

Interactions with Culturally Relevant Children's Literature: A Punjabi Perspective

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A thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education

Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

ABSTRACT

This research investigated Punjabi children's meaning-making processes as they engaged with culturally relevant literature, and presents a critical evaluation of Punjabi and Sikh representation in children's literature. The Punjabi community in Canada is growing rapidly, with Punjabi being the third most commonly spoken non-official language in Canada. Yet, this minority group remains underrepresented in educational research. Past research has shown the numerous benefits minority children experience when engaging with literature that authentically represents their cultural background (see Cunard, 1996; Goldblatt, 1999; Goo, 2018; Steiner, Nash & Chase, 2008; Zhang & Morrison, 2010). This study gave Punjabi children the opportunity to interact with culturally-relevant stories in multimodal ways, and express their understandings through multiple literacies. The children constructed and shared meanings through verbal discussions, multimodal artwork and the inclusion of movement and dramatizations. They drew on a variety of lived experiences to make meaning from the stories. Their meaning-making processes were further enhanced by the collaborative experience of reading, constructing and sharing meanings. This study opens the door to future research into ways of using literature to foster engagement in the classroom and support children's meaning-making processes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to Noor, Sucha, Akhand, and Fateh (pseudonyms) for sharing your memories, humour and wonder with me.

To the families of the children who participated in this study, thank you for your time and interest in this research project.

Kiran and Ik, this project would be no more than an idea without your support. Thank you.

Thank you to my parents for teaching me and supporting me.

Jasmin, thank you for making my life interesting.

Thank you, Cynthia and Ray, my committee members, for sharing your thoughts.

And finally, a big thank you to Pat. I am grateful for your not-so-gentle nudges to expand my thinking beyond the confines of familiarity. Thank you for your guidance, thank you for your wisdom, thank you for your flexibility.

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“Meaning resides not in the author’s intentions (nor in the text itself) but in the literary experiences of readers and their social interactions with each other.”

(Sipe, 1999, p.121)

PROLOGUE

The books I read as a child never had characters that looked like me, or families that lived like mine. Nonetheless, I developed a love for reading; I was captivated by the world of stories and possibilities that books could provide. In elementary school, I noticed that my ways of constructing meaning from texts were very different from those of my friends and classmates. I often related the characters and plots to those found in other books, or to the imagined world in my head of what it must be like to be white. My white peers were able to relate the books to their own lived experiences reflected in the stories.

As a teacher, I try very hard to include literature and learning materials that reflect the cultural backgrounds of my students. One of my favourite memories from my time as a teacher-librarian is of a little boy who signed out the same book every week to read with his family because the characters looked and lived like he did. His parents personally thanked me for adding this book to our school library collection. My time as a teacher-librarian and classroom teacher, combined with my personal experiences of meaning making as a child, have fostered my desire to learn more about how children make meaning of culturally relevant literature.

INTRODUCTION

Minority representation in children's literature is a topic of particular relevance to diverse societies, such as Canada. Numerous scholars have documented the positive benefits of engaging with multicultural literature for minority and non-minority students alike (eg. Cunard, 1996; Goldblatt, 1999; Goo, 2018; Steiner, Nash & Chase, 2008; Zhang & Morrison, 2010). Much of the research done to date on student engagement with multicultural literature has focused on middle school or high school African-American children, and to a lesser extent, Hispanic and Asian-American children. Early readers' meaning-making processes, particularly with culturally relevant literature, have largely been neglected. Additionally, the Punjabi-Canadian perspective is a gap in our current collective knowledge.

With current immigration trends, the Punjabi population in Canada will continue to grow, and research into the meaning-making processes of this minority group is currently inadequate. Punjabi is the third most common non-official language spoken in Canada, and 22% of students in the Surrey school district, where this research was conducted, speak Punjabi at home (Planning and Development, City of Surrey, 2012).

While children's books written by Indian authors are on the rise, they remain difficult to come by for the average consumer and are scarcely advertised. Only 7 characters in 241 children's picture books published in Canada in 2018 were South Asian (Dundas, 2019). This research examines the representation of Punjabi characters and culture in children's books and investigates Punjabi children's meaning making from culturally relevant children's literature.

It is important to note that multicultural literature and culturally relevant literature are not synonymous. Multicultural literature includes any literature "regardless of genre, that have as the main character a person who is a member of a racial, religious or language micro-culture other

than the Euro-American one” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p.188). Culturally relevant literature is literature that is authentically representative of the reader’s cultural background (Zygmunt, Clark, Tancock, Mucherah & Clausen, 2015). The reader determines whether or not a multicultural book is culturally relevant; any multicultural book can be culturally relevant if it depicts the reader’s cultural background. All books included in this study were culturally relevant for the participants involved.

Despite the frequent use of the word ‘authentic’ to describe literature, the authenticity of children’s literature has been controversial and debated (Loza, 2018; Mo & Shen, 1997), in part due to the contested nature of the word authentic. Initially, I defined authentic children’s literature as literature that respectfully and accurately represents the histories, values and lived experiences of the people who claim the represented culture as their own. However, upon reflection, I recognized that there are multiple ways of living and being within any given culture. Therefore, the authenticity of cultural representation in a book may vary based on an individual’s personal interpretation and expression of their culture. Mo and Shen discuss the constantly evolving nature of culture by stating,

Within a culture, different values are constantly in conflict. New values, beliefs and attitudes are fighting to take ground in the culture while some old ones, though dying, are still hanging there with a small number of the members... Therefore, cultural values are not something stagnant. If you conform with the values most members of the culture consider worthy of acceptance, you have achieved the value authenticity (1997, p.87).

Thus, for the purpose of this study, authentic literature represents histories, values, beliefs and lived experiences that are accepted and validated by a majority of people who claim the represented culture as their own. The word accurately was removed from the definition because, like authentic, what is considered accurate by one person may not be by another. Even our histories are only as accurate as our memories, both individually and collectively.

Research Questions

My research questions are shaped by my experiences with culturally relevant literature, both as an educator and a reader. As a teacher, I have seen how excited children can get when they see their cultural background reflected in the stories they read. As a reader, I am always searching for opportunities to read literature that I can meaningfully connect with through characters like me or traditions that reflect my culture. The research questions that will guide this project are:

- (1) How are Punjabi characters and culture represented in English language and English-Punjabi bilingual children's books?
- (2) How do Punjabi-Canadian children make meaning of cultural representation in culturally relevant children's books?

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE KNOWN: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into four subsections to discuss previous research that has informed and guided this project. The first subsection, *Minority Representation in Children's Literature*, discusses the frequency and availability of multicultural books, and the need for readers to be critical in their encounters with multicultural representation. The next subsection, *Value of Multicultural and Culturally Relevant Literature*, summarizes research highlighting the numerous ways children, families, educators and schools can benefit from the inclusion of books that represent diverse perspectives. The different responses students may have to multicultural and culturally relevant books is discussed in the subsection, *Students Preferences and Interpretations*. Finally, the subsection, *Multimodal Expression*, describes the ways in which multimodality can expand potential for making and sharing meanings.

Minority Representation in Children's Literature

The representation of minorities in children's literature has increased drastically since Nancy Larrick brought attention to "The All White World of Children's Books" in 1965 (Hall, 2011; Larrick, 1965). However, despite this recent increase, only a limited selection of diverse books are available in chain bookstores and big-box retailers where parents, children and teachers have easy access to them (Joshua, 2002). This could be due, in part, to the fact that many bookstores and retailers advertise and market the latest award-winning literature, which tends to under-represent minorities. Hall (2011) found only 17% of award-winning books published in Great Britain, Australia and the United States from 1960 to 2009 represented minority perspectives. In Canada, only 15% of characters in best-selling pictures books represent minority groups (Hirschberg, 2019). In this way, those who have the power to choose which

books are deserving of awards and recognition can have a profound impact on the variety of books that are available to readers, and the elitism of different types of literature (Kidd & Thomas, 2017).

A similar absence of diversity in award-winning books is seen in Scholastic. Scholastic is a multinational company that publishes and sells books to schools, teachers, students and parents. Books written by non-white authors accounted for less than 5% of all books available for purchase through Scholastic over a six-month span (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015; McNair, 2008). Additionally, Scholastic further perpetuated the under-representation of minorities in children's literature by failing to include any culturally diverse books in their selected book lists such as "All Time Favourites," and "Best Books of All Time;" (McNair, 2008).

Even within the limited supply, educators need to be critical in their selection of multicultural literature to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes (Goo, 2018). Some traditional books intentionally or unintentionally portray minorities in a way that can be interpreted negatively by children and can further propagate stereotypes that may exist in society (Joshua, 2002). Minority authors are more likely to minimize stereotypes and holistically represent their own cultures in stories (Thirumurthy, 2011; Wee, Kura & Kim, 2018). Wee et al. (2018) noted that stories representing diverse cultures, written and illustrated by people belonging to that cultural group, are more likely to be authentic and avoid stereotypes or misrepresentations. However, the same researchers also argue that "authenticity can be produced by those who have experience and understanding of a particular culture" regardless of their own cultural background (Wee et al., 2018, p.47).

Misrepresentation of a culture in children's literature can be confusing for children belonging to that culture (Wee et al., 2018). Furthermore, misrepresentation can spread false

information to children from other cultural backgrounds trying to learn about a culture different than their own. Consequently, multicultural children's literature should be held to the same standards for accuracy as non-fiction information books (Wee et al., 2018). Multicultural literature is a valuable learning experience for minority and mainstream children only if it holistically represents a culture and its people.

However, even authentic multicultural books can leave gaps in students' knowledge of minority cultures around the world. Hall (2011) and Wee et al. (2018) found contemporary lived experiences of minorities, both within their home countries and countries they have immigrated to, are ignored in children's literature. Much of the minority representation in children's literature focuses on historical settings and historical lived experiences (Hall, 2011; Wee et al., 2008). The lack of modern-day multicultural stories and experiences could give students an incomplete idea of the culture they are learning about, and how it has changed over time (Hall, 2011; Wee et al., 2008).

Value of Multicultural and Culturally Relevant Literature

As noted previously, multicultural literature is a valuable resource for teaching both minority and non-minority students about diverse perspectives around the world (Goldblatt, 1999; Goo, 2018; Steiner, Nash, & Chase, 2008). In today's globalized world, the need for cross-cultural connection has never been stronger and multicultural literature can facilitate that cross-cultural understanding by representing diverse perspectives (Thirumurthy, 2011). Aldana (2008) pointed out the importance of multicultural literature in her speech stating,

If I understand you (because I have your literature and learned all about you) but you do not understand me because I don't exist in written form, one by which you can come to know me, then we do not have a fair and equal relationship (n.p.).

Teachers can encourage an environment of cultural acceptance and respect through the use of authentic multicultural literature, providing students the opportunity to learn more about the cultures that co-exist in their classroom, school and society (Goldblatt, 1999; Steiner et al., 2008). In this way, books can act as *windows* into different ways of living. However, Aldana (2008) argues that our priority should be books that act as *mirrors* allowing children to see themselves reflected in the literature they read. Researchers have found that a lack of authentic and accurate representations of children's own cultural backgrounds can lead to feelings of exclusion (Gollnick & Chin, 2015). These feelings of exclusion can have a lasting impact on children's self-efficacy and identity development (Gollnick & Chin, 2015). Minority representation in children's literature can lead to a sense of pride (Hinton & Berry, 2004), and foster positive self-esteem (Cunard, 1996; Steiner et al., 2008) for students who do not typically see themselves reflected in the stories they read.

While cultural stories are valuable resources for multicultural education, it is critical that multicultural literature depicts minority characters in a variety of roles within modern day societies. Minority children need to see that people who look like them and speak like them can be successful in any field. It is "equally important for White children to know that talent comes in *all* colours" (Gangi, 2008, p.32).

For immigrant students within Canada, or children of immigrant (grand)-parents, retaining their unique cultural heritage is important as they adjust to Canadian culture. Most

transfer of cultural knowledge occurs at home among family (Al-Ajeely & Ja'Far, 2018); culturally relevant literature can encourage multi-generational storytelling when used at home or in school, which aids in the transfer of traditional values and customs, as well as fosters positive feelings towards cultural heritage (Al-Ajeely & Ja'Far, 2018; Zhang & Morrison, 2010). Reading culturally relevant books at home gives parents the opportunity to connect with the literature and share personal experiences with their children that promote cultural identity development (Packard, 2001). Additionally, Cunard (1996) found the inclusion of multicultural literature in a kindergarten class allowed students to gain confidence in expressing their cultural heritage. In this way, multicultural literature can promote cultural preservation (Thirumurthy, 2011).

Development of cultural identity is integral in the psychological well being of children and youth (Iyengar & Smith, 2016). A positive attitude towards one's own ethnicity is also linked to increased academic success (Makarova & Birman, 2015). However, it is important to note that the inclusion of some traditional values in children's literature has decreased as the influence of western values has increased. Zhang & Morrison (2010) noticed this trend in stories about Chinese culture, which have increased their portrayal of Western values over time. A lack of traditional knowledge in multicultural books can impact minority students' understandings of their culture's histories, traditions and values. A loss of cultural knowledge can result in intergenerational family tensions and community disconnect. This reinforces Thirumurthy's (2011) call for increased production of authentic cultural stories written by minority authors.

In addition to providing an opportunity for immigrant parents and children to connect with each other, culturally relevant literature can increase literacy skills in children's home language and the official language(s) of their adopted country (Dixon & Wu, 2014). Parents' literacy skills can also benefit from home reading programs with children (Morrow & Young,

1997). Immigrant parents may sometimes have limited involvement in their children's school work due to insecurities about their own literacy levels in the mainstream language; however, Morrow and Young (1997) found that immigrant parents were more enthusiastic and willing to participate in home reading programs that involved culturally relevant reading material.

Integrating culturally relevant instruction into the classroom can also result in greater engagement from students, especially minority students (Iyengar & Smith, 2016). It is well known that many students feel the school curriculum is disconnected from their home lives; this is even more prevalent among minority students. For many white students, the text-to-self and text-to-world connections in literature come more naturally, as most of what is read in schools centers around white characters and white lived experiences (Gangi, 2008). However, for ethnically diverse students, connecting to text may be more challenging, as they frequently do not see themselves reflected in the literature they read (Gangi, 2008; Smith, 1995; Zygmunt et al., 2015). Adrienne Gear's widely used *Reading Power* books emphasize the importance of connection in order to develop proficient reading skills (Gangi, 2008; Gear, 2015). This could be one factor contributing to the achievement gap that exists between minority and non-minority students (Rojas-Labouef & Slate, 2011). Minority students are not given the same opportunity to find meaningful connections to the text, which in turn may impact their ability to become proficient readers (Gangi, 2008).

A case study by Spears-Bunton (1990) examined one African-American student who was disengaged in school, which was negatively impacting her academic achievement. However, introducing culturally relevant books into the curriculum encouraged her to engage with the reading material and in classroom activities (Spears-Bunton, 1990). This case study highlights the importance of bringing culturally relevant learning materials into classrooms. By doing so,

educators can help bridge the gap that exists between minority students' home lives and school lives (Iyengar & Smith, 2016). Wearmouth (2017) describes this as culturally responsive pedagogy; a focus on the teacher as a mediator in a learning process that acknowledges the students' cultural position within the broader social context of the learning environment.

Students' Preferences and Interpretations

Students' preferences towards reading material can play an important role in their level of engagement while reading. However, we cannot assume that minority students will prefer books that include representations of their culture. In fact, findings from past research regarding students' preferences for culturally relevant books are inconsistent (see Grice & Vaughn, 1992; Smith, 1995; Taylor, 1997; Towell, Schulz, & Demetrulias, 1997). Grice and Vaughn (1992) found that a large number of African-American and white students did not embrace books focused on African heritage and traditions. Similarly, Towell et al. (1997) found that students' preferences in literature were unrelated to the cultures represented in the story.

In contrast to the studies above, three separate researchers found that African-American students preferred books that included black characters and reflected their cultural heritage (Sims, 1983; Smith, 1995; Taylor, 1997). Interestingly, students preferred culturally relevant books specific to their own culture, rather than multicultural books in general. Taylor (1997) found that Hispanic children did not demonstrate an appreciation for books focusing on African culture; however, African students rated books with African content higher than books with no culturally-specific references or books focusing on white-American perspectives. Researchers argue that with additional teacher scaffolding and the inclusion of background information

relevant to the histories and contributions of Africans, students are better able to connect and understand the diverse perspectives represented in the stories (Taylor, 1997).

The use of multicultural literature as a learning resource needs to extend beyond simply reading a story to engaging with the content and learning about the represented culture in a more holistic way. “One cannot adequately read the literature of a people without knowing something of the culture and the historical circumstances of that people” (Lee, 1993, p.4). Both minority and non-minority students need some context to fully understand the value and meaning of multicultural literature. Additionally, students need to critically assess *how* diverse groups are represented in literature rather than accept all representations as inherently good simply because they are inclusive. In this way, students draw on critical literacy as they make meaning from multicultural literature.

The meaning portrayed in any literary work can be interpreted differently depending on the readers’ personal backgrounds and knowledge. Numerous scholars have noted that students draw on lived experiences when making meaning from literature (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Johnston & Mangat, 2012; Mantei & Kervin, 2014). A Canadian study found that high-school students with Indian heritage interpreted a culturally relevant story differently than their white peers (Johnston & Mangat, 2012). The connections made, level of appreciation for the story, and general attitude towards the cultural conflicts and traditions represented varied between the Indian heritage students and the white students (Johnston & Mangat, 2012).

One initial question these researchers asked was if there exists such a thing as “ethnic reading” (Johnston & Mangat, 2012, p.2). This question arises from Verhoven’s (1996) inquiries into the term “ethnic writing” being used to define work authored by ethnic writers. The researchers investigated whether the reading processes are different when ethnic readers engage

with ethnic writing (Johnston & Mangat, 2012). They conclude that while cultural background certainly does influence the ways in which students make meaning of literature, especially culturally relevant literature, it is not the only knowledge and experience students use to make meaning (Johnston & Mangat, 2012). Research related to African-American middle school students' meaning-making processes also found that students draw from a variety of lived experiences that may or may not be related to culture (Brooks and Browne, 2012).

While findings from current research on the meaning-making processes of middle school and high school students are consistent (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Johnston & Mangat, 2012), questions about young readers' meaning-making processes remain unanswered. As May (1997) argues, adults so often read literature to young readers then tell them what it means. Children sometimes are not given adequate opportunities to make meaning from literature on their own.

Multimodal Expression

Today's Euro-centric model of education has a very heavy dependence on written output for expressions of understanding. However, by limiting students to one form of expression, we also limit the ways in which students are able to engage with the literature. Multimodal text is the term used to describe print-based or digital texts that use more than one mode of expression to convey meaning (Kress, 2010). Short, Kauffman and Kahn (2000) pointed out that multimodal forms of engagement allow students the opportunity to "more fully enter into and reflect on the story world because they experienced it from so many perspectives" (p.170). When students use alternate means of expression to demonstrate their engagement with literature, they must also think about the literature in new ways thereby deepening their critical engagement with the text. Multimodal expression is also an accessible way to highlight the strengths of all students, as it

offers flexibility, which is particularly important for students who may struggle with traditional written output (Morawski, 2012). Therefore, multimodality challenges the status of written language in today's learning environments (Morawski, 2017).

Additionally, varied ways of sharing and making meaning hold different “potential for meaning” (Short, Kauffman & Kahn, 2000, p. 160). This is to say that meaning represented through artwork may have developed specifically because artwork was the chosen medium. The same individual may not have created that meaning if they had chosen an alternate form of expression, such as written language (Morawski et al., 2014). In this way, multiple meanings may arise through multimodal ways of sharing meaning, as there are fewer restrictions to confine thinking processes (Morawski et al., 2014).

The very materials used in this research project, picture books, are also a form of multimodal expression. Picture books are particularly interesting to analyze because they use a combination of images, words, and design elements (such as borders, colours, etc.) to convey meaning, drawing on readers' multimodal literacies (Serafini, 2015). The visuals add an additional mode for representing and interpreting meaning (Serafini, 2010; Wee et al., 2008). Additionally, the images in the picture books are useful for early readers who may not be able to fully engage with the language independently (Mantei & Kervin, 2014; Serafini, 2010).

Literature Review Conclusion

Educators and readers need to be critical of all aspects of cultural representation in children's books (including illustrations, design elements, plot progression, character development and power dynamics) to ensure they are not supporting the perpetuation of stereotypes. Holistic and respectful representation in multicultural children's literature allows

children to learn about other cultures and, if the book is culturally relevant, feel that their culture and histories are valued. However, not all students connect with and prefer to read books that represent their culture. Readers construct meaning from text by drawing on multiple aspects of their lived experiences; therefore, readers need to have the opportunity to read culturally relevant and multicultural books in ways that support their engagement with all aspects of the text. Freedom to create and share meaning through any mode of choice allows readers greater opportunity to interact with the text in ways that are personally relevant.

FRAMING THE IDEA: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on two separate frameworks to answer the two research questions outlined in the introduction. Firstly, critical race theory is used as a framework to analyze representation in children's books during the book analysis phase of this research project. Secondly, Serafini's (2010) analytical framework for investigating multimodal texts provides the foundation in understanding how we interact with picture books, which employ multimodality to convey meaning.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is used to examine the complexities of race and power both historically and in modern society (Chapman, 2013). It provides "scholars with the tools to critique and question the ways in which people of color are represented, the resources that schools receive, and the public mandates structuring their lives" (Chapman, 2013, p.106). Previous scholars have used critical race theory to highlight the "racial biases that are deeply

embedded in the unstated norms” in society (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p.19). Critical race theory provides the framework for this research to examine the possible embedded racial bias within multicultural literature, and the power imbalance that leads to those misrepresentations.

Analytical Framework for Interacting with Multimodal Texts

Serafini (2010) draws on a number of theories within the realm of literacy studies, culture studies, and studies of representation to construct a framework with three distinct perspectives describing interactions with multimodal texts. These three perspectives (perceptual, structural, and ideological) are deeply interconnected and build off one another as demonstrated in the figure below (Figure 1), which is based on a description by Serafini (2010).

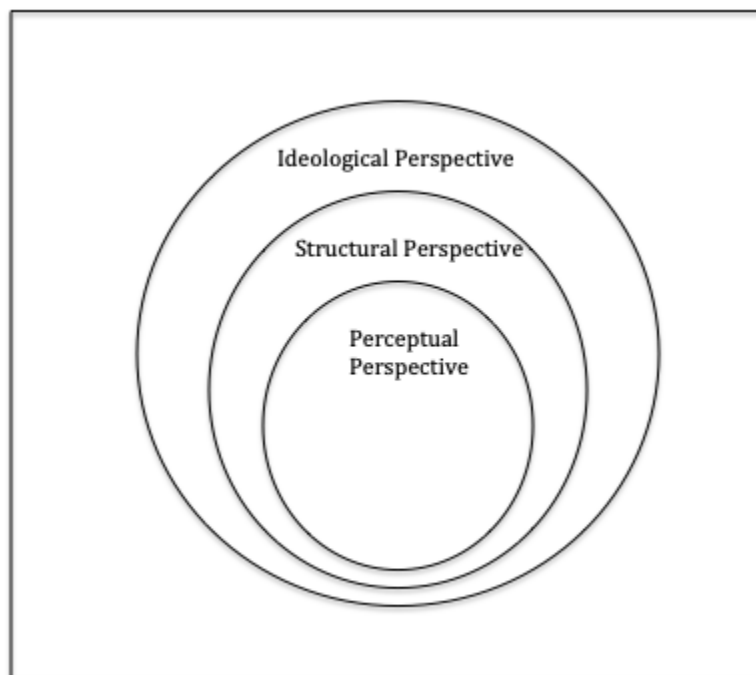


Figure 1: The three perspectives of the analytical framework for interacting with multimodal texts

The first perspective, the perceptual analytical perspective, focuses on the literal content of the multimodal text. Readers must perceive and notice the visual contents of multimodal texts before they can interpret the visuals. “Readers cannot interpret that which is not perceived, and what is perceived can change based on what is understood,” (Serafini, 2010, p.93). Many visual and design features of multimodal texts may be overlooked by readers because of the emphasis placed on language in our culture (Serafini, 2015). However, these visuals and design features play important roles in conveying meaning (Serafini, 2010). Therefore, it is important to give young readers the opportunity to notice, perceive and interact with all aspects of the multimodal text, not just the language.

Readers construct meaning from multimodal texts based on what they perceive. This is why the structural analytical perspective frames the perceptual analytical perspective. The structural perspective refers to the process of constructing and reconstructing meaning as part of the interpretation process of reading multimodal texts (Serafini, 2010).

Finally, the outer ring in the diagram represents the ideological analytical perspective, which focuses on the “socio-cultural, historical and political contexts” of the multimodal text. Hall points out that

We should perhaps learn to think of meaning less in terms of ‘accuracy’ and ‘truth’ and more in terms of effective exchange – a process of *translation*, which facilitates cultural communication while always recognizing the persistence of difference and power between different ‘speakers’ (1997, p.11).

The way meaning is interpreted from a multimodal text is influenced by the social, political and cultural contexts of its production and reception. Readers need to consider the cultural conventions, and historical and political implications related to the multimodal text at hand. Therefore, the ideological perspective extends beyond aesthetic interactions with the text and personal meaning making, such as those in the structural perspective, to include situating the text within contemporary society.

PLANNING THE PLOT: METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on stories that have been produced for large audiences, and the stories of children who engage with these productions. Consequently, narrative inquiry is well suited because it is a research methodology focused on sharing stories (Creswell, 2015).

We, as narrative inquirers, are interested in how storytelling activities are (contextually) embedded, what they consist of, and how we can take their form, content, and context as cues toward an interpretation of what the particular story meant — what it was used for and what functions it was supposed to serve (Bamberg, 2012).

Prior to investigating children's interpretations of culturally relevant literature, it is important for me to assess the literature that will be presented to participants to ensure that the cultural representation is free of stereotypes. Stereotypes in literature can have negative effects on students (Joshua, 2002), and from an ethical standpoint, I did not want this research to negatively impact my participants. Therefore, a thematic analysis to critically examine Punjabi

and Sikh representation in children's literature was completed before books were presented to participants.

Book Selection

English language books and English-Punjabi bilingual books available in Canada, regardless of publishing location, were included in this study. The children participating in this study described themselves as not fully fluent in Punjabi; therefore, Punjabi language books were not included in this study. All books included some story elements; non-fiction books structured as information books only with no story elements were not included, as there were fewer literary and creative elements for students to make meaning from. Twenty-two print books and four digital ebooks were collected from online retailers, independent children's book publishers, and local and university libraries. Some books were purchased by directly emailing the authors of the books. Bookstores were searched for culturally relevant books specific to Punjabi and Sikh traditions; however, no suitable books were found within the searched bookstores.

While Sikh is not synonymous with Punjabi, it is important to acknowledge that a majority of Indian Punjabi people do identify with the Sikh faith. The Punjabi identity is associated with the geographic region known as Punjab; however, Sikh identity is defined as participating in the Sikh faith and belonging to the Sikh community. Books associated with Sikh identity were only included after confirming that all of the child participants identified as Sikh in addition to Punjabi.

Book Analysis Strategy

The Punjabi and Sikh representations in children's books were evaluated using a holistic narrative inquiry approach. My personal background and involvement in the Punjabi and Sikh community provided me with strong understandings of Punjabi culture and Sikh philosophy. My understandings informed my critical assessment of children's books for representation of Punjabi and Sikh characters and traditions. Additionally, I had previously gained practice in critically assessing children's literature throughout my time working as a teacher and teacher-librarian in British Columbia's public education system.

My assessment of children's books was further informed by previous research looking at stereotypes in multicultural children's literature. Pratt and Beaty (1999) created a set of guiding questions to assess multicultural representation in children's literature. These questions focus on representation through character development, descriptions and interactions, story setting, and social or economic norms. These guiding questions were used in combination with the *multicultural book analysis categories* outlined by Wee, Park and Choi (2015). The categories include characters, language, and stereotypes in illustrations (Wee et al., 2015). Aspects of each book were evaluated holistically under each category to study the representation. Books were read and reread, and detailed notes were taken pertaining to the story, illustrations, character development, setting and traditions included in each book.

Story Session Strategy

Books considered to be free of stereotypes were shared with the four children who participated in the study. Participants were recruited from a Punjabi language after school program that has been an important community institution for several years within the Punjabi-

Canadian community in Surrey, BC. This particular program was selected for its work in preserving Punjabi culture within the Punjabi-Canadian community in Canada. For the recruitment process, parents/guardians were given a recruitment letter (Appendix A) when they arrived to drop off their children. The families that proceeded to contact me and express an interest in participating were all included in the study.

As with any research involving the participation of young children, it was necessary to obtain consent from the children's parents/guardians, and assent from the children who participated. Consent from parents/guardians was obtained using the consent form, which was approved by the University of Ottawa Ethics Review Board (included as Appendix B). Assent from the children was obtained verbally before beginning each story session. Parents/guardians and children were made aware that they could leave the study at any time.

Data was collected in semi-structured 'interviews' and observations during group read-aloud story sessions. The story sessions were held in the Punjabi program's building over summer vacation when the program was not in session. The group story sessions allowed for a more social and collaborative process of meaning making, as is customary in Punjabi culture. I intended to conduct three group story sessions with a different story each time; however, the study ended up including four sessions due to scheduling conflicts. The first two story sessions included all four child participants, while the last two sessions included two children at each story session. Ultimately, each child participated in three story sessions throughout the project.

I use the word 'interview' to describe a verbal, guided meaning making process in which I used prompting statements to engage the children in reflection and critical analysis of the story. However, children were also invited to ask questions of each other or me. 'Interviews' followed the 'tell me' model that has previously been used in research with children (Chambers, 1994;

Mantei & Kervin, 2015). This interview framework allows children more freedom to share their thoughts and interpretations of literature (including visuals). Examples of ‘tell me’ interview prompts include: “Tell me some things you notice about this book, tell me about anything these stories remind you about in your life” (Matei & Kervin, 2015). Appendix C includes prompts for each story session that were outlined before beginning the sessions. The semi-structured nature of the story sessions allowed me the freedom to ask participants questions specific to the aspects of the stories that piqued their curiosities. Consequently, additional questions and prompts not included in Appendix C were discussed in the story sessions related to specific ideas and thoughts the children shared.

The ebooks collected for this project were available for students to read on an iPad individually during the story sessions; however, only print books were presented as choices for our collaborative group reading. The decision to present only print books for collaborative reading was partially based on my preference for print books over ebooks. Additionally, I felt that the print books presented more engaging story lines. Finally, recent research by Munzer et al., (2019) highlighted the ways in which print books can encourage collaborative reading compared to ebooks. Researchers found that children demonstrated more book-related verbalizations, more verbalizations overall, and increased collaboration when reading print books compared to ebooks (Munzer et al., 2019). Additionally, new research by Halamish and Elbaz (2020) found children’s reading comprehension to be stronger when reading on paper compared to reading on a screen.

The children, as a group, selected the story for each session from a selection of books I presented. Each session had a guiding theme, and each book presented was related to that theme. The three themes emerged during the book analysis and are discussed further in the *Interactions*

and Exchanges section. Participants were encouraged to express their understandings through multimodal forms, such as art, drama and oral storytelling. Materials for multimodal expression (such as: coloured paper, crayons, markers, buttons, string, beads, scissors, glue, tape, rhinestones, etc.) were available for the participants to use.

Frequently, students are given access to materials for multimodal expression after a literature discussion. This implies that these multimodal forms are only useful for communicating ideas that were already developed through language (Short, Kauffman & Kahn, 2000). However, alternate forms of expression can create opportunities to explore literature through a new lens (Short, Kauffmann & Kahn, 2000). Therefore, materials, space and time for multimodal meaning-making and expression were available to participants throughout the read-alouds, prior to our verbal and collaborative discussions, for story sessions 1, 3 and 4. In story session 2, I did not provide art supplies for the children to engage in multimodal expression during the reading process. This was because I was curious to learn more about how the presence of materials for multimodal meaning-making and expression would affect children's verbal meaning-making and expression throughout the read aloud. After our discussions, the children were invited to create an additional piece of artwork to represent their interpretations and understandings of the story. Participants were given the opportunity to talk about the meanings they represented in their artwork. They were invited to share with the whole group or just share with me independently.

All story sessions were video-recorded and transcribed. Video recordings allow for easier differentiation of voices and include multimodal expressions of understanding such as dramatizations. Detailed observation notes were taken before and after each session as well. Transcriptions and observation notes were read repeatedly and intertextually to code for

emerging themes using Newell and Burnard's (2006) six-stage framework for qualitative data analysis.

MEETING THE CHILDREN: PARTICIPANTS

Four children were included in this project, and each of the children identified as being Punjabi and Sikh. At the first story session, all four participants eagerly showed me the *kara* on their wrists after seeing a *kara* on my wrist. A *kara* is a visual representation of the Sikh identity.

Fateh Singh was four years old during the story sessions. He is the oldest of three children in his family, and was very open and willing to speak with me right from the start despite his more reserved interactions with the other participants at the beginning of the story sessions. Fateh is an incredibly responsive child who was quick to make connections, respond to prompts and think of ideas for multimodal expression. He frequently commented on the other children's artistic expressions, telling them they had good ideas or had done a good job.

Noor Kaur was five years old during the story session and the only girl participating in this project. Noor, along with the rest of her family, visibly represented her Sikh identity through uncut hair. Noor frequently talked about her family at the story sessions, especially her younger cousin who she referred to as her sister, as is customary within Punjabi culture. Noor was very inquisitive at each story session and often asked questions about the story, the art materials, me and the other participants. She spoke easily with the other participants and eagerly shared details about her artwork. Noor was the most advanced reader in the group and was able to independently read parts of the stories as she browsed the books to make a decision on which book she would like to read during the story session.

Akhand Singh was six years old at the time of the story sessions. He visibly represents his identity as Sikh by keeping his hair long and tied in a traditional *joora*. Akhand is an outspoken little boy who was very willing to share his thoughts. Throughout each session, he was particularly attentive to his younger brother, Sucha Singh (who also participated in the study). He was eager to help Sucha create meanings from the literature and create artwork to express those meanings. He would always cater to Sucha's needs by sharing art supplies and even compromising on book selection to accommodate Sucha's interests. Akhand was also able to independently read sections of the stories while browsing books before we began the story sessions.

Sucha Singh was four years old at the time of the story sessions. Initially, Sucha was shy and hesitant to share his thoughts, only whispering his ideas to me when I would specifically prompt him. However, by the last story session, he was speaking much more freely and even singing as he worked on his artwork. He would seek out Akhand to share his ideas and artwork while working. Sucha had limited independent interactions with Fateh and Noor, but would join in on conversations with them when Akhand was also involved in the conversation. Sucha Singh, like Akhand, visibly represents his Sikh identity with long hair. Both Sucha and Akhand come from a mixed race home; their mother is of Punjabi heritage while their dad is white. Both of their parents have been actively involved in the Punjabi community for more than 10 years and visited India multiple times.

All three of the participating families shared that the children's families (including parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles) have served as major sources of cultural and religious knowledge and learning. Akhand and Sucha's mother also highlighted the Darbar Sahib (Sikh temple) as a place of learning for her children regarding Punjabi language, culture and Sikhism.

INTERACTIONS AND EXCHANGES: RESULTS

Included and Excluded Books

A total of 22 print books and four digital ebooks were collected for inclusion in this project. The books collected for this project reflected a mix of historical and contemporary settings. Previous research by Hall (2011) and Wee et al. (2018), as discussed in the literature review, found that minority representation in children's literature tends to focus on historical experiences; however, this was not the case with books representing Punjabi and Sikh characters and traditions.

Appendix D includes a summary of analysis for each book collected for this study. Upon analysis, the books were divided into three categories related to Sung's (2020) categories for books representing Korean culture and characters. Sung (2020) described books including Korean culture or characters as falling into two categories; the first category was books that capture experiences and stories specifically relevant to the Korean diaspora. The second category was books that are relatable for all children, regardless of their cultural background because they represent experiences that occur in the lives of any child (Sims, 1982; Sung, 2020).

My analysis categorized books into three categories, rather than two like Sung (2020), and each category was used to guide one story session. Category one, similar to Sung's (2020) second category, consists of books that include Punjabi or Sikh characters but do not focus on Punjabi culture or Sikh religion. Some books under this category have no cultural or religious aspect included beyond identifying the characters as being Punjabi, Indian or Sikh through illustrations. Other books in this category include some cultural or religious aspects, but they are not integral to the story. These books do not require knowledge of Punjabi culture or Sikh religion to understand and connect with.

The second category outlined by Sung (2020) was divided into two separate categories in this study because there was a clear distinction between books that focused on Punjabi culture and books that focused on Sikh religion. As Sikhs make up the majority of the population in Punjab, and many Punjabi-Canadians identify as Sikhs, these books were a large portion of all books written by and for the Punjabi community.

Category two includes books that represent Punjabi culture through cultural celebrations or traditions. The stories included in this category teach readers about Punjabi culture or require a level of cultural knowledge in order to understand the plot. The culture is integral to the story. Finally, category three includes books that represent important aspects of Sikhism, such as religious practices, beliefs, celebrations, and histories. Readers learn about Sikhism or require knowledge of Sikhism in order to fully understand these books.

Most of the books collected for this project were free of stereotypes; however, there were some exceptions. *Bani da Pari'vaar* (Johal, 2017) was excluded from the story sessions because of exoticism; a grandmother is depicted riding an elephant in the book. It is notable that this book was meant to take place in modern-day society. Additionally, *Treasure for Lunch* (Nanji, 2000) was excluded from the story sessions because of possible stereotyping. This book presented an engaging story; however, the skin colour of the main character varies from page to page and is depicted significantly darker in images where she is with her classmates. The preference for lighter skin in illustrations where she is the sole focus of the image can contribute to the perpetuation of beauty standards that promote lighter skin over dark skin (see Wong, 2015).

Two other books were excluded from this project because they represent Sikh philosophy in ways that I do not agree with. Religion is very much open to interpretation, and these books do not suit my interpretation of Sikhism. However, that does not mean that other Sikhs would also

find these books to be inaccurate. They may represent beliefs that other Sikhs agree with. As discussed previously, what I consider to be accurate and truthful representation may be considered inaccurate or disrespectful by somebody else with a different perspective; after all, “just as no single piece of literature can adequately convey the complexities of any given culture, so no one representative of a culture can speak for all its members” (Sipe, 1999, p.126). Both of these books were written by members of the Sikh community, and appear to be honest efforts to give children meaningful opportunities to learn about Sikhism. Firstly, the book, *What is a Patka?* (Kalia, 2019), was excluded because of the following sentence in the book: “Mohan is Sikh, because his Mom and Dad are Sikhs! Being Sikh means he follows certain rules” (n.p.). One of the rules that Mohan must follow is not cutting his hair. Any religion is more than just a set of rules; this description of Sikhism is not in line with my understanding of Sikh philosophy. Additionally, I do not believe that one is Sikh simply because their parents are. Finally, *Ajeet Singh the Invincible Lion* (Singh, 2018), was excluded from this story session because its representation of a Sikh scripture is inaccurate based on my interpretation of the scriptures. Children in this story are labelled as negative mindsets which is not in line with Sikh beliefs as I understand them.

Some books free of stereotypes were not included in the story sessions. Two print books were not included because they were not delivered in time for the story sessions: *A Lion's Mane* (Kaur, 2009) and *The Many Colours of Harpreet Singh* (Kelkar, 2019). Two additional books were not included due to the length of the books: *Dear Takuya ... Letters of a Sikh Boy* (Kaur, 2008) and *The Royal Falcon* (Kaur, 2009). These two stories were too long for the age group and time frame allotted for story sessions.

While all books free of stereotypes were available for children to look through on their own or take home to read with their families, a limited number of books were selected to present to the children as options for the story sessions. I selected the books that I believed presented the most engaging stories related to the theme of that particular story session. I wanted to keep the process of selecting a book with the children as manageable as possible. Based on my experiences as a teacher and teacher-librarian, I believe it is much more manageable for a group to make a selection from three or four books, rather than a larger number. Additionally, within the Sikh themed books in story session three, many of the books emphasized the importance of uncut hair in Sikhism. It is true that uncut hair is a part of the Sikh identity; however, I believe that there are multiple ways to express a Sikh identity. I also did not want Fateh to feel excluded from the Sikh community due to this focus, as he was the only participant who cut his hair. Consequently, the books selected as options for story session three were books that included multiple aspects of Sikh identity.

Story Session 1

The first story session was based on category one from the book analysis stage: books that include Punjabi and Sikh characters, but do focus on cultural or religious aspects as integral parts of the story. All of the books included in Appendix D under category one and deemed free of stereotypes were available for children to read independently or take home; however, only the following four books were presented as options for our group story session: *Super Satya Saves the Day* (Mirchandani, 2018), *The Five Fingered Family* (Khalsa, 2000), *Always Anjali* (Sheth, 2018), and *Ajooni the Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands Up to the Dragon* (Dhami, 2018). These four books were chosen because I believed them to be the most engaging stories out of all the books

that were categorized under category one. Additionally, these four books present a mix of contemporary and historical settings, as well as a variety of underlying story themes as illustrated in Appendix D. These four books allowed the children to choose between stories that include imagined worlds and stories that are grounded in actual observed/lived experiences.

Fateh was eager to read *Ajooni the Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands Up to the Dragon* (Dhami, 2018), and quickly pointed out that his sister's name is Ajooni. The other three children all voted for *The Five Fingered Family* (Khalsa, 2000) after hearing a short description of each book from me and spending a bit of time looking through all four of the book choices. All three children were interested in this book because of the troll. As a group, we decided to select *The Five Fingered Family* (Khalsa, 2000) since it received the greatest number of votes. Fateh did take *Ajooni the Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands Up to the Dragon* (Dhami, 2018) home with him after the story session.

Brief Plot Summaries:

Ajooni The Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands up to the Dragon (Dhami, 2018) - Ajooni encounters a dragon and discovers that bravery does not mean being unafraid, rather bravery is the act of confronting your fears

The Five Fingered Family (Khalsa, 2000) - a folktale about a family working together to trick a troll

Super Satya Saves the Day (Mirchandani, 2018) - Satya's superhero cape is at the dry cleaners; she worries she will not be able to be super without it, but realizes the cape is not what makes her super

Always Anjali (Sheth, 2018) - Anjali feels excluded because her name is different; she eventually realizes that being different is not a bad thing

A large piece of paper and a number of different art supplies were placed on the floor in front of the children to encourage collaborative expression as we read the story. I explained to them before beginning the story session that they could use the supplies to show memories, thoughts, or ideas that occurred to them while we read. I also explained that for this particular artwork, they could add on to each other's work and use up space anywhere on the paper. The

children did not wait until we started the book to begin creating art work. They all chose to use markers, and there was very limited collaboration in the artwork they created while reading the story. All of the children continued to work on this artwork as we read, stopping intermittently to look at the illustrations in the book or comment about the story.

Before starting the book, Noor immediately noticed the family on the front cover. When I asked the group what they noticed about the family, Akhand responded that they are a human family. My own immediate reaction to the cover was to notice the family wearing traditional Indian clothing and turbans; however, this did not appear to stand out to the children, or was not something noteworthy for them initially, as none of the participants voiced this observation until after finishing the story. The topic of the characters' clothing came up when the children talked about the family as living in India and speaking Punjabi; this was explicitly stated in the story. Noor commented that the family in the story was a Punjabi family, and when I prompted her to ask how she knew that the family was a Punjabi family, she answered “because they have some *suites*.” Suites are one style of women’s clothing popular in India, especially in Punjab. Fateh and Sucha both added that some characters were also wearing “a *pagh*” (turban). In this case, the clothing of the characters was the most distinguishable characteristic in identifying them as Punjabi.

When the children were prompted to share what they think the family in the story learned from their experiences with the troll, Fateh was quick to respond that they learned to “be good.” The other participants did not have any comments related to the moral of the story; however, the following conversation suggests that Noor also picked up on the moral aspect of the story:

Me: Tell me what the story reminds you of in your life?

Noor: Um [short pause] my family, my family, we all went to the beach.

Me: Yeah? How did the story remind you of that?

Noor: Yeah because they're, they're helping [each other].

Noor also stated at a later time that “staying together” is the most important thing about the family in the story. However, the most important thing about the story is not necessarily the aspect of the story that the children liked best. Sucha said his favorite part of the story was the monster, and Fateh agreed, but used the terminology troll, as was used in the story, to refer to the same monster Sucha spoke of. Noor used this topic of discussion to make a connection between the book and a film she had seen; she stated she had “watched a different trolls movie” that was different because the trolls were “little.”

Noor’s favourite thing about the story was the treasure. This was also reflected in her artwork, shown in Figure 2, where she created a treasure. When discussing her artwork she said the treasure was her favourite because “I have jewels at home too. I have a bunch.” She had carefully selected each colour and object to use in her treasure creation, often sifting through the container for minutes at a time to find a specific item to include. When I asked her how she chose which jewels to include in her artwork, she said “they’re my favourite colours.”



Figure 2: Noor’s Treasure

Akhand struggled initially to think of something to create for his artwork. He said he did not like the story we read; when I prompted him to ask what he didn't like, he said "ah, I don't know what I didn't like, I just didn't like it." He spent a while observing the other children at work before deciding to also create a treasure, like Noor; however, he took a very different



Figure 3: Akhand's Bracelet

approach. Initially, he wanted to make a necklace for a treasure chest, but after starting the necklace, he had two accidents where all the beads fell off his string. He had to restart each time, and decided to make a bracelet instead, shown in Figure 3. Akhand solved his problem of the beads falling off the string by attaching a piece of tape to the end. After adding all of the beads he wanted, he used another piece of tape on top of the first to hold the bracelet together in a loop. I observed that Akhand was much less meticulous in selecting beads for his bracelet and would

include any beads that were near him on the table; I asked him, "how did you choose which beads to use for your bracelet?" and he responded, "I just chose. I just concentrated on making it." Fateh was also inspired by the treasure idea, and specifically commented "that's a good idea" to Akhand's bracelet. Fateh wanted to create a bracelet for his mom, but had already started a different piece of artwork which he finished before beginning work on his bracelet.

My initial art prompt to the kids was that they could create any kind of art they wanted to show me what they thought was important in the story or what they learned from the story. Fateh almost immediately responded saying, "I'm gonna make my farm. That's what I'm gonna do." When I asked how his farm was connected to the story, he promptly replied "It does like the



Figure 4: Fateh's Farm

story. Yeah, it's blue, like the clouds. And the grass." Fateh initially began creating using only markers and did not even look at the other multimodal materials available on the table; however, once he saw the other participants opening containers and reaching for other materials, he spent some time exploring the options available for materials. He added a large

button and described it as "the sun going down." He also later used beads and said "I'm gluing stars because it's night time. It's almost night time." Figure 4 shows Fateh's final piece. His artwork evolved as he explored additional materials and he ended up spending only a few minutes working on a bracelet for his mom which he stated "is like the treasure from the story." He took beads with him to finish his bracelet at home because he did not have time to finish before needing to leave with his mother.

Sucha's artistic journey was different than the other children because where the others seemed to think of a plan for their artwork then execute that plan, Sucha instead began creating first and allowed his plan to evolve as he created. Initially, he told me he had an idea for his artwork, but did not speak when I prompted him to share his idea and instead was very engaged in his work. Later, after I had a conversation with Fateh about his artwork, Sucha whispered to me that he was making a farm. When I asked him what made him think of a farm, he responded "cats." There were no cats in the story we read, so I curiously asked him what it was in the story that made him think of cats. Akhand jumped in to answer for his brother and said "Oh it's like lots of cats in India." Both boys shared with me that they had travelled to India with their family

and had seen plenty of cats there. However, towards the end of the session when I checked back in with Sucha and asked him to tell me more about his artwork, he did not mention cats at all. Instead, he said “It’s a farm. It has crazies, crazy stuff.” Figure 5 shows Sucha’s creation. When prompted to explain what he meant by crazy stuff, he explained that there was a water fountain

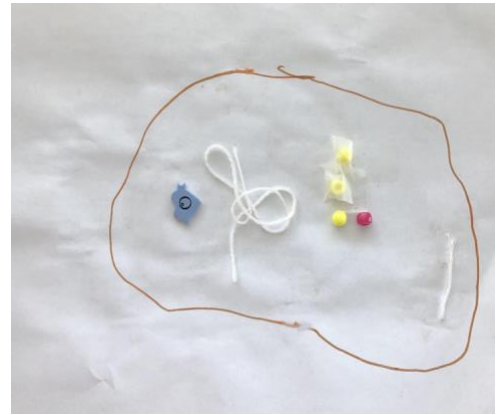


Figure 5: Sucha’s Farm

(the loop of white string in the middle), a house (the blue piece on the left), cars (the yellow and pink pieces), and walls (the brown shape surrounding the other pieces). He did not respond when asked about where the cats were. His ideas evolved as he worked through his creation, and he was open to allowing his artwork to evolve with his thinking processes.

Before concluding the session that day, we revisited the drawings the children had worked on while reading the story. At this time, the children did not have much to say about their drawings. This may have been partially due to the fact that a significant amount of time had passed between when they created that first piece of art and when we sat down to discuss it. In that time span, the children had created new pieces of artwork and had moved on from the first piece. I used this observation to restructure future story sessions, and include a discussion about the art they made while reading the story immediately after finishing the story.

What the children did share about their artwork led me to believe that the initial artwork they created as they read the story was not related to the story, but an output for other thoughts present in their brains as we read the story. Figure 6 shows the artwork the children created as we read; Sucha created the drawing on the far left of the page, Noor created the collection of



Figure 6: Group artwork while reading from story session 1

drawings to the right of Sucha's, Akhand's creation was the next one to the right of Noor's.

Fateh's drawing is the one on the far right, including the blue circle shapes drifting up the page.

Fateh said he drew his sister because the title of the book, *Ajooni the Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands Up to the Dragon* (Dhami, 2018), reminded him of his sister. Sucha did not want to talk about his artwork and chose not to provide a description for his drawing depicting circles of various sizes and colours. Noor said she drew "outside;" like Sucha, she did not elaborate on this.

Akhand stated that his drawing is "just scribbles" because he was listening to the story.

Interestingly, there is a sad face in the middle of his scribbles. When I prompted him to ask him if the story made him feel sad, he said it did not make him feel sad, but he reinstated that he didn't like the story.

Story Session 2

Before we began this story session, Fateh started a conversation about the book he had taken home the week before. Fateh started off by telling me he liked the book, *Ajooni the Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands Up to the Dragon* (Dhami, 2018). When I asked him what he liked about the book, he responded by saying "I like, like the dragon ... [and] because, because the name [of the main character, not the dragon] like my sister." After this I briefly prompted the

other children to share what they thought about the books they took home; Sucha shared that he liked the books he borrowed, but did not have much to add regarding what he enjoyed about the books. Akhand did not have anything to share about the books he read at home with Sucha.

Fateh quickly noticed the absence of the large piece of paper on the floor along with materials for artistic expression as we read; he commented, “why we not put a paper here?” The children all seemed satisfied with my explanation that for today’s story session, we would only do artwork after we finish reading instead of also creating art while we read. I was curious to see if the presence of multimodal materials for artistic expression as we read had any influence on the children’s level of verbal engagement with the story; therefore, I did not provide children with art materials as we read the book at this story session.

Noor was late arriving to this story session; she arrived when we were nearly finished reading the book. She was much quieter and reserved at this story session compared to her way of being at the other sessions. She asked me to read the beginning of the book, which she had missed, to her after we finished reading as a group. The two of us read through quickly; however, we were interrupted multiple times by the other children wanting to share something about their artwork with me. Consequently, I did not have the opportunity to fully engage in a discussion with Noor about the story.

This story session was based on category two from the book analysis stage: books that include Punjabi culture. Only three books in total were categorized as this during the book analysis stage. One of those three books, *Bani da Pari’vaar* (Johal, 2017), was not deemed

suitable for inclusion due to the presence of some stereotyping. As a result, *Gidhaa Rani* (Kaur, 2011) and *Lohri: The Bonfire Festival* (Dhillon, 2015) were the only two options presented to children at this story session.

Noor was not present to vote, but all three other participants chose *Lohri: The Bonfire Festival* (Dhillon, 2015) for the group story

session. The boys did not spend any time browsing the book choices for this story session; instead, their decision seemed to be based on the cover. *Lohri: The Bonfire Festival* (Dhillon, 2015) has a very colourful cover with a boy and a girl dressed in bright, traditional clothing. *Gidhaa Rani* (Kaur, 2011) has a much simpler cover with an illustration of one girl dressed in traditional clothing; the colours in this illustration are also much softer. The cover of *Lohri: The Bonfire Festival* (Dhillon, 2015) seemed to be more appealing to all three boys. This may be due to the colours and vibrancy, or due to the fact that it included a boy and a girl, whereas *Gidhaa Rani*'s (Kaur, 2011) cover only included a girl.

Lohri: The Bonfire Festival (Dhillon, 2015) is a bilingual book in Punjabi and English. When I asked the kids if they knew any Punjabi, Akhand responded "yeah," while Fateh said no. At the first story session, Fateh demonstrated to me that he was able to count in Punjabi up to five at least; he was also aware of some other words in Punjabi which had come up throughout the first and second story sessions. Akhand had demonstrated a similar level of Punjabi vocabulary, but he considered himself as knowing Punjabi. Both boys attend the Punjabi language after-school program where the teachers frequently speak both Punjabi and English

Brief Plot Summaries:

Lohri: The Bonfire Festival (Dhillon, 2015) - follows two children as they prepare for and celebrate *Lohri*, a Punjabi cultural celebration

Gidhaa Rani (Kaur, 2011) - describes Daya's first encounter with the traditional Punjabi dance known as *gidhaa*; Daya later goes on to learn and perform *gidhaa*

with the students. I read each page of the story in Punjabi first, paused for a short time to allow the children to respond, then read it in English and paused for a similar amount of time. The children never responded after the Punjabi reading, and always had something to share after the English reading. This may suggest that while the children have some knowledge of Punjabi vocabulary, their overall fluency in Punjabi may be low. Alternatively, they may have understood the Punjabi, but wanted to wait until they could confirm their understanding with the English translation before commenting to the group.

Lohri is a significant celebration in Punjab every January. The festivities have reached Canada, and there are often a number of different celebrations in numerous cities each year for Lohri. When I asked the children if they had ever heard of or celebrated Lohri before, they all responded no. Interestingly though, Akhand later referenced throwing nuts into a bonfire, which is often a part of Lohri celebrations both in Punjab and in Canada. He questioned, “why are they throwing popcorn [in the story]?” and shared his knowledge by saying, “they throw nuts,” suggesting he did have some knowledge of Lohri traditions.

Before reading the book, I prompted the kids by asking them what they think is happening based on the picture on the cover, which represents an air of celebration, and the following conversation ensued:

Akhand: They’re having a party in the elevator.

Me: Why do you think it’s an elevator?

Akhand: Cause, because of FGTeV

Fateh: (shakes head with a big smile) No, I think it’s outside.

Sucha: It’s grass! (exclaimed loudly)

FGTeeV, also known as The Family Gaming Team, is a YouTube channel where one family posts videos of themselves playing various family friendly video games. I was not able to find any videos posted online by FGTeeV where an elevator looked similar to an outdoor setting.

Sucha interrupted the conversation about the illustration showing an outdoor party by exclaiming “Dress... the girls are wearing dresses,” to which Akhand responded, “dresses and *suites*.” Fateh pointed out, “the boys are wearing *suites*.” These observations were perhaps because the main character was wearing a *lengha* which includes a skirt-like bottom, rather than the pant-like bottoms in Punjabi *suites*. *Lenghe* (plural) are still considered a part of Punjabi attire; however, they are less common than *suites*. The male equivalent of a *suite* would be called a *kurta pyjama*; however, Fateh called it a *suite*, perhaps because it is similar in style.

On page seven of the book is an illustration showing a variety of traditional Punjabi sweets, and this illustration prompted the strongest reaction from the kids throughout any of the story sessions. The kids moved in very close to the book to point to specific parts of the picture and examine others more closely. They started out somewhat confused about what was represented in the picture, but together figured it out. The conversation was as follows:

Sucha: Pencil?

Akhand: He’s saying those are pencils (points to *jalebi*’s)

Fateh: I saw those before

Sucha: Cake

Fateh: I saw these (points to *jalebi*), and these (points to *barfi*) and these (points to *besan*)

Me: What are they?

Fateh: I don't know.

Sucha: Popsicle?

Fateh: You eat them!

Akhand: They're food.

Sucha: They are food. Cake.

Fateh: No

Akhand: No. *Ladoo ladoo ladoo!*

Fateh: Oh I eated those ones! (said with great enthusiasm) Yeah. And this (points to *jalebi* and *barfi*)

Sucha: I eat these before too. I ate it.

Akhand: Why is everybody so close to the book?

By mentioning their proximity to the book, it was as though the bubble of excitement and collaboration suddenly popped. The children moved to return to their original spots and the meaning making seemed to shift back into a more structured process. While I had never outlined proper protocol for these story sessions, the children all seemed to be aware of some unspoken rule that a story session should involve sitting still at a respectable distance away from the book. As a researcher and teacher, I did not feel that I would be able to bring the moment back now that it had passed, so I continued reading the story as the children sat quietly.

I was keen to bring movement back into our story session as I watched the kids sit very still throughout the next few pages. When the story mentioned two traditional Punjabi dance styles, Akhand stated, "I don't know of *giddha* but I know of *bhangra*." *Giddha* is the female dance equivalent of *bhangra*, which was traditionally male dominated. Akhand proceeded to sing

the words “*bhangra, bhangra, bhangra*” while swaying ever so slightly in place with one finger up in the air. I asked him if he would like to show us some *bhangra*, and he very quickly stood up and began dancing. His moves helped the other kids remember their own experiences with *bhangra*; Sucha exclaimed, “I seen them, I seen them at somebody’s wedding!” Fateh also shared that he had seen *bhangra* dancers at a wedding, even though he had stated that he didn’t know what *bhangra* was before seeing Akhand’s dance moves. Physical movement seemed to help the children mentally move through their meaning making process.

As we read, Akhand repeatedly brought attention to the popcorn that was shown in many illustrations throughout the story. Popcorn is a part of traditional Lohri celebrations both in Punjab and in Canada; however, this was something new for Akhand. He stated, “Why are the *Darbar Sahib* people eating popcorn? Popcorn is not a traditional thing for India. Or a *Darbar Sahib*.” I mentioned to Akhand that popcorn is something that is easily available all over India, to which he responded, “Wait, what? Why do they celebrate with popcorn at the *Darbar Sahib*? They never have popcorn. We celebrate here and at the *langar hall* they never have popcorn after *deg*.”

Vocabulary:

Darbar Sahib = the main hall in a Sikh Gurdwara

Deg = a sweet dessert made with butter, flour and sugar served after prayers in the Gurdwara

Langar Hall = the space used for shared meals in the Gurdwara

We had previously discussed as a group that this was an outdoor party, and neither the story nor child participants had mentioned anything connecting Lohri and the Sikh religion, as Lohri is a cultural holiday, not a religious one. However, Akhand had still related it to the Sikh *Gurdwara*, noting that he never received popcorn at religious events and celebrations. I had mentioned this to his mother during a conversation after the story session, and she said that the

focus in their family had been on religion and her sons, Akhand and Sucha, often learn about culture as it intersects with religion. This is perhaps why Akhand was thinking of the Sikh Gurdwara during the story that had no mention of religion.

After finishing the story, I asked the kids to tell Noor what they learned about Lohri because she had missed a large part of the story. The key details that stood out for the children were: popcorn, the bonfire, dancing and *laddoos*. At this point, Fateh brought up another celebration that he participates in with his family. He stated, “All the time when there’s holiday, my dad shot fireworks. I love fireworks. I celebrate Diwali all the time in the home.” Fateh’s comment about Diwali prompted Akhand to ask “are we telling the holidays we like?” This was not a question I had intentionally included in this story session, but the semi-structured approach I used allowed me to let the conversation flow in any direction the children chose to take it. The holiday’s that came up as favourites were Halloween, Christmas and Easter, none of which are a significant part of Punjabi or Sikh tradition. However, sweets and candies seemed to play a central role in positioning those holidays as favourites for the children.

Fateh’s connection between the story and Diwali came up again in his artwork. I prompted the children to make some artwork to show me what the story reminded them of or how it made them feel. Fateh created an image depicting his family watching fireworks for Diwali stating that he thought of Diwali because it’s another holiday, like Lohri. He included (from left to right) his dad, mom, himself, his brother and his sister. He also specified that they are standing on rocks “because my driveway is not done yet.” Interestingly, he chose to depict Diwali instead of other holiday’s he likes, specifically Halloween, which he mentioned is one of his favourites. He may have chosen Diwali because the Indian cultural aspect makes it more similar to Lohri than Halloween or the other non-Indian holiday’s discussed. In speaking about



Figure 7: Fateh's Family at Diwali

Diwali, he also talked about “Babaji go in jail,” referring to the Sikh religion’s connection to Diwali. Diwali, known as the festival of lights, is often thought of as a cultural holiday; however, the Sikh faith celebrates Diwali as Bandi Chhor Divas with a specific religious focus. Fateh was quite knowledgeable about this religious aspect.

Sucha connected to the celebratory atmosphere of the story and shared “I’m feel happy... I’m gonna have a party, at my home,” before beginning his artwork. Ultimately, he did create a party; however, the setting changed from his home to the ocean. He stated that it is a “swimming party” and they were giants celebrating “Ocean day.” Sucha was not willing to elaborate on what Ocean day was, or why he decided to create a party with giants in the ocean rather than a party in his home like he originally planned. I initially thought that the blue line through the middle of his creation was the ocean, but Sucha told me that the cuts around the edges of the paper are the ocean, surrounding the party goers as they danced. The blue line is “the wall so they don’t get wet.” He also specified that the party goers are “high fiving” each other and popping



Figure 8: Sucha's Ocean Party

invisible balloons that we cannot see in his creation.

Akhand spent a bit more time thinking about what to create for his artwork, rather than beginning immediately like the other children. The other children all reported that they enjoyed the story; however, Akhand said “I don’t like it. Ah, I’m not a big fan of Punjabi books that much.” When I prompted him further to ask what it is he didn’t like or why he doesn’t like Punjabi books, he responded, “I don’t know, just not a big fan... I did not like the whole book”

This was particularly interesting to me because I believed he was engaged and enjoying the story as we read. I shared this with him and he stated, “I liked some of it. I liked the part when they....” but he was unable to finish the sentence and did not describe anything in particular he liked. He did say that the book reminded him of going camping “because they lived next to a fire,” as he does when he goes camping. I think this was the inspiration for his artwork; he created a scene depicting army men. When



Figure 9: Akhand’s Army Men

I asked Akhand to tell me more about his artwork, he said, “Oh because there’s a fire [in the story]. And army men, they go in tents and they cook food in the fire. The army means they cook food with the fire, yeah.” He clarified that the sad faces on the army men are because “they’re starting war after eating.”

Noor had missed much of the collaborative reading process at this story session; however, I quickly read through the parts of the story she had missed and gave her time to browse through the book independently before beginning her artwork. She created a beach scene for her artwork saying, “my favourite holiday is going to the beach.” Noor had arrived before the

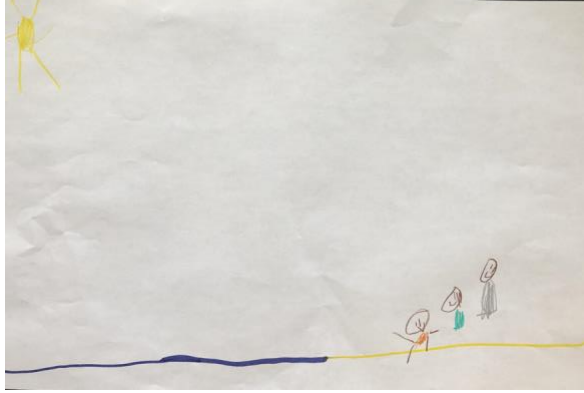


Figure 10: Noor's Beach Holiday

discussion about favourite holidays, but did not contribute much to the discussion except agreeing with the other children. Her contribution to that discussion was through her artwork, though she defined holiday as vacation rather than 'festive time of year,' which is the context the other children used.

Interestingly, the children all chose to use markers as their means of expression in this story session. They were provided with the same variety of multimodal materials as the previous story session; however, it is possible that they were less interested in the other materials because the novelty was no longer there. They had already explored all of the containers and materials available to them in the previous story session, so perhaps they were less interested in looking through the various containers/bags present on the table. I did not ask the children specifically why they chose to use markers instead of other materials.

Story Session 3

This story session only included two child participants: Fateh and Noor. Akhand and Sucha were not able to attend due to a last minute family commitment, and Fateh and Noor's families were not able to reschedule for the following week due to plans for summer vacation. Therefore, I decided to conduct two story sessions with two participants at each. By doing this I was able to include three meaning-making sessions for each participant, and there was still some collaboration involved in each story session. Fateh and Noor were very aware of Sucha and

Akhand's absences. They were both initially worried about Sucha and Akhand, asking if they were sick.

This story session was focused on category three from the book analysis: books that focus on aspects of Sikhism rather than Punjabi culture, including Sikh history and religious practices. Among the books in this category, two books did not arrive on time: *A Lion's Mane* (Kaur, 2009) and *The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh* (Kelkar, 2019). Two other books were considered too long for the time allotted to the story session: *Dear Takuya ... Letters of a Sikh Boy* (Kaur, 2008), and *The Royal Falcon* (Kaur, 2009). Additionally, two books, *Ajeet Singh the Invincible Lion* (Singh, 2018) and *What is a Patka?* (Kalia, 2019), were considered unsuitable. Many of the remaining books that were considered acceptable placed a significant emphasis on the importance of uncut hair in Sikh identity. While it is true that many Sikhs choose to keep their hair uncut and covered, I felt it was important to acknowledge that there are multiple ways of expressing a Sikh identity. I was also mindful of the fact that Fateh, who did identify as Sikh, had cut his hair. I did not want him to feel excluded from the Sikh identity presented in these books; therefore, I chose to exclude the books that focused on uncut hair as integral to the Sikh identity. These books were made available to the children, and it is notable that Sucha chose to take home *The Boy with Long Hair* (Singh, 2017) and *Joor* (Kaur, 2017) at the story session he attended. He held onto *The Boy with Long Hair* (Singh, 2017) for an extra week. Ultimately, the children were presented with three books to choose from at this story session: *The Garden of Peace* (Kaur, 2017), *Vaisakhi* (Kaur, 2017), and *The Enchanted Garden of Talwandi* (Kaur,

2013). It is important to note that these three books were authored by different people, despite all of them having the name Kaur. *The Garden of Peace* (Kaur, 2017) touches on the reasons women of Sikh faith share this name.

I had hoped the children would select *The Garden of Peace*, as it is one of my favourites among the books collected for this project.

However, neither child demonstrated much interest

in this book. This brings attention to the fact that children may not share adults' opinions on which books are high quality. Children often read books written by adults and considered interesting by adults, but ultimately, children's opinions should be the ones that count.

Both Noor and Fateh selected *The Enchanted Garden of Talwandi* (Kaur, 2013) after briefly looking through each book. Talwandi is the hometown of Guru Nanak Dev ji, an important teacher and leader in Sikhism. When I prompted the children to ask why they chose this book for the story session, Fateh responded, "It have flowers. It have flowers." Noor said she liked the story after briefly browsing the book. I then asked the kids to tell me what they know about Guru Nanak Dev ji before reading the book, and the following conversation occurred:

Fateh: Mmm he's [Guru Nanak Dev ji's] got a *pagh*. A white one and a white beard. My baba got a white beard.

Noor: I think he had a blue *pagh*.

Fateh: My baba change his *pagh* all the time.

Brief Plot Summaries:

The Enchanted Garden of Talwandi (Kaur, 2013) - a retelling of a traditional religious story focusing on Guru Nanak Dev Ji's love for all

The Garden of Peace (Kaur, 2017) - an artistic interpretation of an important historical event in Sikh history

Vaisakhi (Kaur, 2017) - follows one modern day family as they celebrate *Vaisakhi*, one of the most important days in the Sikh calendar

Noor: My dad, sometimes he doesn't. Only white and black *paghs*. But his favourite colour is green.

Me: Is there anything else you know about Guru Nanak Dev ji?

Fateh: No.

Noor: No.

Me: Is there anything you wonder about Guru Nanak Dev ji? Anything you want to learn about him?

Fateh: No.

Noor: Mmm. Not me.

Neither child was curious to learn more about the religious focus of the story and instead seemed to be satisfied with their knowledge of Guru Nanak Dev ji's appearance. Both were able to raise a family connection in talking about *paghs*, and Fateh had selected the book because he likes flowers and could see from the illustrations that there would be flowers in the story. Noor also made her decision primarily based on illustrations.

The children listened and coloured quietly as we read the book, but both commented at the same time when we came across a page describing roses as believing they were more beautiful than the other flowers in the garden, and therefore loved by Guru Nanak Dev ji the most. Noor said, "ah, no. They're, they're both the same." Fateh seemed to be echoing the same sentiment but trailed off as Noor's voice drowned out his.

When a similar situation was represented between different animals with each animal offering reasons as to why Guru Nanak Dev ji should love that animal the most, Fateh firmly stated, "He liked everyone. Everybody. Guru Nanak Dev ji like everybody." He was confident in

the teachings he had received from home surrounding how individuals are all viewed as equals in the Sikh faith. This comment suggests that Fateh knew more about Guru Nanak Dev ji than he initially stated.

As we turned the page to an illustration including a young Guru Nanak Dev ji, Fateh said “That’s not Guru Nanak Dev ji.” He went on to again reference the white beard that Guru Nanak Dev ji is often depicted as having. Noor clarified for Fateh that people get white beards “when they’re grandpas and grandmas,” so this picture might be from before Guru Nanak Dev ji had a white beard. Fateh seemed satisfied with this explanation.

Both children also responded very eagerly to the inclusion of *Ek Onkar* in the story. Fateh sang *Ek Onkar*, while Noor told me “Oh my dad sings that then I go to sleep at night.” Fateh also shared, “Yeah, my dad sings it all the time to me.” Noor added, “and I think it’s fun.”

I asked the kids if they know what *Ek Onkar* means, to which Fateh responded, “it’s *paat*.” I further prompted the children to ask what *paat* (prayers) means, and Noor said, “you sit criss cross applesauce.” This may have been in reference to sitting cross legged at the Gurdwara when doing *paat* there because when I asked her to clarify about sitting cross legged to do *paat* before going to sleep, she said, “no, [when] I do it, I lay down. Me and my dad lay down.” Noor also later mentioned, “my mom is telling me the Waheguru,” referring to another religious meditation she is learning at home. She said, “we do Waheguru every single day,” to which Fateh responded, “*paat*.” Noor concluded that conversation by saying, “because it’s nice to do *paat*.”

After finishing the story, as we reflected on the book together, Noor referred to Guru Gobind Singh ji instead of Guru Nanak Dev ji when referring to the storyline. Fateh didn’t seem to notice that Noor had confused the names of two gurus because when I asked the kids if Guru

Gobind Singh ji was in the story, they were both quiet for a while as they thought about it, but neither answered the question. When I clarified that Guru Nanak Dev ji was in this story, and he was a different person than Guru Gobind Singh ji, Noor responded “I’m tricking you.” Neither child was very interested in the clarification I provided.

Despite religion being a focal point of the conversations as we read the story, religious connections were neither child’s favourite aspect of the story. In response to my prompt about their favourite part, Noor answered, “I liked the part of the book, um, the animals were being nice... I like about it, it had flowers.” Fateh agreed, “me too,” to the comment about flowers and also said the animals were his favorite part. This was also reflected in their artwork. At this story session, like in session one, the children were invited to create some art to express their thoughts and feelings as we read the story together. The children, again, chose to only use markers for this



Figure 11: Group artwork while reading from story session 3

piece of art despite the presence of other materials. Fateh’s drawing is the one on the left, and Noor’s is on the right. The black boxes were added to the image of their artwork to cover the children’s real names, which they had each written

near their drawing. Fateh explained that he made a sun and trees, similar to what he could see in the illustrations in the book. Noor said she made “flowers and trees and smiley faces.” She also

wrote the word 'love' which she did not comment on; however, it is notable that she added this word to her drawing when Fateh talked about how Guru Nanak Dev ji likes everyone.

Both children also decided to include flowers in the artwork they created after finishing the story. Noor got to work immediately, but Fateh, who had already expressed a desire to create flowers said, "I don't know how to make flowers." I encouraged him, but ultimately, he found his inspiration from Noor. After watching Noor make a few flowers, he also employed a similar strategy to make a flower.

Although both children created flowers, their finished artwork was very different. Noor created an aerial view of a garden filled with different kinds of flowers, some of which she specifically called roses and others she called "summer flowers." She consciously tried to create flowers of different sizes and colours, and told me, "I collect flowers before too. I find flowers that are different."



Figure 12: Noor's Flowers

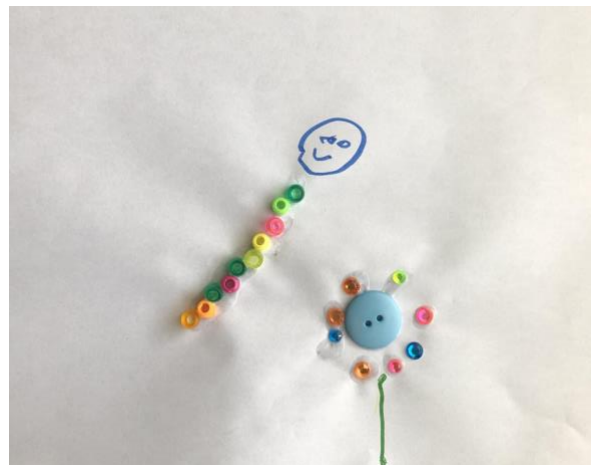


Figure 13: Fateh's Flower and Snake

Fateh made one flower from the perspective of someone sitting on the grass. He told Noor that he had sunflowers growing at home; I noticed his created flower shared a resemblance with a sunflower. Fateh also included a snake in his artwork. When I asked him why he wanted

to make a snake and flower, he said that he likes flowers and “because he [the snake] was good to Guru Nanak Dev ji.” He also reported feeling very happy about the way the story ended.

Story Session 4

This story session, like story session three, included books from category three: books with a focus on Sikhism. The same three book choices were presented because Akhand and Sucha were unable to attend story session three. Both boys were also very aware of the absences of their peers, Noor and Fateh. Akhand and Sucha spent more time than usual browsing the three book choices I presented them with. After looking through the books, Sucha told us he wanted to read *Vaisakhi* (Kaur, 2017), and Akhand said he wanted to read *The Garden of Peace* (Kaur, 2017), stating “I like this because it looks like it has a war.” This was the first time we did not have a clear selection for the day’s read aloud, so I asked the kids, “what do you think is a fair way to decide?” Akhand’s idea for compromise was to read Sucha’s selection first and then read his book of choice. When I told them we only had time for one story, Akhand quickly responded, “let’s read Sucha’s.” Sucha was enthusiastic about this, so we read *Vaisakhi* (Kaur, 2017).

Before beginning the story, I asked the boys what they know about Vaisakhi. Akhand responded, “it’s when people get *amrit shakh*. I think, kinda, when *babaji* comes ... Ah, we light a fire and throw nuts in.” Akhand was perhaps referring to the historical significance of Vaisakhi as the day when the *panj pyaare* were *amrit shakh*; however, throwing nuts in a fire was not something I had previously encountered as part of Vaisakhi celebrations. I prompted him further to explain where he had seen that, and the conversation returned back to the book about Lohri from story session two. He had confused the two celebrations, one religious and the other cultural.

After Akhand's comments, Sucha stated, "I seen parades ... at Disneyworld." This comment, although linked to Disneyworld, may have crossed his mind because of the large Vaisakhi parade, called a *Nagar Kirtan*, that takes place in this community every year. Akhand and Sucha's mother confirmed that she had taken both boys to the *Nagar Kirtan* in previous years.

As we read, the boys noted the representation of the *Nagar Kirtan* in the story and chose to depict a parade in the drawings they worked on while listening to the story. They occasionally shared comments about their drawings as we read without any prompts from me. Akhand stated, "I'm putting god looking at the parade." Sucha initially started drawing a parade and fun fair, likely also based on his experience of the fun fair put on by a Gurdwara in this community each year for Vaisakhi. He was later inspired by Akhand's idea and also said, "there's a god here looking at this parade." Sucha also shared that his artwork includes a sun in the sky. The art they created as we read the book during this story session was more collaborative than in previous sessions; they borrowed ideas from one another and explained their work to each other often. As they worked, their drawings merged together to depict one large parade. Sucha noted the tall figure on the far

right of his section, drawn in purple on the right side, "is a daddy." Akhand noted that his section, drawn in blue on the left



Figure 14: Group artwork while reading from story session 4

side, shows army men carrying “a grave.” He elaborated on this describing a parade for an army man who died in battle; he also noted that this parade is for a “*Gursikh* army man.”

The boys were also able to connect their lived experiences and observations to religious symbols represented in the story. When the story mentioned the 5 *kakaar*, Akhand was quick to comment that he had seen a *kirpan* (one of the 5 *kakaar*) before because “it’s the thing that you cut *prasad*,” this is done in gurdwaras and homes during prayers. Both boys were also eager to respond to the mention of the *kara*, another of the 5 *kakaar*. They both showed me the *kara* on their wrists and identified *kara* on the characters in the illustrations. Akhand also connected with the *kanga* by commenting, “the comb reminds me of my mom hurting my hair combing it.” Interestingly, neither Akhand nor Sucha had any comment about the *kes*, even though they both have uncut hair.

Later in the story, at the mention of a *khanda*, Akhand responded, “our Nanaji has a *khanda*.” Sucha had an additional personal connection to the story; he shared, “somebody in my class’ name is Sahej,” just like one of the characters in the story.

After finishing the book, I prompted the kids by saying, “tell me what you think Vaisakhi is about.” Sucha responded, “about god.” The story includes one very brief mention of god, but this was not the focus, so Sucha’s understanding of god as a focal point may be based on his prior experiences surrounding Vaisakhi or his understanding of connections between religious practices and symbols to god. Sucha also shared that he liked the kids in the story.

Akhand responded very differently to the same prompt by saying, “I did not like the book because I’m not a big fan of Punjabi. I don’t know how cool it is, or fun, Punjabi. So yeah.” This comment is particularly notable because Akhand had previously mentioned to me that he really enjoys reading books; this comment suggests that it is specifically books related to his Punjabi

heritage he does not like. His comment about not knowing how cool Punjabi is especially sparked my interest because it led me to wonder if his disapproval of books reflecting the Punjabi perspective was due, at least in part, to the way others may view these books. I prompted him further to ask him why he thinks it's not cool or fun, and he responded, "Well I kinda have fun. 'Cause some books are my favourite and some books are not."

At each story session, he mentioned that he did not like the books we read; additionally, he demonstrated no interest in taking books home to read like the other children. However, Akhand always seemed engaged and interested throughout the story sessions; he had even asked multiple times if the sessions could be longer so he could spend more time making art. This led me to question whether his expression of interest and enjoyment at the story sessions was because he enjoyed the art aspect, rather than the story aspect. Through conversations with his mother, he seems to come from a home that encourages positive cultural identity development; however, other influences such as peers at school or experiences outside of home may also affect his views about being Punjabi. Akhand responded with a shrug when I tried to learn more about why he thinks Punjabi may not be cool or fun. Akhand was normally very willing to talk and share his thoughts, so this was an unusual response from him. It seemed to me that he was not willing to discuss this in more detail, so I decided to move on with the discussion. I did not want to make him uncomfortable by asking more questions.

I prompted the kids to tell me what the story reminds them of or makes them think of. Sucha answered that it reminds him of a book; when I asked which book, Akhand answered for his brother saying Sucha is referring to a Mickey Mouse book. Sucha agreed with Akhand's statement. The boys were not able to describe any similarities between the two books when I

asked how the story we read reminds them of the Mickey Mouse book. Instead, Akhand stated, “because books are like other books.” Neither child elaborated further on this point.

In response to how the book made them feel, Sucha quickly said, “I was happy because they’re [the characters are] happy.” Akhand answered that he felt mad “because they had a lot of fun. I don’t get fun if they don’t get fun.” I asked him to clarify this for me, but he was wanting to move on to start his artwork and didn’t seem to want to continue the discussion. I thought it was possible that Akhand expressing that he felt mad was, at least in part, due to being frustrated with the discussion and wanting to start his artwork instead of continuing to talk. As a result, I decided to end our discussion there and move on to the artwork stage.

The artwork prompt for this story session was to “show me what Vaisakhi means to you.” Both Sucha and Akhand were very enthusiastic about the artwork and eager to start. Sucha got started on his artwork almost immediately. When I asked him what he was planning to make, he replied, “I’m gonna know more when it’s done.” Each time Akhand or I would ask him a question about his artwork, he would say, “not til I’m done,” in a sing-song voice. In the previous story sessions, Sucha tended to start his artwork immediately and think of ideas as he worked. He continued to use this strategy rather than planning before creating.

Akhand on the other hand, tended to come up with a plan before starting his artwork. He spent some time sitting at the table thinking before getting a piece of paper and copying a part of Sucha’s design, what looked like a letter A with a circle around it. Akhand stated, “I’m gonna copy because he’s my brother.” Sucha said it was okay for Akhand to copy him; however, when Akhand asked Sucha what he was making, Sucha did not answer him. When I asked Akhand about his artwork, the following conversation occurred:

Akhand: Vaisakhi actually makes me think the symbol of Vaisakhi is actually a A, looking like that.

Me: Why do you think that's the symbol of Vaisakhi?

Akhand: Because I just think. It's in my brain.

Me: What's around the symbol that you made?

Akhand: Ah, some X's.

Me: Why X's?

Akhand: Because like ah, I don't know.



Figure 15: Akhand's Vaisakhi

After this conversation, Akhand reached for another piece of paper and started a new piece of artwork, saying, "I'm just gonna do about Vaisakhi." Instead of reaching for the white paper that the children typically chose to work with, he used an orange piece of paper. Orange and blue are the colours of the Khalsa and typically associated with Vaisakhi celebrations. It is possible that Akhand's choice was due to the connection between the colour orange and

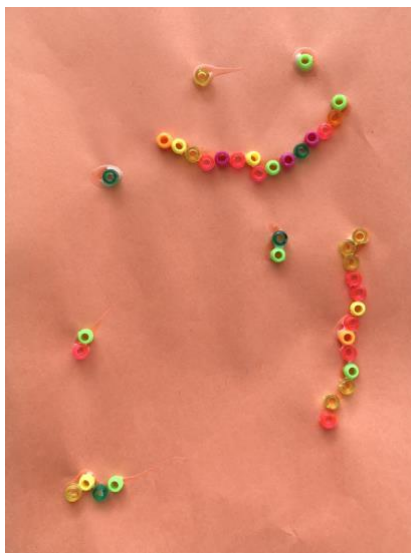


Figure 16: Akhand's Sparkly Feeling

Vaisakhi; however, I did not confirm this with him during the story session.

After giving him some time to work on his new artwork, I returned to ask him about it. Akhand said, "because like Vaisakhi feels like it's kinda sparkly. 'Cause, Vaisakhi, it's a party. And like parties, happy, means like kinda sparkly." He elaborated that he included a smiley face because Vaisakhi is a happy time. When I asked him what the other parts of his artwork were, he

explained, “Animals. Animals, they come to parties, some animals are sparkly, some animals are not. I’m just putting in sparkly animals, you know.” Animals were not included in the story we read, but Akhand mentioned that “animals should celebrate Vaisakhi too, just like people.”

After finishing his artwork, Akhand turned his attention to Sucha, who was still working on his creation. However, Sucha was still not able to explain what he was making to Akhand. Akhand told him, “We’ll know if we talk about it,” but Sucha was very focused on working and not interested in talking at that time. Sucha did say, “I’m gonna be so much hours. I’m gonna make this so much,” and he did indeed spend a lot of time creating his artwork. Eventually, the family needed to get going, as they had another commitment and had spent nearly an hour with me. Time had not previously been an issue at the other story sessions; the children were always finished within the hour that was allotted for the session; however, Sucha was still working eagerly. He was forced to finish up quickly because he needed to leave with his family.

Before having to leave, Akhand and I both asked Sucha to describe his artwork to us; however, he struggled to do so as illustrated by the following conversation:

Akhand: What’s those? (pointing to the clusters of string)

Sucha: Those. Those are the [short pause] the ... the....

Akhand: If you don’t know what they are, you know they can be lights, if you don’t know. Can be big giant lights.

[pause]

Akhand: Maybe they’re lights.

Sucha: They’re....



Figure: 17 Sucha’s Journey

Sucha trailed off and never finished describing this part of his artwork. After waiting for a reply for a short while, Akhand eventually changed the subject and we did not have time to revisit this topic. He did however say that the buttons and beads in his artwork are lights. With respect to the other parts of his artwork, Sucha said, “those pieces are the ... um those pieces are the I don’t know.”

While Sucha used the same strategy for each of the story sessions where he would begin creating before planning, he was always able to clearly explain each aspect of his artwork. In this instance, I think it is possible that he did not have enough time to gather his thoughts and clearly articulate the meanings portrayed in his work. He was rushed in finishing his work, and by the time he finished, his brother and mother were waiting for him. He may have felt under pressure and unable to concentrate on explaining his intentions.

CONNECTING THE THREADS: DISCUSSION

Themes in Meaning-Making

Throughout all of the story sessions, themes emerged in how the students made meaning of what they read. As discussed in the literature review, previous research has noted that students use different types of lived experiences and knowledge, beyond just cultural knowledge, to make meaning of culturally relevant literature (Johnston & Mangat, 2012; Brooks & Brown, 2012). The findings of this study support this previous research; the children drew on knowledge and experiences from different facets of their lives including, and extending beyond, knowledge related to their cultural heritage.

Brooks and Browne's (2012) define four themes that middle school students used to connect to the content of culturally relevant literature, and make meaning of cultural representation. The themes are: ethnic group, community, family, and peers (Brooks & Browne, 2012). Students in that study drew from their personal knowledge related to all four themes to better understand the characters' emotions and the cultural aspects of the story. In this study, the children drew on knowledge from four different themes related to their personal knowledge to make meaning of the stories we read. Community and peers were not among the themes I identified, possibly because these two things have less influence on young children compared to middle-schoolers like those in Brooks and Browne's study (2012). The themes I recognized throughout the sessions are: cultural and religious connections, family, story focal points, and lived experiences. These themes do not exist in isolation of one another; instead, they intersect and overlap in the ways they were brought up by the children. Figure 18 illustrates the overlap that exists between the themes.

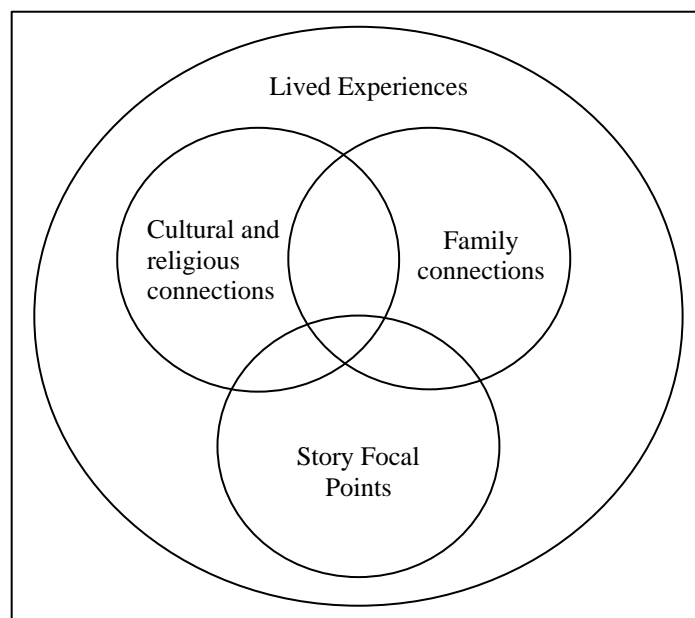


Figure 18: Overlap between themes used to make meaning

The theme, lived experiences, is an overarching theme which I believe intersects with all three of the other themes. The students' knowledge and ability to make connections with the other three themes are all influenced by their personal experiences and the learning those experiences have afforded them. Everything we know and understand is influenced by our lived experiences. As Rogers (1999) states, "a final challenge in negotiating children's responses to literature will be to capture the complexity of their lived experiences, their private and social performances" (p.143). Many of the lived experiences the children shared with me can be related to the themes of family, Punjabi culture, Sikhism, media and story focal points. However, there are some lived experiences that are outside of these defined themes, which is why this aspect of meaning-making can be a theme on its own in addition to being an umbrella theme. Examples of lived experiences that do not intersect with the other themes include: connecting the setting of a story to a Canadian farm, discussing carefully curated personal collections of different items (jewels, flowers, etc.), and connecting the Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan to a parade at Disneyworld.

The children frequently used their knowledge of Punjabi culture, such as clothing, language and food, to understand aspects of the stories and identify the characters as Punjabi. Connections between different aspects of, and practices within, Sikhism were also evident; children shared their knowledge of Sikh history and the ways they practice Sikhism in their homes. However, the line between Punjabi culture and Sikh religion was often blurred for the children. The participants sometimes made religious connections when discussing instances that were specifically cultural and unrelated to religion, such as Lohri, a cultural holiday. While I acknowledge that Punjabi culture and Sikh religion are separate and distinct, I have combined them into one theme due to the interconnected way in which the children discussed them. This may be because the children's experiences of being Punjabi and being Sikh are deeply

interwoven. Within this particular community, there is a large Punjabi population, and a majority of that Punjabi population also belongs to the Sikh faith. Even within Punjab, Sikhism is the major religion. Consequently, it is possible the children view being Punjabi and being Sikh as synonymous. The children also frequently underestimated their knowledge of Punjabi language and culture and Sikh history and practices. Through their discussions and verbal expressions, it was clear that their understandings of topics related to their heritage had greater depth than the children initially let on. They often commented that they did not know about celebrations, history and practices, but were able to relate them to their personal experiences after more reflection. They were often surprised by their own depth of understanding and proud to share what they remembered. This suggests that culturally relevant literature could help children conceptualize their culture and how it fits into broader social contexts, and develop their sense of pride related to their cultural heritage.

Both cultural and religious connections were frequently raised alongside family connections; this is likely because family is a key source of learning related to both culture and religion for the children. The children were eager to talk about their families and often shared ways in which their families were similar to or different from observations they made of the characters we read about.

Themes of family and religion also defined the moral lessons the children felt were conveyed through the stories in sessions one and three. No moral aspect was brought up in discussion or artwork during story sessions two and four.

The story focal points theme is related to the numerous occasions the students shared with me the things they liked or disliked about the books. Frequently, they were not able to express why they liked or disliked something, but were firm in their opinions about how they felt

towards that specific topic/object/occurrence. Their likes and dislikes ranged from character behaviours and aspects of the plot, to specific items within the story that may or may not have been significant to the storyline. This played a key role in the meaning-making process because the story focal points dictated the ideas/aspects that received more attention from the children; therefore, the children constructed more detailed meanings related to the things they liked compared to parts of the story they did not have any exceptional feelings for. The story focal points were particularly important during multimodal expression because the children frequently included things they liked from the story in their artwork. The things they liked from the story stood out to them and were considered important by the children, even when the specific thing they liked was not integral to the storyline.

In addition to the themes used for meaning-making, the children also made a number of connections to various types of media, such as films, books and a YouTube show. These connections did not necessarily enhance their meaning-making processes or influence the meanings they constructed; the children often noted how something from the story reminds them of some type of media and quickly moved on to other topics of conversation. However, the media connections may be intertwined with story focal points because the media has the power to influence our likes and dislikes, and our perceptions of social norms. This intersection may be of particular relevance to Akhand's general disapproval of Punjabi books, especially considering his comment about being unsure of "how cool" Punjabi is. His perceptions related to what is cool and what is not cool may develop in relation to his interactions with peers and various types of media outlets.

Researchers have used the term 'resisting the text' to describe disapproval of specific texts (Sipe & McGuire, 2006). Children may resist texts due to a disconnect between the features

of the story (such as the message, content, language or illustrations) and the experiences and ideologies of the children (Sipe & McGuire, 2006). Resisting a text is not to be misunderstood as limited engagement with a text; on the contrary, text resistance signifies a high level of engagement because the children are actively and critically analyzing the story as they form opinions about it. Sipe and McGuire (2006) define six categories of text resistance. The categories are as follows: (1) intertextual resistance, described as resisting a text because it provides a different perspective or expression of a story the children have previously encountered; (2) preferential or categorical resistance, explained as ‘judging a book by its coverer’; (3) reality testing, which is resistance because the story does not agree with the experienced reality of the children; (4) engaged or kinetic resistance when stories are too sad or cause emotional pain; (5) exclusionary resistance related to who is represented in a story and how they are represented, and finally (6) literary critical resistance, described as finding fault in the author or illustrators productions.

Sipe and McGuire note, “the presence of a character with a similar cultural background is no guarantee that identification will occur” (2006, p.9). Whether Akhand did not identify with the characters, or did identify with them and disapproved of the story due to a different reason is unknown. I did not ask Akhand enough questions during the story sessions to ascertain if his disapproval was due to one of the categories of text resistance outlined by Sipe and McGuire (2006), due to external factors such as peer or media influence, or a different reason entirely. I was worried about causing him discomfort considering his hesitant and reluctant attitude when discussing the topic. Further research is needed to understand the reasons children resist texts, specifically culturally relevant texts. Studies addressing this important topic of research would

need to follow appropriate ethics procedures and methodologies to ensure child participants are not negatively affected by the research process.

Collaboration

Collaborations had a meaningful, positive role in enhancing children's meaning making from the story and in developing their expressions of meaning. While reading the text, the children often clarified topics for each other, such as the instance in story session three when Noor helped Fateh make meaning from an illustration in the book that did not fit his personal constructs of how Guru Nanak Dev ji should be depicted. Additionally, the children were able to help each other make meaning and draw conclusions from the text and story through collaborative discussions with little or no input from me. This was highlighted in story session two when the children worked together to make connections and understand an illustration depicting various Indian sweets. Additionally, they were able to help each other relate the stories to their personal lives.

Collaboration also played an important role when expressing meaning through art work. The children frequently drew inspiration from their peers when creating their own artwork. They collaborated and shared thoughts related to which meanings to share through artwork, how to express desired meanings, and techniques to employ in creating a piece that expressed their intended meaning. The children frequently commented on each other's work to provide feedback to peers and to give ideas on how to expand the meanings that were represented.

These findings support previous research which indicates that interaction with others during literacy events can help students better develop literacy products (Dyson, 1993). Dyson's (1993) research, which established a strong link between social interactions and production of

written text, can be related to the observed role of collaboration in the creation of artwork in this study because art can also be considered a form of text. One could argue that text is anything from which meaning can be constructed or shared. Pahl (2002) describes sculptures, cultural artefacts and drawings as text; Mackey (2010) describes her physical environment as a text, and Palulis (2017) talks about “reading and rereading the marks and traces” a place and experience have left on her (16.2.1).

Interestingly, the types of interactions between children while working on a literacy related task can vary depending on the relationship the children share with each other (Jones & Pellegrini, 1996). Researchers found a difference in quality, not quantity, of metacognitive talk amongst friends compared to acquaintances (Jones & Pellegrini, 1996). Metacognitive talk was described as phrases such as ‘I know/think/guess/remember, ask, tell, say.’ In this study, Sucha and Akhand engaged in more detailed discussion with each other related to their opinions and ideas about the story and each other’s artwork. The conversations between Sucha and Akhand tended to be more critical than any of the other conversations that occurred between participants. The collaborative artwork the students produced during the story sessions exemplifies this point; in story session four, when Sucha and Akhand were the only two participants present, they created a piece of collaborative artwork that meshed each of their designs into a single, more continuous piece. Contrastingly, the other two pieces of collaborative artwork created by participants show separate illustrations created by each participant that do not blend together and are more discontinuous. Sucha and Akhand are brothers and therefore already had an established relationship with each other before the study; this may have contributed to their comfort in sharing space on the paper for creation, criticizing each other’s productions and providing more

detailed feedback to each other. Despite their young ages, this study suggests the children had already picked up on social norms related to polite conversation between strangers.

Multimodality

The multimodal expression enhanced the meanings the children could create because “students learn as much about critical analysis from being actively involved in the design and production process as they do from their questioning of texts produced by others” (Vasquez, Janks & Comber, 2019, p.308). When they thought about expression through art and images rather than through words, they engaged with the story and story elements in different ways. This has also been noted by previous researchers working with multimodal expression (Morawski et al., 2014; Short, Kauffman & Kahn, 2000). For example, Fateh made no reference to the lush greenery and bright blue skies in the setting of the story throughout story session one; however, when he thought about depicting something important from the story through artwork, he made a connection between his home on a farm and the setting of the story. This connection may not have been made if we had only discussed the stories verbally and not added opportunities for multimodal expression.

In planning this research project, I provided students with the opportunity to make meaning through multimodal expression by sharing their thoughts through images and other artistic expressions that could be held and photographed. I did not consciously include multimodal expression through body movements; however, when the participants did express themselves through movement, it expanded their meaning making both individually and collectively.

Movement as Multimodal Expression

All of the children chose to stand at tables to work on their artistic creations rather than sit at the chairs that were provided for them at the tables. They would often move around the tables to look at what their peers were creating and move to collect items from other parts of the table to use in their artwork. Two participants, Sucha and Noor, also frequently hummed and swayed or danced quietly while working on their art. The children were generally comfortable including movement when they worked on artistic expression. However, this was not the case when we read and discussed the stories together.

The students frequently sat still and cross-legged as we read; however, when movement did occur, it created a feeling of excitement that engaged the students. In one instance during story session two, discussing *bhangra* did not help the children make connections, but bringing the dancing into the story session seemed to spark their memories, allowing them to make connections they hadn't made previously. Another instance of movement in story session two was when the children gathered close around the story and were pointing and moving around near the book; they were very excited. Unfortunately, the minute they became aware of this unusual storytime behaviour, they returned to what seemed to be an established storytime etiquette.

This storytime etiquette was never discussed in our story sessions and seems to be something all of the children were aware of, perhaps through their previous experiences reading books in school or library settings. Even in my own teaching experiences, I have asked students to sit with "calm, still bodies" when we read stories together. Sipe (1999) observed a similar situation during classroom read alouds; the researcher noted:

These children and their teacher had come to an understanding about how to listen to a story and how to read a story aloud. The class had conversational norms about interrupting and when and how to speak. This complex set of implicit rules and expectations - the immediate social context of the read aloud - was largely determinative of what *counted* as a response in this situation (p.125).

Through this established storytime etiquette, we limit children's potential for meaning-making. Children learn they should not share their thoughts, ideas and connections as outbursts in the midst of a read aloud, and are often reprimanded for this behaviour. By the end of the story, that thought may be forgotten and never shared; thereby limiting the meaning-making process. The storytime etiquette may have been an ingrained behaviour for the participants in this study, despite their young ages, based on previous read alouds they participated in. Alternatively, I may have unknowingly limited their movement through physical barriers.

In story sessions one, three and four, it is possible that the large piece of paper I had set out to allow students to express meanings as we read acted as a barrier separating the children from the book. This may have limited their movement. It is noteworthy that both instances when of movement occurred during the story session when the paper was not present; therefore, the barrier was removed. I did not provide materials for multimodal expression during the read aloud in story session two because I was curious to see if and how this would affect verbal discussion. Ultimately, the amount and quality of discussion did not seem to be affected by the presence or absence of multimodal materials, but the materials may have impacted the level of movement. The presence of art supplies, such as the large paper, to allow for multimodal expression is beneficial, but perhaps it would be better to present the materials in an alternative way so that the

materials do not act as a physical barrier between the children and the book, thereby limiting their movement. Additional research is needed to investigate how to encourage or discourage movement during read alouds, and the role of movement in meaning-making from literature, specifically, culturally-relevant literature.

LESSONS LEARNED: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The representations of Punjabi characters and culture were generally respectful and free of stereotypes in the books collected for this study. However, the number of books focusing on Punjabi characters and culture were significantly less than those focusing on Sikhism. This may be a direct reflection of the practices and ideals that Punjabi Canadians view as important to hold on to over time. Interestingly, even within children's books related to Sikhism, the value of uncut hair takes precedence over many other religious values and practices. This may be due, in part, to the fact that uncut hair is uniquely Sikh, something out of the ordinary in many other cultures. Therefore, these books may try to educate both non-Sikhs and Sikhs about the reasons for keeping uncut hair, even in a world where it is not the norm. Other aspects of Sikh religion may be viewed as more common in Canadian society, so there is less need to provide an explanation for those aspects.

The way children made meaning of the books did not differ between books that focused on Punjabi culture/depicted Punjabi characters versus Sikh characters and practices. In general, children drew on a variety of lived experiences to make meaning from the themes and ideas presented in the books, including experiences related to their cultural heritage and experiences

outside of Punjabi or Sikh traditions. They also used their personal experiences as points of reference when creating artwork to expand and express meanings constructed from the books.

The social aspect and collaborations served to enhance the meanings the children were able to create; they discussed their understandings, clarified topics for each other, and helped each other make personal connections to the stories. Collaboration also allowed students to create artwork using new techniques learned from their peers, and expand thinking related to ideas and modes of expressing meaning through art.

Multimodality created alternate opportunities for students to both create and express meaning in the story sessions. Movement as multimodality was an occurrence I was not expecting and had given very little thought to prior to this research project. However, the inclusion of movement in meaning making not only resulted in excited participation, it also helped children remember experiences and construct new meanings. As a teacher and researcher, this learning experience has inspired me to move away from promoting “calm, still bodies” when we read in order to allow students the freedom to incorporate movement into their meaning making processes. Children may need regular and repeated encouragement to move during story time because storytime etiquette seems to be ingrained from a very young age.

Another finding I was not expecting when I began this project was Akhand’s resistance to the books we read. This study was not adequately equipped to deal with Akhand’s discomfort discussing his disapproval of the books we read, so I am left with numerous questions related to text resistance. How can we embrace the discomfort stories can cause? How can we encourage children to do the same? And why did Akhand resist the story, but embrace the story session experience? These questions are important topics for future research because understanding why and how children resist culturally relevant texts can help educators and parents better understand

children's conceptualizations of their cultural identity and guide children to meaningfully engage with text, even if it is something they disapprove of.

It is my hope that this research project will support educators and parents in selecting children's literature that represents Punjabi and Sikh characters and traditions. Additionally, I hope the findings of this project can highlight ways to foster engagement with children's literature through multimodal constructions of meaning.

The children in this study were much more knowledgeable than even they believed themselves to be. Their responses to the literature, which include comments shouted out during reading or multimodal pieces of art after reading, were all hints into the process and strategies they used to make and share meaning from literature.

From the traditional view that literary understanding comprises a knowledge of narrative elements like plot, characters, setting and theme, certain responses might be considered simply off task. However, these same responses might be prized and positively valued from the perspective of a broader and more inclusive conceptualization of literary understanding (Sipe, 2000, p.257).

As educators, it is our job to facilitate the meaning making process, not constrain it to fit our expectations. By giving children the freedom to create and express meanings in any way they are able, we open opportunities to create new meanings and facilitate additional, unexpected learning. By expanding our definitions of what counts as a valid response to literature, we show children their knowledge and understandings are meaningful.

LIMITATIONS

As with any research involving people, the results of this study are limited to what the individuals chose to share with me. Prior to beginning this study, I had intended to spend time volunteering in the Punjabi after school program from which I recruited participants to develop a level of familiarity with the children. However, this particular program takes an annual summer break in the months of July and August, during which time there are no classes in which I could volunteer or recruit participants from. I was given the opportunity by the after-school program to recruit participants immediately after receiving ethics approval in June rather than wait for the fall. Due to the practicality of this, I accepted this offer and was able to recruit participants from the school before the program ended for summer break. This allowed me to conduct story sessions through the summer and use the program classrooms for story sessions. The downside of this timeframe was that I did not get to know the children before beginning data collection. My lack of familiarity with the participants may have limited some of the information and thoughts they shared with me. The familiarity of the environment where data was collected, the classroom in the after-school program, may have helped the children feel more comfortable which is one benefit of collecting data in the months when the after-school program was not in session.

Additionally, this study is limited to books that are available in Canada. It is likely that there are many other culturally relevant children's books that would be rich additions to this study; however, I only had access to books I could borrow or purchase in Canada.

This study only investigated the meaning-making processes of children at one point in time. I have realized my own constructed meanings from the books included in this study evolved over time as I had a chance to reflect deeper. It is possible that the children's constructed

meanings could also grow and change if they revisited a book multiple times; more research is needed to investigate this. Additionally, a longitudinal design could add more rich data to investigate how meaning-making processes from culturally relevant literature can change for students as they progress through school. This is an important area for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

June 13, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Sunjum Jhaj and I am currently a master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. For my master's thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Palulis, I am conducting a research project looking into the meaning making processes of Punjabi-Canadian children as they engage with children's literature that includes Punjabi characters and culture.

This letter is an invitation for your child to participate in this research project. Participation is voluntary; this study is being conducted separately from the Punjabi school, and the choice to participate will have no effect on your or your child's relationship with the school. Participation in this study would include attending three separate story sessions where I will read a culturally relevant children's book to a small group of children. The children will have the opportunity to choose the book we will read in each story session out of a selection of books that include Punjabi characters and culture. After each story session, we will have a discussion about the book, and the children will be invited to create some artwork to demonstrate their understandings and interpretations of the children's book.

Each story session will last approximately thirty minutes, and will occur once per week for three consecutive weeks. The story sessions will take place at the Gobind Sarvar School in which your child is currently enrolled. The dates and times of the story sessions are flexible and will be set to accommodate your schedule. The story sessions will be video recorded for analysis. Participants will be selected on a "first come, first served" basis. Parents who contact me after the participation slots have been filled will be invited to participate in story sessions that will not be used for research.

Your child's identity will remain anonymous when I report my findings. All names will be substituted with pseudonyms, and any identifying information will be omitted. If at any time, you or your child would like to leave the study, you will be free to do so.

Please email me at [REDACTED]@uOttawa.ca if you are interested in participating, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this research project.

Sincerely,

Sunjum Jhaj

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Appendix B: Consent Form

Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Consent Form

Project Title: Interactions with Culturally Relevant Children's Literature: A Punjabi Perspective

Names of researchers and contact information

Sunjum Jhaj
Master's student
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

Supervisor:
Patricia Palulis
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa
Email: [REDACTED]

Invitation to Participate: My child is invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Sunjum Jhaj as part of her master's thesis at the University of Ottawa.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to learn more about how young Punjabi-Canadian children make meaning of children's literature that represents their culture.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of attending three separate group story sessions during which my child will listen to a read-aloud of a story with Punjabi characters or culture. My child will then participate in a group discussion about the story, and create some artwork to show their understandings and interpretations of the story. I am expected to remain on site throughout the duration of the story sessions. The story sessions will take place at the Gobind Sarvar School at a time that is convenient for me.

Risks: My child's participation in this study entails no foreseeable risks. However, if I or my child experiences any discomfort, Sunjum Jhaj has assured me that she will make every effort to minimize this discomfort.

Benefits: My child's participation in this study will contribute to a greater understanding of how children engage with culturally relevant literature.

Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information my child and I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for Sunjum Jhaj's master's thesis. I have been assured that my and my child's confidentiality will be protected; however, I am aware that other parents will be present observing their children during the group story sessions, and this is limit of the confidentiality.

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Appendix C: Story Session Prompts

Discussion prompt before reading the story:

- Tell me why you chose this book?
- Tell me what you notice about the cover of this book.
- What do you think this story will be about?

Discussion prompts after reading the story:

- Tell me how this story makes you feel.
- Tell me what you liked about the story.
- Tell me what you didn't like about the story.
- Tell me something you noticed about this book.
- Tell me something you noticed about the characters in this story.
- Tell me about something this story reminds you of (in your life/the world).
- Was there anything that puzzled you or surprised you? Tell me more.
- What would you tell a friend about this book?

Art prompt:

Can you make some artwork to show me what you think was important in the story? You can show me the most important part of the story, something you learned from the story, something the story made you think of, or how the story made you feel.

Some additional prompts were specific to the story read. The table below outlines story-specific prompts.

<p>The Five Fingered Family (Khalsa, 2000)</p>	<p>Before reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell me what you notice about the family on the cover? <p>After reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What was the treasure the second family got?
<p>Lohri: The Bonfire Festival (Dhillon, 2015)</p>	<p>Before reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell me what you know about Lohri. ● Have you celebrated Lohri before? <p>After reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell me what you notice about the people in the book? ● Tell me what you learned about Lohri?
<p>The Enchanted Garden of Talwandi (Kaur, 2013)</p>	<p>Before reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell me what you know about Guru Nanak Dev Ji? ● What do you want to learn about Guru Nanak Dev Ji? <p>What do you wonder?</p> <p>After reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why do you think the cobra was kind to Guru Nanak Dev Ji?

Vaisakhi (Kaur, 2017)

Before reading:

- Tell me what you know about Vaisakhi?
- Have you ever seen a Vaisakhi celebration before?

Where?

- How do you celebrate Vaisakhi?

After reading:

- What does Vaisakhi mean to you?

Art prompt:

Can you create some artwork to show me what Vaisakhi means to you?

Appendix D: Book Analysis

Story Session 1

Category One: Books that include Punjabi or Sikh characters, but do not focus on Punjabi culture or Sikh religion. In some books, there is no cultural or religious aspect included beyond identifying the characters as being Punjabi or Indian through illustrations, while in other books, there is some cultural or religious aspect, but it is not integral to the story. These books do not require knowledge of Punjabi culture or Sikh religion to understand and connect with.

Title	Description	Thoughts
Ajooni the Kaurageous: Ajooni Stands Up to the Dragon (Dhami, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modern day setting, specific place was not named - Ajooni's mother and father both wear <i>paghs</i> - Illustrations include diverse representation of characters in the background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The storyline is one that children of all backgrounds can relate to: Ajooni overcoming her fear of the dragon and demonstrating courage - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
Always Anjali (Sheth, 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modern day setting, specific place was not named, but likely set in the U.S.A. - The story touches on themes of bullying and pride in your own identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book does not clarify if Anjali is specifically Punjabi; she is Indian. However, the storyline is very relevant and relatable for many Punjabi (and other minority) children who have names that may seem unusual to their white peers - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
Dreams of Hope: A Bedtime Lullaby (Kaur, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is written as a bedtime lullaby, rather than a story, and includes a few Punjabi words (English definitions are provided) - The illustrations show the father wearing a <i>pagh</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book creates a feeling of calm through the melodic writing - It is a relaxing and enjoyable lullaby that does not include any cultural or religious content - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

<p>The Five Fingered Family (Khalsa, 2000)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a folktale set in historical Punjab - The characters are all Punjabi, depicted wearing traditional Punjabi clothing - The illustrations show a lush, green Punjab as it would have been in the historical setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The story focuses on family values: working together as a united team. Family values are a strong part of Punjabi culture; however, this is also something that is important in many other cultures around the world. The plot is relevant to all children regardless of their cultural heritage - It has an engaging storyline - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>I'm Ready to Go to My New School (Sandhu, 2004)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a bilingual written in English and Punjabi on each page - It is set in a modern-day city - The story is about a Sikh boy who is afraid of starting school in Canada after recently moving from India – his fears are universal: worried he will not be able to make friends, afraid he will not understand what he is learning, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book ended without any significant struggle for the main character, Harman; he was afraid of going to school but when his mother tells him he will be fine, he is suddenly excited to go to school. The plot did not strike me as engaging; however, it does highlight the fears of children everywhere when they change schools or begin school. - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>Raam: The Adventures of Ramm and Friends (Khalsa, 2018) (ebook)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book follows a Sikh boy named Raam as he goes about his day. He plays, eats, feeds farm animals, and sleeps. - The end of the book includes a short write up explaining that Raam is wearing a <i>patka</i> throughout the book because he is Sikh, and includes illustrated instructions on how to tie a <i>patka</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think this story is aimed at an audience of very young children; it is written with a rhyming pattern and does not include a climax. The plot is very simple. - Raam is depicted with blonde hair; in this way it represents a more inclusive Sikh identity - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

<p>Sheru and the Zoo Animals (Kaur, 2013) (ebook)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book follows Sheru, a Sikh boy, as he visits animals in a zoo - Sheru is depicted wearing a <i>patka</i> - The book is a bilingual book in Punjabi and English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The illustrations in this ebook are very vibrant and humorous - The plot of this book is simple and uncomplicated, it is suitable for very young children - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>Sheru's Jalebi (Kaur, 2013) (ebook)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book follows Sheru, a Sikh boy, as he searches for his <i>jalebi</i> (an Indian dessert) - Sheru is depicted wearing a <i>patka</i> - The book is a bilingual book in Pujabi and English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book does not require much cultural knowledge to understand; however, the book does not at any point clearly define what a <i>jalebi</i> is. Readers would benefit from a clear description of a <i>jalebi</i>. - The plot of the book is very simple and uncomplicated, it is suitable for very young children - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>Super Satya Saves the Day (Mirchandani, 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is set in modern-day Hoboken - The main character and one of her classmates are from Sikh families (known because of the <i>paghs</i> worn by the fathers and <i>patka</i> worn by the classmate) - The main character is depicted living an American lifestyle - Black and white characters are also included in the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Storyline is one that children of all backgrounds could relate to: Satya does not feel brave without her superhero cape - The book has an illustration of Satya's father without his <i>pagh</i> (turban) when he is in bed in the morning; he wears his <i>pagh</i> in all other illustrations when he is out in the city. I think this was a very realistic portrayal and could open up the conversation with children about what is underneath a turban. - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

<p>Treasure for Lunch (Nanji, 2000)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The story takes place in a modern-day school; Sharia, the main character, is embarrassed about the Indian food she brings for lunch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is about wanting to fit in and is relatable for children from many different cultural backgrounds - This book does not specify if the main character, Shaira, is Punjabi. She brings foods to school that are popular all over the Indian subcontinent and her grandmother is depicted wearing a <i>sari</i> which again can be worn by people throughout all of India - The plot does not include any apparent stereotyping; however, the colour of Sharia's skin varies from page to page - she is depicted with slightly darker skin in some images, especially when she is in close proximity to her classmates with light skin. This was perhaps a way to make her stand out in images that include other children; however, it could be contributing to the very real issue of discrimination based on skin colour, which exists in many cultures around the world
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Story Session 2

Category Two: Books that represent Punjabi culture (cultural celebrations or traditions). The stories included in this theme teach readers about Punjabi culture or require a level of cultural knowledge in order to understand the plot. The culture is integral to the story

Title	Description	Thoughts
Bani da Pari'vaar (Johal, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a bilingual English and Punjabi book - It describes all members of an extended family using the Punjabi titles for each relative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While some members of the family are shown driving cars, etc., the grandmother is depicted riding an elephant. This is problematic because it is an exercise of exoticism. - Additionally, there are numerous errors in the English parts of the story; they are not correctly translated from the Punjabi sections
Gidhaa Rani (Kaur, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modern day setting - This story describes Daya's first encounter with the traditional Punjabi dance called <i>Gidhaa</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In order to fully appreciate this book, I believe readers would need to learn about the significance of <i>Gidhaa</i> in Punjabi culture and traditions. - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
Lohri: The Bonfire Festival (Dhillon, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a bilingual English and Punjabi book describing festive celebrations for Lohri - This book is written more like a poem/song than a story; it highlights numerous aspects of Lohri celebrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The illustrations in this book include a variety of people who express their Punjabi identity in different ways, some wearing turbans and some with their hair cut and uncovered. This creates a more inclusive experience for children of Punjabi heritage. - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

Story Session 3

Category Three: Books that represent important aspects of Sikhism (religious practices, beliefs, celebrations, histories). Readers learn about Sikhism or require knowledge of Sikhism in order to fully understand the story.

Title	Description	Thoughts
<p>Ajeet Singh the Invincible Lion (Singh, 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is the author’s interpretation of a Shabad (holy scripture) by Guru Arjan Dev Ji - The author has written a story to explain his interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I do not agree with this author’s interpretation of this <i>Shabad</i>; the story written by the author does not represent Sikh philosophy as I understand it - The author explicitly labels 5 child characters in the story with negative mindsets (by writing these words on their shirts); however, in Sikhism, these negative mindsets are not people. People may behave negatively or think negatively, but they are not defined by that. I was especially shocked by the fact that children were labelled with these negative mindsets. Children are innocent and learn both negative and positive ways of thinking and behaving from what they see and participate in in the world - Additionally, a different 5 characters are labelled with 5 positive mindsets – again these 5 mindsets are traits that exist within each of us and are not described in relation to one individual - Finally, the story resolves the tensions that exist by having ice cream together; this is a very unrealistic resolution

<p>A Lion's Mane (Kaur, 2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book refers to the main character's uncut hair as his lion's mane - It connects the metaphor of lion to a number of different cultures around the world to highlight some of the personality traits that are important in Sikhism and other religions/cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book establishes a sense of pride in tying a <i>dastaar</i> (the fabric used to tie a turban) through the use of the lion as a metaphor - It may be more relevant to boys than girls because the middle name Singh is usually for males only; although, the book does mention that girls can also "roar" and highlights 2 woman who have acted as lions - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>Dear Takuya ... Letters of a Sikh Boy (Kaur, 2008)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is written as a collection of letters from a Sikh boy, named Simar, to his Japanese pen pal, Takuya - His letters share his experiences of learning about the history, beliefs and practices of Sikhism, as well his experiences of bullying and welcoming a baby sister into his family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book gives children, and adults, the opportunity to learn about Sikhism through the learning experiences of a young boy – it is well written and engaging - The letters also depict how this young boy develops a sense of pride in his religion - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book - This book is intended for older children; it was too long to include in this project with 4 to 6 year olds
<p>Joorā (Kaur, 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is about a young Sikh boy's first day of kindergarten where he is a visible minority - He is asked about his <i>joora</i> by a classmate and explains that his uncut hair is a part of his Sikh identity; he goes on to explain the different ways of covering your hair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a good way to inform young children about the value of visible expressions of Sikh identity through uncut hair - Readers would likely require additional learning to fully understand the historical significance of uncut hair, and the reasons why people today choose to keep their hair uncut - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

<p>Let's Celebrate Diwali (Joshi, 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book shares Diwali stories from Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism - It is written from the perspective of children in a class who each share the Diwali story they hear from home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a nice, brief overview of what Diwali means to different religions in India, and how people may practice Diwali differently - It also sheds light on how children may feel hesitant (or in some cases excited) to share their family's celebratory practices because they are different from how their classmates celebrate - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>Prem Singh's Day (Singh, 2013) (ebook)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This ebook takes readers through Prem Singh's day; Prem Singh is a Sikh boy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This story has no climax, readers read about what Prem Singh does throughout the day - While the book does talk about activities many Sikhs do daily, no explanation is given as to why these routines are valued by many Sikhs - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>The Boy with Long Hair (Singh, 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is about a Sikh boy who feels excluded from his new school because of his uncut hair - He eventually tells his peers about why he has long hair, answers their many questions, and finds acceptance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The book focuses on similarities as well as differences; it discusses how we share similar feelings, smiles, and experiences – I think this is a valuable point to include - The end of the book includes a page of information on Sikhism; this is useful knowledge for readers who do not know much about Sikhism and read the book independently without someone who can provide that knowledge - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>The Enchanted Garden of Talwandi (Kaur, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book re-tells a religious story focusing on equality and the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev ji - The story takes place in a garden in Talwandi, Punjab during Guru Nanak Dev Ji's lifetime - Guru Nanak Dev Ji is the only human character in the story, the other characters are animals and flowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The story emphasizes the idea that we all have equal value in this world, despite our individual talents and differences - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

<p>The Garden of Peace (Kaur, 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This story is an artistic interpretation of an important Sikh historical event that took place in Punjab (Vaisakhi) - It is a beautifully illustrated book that touches on issues of inequality and social prejudice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children may require additional scaffolding to connect this story to the traditional retellings of Vaisakhi that they may be familiar with - The way Vaisakhi is retold in this book gives children more opportunities to make their own meanings of what Vaisakhi means, and better understand Sikh values - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book
<p>The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh (Kelkar, 2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is about a Sikh boy, Harpreet Singh, who expresses his feelings and moods through the colour of his <i>patka</i> - He feels sad after moving to a new city, and his <i>patka</i> shows this. Gradually he is able to make friends - The story takes place in modern day America 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book is a wonderful story that all children can relate to - I was conflicted about including this book in theme 1 or theme 3 because this book does not require much cultural knowledge to understand, and the story does not specifically discuss the religious aspect of a <i>patka</i>. However, the afterword included in the book explains the importance of a <i>patka</i> and its integral role in Sikh philosophy. The story itself focuses on Harpreet's self-expression and feelings which are universal themes and relatable for children from all cultural backgrounds. - The illustrations in this book are beautiful and attentive to small details such as the <i>kara</i> on Harpreet's hand - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book - This book is my favourite story collected for this research project; unfortunately, it did not arrive in time for the story sessions
<p>The Royal Falcon (Kaur, 2009)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In this book, a Sikh boy named Arjun is able to learn a lesson in compassion by flying back in time to watch the story of Bhai Kanhaiya unfold. Bhai Kanhaiya was a Sikh who showed compassion to wounded soldiers regardless of who they fought for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This story teaches readers about the story of a celebrated Sikh while also connecting the lesson to a contemporary setting; it is very effective at highlighting the value of compassion - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book - This book is intended for older children; it was too long to include in this project with 4 to 6 year olds

<p>What is a Patka? (Kalia, 2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This story describes the lifestyle of the main character, Mohan; Mohan is a young Sikh boy who wears a <i>patka</i> and lives in modern-day New York 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This book states “being Sikh means he follows certain rules” (n.p.). Not cutting hair is included as one of the rules Mohan must follow. I do not believe that the Sikh religion is about following rules, nor do I believe that cutting one’s hair excludes one from the religion. - This story does not educate readers about the historical significance of wearing a turban or the reasons why one may choose to keep their hair uncut and wear a turban - The book also says, “his hair and <i>patka</i> should not be touched, except by an adult.” I believe that this sentence intends to describe the respect that a turban should be given; however, it does not effectively get that point across. Adults can be disrespectful so rather than suggesting that there is an age requirement to touch a <i>patka</i> or <i>joora</i>, it would have been better to describe why and how a <i>patka</i> and <i>joora</i> is treated with respect.
<p>Vaisakhi (Kaur, 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This depicts one Sikh family’s Vaisakhi celebration – through their celebratory practices, readers learn about the history of Vaisakhi - The story takes place in modern times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The book uses a fictional family’s celebratory practices to share some information related to the history of Vaisakhi and some important aspects of Sikhism; however, many readers would require additional scaffolding to understand the importance of the religious symbols included in the story - It is important to make sure children understand that there are multiple ways to celebrate Vaisakhi. The quiz/treasure hunt the family in the story participates in are not traditional aspects of Vaisakhi celebrations, but are instead one family’s chosen way to participate in this important celebration - No apparent stereotyping throughout the book

Appendix E: Punjabi Vocabulary

5 Kakaar - the 5 articles of the Sikh faith worn by devout Sikhs, each of which begins with the letter K; the 5 karkaar are kes, kanga, kara, kirpan, kachhera

Amrit Shakh - it is a religious ceremony initiated by Guru Gobind Singh Ji; after completing the ceremony the individual is a member of the Khalsa; the individual has chosen to live his/her life according to the principles of Sikhism and wears the 5 kakaar

Babaji - this word had 2 definitions; it can be an informal word used to refer to God, or as a term of respect referring to older men such as grandfathers

Bandi Chhor Divas - a significant historical event in Sikh history which occurred on the same day as Diwali

Barfi - an Indian sweet made from milk, sugar, and flour

Besan - an Indian sweet made from butter, sugar and chickpea flour

Bhangra - a traditional Punjabi dance, historically performed by men

Darbar Sahib - the main hall in a Sikh Gurdwara

Deg - a sweet dessert made with butter, flour and sugar, often served after prayers in the Gurdwara

Diwali - the Indian festival of lights

Ek Onkar - it is the opening symbol in the Sikh religious scripture, it represents one god

Gidhaa - a traditional Punjabi dance, historically performed by women

Gurdwara - Sikh temple

Gursikh - a Sikh who is amrit shakh

Jalebi - a fried Indian sweet made with sugar, butter and flour then dipped in a sugary syrup

Kanga - one of the 5 kakaar; it is a small, wooden comb tucked into the joora

Kara - one of the 5 kakaar; it is an iron bangle worn on the right wrist

Kes - one of the 5 kakaar; uncut hair

Khanda - a symbol of the Sikh faith

Kirpan - one of the 5 kakaar, a sword worn in a sheath on a strap

Khalsa - it is the name given to the community of Sikhs who are Amrit Shakh

Kurta Pyjama - a traditional Punjabi outfit for men consisting of a long shirt and pants

Jooira - long hair tied in a top knot

Ladoo - an Indian sweet made of sugar, chickpea flour, and butter

Langar Hall - the space used for shared meals in the Gurdwara

Lengha/lenghe - this is part of traditional Indian clothing; it is a long skirt for women, usually worn at special occasions (lenghe is the plural form of the singular lengha)

Lohri - a Punjabi celebration occurring every January

Nagar Kirtan - a religious parade related to Sikhism

Paat - prayer

Pagh - turban

Patka - a square handkerchief tied over the jooira to cover the hair; typically worn by young boys

Panj Pyaare - the first five Sikhs to amrit shakh

Suites - a traditional Punjabi women's outfit consisting of a long shirt and pants

Vaisakhi - the birth of Sikhism, celebrated in April each year