always agreed with Karl Marx about infrastructure and super structure but I have always read Durkheim and Weber the most (especially *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* or *The Protestant Ethic and Rise of Capitalism*, I have read them over and over). Somehow I believe in emotion more than I believe in logic and reasoning. That's probably why I could not make the I.A.S. (Indian Civil Services Exam).

After I got married and migrated to U.S, I completed another Masters degree in Sociology from Eastern Michigan University (2005). September 11, 2001 affected me in such a way that I thought about doing my research on Sikhs in the United States. I had researched on the topic, "Sikh Youth and Altruism in Southeast Michigan," for my Master's thesis. Even though I am Canadian, I was tied to U.S. society by education, the birth of my children, and because it was the first place I made my home after I left India.

After I earn my Doctorate in Sociology from Wayne State University in May 2014, I wish to be a teacher of sociology, especially either sociological theory or qualitative methods. I would also like to engage in research on world peace, philanthropy, or other positive emotions that make humans more humane. I still think that religious knowledge and religiosity are not only about faith systems of the world but also they represent a field of knowledge, a science that equips humans with mutual cooperation and goodness. Sociology of religion is the most neglected area of study about immigrants. I have tried to fill this gap in the literature by completing my PhD in the sociology of religions, second generation Sikh immigrants and volunteering practices.

My children are second generation Sikhs and I will try my best to insure that not only will they become doctors or engineers but also good human beings that can contribute to the world in a positive way and become responsible and good citizens.