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Immigration Experiences: Maintenance and Promotion of Cultural Values Among Asian Indian Women and Their Children

Harshi Shah

Montclair State University

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Abstract

Guided by the principles of grounded theory, this qualitative study aimed to explore the Asian Indian immigrant women’s experiences in maintaining and promoting the Indian cultural values for themselves and their children, living in the United States. Components of acculturation theory were also utilized as a lens to interpret the data. Thirteen first-generation Asian Indian mothers were recruited through a combination of snowball and theoretical sampling techniques. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. Four themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) Maintaining core Indian values in daily life, (b) Maintaining transnational connections, (c) Preference for Indian enclaves, and (d) More “Indian” here than in homeland. The findings suggest that Asian Indian immigrant women made conscious efforts to maintain their “Indianness” and raised their children with Indian values. Residing in Indian enclaves, celebration of Indian festivals, and participation in one’s religious activities were some of the means of recreating “Indian” culture on a foreign land. The findings also suggest that the participants continued to maintain strong relational ties with the family members in India. The role of information and communications technology (ICTs) emerged as pivotal in helping the immigrants and their families to stay connected. Implications of the study and future directions were discussed.

Keywords: Asian Indians, immigration experiences, value retention
MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Immigration Experiences: Maintenance and Promotion of Cultural Values among Asian Indian Women and their Children

by

Harshi Shah

A Master’s Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

May 2018

College of Education and Human Services
Family Science and Human Development

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Dr. Katia Goldfarb

Dr. Olena Nesteruk
IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCES: MAINTENANCE AND 
PROMOTION OF CULTURAL VALUES AMONG 
ASIAN INDIAN WOMEN AND THEIR 
CHILDREN 

A THESIS 

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For the degree of Master of Arts 

by 

HARSHI SHAH 

Montclair State University 

Montclair, NJ 

May, 2018
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# Table of Contents

Chapters:

1. Introduction........................................................................................................... 1

2. Literature Review.................................................................................................. 4
   - History of Asian Indian Immigration to the United States................................. 4
   - Demographic Characteristics of Asian Indians in the United States...................... 5
     - Age and Geographical Dispersion....................................................................... 5
     - English Proficiency and Educational Qualification............................................. 5
     - Employment and Income................................................................................... 6
   - Traditional Asian Indian Society and Family Structure........................................ 7
   - Parenting Beliefs among Asian Indian Parents.................................................... 8
     - Child Rearing in India.......................................................................................... 8
     - Changing Dynamics of Asian Indian Families and Parenting Roles..................... 9
     - Asian Indian Parenting in Immigration.............................................................. 10
   - Theoretical Framework.......................................................................................... 12
     - Immigration and Acculturation.......................................................................... 13
     - Research Question.............................................................................................. 14

3. Methods.............................................................................................................. 16
   - Research Design.................................................................................................. 16
   - Establishing Trustworthiness.............................................................................. 17
   - Participants.......................................................................................................... 18
   - Procedures.......................................................................................................... 20
IRB Approval............................................................... 20
Recruitment............................................................ 20
Data collection....................................................... 21
Demographic Survey................................................ 22
Semi-Structured Interview Schedule......................... 22
Observations.......................................................... 24
Data Analysis.......................................................... 25
Open Coding......................................................... 26
Axial Coding......................................................... 26
Selective Coding.................................................... 26

4. Results...................................................................... 28

Maintaining Core Indian Values in Daily Life.................. 28
Inculcating the Value of Family.................................. 28
Preserving One’s Native Language.............................. 30
Following One’s Religious Practices and Customs.......... 35
Celebrating Festivals............................................... 39
Maintaining Transnational Connections...................... 42
Significance of Information and Communications Technologies.. 44
Preference for Indian Enclaves.................................. 47
More “Indian” Here than in Homeland......................... 52

5. Discussion.............................................................. 58

Culture-Parenting Nexus........................................... 58
List of Tables

Table 1 ........................................................................................................................................ 19
CHAPTER I

Introduction

United States of America is known as the land of immigrants. As of 2017, one-fifth of the world’s immigrant population resided in the U.S, making it the top destination for international immigrants (Zong, Batalova, & Hallock, 2018). Successive waves of immigrants have come to this country and have assimilated into the mainstream culture. Though they leave behind their extended families and community members, these immigrant groups bring with them strong cultural models of their native countries which then become the foundation of their value-orientations in the host culture (D’Andrade, as cited in Raghavan, Harkness, & Super, 2010). One immigrant group, which has successfully integrated themselves into the U.S. culture, is Asian Indians. The Asian Indian population refers to the population belonging to the Asian sub-continent of India. As these immigrants and their families become active participants in communal domains of the host country such as the schools, corporate world, neighborhoods and the socio-cultural aspects, there was an increased need to understand how these families adapt to the host culture, the mechanisms that these families may adopt to blend with the host culture as well as some of the challenges and the hardships that they may experience in doing so (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998).

Presently, Asian Indians are considered to be among the fastest growing immigrant population in the United States (Raghavan et al., 2010). Recent data indicate that as of 2015, there were nearly 2.4 million Asian Indian immigrants living in the United States of America (Zong & Batalova, 2017). According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), Asian Indians accounted for almost 19 percent of
the Asian population in the U.S. This made the Asian Indian immigrants the second-largest group among the Asians, after the Chinese (23%) (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2010). In addition, as per the American Community Survey (ACS) data, there were more than 43.7 million immigrants living in the United States as of 2016 (Zong et al., 2018) and out of this 43.7 million immigrant population, Asian Indians accounted for almost 6 percent, making them third-largest immigrant group overall, following Mexican- and Chinese-born immigrants in the U.S. (Zong & Batalova, 2017).

Given the significant number of Asian Indian population in the United States, it was important to explore the unique experiences, challenges and negotiations that these immigrant families face in a host culture. As a result, the need for culturally sensitive research becomes apparent. The main purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of Asian Indian immigrant women, living in the U.S, in maintaining their Indian cultural values in a host culture. This study further sought to understand their experiences in promoting these cultural values among their children. Understanding the pressures of immigrant parents is significant as the literature on immigrant parenting suggests that parenting in a host culture is an extremely challenging and stressful process (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011). While acculturating to the host country, not only do these parents have to maintain and retain their own ethnic identity (Inman et al., 2007) but also these parents have to constantly mediate and bridge between the two cultures, such that the children continue to retain and preserve values specific to their ethnic culture as well as blend within the larger host culture (Nesteruk & Marks, 2011; Terrell, 2005). Further, Patel, Powel and Bhavnagri
(1996) stated that Indian immigrants were an excellent group to study owing to the large numbers that immigrate to foreign lands as well as because of their ability to function brilliantly across cultures. More research, on this group will help us better understand some of the challenges that these families face in adapting to a culture that is significantly different from their native culture. Also, researching in this area is very significant as its findings could be compared with the studies on other immigrant groups in the U.S and similarities and differences in the experiences can be accessed for policy formulation for immigrants in the United States and for developing counseling practices for immigrant parents and their families.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

History of Asian Indian Immigration to the United States

For most Asian Indian immigrants, who moved to U.S. in their early lives, the move was prompted by a voluntary personal decision for better opportunities rather than as war victims or refuges (Bhattacharya & Shibusawa, 2009). Immigration of Asian Indians to the United States largely began around end of 1800s and early 1900s. During this phase, these immigrants primarily came to the United States to take up employment in agricultural sector and railroad development projects on the West Coast (Gibson, as cited in Poulsen, 2009). As a result, during this period, immigrants from Indian subcontinent comprised mostly of poor and uneducated laborers from the state of Punjab, who immigrated in search of work in the logging and railroad industries (Das Gupta, 1997). It was mostly the male members of the family who immigrated to the U.S. Their dependent family members would remain in India, generally under the care of extended family members, until a time when the immigrant members had earned significant income and could return to India with those earnings (Poulsen, 2009).

According to Gibson (as cited in Poulsen, 2009), the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which emphasized on reunification of families, enabled the primary immigrant earner to bring his family members to the U.S. as well. As a result of this legislation, by the 1970s, people from the Indian subcontinent came to the United States primarily to seek better educational and professional opportunities. For example, 83% of Asian Indian immigrants who entered the United States between 1966 and 1977 came as
professionals (Dasgupta, 1998). As noted by Segal (1991), most Indians come to the U.S. either to seek educational or professional opportunities or as dependents of those seeking these opportunities.

**Demographic Characteristics of Asian Indians in the United States**

**Age and geographical dispersion.** The Asian Indian immigrant population, in the United States, was largely concentrated in the working ages. For example, in 2015, about 82 percent of the Asian Indians in the U.S. were between 20 to 54 years of age (Zong & Batalova, 2017). The median age for this immigrant group was 39 years; making them younger than the total foreign-born population in the U.S. (44 years) and older than the native-born population in the U.S. (36 years) (Zong & Batalova, 2017). In 2011-2015, out of the total Asian Indian population in the United States, the states of California and New Jersey accounted for almost one-third of the Asian Indian residents; with 21 percent residing in California followed by 11 percent in the state of New Jersey. Other states with higher Asian Indian population included: Texas (9 percent), New York (7 percent), and Illinois (7 percent) (Hoeffel et al., 2010; Zong & Batalova, 2017).

**English proficiency and educational qualification.** As per the 2011-2015 data, 25 percent of the Asian Indians in the U.S. spoke Hindi at home, followed by Telugu (13 percent), Gujarati (12 percent), Tamil (9 percent), and Punjabi (8 percent) (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Despite diverse linguistic backgrounds, immigrants from the Indian subcontinent were more likely to demonstrate better proficiency in English than the foreign-born population in the United States (Whatley & Batalova, 2013). As of 2015, nearly 11 percent of Asian Indian immigrants spoke only English at home as compared to
the 16 percent of the entire immigrant population in the U.S. In addition, only 26 percent of Asian Indians reported limited proficiency in English, as compared to 49 percent of the total foreign-born population in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2017). With regards to educational qualifications, Asian Indian immigrants were likely to be better educated and attained much higher educational achievements than the foreign-born as well as U.S.-born population in the United States (Whatley & Batalova, 2013). In 2015, among the Asian Indian immigrant adults (25 years of age and above), 77 percent had their bachelor’s degree or higher, as compared to native-born adults (31%) and foreign-born adults (29%) in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2017).

Employment and income. As compared to the overall working immigrant male population in the U.S, Asian Indian men were more likely to be employed in science, management, business and finance related occupations (Zong & Batalova, 2017). As of 2011, about 29 percent of the Asian Indian immigrant men worked in the information technology (IT) sector, 21 percent were associated with business, management and finance sector, and about 11 percent were employed in sales related jobs (Whatley & Batalova, 2013). With regards to the employment of Asian Indian immigrant women, about 19 percent worked in management, business and finance related occupations (as compared to 11 percent of other immigrant female workers), 16 percent worked in information technology and engineering related employments (as compared to 2 percent of other immigrant female workers), and 11 percent worked in sales related jobs (Whatley & Batalova, 2013). As per the recent data, in 2015, the median household income for the members of Asian Indian immigrant population was reported as $107,000,
as compared to $56,000 for the typical U.S. household and $51,000 for overall immigrant population in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Moreover, a relatively smaller percentage of Asian Indian immigrants (7 percent) lived below the federal poverty line in 2015, as compared to the native-born (14 percent) and foreign-born (17 percent) population in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2017).

**Traditional Asian Indian Society and Family Structure**

India is a pluralistic nation and is characterized by vast cultural diversity (Tuli, 2012). Owing to its multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious heritage and demographic characteristics, India is regarded as an extremely heterogeneous country (Singh, 2005). Various sub-cultures are formed within the larger culture due to interconnectedness and intersection of the different religious, regional and cultural influences (Raval, Daga, Raval, & Panchal, 2016). Indian traditions and customs are deeply rooted in the sociohistorical, religious, and political past (Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010). According to Farver, Narang, and Bhadha (2002), the traditional structure and pattern of the Asian Indian families is largely characterized by patriarchal norms, hierarchical decision-making, strict gender roles, familial piety, and collectivism. One of the key features, closely associated with the traditional Asian Indian society, is the importance that it places on the concept of “family” (Tuli, 2012). Researchers (Dasgupta, 1998; Segal, 1991) highlight the fact that the Asian Indian community is highly allocentric and group oriented in their approach, such that the ‘individual self’ and ‘family’ are seen as integrative and interdependent constructs rather than two separate concepts. The role of family is pivotal in regulating day-to-day decision-making and functioning of its
members and the relationships with the family members are highly valued and respected (Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010). Each member of the family, whether children or adults, has a well-defined set of roles and duties towards the family which they are obligated to fulfill in order to maintain the smooth functioning of the family (Farver et al., 2002).

As described by Durvasula and Mylvaganam (1994), the core of Indian culture lies not only in the strong family attachments and sense of responsibility towards its family members, but also in the ways by which each family member strives to maintain the harmony and interdependence among its members. Segal (1998), further elaborates that along with strong family ties, the Asian Indian culture also places significant emphasis on the importance of community life and the role of its members in an individual’s life. As a result, Asian Indians can be described as being ‘allocentric collectivists’; such that they maintain a strong sense of obligation towards both: their immediate families as well as the larger societal group they belong to. Triandis (as cited in Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2008) suggests that in most collectivistic societies, the thinking patterns and behavioral outcomes of its members are primarily governed by their interactions and interconnectedness to a network of people consisting of the extended family members, kinship groups, neighbors, and the alike.

Parenting Beliefs among Asian Indian Parents

Child-rearing in India. Asian cultures such as in India, encourage mothers to be nurturing caregivers, while fathers have traditionally been encouraged to have little involvement in childrearing (Barnhart, Raval, Jansari & Raval, 2013; Roopnarine, Talukder, Jain, Joshi, & Srivastav, 1990). Despite the pivotal role played by mothers in
the lives of their children, children in India grow up in a network of multiple interactions with members from within and outside the family (Gupta & Panda, 2003). In most Indian families, parents are not solely responsible for the upbringing of their children (Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010); rather, the child-rearing and child-caring responsibilities are shared among the extended family members including grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews, older siblings and other significant adults in the family (Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002; Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010). Further emphasizing on the involvement of extended family and significant others in Indian parenting, Deepak (2005) indicated that in addition to the physical assistance from the family members, it was also common for parents to receive guidance regarding child-caring and child-rearing issues from the older members of the family. It is also very common for neighbors to become involved in activities concerning the supervision and care of the children. Asian Indian parenting focuses on instilling in their children the importance of family and its members, maintain the enduring familial ties and relationships and also, fulfill their lifelong familial obligations and responsibilities (Durvasula and Mylvaganam, 1994). Child-rearing practices in the Asian Indian culture are largely governed with close family bonds wherein family members of all ages, especially the children in the family, are expected to make the necessary sacrifices and maintaining family’s honor and welfare (Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002).

**Changing dynamics of the Asian Indian families and parental roles.** As a result of globalization and westernization, the structure and functioning of the Asian Indian families has undergone drastic changes, especially in the urban areas and
metropolitan cities (Bhatia, 2006). As a result of urbanization and globalization, more and more Indian families have become increasingly nuclear in structure (Tuli, 2012). However, though families are appearing smaller in size and essentially nuclear in structure (especially in urban metropolises), the crux of the family continues to be characterized by close-knit associations (Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002; Tuli, 2012). As noted by Singh (2005), despite considerable changes in the structure of traditional Indian families and relocation of extended family members to different geographic locations, the family members continue to identify themselves with the larger family and regularly cooperate and contribute towards the family in matters of financial assistance, rituals and ceremonies. Further, even in most Indian nuclear households, parents are rarely the sole caregivers for their children as some or the other form of help is arranged from family members or the neighbors (Bhatia, 2006). Also, with increase in numbers of dual-earning couples, the traditional notions of motherhood and fatherhood in the Indian society have also undergone alterations (Bhatia, 2006). Recent studies on parenting among Indian couples, indicate higher involvement and participation of Indian fathers in the child-caring and child-rearing activities (Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010).

**Asian Indian parenting in immigration.** Parenting and raising children in a host culture is an extremely challenging endeavor wherein the immigrant parents constantly face substantial pressures concerning child-rearing and child-caring processes. Not only do these parents have to retain and maintain their own cultural and ethnic identity, but they have to ensure that specific aspects of their original culture are imparted and maintained among their children (Inman et al., 2007). According to Farver et al. (2002),
the real challenge lies in the fact that in immigrant households, children usually tend to adapt and accept the norms of host culture much quicker as compared to their parents. As a result, there tends to be ‘acculturation gap’ existent within the family, especially between parents and their children.

In a study exploring Asian Indian immigrants’ parenting experiences in the United States, Segal (1991) reported that these immigrant parents primarily expressed apprehensions regarding issues like losing their children to the norms of the host culture, losing the degree of authority and control that they exert over their children’s lives and losing respect within the Indian community as their children become more westernized and may violate Indian cultural norms. According to Mehra (2003), Asian Indian immigrant parents adopted more ‘conservative’ approaches to instill the traditional cultural beliefs and values in their children, as compared to parents living in India. One of the key characteristics noted about Asian Indian parenting, in immigration, was that these parents laid strong emphasis on adherence to some of the core Indian traditional values and beliefs (Dasgupta, 1998; Patel et al., 1996; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). It was imperative for them that their children inculcated some of the core Indian values, that were inculcated in them during their own upbringing.

When this cultural group immigrates to the United States of America, their collectivistic and familial beliefs often contradict and clash with the autonomous and individualistic orientation of the American culture (Deepak, 2005; Farver et al., 2002). One of the issues that the first-generation Asian Indian parents face in particular is that while they migrate to the U.S, other members from their extended family unit (e.g.,
parents, siblings, significant elders) may remain in India. As noted in the literature (Tuli, 2012; Tuli & Chaudhary, 2010), the role of family members and significant elders in the child-rearing process is very important to Indian families as the young parents seek constant support and guidance related to child-rearing decisions. Also, grandparents are largely responsible for instilling values and moral teachings among the children in the families and the availability of child-care within family provides young parents with great emotional support. However, due to immigration, the Asian Indian immigrant parents are confronted with numerous challenges while raising and parenting their children in a nuclear family set-up, without the involvement and guidance from the extended kinship networks (Inman et al., 2007; Iwamoto, Negi, Partiali, & Creswell, 2013). Given this context, not only do these immigrant parents become solely responsible for child-rearing and care-taking activities (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002) but also, they become key agents in transmitting the traditional cultural values and identity among their children (Dasgupta, 1998; Dhruvarajan, 1993).

**Theoretical Framework**

Though guided by the principles of grounded theory, this study primarily utilized components of acculturation theory as a lens to interpret the data. This is because, acculturation plays a very significant role in shaping the experiences of immigrant families and determining the parenting aspects. Immigration and acculturation to a host country not only impacts parent-child relationships and interactions, but also influences and directs immigrant parents’ childrearing practices and disciplining techniques. Immigrant parents’ definition and perspectives regarding what it means to be an ‘Asian
Indian’ in a host culture, would further dictate aspects like the lifestyle they adopt, socialization goals for themselves as well as their children and the expectations they have from their children regarding their career choices, and behaviorisms (Deepak, 2005).

**Immigration and Acculturation**

Immigration in itself is a very complex process. For many immigrants, migration to another country entails experiencing a set of conflicting and contradictory demands and expectations which may arise from the ideological, social and cultural discrepancies between the host country and the country of origin (Deepak, 2005). Immigrant families that successfully cope with these constraints by either accepting, rejecting, accommodating, and reformulating these demands, can further strengthen their family bonds; while those families which fail in doing so, make the situation even more stressful for the family and its members (Wakil et al., 1981).

Acculturation can be defined as a process of cultural as well as psychological changes in individuals post intercultural contact (Berry, 2007). It is a process of accommodation through which immigrants, coming from a particular cultural background, adopt as well as adapt themselves with the characteristics of the new culture (Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012). According to Berry (2007), any given ethnic minority group can respond to and associate with the host culture by indulging in either of the four acculturation strategies: (a) **Assimilation** (when the immigrants solely recognize and adopt the norms of the host culture, with minimalistic or no ties to the culture of origin), (b) **Marginalization** (when the immigrants do not maintain the cultural norms of either culture), (c) **Separation** (when immigrants exclusively maintain cultural aspects of their
own culture, while rejecting the host culture), and (d) Integration (the immigrants successfully maintain the specific components of both the cultures).

Ethnographic literature on Asian Indian immigrants (Dasgupta, 1998; Wakil et al., 1981) indicate that Asian Indian immigrants strive to develop, adopt and maintain characteristics specific to the host culture as well as that of their original culture. Similarly, while exploring the socialization patterns of Indian immigrants, Patel et al. (1996) found that most Asian Indian immigrants did not merely leave their original values in order to assimilate to the Western culture, but rather they adopted integrative measures in order to acculturate in bicultural manner. However, Segal (1991) found that even after spending considerable amount of years in the host country (i.e. those settled in Western cultures), Asian Indian immigrants primarily continued to maintain their lifestyles and ideologies consistent with the traditional collectivistic values and beliefs, emphasizing on the importance of extended family relations, obedience to elders, and adherence to gender-specific roles and hierarchical authority assumption. Over-all, the acculturative pattern generally observed among most Asian Indian immigrants is that they tend to uphold and maintain their Indian ethnicity, largely by ‘reinventing’ Indian culture on the foreign soil (Dasgupta, 1998).

Research Question

The main focus of this study was to understand the experiences of Asian Indian immigrant women in maintaining their Indian cultural values in a host culture as well as their experiences in promoting and retaining of those cultural values among their children growing up in a host culture. The primary question that this study explored can be stated
as: ‘How did immigration shape Asian Indian women’s experiences in maintaining and promoting the Indian cultural values for themselves and their children?’
CHAPTER III

Methods

As described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research is often used to understand how individuals construct their worlds, how they interpret their experiences, and what meaning they assign to their experiences. The primary focus of a qualitative study is to understand how people make sense of their lives. According to Cobb and Forbes (2002), qualitative studies are chiefly beneficial when the phenomenon being studied can be best communicated and understood through detailed examples and rich narratives. The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding about Asian Indian immigrants’ experiences in the maintenance and promotion of Indian cultural values for themselves as well as their children in a host culture. Considering the nature of the present research, it was felt that a qualitative approach was the most appropriate method to utilize.

Research Design

The present research was guided by the principles of grounded theory. Grounded theory, as a research methodology, was introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. This methodology was subsequently elaborated by Glaser (1978), Strauss (1987); Strauss and Corbin (1990). The key element of grounded theory, that differentiates it from other types of qualitative research, is that it emphasizes building a new substantial theory and/or enriching the existing ones (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The theory developed or generated is “grounded” in the data collected such that it is closely related to phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2017). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016),
“grounded theory is particularly useful for addressing questions about process; that is, how something changes over time” (p. 32).

Establishing Trustworthiness

All researchers are concerned with producing research material that is trustworthy. ‘Trustworthiness’ of any given research, simply refers to the degree to which one can rely and trust the findings and the propositions of that study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In quantitative research, this is established through the constructs of validity and reliability. Whereas for qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe four criteria for establishing trustworthiness. These criteria are: (a) credibility (the extent to which the study findings are congruent and in-match with the reality); (b) transferability (the extent to which the findings can be generalized or applicable); (c) dependability (the extent to which the findings are consistent with the data), and (d) confirmability (researcher’s objectivity).

In the present study, the method of triangulation was used in order to ensure its credibility. Triangulation is a strategy of using multiple: methods of data collection, sources of data, investigators for analysis and theories to guide the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, triangulation was employed by using multiple methods of data collection, mainly the interview, field-observations, and the literature.

The strategy of maintaining rich and thick descriptions was employed in order to ensure transferability and dependability of the present study. As described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this strategy involves providing rich descriptions and detailed accounts of the study so that the readers can conceptualize the study. For the purposes of this study,
the researcher maintained a research journal and documented in-depth details pertaining to the study, description of the settings and the participants. The research findings were explained in detail and supported with participants’ quotes.

Confirmability refers to researcher’s ability to remain neutral and take an objective stance while conducting the research. Peer examination or peer-review is one of the techniques used to ensure that the research findings are free from any bias. Peer examination is done by involving impartial colleagues or qualitative research experts and discussing the research procedures as well the findings with them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the present study, the thesis committee provided assistance and expertise with peer-examination. The research guide was regularly briefed about the research updates as well as the emerging themes. Important decisions made, pertaining to the research process and the analysis, were well discussed and consulted with the guide.

**Participants**

Data for this study was collected from thirteen first-generation Asian Indian mothers, living in the state of New Jersey. The participants were between 33 to 45 years of age (M= 36.92; SD= 3.86). All the participants were married to Indian spouses and had at least one child who was two years of age or older. All participants were born and raised in India and immigrated to the United States between 1995 and 2014. The number of years that the participants had spent in the U.S. ranged from three to twenty-two years (M= 12.07; SD= 5.97) (Refer to Table 1).
Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants (N=13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Age (in years)</td>
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<td>3.86</td>
<td>33-45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of years in the U.S</td>
<td>12.07</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>3-22</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Characteristics</th>
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India has a multicultural and multi-religious heritage and the native language of the people differs according to the region of India from which they originate. The participants of the study identified themselves as Jains (n=8) or as Hindus (n=5). The Indian native languages of the participants were Gujarati (n=9), Marwari (n=2), Telegu (n=1) and Marathi (n=1). The educational qualification of the participants ranged from High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (n=1), Bachelor’s degree (n=5) and Master’s degree (n=7). With regards to their occupation, seven out of the thirteen participants were working in the U.S, while six were full time home-makers. The annual household income was indicated as: $90,000 or more (n= 10), $60,000 to $80,999 (n=2), while one participant (n=1) choose not to indicate the income.

**Procedures**

**IRB approval.** Prior to beginning the research, approval was obtained from the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). All the study material, including the study methodology, the semi-structured interview schedule, and demographic form were approved by the IRB (see Appendix A).

**Recruitment.** For this study, participants were largely recruited through a combination of snowballing and theoretical sampling. Snowball sampling requires the researcher to locate and interview an initial few participants and then the participants are asked to pass the word to the eligible others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Babbie (2013) refers “Snowball” to the process of accumulation, wherein, the contacted participant further suggests other subjects known to them, thus creating a bigger pool of contacts. For the present study, the initial contacts were established largely through researcher’s
acquaintances in the Indian community. These participants then provided recommendations of other eligible participants known to them. After the data was gathered and analyzed, from the initial few interviews, subsequent recruitment was done using theoretical sampling. This type of sampling technique is a feature specific to grounded theory (Creswell, 2007). The main purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data based on the concepts emerging in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As a result, theoretical sampling can be conducted only after the researcher has developed initial, tentative categories or themes (Charmaz, 2008). In short, in doing theoretical sampling, a researcher first gathers some data, analyzes it and then directs the following data collection from those people, events or locations that will best provide information pertaining to the emerging concepts or the tentative categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

**Data collection.** The data for this study was collected between May 2016 to November 2017. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as a primary tool of data collection. In addition, the demographic survey and field observations were used to secure necessary information about the participants and to record important notes. The data was collected until the point of saturation. “Saturation” can be described as a phase in research when the information obtained from the participants becomes repetitive (Creswell, 2007) and no new insights or themes are being emerged from the forthcoming participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that once the point of saturation has been attained, further sampling and data collection must be terminated.
**Demographic survey.** Each participant filled in the demographic survey, prior to the interview (see Appendix B). The demographic survey was also used as a screening tool to select potential participants for the study. The primary screening questions on the demographic form were indicative of each participant’s country of birth, age, the year of immigration to the United States, whether or not they had children, and the age of their children. These questions affirmed that the participants met two main inclusion criteria of the study; i.e. they were first generation immigrants (born in India and immigrated to U.S after the age of 18 years) and that they had at least one child, who was two years of age or older. Supplementary information was also obtained regarding participants’: gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation and their Indian native language.

**Semi-structured interview schedule.** In this type of interview, prior to beginning the research, the researcher chooses and prepares a list of topics and the questions to be explored based on literature or practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). However, when and how the topics will be covered or the order of questioning is not structured or predetermined (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 111). A semi-structured interview was preferred for this study because this type of interview enables the researcher to seek specific information from the participants as well as allows the participants to share new and unique information. It was felt that semi-structured nature of questioning will keep the interactions focused and at the same time, the
flexibility in questioning will enable the participants to share individual perspectives and experiences.

Interviews can be conducted either face-to-face in person, or over video conferencing or by telephone. For the present research, all the interviews were conducted face-to-face, in person. Babbie (2013) highlights two main advantages of using face-to-face interviewing. According to him, the primary advantage of using this format is that it enables the researcher as well as the respondents to seek clarifications or further simplifications in case of doubt. Secondly, the face-to-face interactions enables the researcher to make first-hand observations and write necessary notes. For the present research, the interviews were conducted at each participant’s homes. The date and the time of the interview were finalized keeping in mind participant’s as well as the researcher’s convenience. Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix C). All the interviews were conducted in English as all the participants had conveyed their comfort and ease at communicating in English. The interviews typically lasted for about 60 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded using a digital recorder and later transcribed verbatim by the researcher, within a short period after their completion. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and any personal information linking the data to the participant was kept confidential.

The interview was largely guided by seven broad open-ended questions. These questions were further guided by few sub-sections and probes (see Appendix D). The introductory questions focused on basic information regarding their reasons for immigrating to the United States and transition to the host culture. The main questions of
the interview largely focused on the participants’ experiences of being an immigrant in a host culture (e.g., ease or difficulty in maintaining one’s ethnic values in a host culture, some of the activities they engage in so as to maintain their cultural values in U.S, and some of the challenges faced in doing so). The following set of questions focused specifically on the experiences of the participants in raising their children in a host culture and ensuring that the children retained and maintained some of the core Indian values and practices. Some of the aspects covered in this section concentrated on the activities parents engaged in order to ensure the promotion of the values among their children. In addition, the concluding section focused on participants’ experiences pertaining to the benefits as well as challenges of having their child/children grow up in the United States as opposed to in India.

Observations. Observations are one of the key elements of a qualitative research and should be considered as an additional form of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Informal interviews and conversations must be interwoven with observations in order to obtain rich and meaningful data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Further, observations facilitate the researcher in recording the respondent’s behaviors and reflexes as they are happening. According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), “observations place researchers in the center of the action where they can see as well as hear what is going on” (p. 41). While conducting the interview, some of the key elements to be observed include: non-verbal cues, the physical setting, the presence of various possessions, participant’s general reaction to the study, and so on (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Cobb and Forbes (2002), it is extremely essential to fully
and accurately describe the “context” as it helps in interpreting participant’s experiences and behaviors.

For the purpose of the present study, a research journal was maintained to record all the observations and key notes. Observations were primarily noted about non-verbal cues such as participant’s body-language and facial expressions during the interactions. Observations were also made regarding the participant’s homes, with reference to home décor and possessions of Indian traditional handicrafts and artifacts. Further, the locality and the neighborhood in which the participants resided, were also taken into consideration in order to gauge the presence of other Asian Indian families in the neighborhood.

Data Analysis

One of the key features of grounded theory is that data collection and data analysis are conducted simultaneously. Qualitative data analysis is a process of classifying and interpreting the linguistic as well as visual data gathered (Flick, 2009). The systematic organization and management of the data primarily involves coding. As described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), coding is a process wherein the researcher assigns some kind of designations or labels to the collected data in order to make it easily retrievable. It involves constant comparison of the phenomena and the concepts being emerged in the data (Flick, 2009). The data for the present research was coded using Strauss and Corbin (1990) coding phases: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding and (c) selective coding.
Open coding. Open coding is the first phase of data-analysis. The main goal of this phase is to understand the data, identify and categorize any segment or piece of information that might seem as useful to the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this step, the researcher thoroughly examines the materials like the transcripts, field-notes and journals in order to identify the necessary and relevant information represented in the data (Creswell, 2007). For this step, the researcher of the present study carefully read and re-read each transcript multiple times. Ideas that were both repetitive as well as unique were highlighted. Necessary ideas and examples were underlined. Further, short-hand notes and labels were created and the material was color coded. Broad categories were formulated.

Axial coding. After open coding, the data is assembled in new ways (Creswell, 2007) such that the categories resulting from open coding are further refined and differentiated (Flick, 2009). The main purpose of this phase is to explore and elaborate the interconnections and linkages between the categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For the present research, during this phase the interview transcripts were constantly compared with one another in order to capture similarities that emerged across the data. All the descriptions and examples that seemed similar or related to one another were clubbed together and sub-categories were created.

Selective coding. This is the phase of further integration of the categories finally leading to formulation of core categories or core variables (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this step, the researcher further looks for examples and evidence to elaborate the core category and develop story-line (Flick, 2009). For the present study, during this stage of
analysis, the number of categories were reduced to a manageable number. The categories that were most relevant to the research question were selected. The transcripts and the field-notes were re-read in order to look for supporting material and further elaboration of the core categories.
CHAPTER IV

Results

While analyzing and coding the data obtained in this study, four major themes emerged: (a) Maintaining core Indian values in daily life, (b) Maintaining transnational connections, (c) Preference for Indian enclaves, and (d) More “Indian” here than in homeland. These themes and sub-themes were explained in detail below. Participants’ quotes were provided to further illustrate and support the descriptions. The names indicated below were participants’ pseudonyms and not their actual names.

Maintaining Core Indian Values in Daily Life

This domain captured the essence of how Asian Indian immigrant women strived to maintain and retain some of the core Indian cultural values and practices while living in the U.S. After the birth of their children, they made conscious effort to inculcate those values and practices among their children since those children are being reared away from the home culture. Within this theme, some of the core Indian practices and values that the participants wished to preserve among themselves and their children were described as the following sub-themes: (a) inculcating the value of family, (b) preserving one’s native language, (c) following one’s religious practices and customs, and (d) celebrating festivals

Inculcating the value of family. The definition of ‘family’ among Asian Indians is not limited to the nuclear unit, but rather family ties can be described as a collectivistic, allocentric and interrelated (Tuli, 2012). All participants in this study emphasized the necessity that their children understood the value and importance of extended family
members. It was equally imperative for the participants that their children showed respect and regard towards their elders, specifically towards their grandparents. For example, Palo, mother of two (12 and 8 years old) said, “the kids should know that we touch grandparents’ feet and seek blessings on special days like birthdays, festivals or before beginning any important task. We respect their age. We respect their experience...”

The parents and immediate family members, for most of the participants, lived in India and visited them in the U.S. only occasionally. Almost all participants raised concern over the reality that the grandparents and the grandchildren were not able to spend as much time together on day-to-day basis. For example, Sonu said, “My mother never had to teach me how to behave with grandparents or how to share room and toys with my cousins. It was all there. We just learnt these things naturally while growing up.” Rani, mother of a teenaged daughter said:

I really don’t know how will I teach her that family involvement and consulting elders or relatives for decisions is not interference. I don’t mean she has to follow [all] advice or agree with everything that is said, but she should at least respect and value what her grandparents are telling her or explaining her

Voicing a similar concern, Maddy (mother of a 9-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son) shared:

One of the concerns that I have is that how will I teach them concept that we are one family. We may be located in geographically distant lands, we may not be living under one roof, but it is still one house. We are one family. Kids have to understand that we cannot celebrate here [in US] if the grandparents [back in
India] are unhappy or in some problem or something like that. The decisions we make affect them. The decisions they make affect us. It’s all in the family. It’s all about the family.

Another participant, Shaina, shared an interesting example regarding one of her attempts to keep her family in U.S and in India, connected and closely involved in each other’s lives. She stated that she would celebrate birthdays of her parents and her in-laws here (in the US), even if the parents were in India. She revealed how she involved her seven-year old son in baking a cake for the grandparent or sometimes prepare hand-made birthday card and wishes. She explained, “such simple gestures make the day special for the grandparent as well as him [son]. He can also witness and understand that we celebrate the grandparent’s birthday here. It means it is a special day.”

In summation, even under transnational circumstances, for these participants, the concept of “family” was inclusive of the family members living in India. It was imperative for the participants that their children understood the interdependence among family members living in India and those living in the U.S. The participants wanted their children to value the role of grandparents and other significant elders in the family.

Preserving one’s native language. Preservation of the native language was another key element advocated for by the participants in this study. In an attempt to foster and stimulate the development of their children’s native language, various strategies were adopted by the participants of this study. The most common strategy used by the participants was that they conversed predominantly in the native language at home. Most participants reported that they consciously used their native language as primary mode of
communication at home, especially after their children were born. For example, one participant said, “I try to use as much Hindi as possible at home. If I or [the children] say something in English, I try to repeat them in Hindi immediately, so that they can relate the words.” Another participant, Ellis, (mother of two teenaged daughters) shared:

even when we go to India [for vacation], I ask family members not to talk to them in English. They [daughters] may ask something in English- but I answer in Gujarati; sometimes I may answer in English and then repeat the same in our language

A few participants also shared interesting strategies that they adopted to meet this goal.

For example, Sonu stated that she mailed letters written in Gujarati to her brother and her cousins every year on the occasion of ‘rakshabandhan’ (an occasion to celebrate brother-sister relationship). She shared:

its been like 12 to 13 years, I send them a special note or letter [in Gujarati] with ‘rakhi’ [wrist-band] every year. This year I made even her [6-year-old daughter] write a small note [in Guajarati] for her cousins. It is just a small simple letter or sometimes like a handmade card, or something. But it [writing] helps me think in Gujarati. When I sit to write, I have all those Gujarati adjectives and descriptions running in my head. This year, I did the same even for Diwali. I made small greeting cards and then each of us [participant, participant’s husband and daughter] wrote messages in Gujarati and sent to our relatives in India

Sonu expressed that she wished to continue this tradition of writing letters and greetings in Gujarati and also hoped that her daughter too continued her participation. On the other
hand, two participants, Saifi and Meenu reported that they had enrolled their daughters (aged 6 years) to Indian Classical music classes, here in the United States with an aim to keep their children in touch with the Indian cultural roots and heritage. Saifi elaborated, “I wanted her to learn an Indian musical instrument like harmonium or tabla, but she wanted to learn piano… I asked the teacher [piano tutor] if she could teach her some Bollywood songs as well and she agreed.” Whereas Meenu shared that her daughter was enrolled in Indian classical music as well as Bollywood dance classes. She justified: because they [children] learn songs and music faster than learning the language per se. Children feel shy to converse in Hindi but they enjoy singing Hindi songs […] they can remember the whole song verbatim. It sounds funny, but teaching them Hindi songs and music, in a way, expands their Hindi vocabulary. Even while learning dance, they have to learn the song, understand the meaning of the lyrics, understand the emotion and the expressions required

Meenu also shared another example of how she closely monitored and controlled the media (e.g., cartoons and poems) that her daughter was exposed to when she was young. She said that until her daughter was about four years old, Meenu would play only those cartoons and rhymes which were in Hindi and Gujarati. She explained:

I knew that once she [daughter] turns four or starts going to pre-school, she would start speaking in English. Once they are in that age, the use of English increases […] and naturally Gujarati goes out of window. So, I exposed her to Hindi and Gujarati songs and cartoons […] until [while] she was under my control.
Similar to Meenu’s point of view, Rani, too, believed that it was better to teach their children the Indian languages before they began socializing in the American community. According to her, it was difficult to make them speak in the native language, once they have learnt English. To achieve this goal, she had sent both her children, when they were around three years old, to India for about a year. She explained:

It is better to teach them Gujarati when they are young. Eventually they are going to use English only. But if they have already learnt it [native language] when they are young, they will at least have the foundation, they will never forget the basics. For example, my son [12 years old] talks with us in Gujarati sometimes, but my daughter [16 years old] hardly. But in situations when they have to [use Gujarati], both of them are able to communicate well in Gujarati.

Interestingly, many participants reported that teaching children their respective native language was particularly important so that the children could converse easily with the family members and relatives living in India, who were generally more comfortable in conversing in the native language. For example, Shaina reported, “not that our parents don’t speak or understand English, but I would always like if my children talk to our parents in our language, just out of respect. They [parents in India] feel more comfortable [in native language].” Veena, a mother to two toddlers indicated that it was imperative that her children retained their native language and were able to understand as well as speak Marathi as they matured. She said:

it is important for them to be able to talk in Marathi so that they don’t feel like an outsider or alien when they are in India. Only if they understand what is being
said in Marathi, they won’t feel lost while others [family and friends in India] are
talking or having any discussions. Also, it becomes easier for them to participate
in the conversation or engage in discussions

Another participant, Nora, highlighted an interesting aspect pertaining to this
domain. She pointed out the fact that even though most family members (back in India)
and relatives may be fluent as well as comfortable with English, the real challenge
occurred as the accent of English spoken in India was different to that of American
English. Thus, she stressed that it became all the more important that children were
comfortable with their native language. She shared, “… the accent is completely
different, pronunciations are different. [It] becomes difficult for mom-dad [in India] to
understand them. So they keep asking the children to repeat and ultimately they get
annoyed and the interaction is interrupted.”

However, most participants also acknowledged the fact that it would be irrational
of them to expect their children to converse only in their native language. They
understood that there could be various situations where speaking in their native language
would not seem suitable or appropriate, given that they were living in the U.S. For
example, Rani shared:

My daughter [teenager] finds it very embarrassing when I talk to her in Gujarati
when she is with her American friends or classmates. She has given us [parents]
strict orders not to talk to her in Gujarati when her friends have come over to play
or study, and I respect it. Now, I cannot mind this or feel bad about this. Important
is that she can talk something with family [in Gujarati] whenever we go to India or when family members visit us here.

On similar lines, Sonu, who was a working mother, justified “when we cannot talk in Gujarati or Hindi or Marathi with our Indian co-workers in office, how can we expect our children to do so when they are in school…”

From the participants’ narratives, it can be noted that preservation of one’s native language was one of the important concepts for the participants. Also, it was imperative for them that their children learned the native language for easy communication with the family members in India. Various strategies were adopted to achieve this goal, including: conversing predominantly in the Indian language at home, exposure to Indian media like rhymes, songs, cartoons and movies, enrolling in Indian classical music classes, and writing letters to relatives in the native language.

**Following one’s religious practices and customs.** The present study revealed that participation in religious practices and ceremonies was integral for Asian Indian immigrant mothers. Even more importantly, participation in these activities aided these mothers in transmitting the religious teachings and principles to their children, who were growing up outside India.

Participants of this study reported using strategies like teaching their children the religious prayers and hymns, frequently visiting Indian temples and performing the religious rituals, reading religious books for their children, and discussing and explaining to their children the principles and the teachings of their particular religion. For example,
Shaina, who follows the Indian religion of Jainism, shared some of the strategies that she engaged in with her son. She summarized:

I generally read Indian mythology books to him and watch animated children movies on life and preaching of Gods like Mahavir Bhagwan, […] just to talk a little bit about our religion, what it says, why we do certain things. I talk to him about what Jainism is, what are the principles, why we don’t eat non-vegetarian food or eggs.

A few other participants who followed Jainism as well, voiced the same agenda. They tried their best to explain to their children why they (as Jains) did not eat eggs and non-vegetarian food. According to them, this task became even more challenging after children begin socializing with other children for example attending school, birthday parties or playdates. Children would generally be tempted to eat cakes and cookies, which need not necessarily be eggless. Recalling similar experiences, Lopa (mother of two children) shared, “…it was difficult when they were young (present ages 14 and 10 years), especially when they went for birthday parties or play-dates. I generally made a cupcake or cookie [eggless] and sent it along with them on most occasions.”

Almost all participants, irrespective of their religious faith, reported that they sent their children to religious school, called as ‘pathshaalas’ or ‘bal-vihaars’ or the Sunday-schools, generally conducted in the Indian temples. The primary motive behind this was to help children learn and understand the ideologies and principles of their respective religion. This further enabled their children to socialize and interact with other children following the same religious faith. Sonu, mother of a six-year old daughter shared a very
interesting perspective on this. She stated that she would generally go to these schools as a volunteer to teach children the religious lessons. She said, “[conducting lessons] helps me to be in touch with my religious roots and language. Like, I have to read religious texts and brush up my knowledge first. Makes me feel good…” According to Seema, one of the best benefits of sending her children to ‘Sunday-school’ was the fact that her children would be among other children following and believing the same religious ideologies and customs. According to her, these were the places where children would not feel odd or “different” as she called it. She further elaborated:

they [children] would not be ashamed of wearing Indian traditional clothes or jewelry and all because the ambience supported it. As in uhh…they would not be the only ones wearing them. Other children would be dressed up accordingly too. They learn that “we are alike”

Interestingly, many participants indicated that they actively participated even in the American religious celebrations like Christmas and Thanksgiving. As shared by Ellis, “We also celebrate various religious holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas and participate in various other traditional holidays like Halloween”. Another participant, Palo (mother of 12 and 8 years old children) said, “up until now we used to get Christmas tree at home. Generally, smaller ones. When kids were younger, they made special list for Santa. We would prepare milk and cookies at night for our superficial guest.” According to most participants, active engagement in these celebrations was important so that their children could blend within the American culture. For example, Sonu shared:
I generally host Halloween-themed gettogethers at home. It’s a beautiful blend of Indian and American friends. This aids in strengthening the children’s friendship with American friends. It even gives us the chance to gel with their parents. Last year she [daughter] suggested that each of the us [mother, father and daughter] decorate a pumpkin. I think its like give and take. I teach her the Indian rituals and she thinks she has a higher charge when it comes to these festivals. She thought she was teaching us how to carve the pumpkins. Hers was the best though.

Moreover, a few participants also indicated that it was equally important to be open to learning and understanding the traditions and the practices of the new culture in order to be a productive member of the host culture. As quoted by Lopa, “One has to be open to ideas and American way of life. Spreading the importance of our religion and traditions to American friends while openly accepting their faith for sure helps ease the transition”.

According to Maddy, “the more open we are open about these celebrations, the more fun it becomes at home. I mean as far as they know our religious rituals why not let children celebrate Christmas or Halloween?” Referring to the welcoming participation of her husband’s American colleagues at work during Diwali, Nora shared:

they [American colleagues] are so enthusiastic about Diwali. They equally look forward for all the sweets and the delicacies. Some managers are even understanding of their employer’s need to maybe leave a little early or work from home. When you expect your American friends and colleagues to greet you on Diwali or be a part of the celebrations and all, of course you have to be sensitive and knowledgeable towards their religion.
Based on the participants’ narratives, it can be inferred that participation in religious activities and holding on to one’s religious principles were seen as important by them. Also, the participants strived to maintain the food habits specific to their religious faith. Frequent visits to the Indian temple, and enrolling children for religious classes were few means of instilling the religious teachings in their children. Moreover, their willingness to understand as well as enthusiastically participate in the American religious celebrations and holidays indicated their efforts to accept and blend within the American culture. This tendency of the participants, of religiously following their native rituals as well as blending with the American faith, reflected the integrative acculturation patterns adopted by the participants of this study.

Celebrating festivals. All participants reported that they tried to celebrate the Indian festivals in the same manner as they were celebrated in India; performing the traditional rituals, visiting temple and preparing the traditional Indian food. The participants of the present study further elaborated that festivals provided them an opportunity to wear Indian ethnic clothes, prepare authentic Indian sweets, snacks and decorations as well as socialize and meet with other Asian Indian immigrant families and friends. Ellis shared her story about how she would host Diwali (Indian festival) get-togethers for her Asian Indian friends and relatives every year. She further stated that she began hosting these get-togethers specifically so that her daughters (both teenagers at the time of the study) could get a feel of the festival and understand how it is celebrated traditionally. She recounted:
I have been hosting Diwali parties for almost 15 years now. Every year, its homemade authentic Indian food, decoration of the house with lights and diyas, and Indian costumes and jewelry. Like in India, I clean and set the entire house and my daughters generally clean their rooms and closets. I start preparing sweets and snacks few days before Diwali. They [daughters] see all this and learn informally. By now they know how elaborated Diwali celebrations as well as preparations are.

Similarly, Lolo and her family celebrated festivals with Asian Indian friends and relatives at the Hindu Centre. She shared, “we generally celebrate Dussehra and Diwali at Hindu Centre. The celebrations are organized pretty well there. Most of our friends gather there. Children enjoy the celebrations. They love the ‘fuljadies’ [fire-crackers]. We enjoy the jalebi [sweets]”. Another participant, Maddy, shared how she and husband planned a vacation to India during Diwali so that their daughter (7 years old during that time) could experience the actual traditional celebrations and rituals. She shared:

she [daughter] had never been to India during Diwali. So, we decided to celebrate in India that year. I wanted her to see and feel the actual thing. I wanted to show her the grand scale of celebrations, see the actual crackers we burst, feel the crowd, hear the loud noises of crackers and the bright sky, experience how many sweets one would eat in those five days and how many people [neighbors, relatives, friends] we would visit […].

Interestingly, many participants described that festivals also provided them with an opportunity to engage their children in the preparations of festivities and decorations,
thus creating a sense of excitement and eagerness among their children. For example, Nora indicated how she created a festive atmosphere at home during *Diwali* and how she involved her daughter in the *Diwali* preparations. She shared, “I generally paint the *diyas* and she [five-year old daughter] decorates them with sparkles, beads and diamonds… we also make lanterns and *rangolis*”. Another participant Veena, who celebrated the festivals of *Ganesh Chaturthi* and *Gudi Padwa*, shared her story about how she involved her 3-year-old daughter in the preparing the decorations during both the festivals. She shared:

> We generally bring ‘*Ganpati bappa*’ [God’s Idol] home for three days, every year. I generally decorate the table and the corner where I keep ‘*bappa’s murti*’ [God’s Idol]. Every year, it’s a different theme [for decoration]. For this time, I have made very child-oriented props, like flowers, butterflies, Sun, Moon, stars, clouds. I made most of the cut-outs and then we [participant and her daughter] did finger printing, vegetable printing and block printing of them. Even for *Padwa* [festival], we made ‘*toran*’ [garland] with vegetable printing

Whereas, Shaina shared her unique way of involving her 7-year-old son in celebrations of the Indian National Festivals of Independence Day and the Republic Day. She said:

> when he was younger, we would make the Indian flag and pin it in our living room. When he was around 5 [years old], I would ask him to draw a flag-hoisting scene or something like that. Now that he is matured enough to understand things, I try doing different things like watching the telecast of flag hoisting at the Red-Fort or watching the Republic Day parade or making him write an essay on our
freedom fighters. At times, I play the Jana-Gana-Mana [Indian National anthem] and Vande-Mataram [National song] on laptop and we all sing along.

In short, just like participation in religious activities, celebration of Indian festivals was seen as an important medium of familiarizing their children to the tenets of Indian culture. The participants tried to celebrate the festivals as “authentically” as possible in order to recreate the festive atmosphere, similar to that in India.

Maintaining Transnational Connections

This was another key category that emerged in this study. This theme illustrated the significance for Asian Indian immigrants of being able to maintain close connections and strong relationships with their family in India. A unique aspect emerged pertaining to the role of technological advancements and telecommunication services in bringing transnational families closer. This was explained as a sub-theme within this domain.

Participants of the study indicated that they continued to share strong relational ties and close connections with members from their immediate as well as extended families, living in India. It was of utmost importance to the participants and their families to ensure that the geographical distance and physical absence caused by immigration not impact familial bonding, sharing and caring. Further, these elements should not hinder them in the fulfillment of their duties and responsibilities towards their family members. This included: caring for their ageing parents, providing financial support, being emotionally available for their family, being actively involved during family celebrations as well as during times of crisis. One of the participants, Maddy, shared:
We are already away from them [physically]. Now it [immigration] shouldn’t make them [parents] feel that we have been [emotionally] distanced from them as well. We have to make sure they are involved in our lives, that we know what is happening to them. They shouldn’t feel they are not important to us or they are not needed in our lives

Participants and their families achieved their goal of maintaining close family ties and associations through: making frequent trips to India, arranging frequent trips of their parents to the United States, regular contact via telephonic calls, video chats, and messaging. Two participants, Palo and Rani indicated that they usually have their in-laws living with them in the U.S each summer. Both of them considered this aspect as beneficial for their children who are being raised away from the home culture. Palo shared:

My in-laws usually visit us every summer. They stay here generally for about five to six months. More than us, this is important for the kids. Because of this, kids get the opportunity to live with their grandparents. They get to experience what grandparents’ love is, their warmth, their teachings, their stories, and even their scolding. It spoils them [children] too because of all the pampering and all the care and extra attention

Like Palo, Rani too described the advantages of this association as, “grandparent-grandchildren bond is a special bond. I cherish every moment spent with my grandparents. I have learnt a lot from them; our values, principles, discipline, good manners. I would love my children to do the same with their grandparents”.
On the other hand, some participants explained that they tried to visit India in regular intervals so that children could get in touch with the extended family members and relatives. Also, this allowed their children to experience the family collectiveness and togetherness. According to Shaina, “since only the parents live with the child [in the U.S.], it becomes difficult sometimes for the child to know that who all are his relatives. For that, it is important to socialize him with relatives in India”. Lolo, who had a three-year-old son, shared:

“We go to India more often after he was born. As a couple, before my son was born, we just went to India once in like 2 and a half years or three years; but after he was born, we plan a vacation to India at least once a year if possible. Also, because he is younger now. He does not have school or too many restrictions. Once he starts going to school, taking vacation and going will become difficult. So, we try to go now as much as possible. My son and I generally stay longer [in India]. My husband generally joins us for a shorter period.

Similar to the above example, Ellis, who has two teenaged daughters shared:

“Until my kids started middle school, we used to visit India every two years so they could keep in touch with our family and cousins back home. We have attended almost all family weddings and important events so as to keep in touch with our Indian culture.”

Significance of information and communications technologies. This unique theme highlighted the role of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in bringing the world closer and enabling friends and families to stay connected. These
technological advancements and various telecommunication mediums have made it much easier for immigrants to be able to maintain their transnational connections. It was indicated by most participants that not only has it become much easier to maintain contact but also because of features like video-calling and media sharing, transnational families did not feel the physical absence of the members as much. As shared by Rani, “we feel much closer. We miss them much lesser. Even the parents in India feel happy that they can be involved in every little thing that is happening here [in the U.S.].”

Sonu and Lolo highlighted the fact that in recent times, the internet connections and services are improving in India and the use of smart phones and similar devices is increasing in Indian households. Because of this, family members were better able to keep each other involved and informed about most of the decisions and occurrences in each other’s lives. For example, Lolo stated, “sharing pictures, videos is so easy now. We can video call. Its like they can see everything in real time, as it is happening. We can see what they are doing, they can see what we are doing…” Sonu, who recently purchased a house, shared her experience about how she and her husband were able to involve their parents (residing in India) in the entire process, right from selecting the house to performing the house-warming ceremony. She shared:

I am so happy I could do this [involve parents and in-laws]. Before finalizing the deal [on this house], we had sent them detailed pics of every room and every corner of the house. We video-called both the homes [parents and in-laws in India] and showed them all the details. Even when we did the ‘gruh-pravesh’ [house-warming], my parents were on WhatsApp video, his parents were on
facetime video throughout. They kept telling us how to do the ‘puja’ [rituals] and what to do next.

Sonu further expressed, “This was a big decision for us. I feel extremely lucky and proud that both the set of parents didn’t miss a single thing. They were virtually there to grace this celebration. I feel blessed”. Like Sonu, many participants acknowledged that these technologies and features enable them and their families to be virtually present in the celebrations and get-togethers as it was not possible for them to attend all the family functions or weddings in India, nor was it possible for their parents to be physically present in all the celebrations here. For example, Veena who was not able to attend her cousin’s wedding in India said:

We were able to be a part of all that was going on there [in India]. Right from the preparations, shopping, ornaments, dance rehearsals to actual wedding. They would send me pictures of her clothes, what she was wearing for ‘sangeet’ [dance ceremony] and her ‘mehendi’ [henna ceremony] and her wedding, and which jewelry goes with which attire. I was a part of everything.

Some participants pointed out that these technological apps and features made it particularly easy to stay connected with the extended family members and distant relatives. According to Lolo “I don’t think I was as much updated about what is happening with my niece or nephews or uncles and aunts before all this started…”. On similar lines, referring to the WhatsApp’s feature of creating groups and adding multiple members to it, Seema shared:
I have four family groups [on WhatsApp]. Its so easy. Just in a click of a button, people can share loads of photos and videos. Its like news, [and] announcements get conveyed near and far. Today sitting in U.S. I know exactly how my cousin celebrated her daughter’s birthday in Australia, or how my sister and ‘jiju’[brother-in-law] celebrate valentine’s day in London, or how much it rained in India, who got stuck in traffic and who reached home safely and at what time

Another participant Meenu shared, “I don’t remember birthdays and anniversaries of every single aunts and uncles or cousins. On ‘family group’, one person initiates the wish [birthday or anniversary wishes], and everyone else follows. It has definitely brought us closer…”

Based on the participants’ narratives, it can be concluded that this was one of the key findings of the present research. As per the participants, it was important for them to be able to maintain the usual day-to-day involvement of and communications with their family members living in India. It strongly emerged that ICTs served the immigrant participants and their families in a number of ways, ranging from being able to maintain contact on a regular basis, being able to virtually participate in celebrations of festivals or special occasions as well as be able to better provide comfort and support to family members during mourning or other stressful times.

Preference for Indian Enclaves

This was one of the most noteworthy findings of the present study. The Asian Indian women in this study placed considerable importance on the need to have easy accessibility to and availability of Indian resources in the neighborhoods they lived in.
Almost all participants of the present study emphasized that they preferred to reside in those towns or neighborhoods which have a higher number of Asian Indian families living in it. This was simply because these areas then become a “hub” to various Asian Indian community resources like Indian grocery stores, restaurants, temples, and the alike.

It was further explained that availability of these resources in the nearby neighborhood was essential to them so that they could be able to maintain their traditional practices as well as be able to recreate experiences similar to home in India even on a foreign land. For example, Veena shared, “they [Indian stores] have pretty Ganesh murtis [Idols of God]. We find a to z accessories and materials for ‘aarti’ [ritual]. We are able to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi with full rituals, just like in India.” It was unanimously indicated by the participants that availability of these facilities made them feel closer to the Indian culture and their families in India. For example, Shaina shared, “it gives us satisfaction that though away [from India], we at least eat authentic [Indian] food and celebrate [festivals] in same manner as our family is doing [in India]. It make[s] you feel closer to the home and family”. Lopa, who practiced Jainism, elaborated how it became easier for her to follow religious food habits and maintain their particular food requirements because of the availability of Indian groceries and restaurants in New Jersey. She stated:

we have a lot of Indian grocery stores here, especially in NJ. We get almost every vegetable and fruit that are core part of Indian cooking. Literally there is nothing that you don’t find here and even [get] all the spices. Everything under one roof.
Because of which we are able to cook pretty much everything […]. I personally feel that if these weren’t available, then it would have been a little difficult as we have particular food requirements.

Similar experiences were shared by other participants as well. As most participants in this study were vegetarians, it was indicated that availability of Indian restaurants and foodstuffs make it easier for them to be able to follow food practices as per their faith. For example, Palo shared, “if we decide to go on a vacation, we generally manage to get Indian eateries in most tourist places as well. These things make it easier because I cannot carry home cooked food everywhere”.

Few participants indicated that availability of these resources and facilities also facilitated them and their families in smooth transition from India to the United States. For example, recollecting her experience about immigrating from India about 22 years back and her transition to the U.S., Ellis shared, “…the transition is of course difficult, but we were lucky to be staying in New Jersey, so we got to be socially active with Indian friends and family. Performing our familiar rituals helped me stay closer to home”. Similarly, Lolo who is a home-maker stated, “The Indian community is very strong in U.S. It made really easy wherever my husband’s job was posted to maintain the sense of being an Indian. I was always surrounded by Indians and made many good friends here.”

One of the participants, Nora, who lived in a different state before relocating to New Jersey, shared some of the difficulties she faced as the town she previously lived in consisted of limited Indian resources. She shared some of challenges she faced during her
transition the American society. She often felt home-sick as she did not have many Asian
Indian neighbors or friends to socialize with. She said:

it was extremely difficult in beginning. I didn’t enjoy at all. Patel [Indian grocery
store] was so far, that too very small. We hardly got anything there. Many days I
would end up crying. I literally missed home. I would crave ‘chaat’, ‘sev puri’,
‘jalebi’ [Indian fast food] but we hardly got anything there. My mom and in-laws
periodically parceled me home-cooked snacks, sweets and all our ‘masalas’
[spices]

Completely contrasting to her prior experience, she shared how she enjoyed being in New
Jersey. The current town she lived in, had some areas which were predominantly
“Indian”, with a larger number of Indian shopping complexes, Indian resident enclaves,
community centers like temples, and restaurants. Nora and her husband choose to reside
in this particular town, even though it meant moving about 35 miles away from her
husband’s work place. According to Nora, it was imperative for them to be closer to
Indian community as they wanted to provide their daughter with the cultural familiarity
and experiences. She shared:

now I feel settled. I feel so comfortable here. Because of so many Indians [in the
apartment community] even the non-Indians become aware of our traditions, they
ask us questions, they wish us during Diwali, they take interest in our celebrations
and our food. Temple is just fifteen minutes from here [her apartment]. We go
every other weekend. She [daughter] goes every Sunday for ‘pathshaala’ [Sunday
school]. It is much better here
Sharing similar experience, Sonu indicated that buying home in an Indian community with nearby Indian amenities was one of their top priorities while they were looking for potential home to buy. She said, “we were very clear that we wanted to look for something in or around the Indian neighborhood. It makes so much of a difference. Especially when you are purchasing one. It is going to be permanent.” According to Sonu, this aspect was important to consider as it would determine her daughter’s companions in school as well as in the nearby playground. Sonu shared another interesting aspect regarding how this medium could be used to help their children in understanding the similarities among Asian Indian households and also acknowledge the fact that they were not the only ones who looked “different” than the American children. She justified:

they [Asian Indian children growing up in the U.S.] constantly feel different than the larger population. So, they have numerous questions about why ‘mumma’ [mother] dresses differently or why we talk differently or why our houses look different than their American friends. This [living among Asian Indian neighbors] helps them see for themselves that we are not the only ones like that. […] she doesn’t feel odd when I put diyas [lights during Diwali] because every alternate house in this neighborhood is decorated and lit with diyas during Diwali. When she [daughter] goes to their homes, she sees that their mumma may be in similar dress, their home may have similar arrangements

Sonu concluded that because of this living arrangement, the Asian Indian children were able to understand and acknowledge that the Asian Indians as a community shared
specific characteristics and qualities which were different from that of American households.

Another participant, Seema, pointed out that one of her reasons for choosing to live in an Indian neighborhood was to ensure their parents’ comfort and preference during their stay in the United States. She said, “they [parents from India] like Indian neighborhood better. They are more comfortable. They can communicate with other Indians in our language. They can get whichever grocery they need…”.

In conclusion, living in “Indian communities” facilitated the participants to interact and socialize with the other Asian Indian friends and families, the availability of Indian groceries and food materials allowed them to cook and prepare authentic Indian cuisine and also the easy availability of necessary materials helped them in being able to perform their religious rituals and celebrate the festivals with full traditions.

More “Indian” Here than in Homeland

This was an interesting theme that emerged in the present study. Referring to the westernization and changing parenting attitudes in the Indian society, the participants of this study felt that the members of the Indian diaspora, settled outside India, were more traditional and conscious about maintaining and retaining the Indian cultural roots, than their counterparts living in India. As shared by Palo, “we respect our “Indianness” more than they do”. Sharing a similar opinion, Nora stated, “sometimes you have to move away from our land to respect it more. We take things for granted when we are there, it is only when we are far, that we value it all the more”.
It was also indicated by many participants that the Indian immigrants living abroad tried to maintain a balance between the western and the Indian traditional culture. According to them, one of the main aspects of parenting, in immigration, was to make sure that their children understood and retained their traditional values. Whereas, in India, the younger generation want to follow only the western culture. Today, in India, the parenting goals were to provide their children with western experiences so as to make them globally competent. As shared by Meenu, “we take conscious efforts to keep our Indianness alive. We want to keep the traditional roots alive. Whereas they are consciously adopting the western culture and the western ideologies”. Another participant, Saifi had similar point of view. According to her:

they [friends and relatives in India] don’t see that we provide our children with both the opportunities. They only see that our children are learning ballet or jazz. But they don’t see that every Sundays, my daughter goes for ‘pathshaala’ [Sunday school] as well. They don’t see that along with ballet, she goes for Hindustani classical [Indian music] too

Ellis, who was a working mother, shared her experience about balancing the work-schedule on weekends so that she would be able to take her children to the temple. According to her, “it is not easy to take them to temple every weekend or to host Diwali parties every year. But you have to work it out. We have to take those efforts because we want our children to learn these things”.

Interestingly, many participants believed that given the recent changes, it could no longer be said that children living in India had a greater contact to Indian values than the
children living abroad. For example, Maddy said, “My nephews and nieces [living in India] barely talk in Hindi or Gujarati at home. Our children maybe using more Gujarati, living here (in U.S.), than them”. Accordingly, participants felt that because of the efforts taken by the immigrant parents, Asian Indian children growing in the U.S, got better opportunities to interact with Indian cultural aspects and practices than the children in India. As stated by Seema, “I agree I can’t give my child all the experiences here [U.S]. But even then, we can’t say that he [son] is less advantaged with regards to Indian cultural experiences than his cousins in India”. A few participants said that it was better to raise their children in the U.S. than raising them in India. For example, Rani shared, “[in India] most teenagers and adolescents wear mini-skirts or halter neck [tops] to colleges or for outings with friends. I would rather have my daughter wear them here”.

Whereas, another participant Ellis shared:

> It is not like how it used to be during our times [growing up years]. Dressing of people has changed drastically. Girls are smoking and drinking openly. Youngsters only want to go partying and clubbing. I don’t say that they are wrong or that it is bad or something. My point is, today no one can say that my child’s values will be safeguarded better in India or that she will learn [Indian] values only if she is [raised] in India

Just like Ellis, Lopa had a similar opinion. She elaborated:

> there was a time when immigrants used to come back to India for good for the sake of their children’s upbringing. So that they can be raised with Indian values and morals. According to me, it was okay to say so 15-20 years back. Not
anymore. I don’t think today anyone will go back to India [settle in India] with an aim of raising their children with Indian morality or principles. It’s not the same anymore.

Furthermore, while sharing their thoughts about the impact of the western influences in the Indian society, some participants spoke about the changes that have occurred in people’s attitudes and outlook towards maintenance of the cultural values. According to these participants, parents in India, themselves preferred western ideologies and lifestyles because of which they were not as cautious about value-transmission in their children. For example, Shaina said, “The whole concept in India is changing. The attitudes of people are changing. They feel talking in English and that too with an accent is cool and happening.” According to another participant Saifi:

The problem is not that they are not following the values or traditions. The problem is, they are demeaning us for following the traditions. They [friends in India] laugh at us for sending our children to Sunday school [in U.S] or for making them [children] talk in Gujarati

Nora had similar views about this issue. Referring to change in people’s outlook in India, she said:

We proudly follow the traditional customs here. We celebrate the festivals religiously. And in India, today, people call this being “regressive”. It is funny. They think wearing jeans and talking in English makes them progressive
According to Veena, “[parents in India] don’t realize that children [in India] are losing grip of our language. They are losing [touch from] our basic disciplines. I don’t think, they even care. As in, they don’t see this as a problem.”

Interestingly, some participants also spoke about the materialistic changes that have taken place in Indian society, especially in the large urban cities. According to these participants, in addition to the changes in people’s outlook and philosophies, changes were also evident in their consumer behaviors and preferences. A few participants pointed out that because of this change in consumer behavior, the demand as well as supply of foreign goods, like fancy toys, books and similar materials had increased in the Indian markets. As a result, the availability of some of the materials that carried the basics of Indian culture decreased. For example, two of the participants, Nora and Sonu, shared that they were unable to find the Indian moral story books in India, which were once very commonly used in Indian households for children. However, they were able to find it in Indian store in the United States. Nora shared, “I wanted the ‘Vikas’ moral stories and ‘Panchatantra’ [story book] for my daughter. I could not find them in India. Someone told me we get them here [Indian stores in U.S.]. I got it from Swaminarayan temple [in U.S]. Whereas Sonu shared, “when I asked for those books, the shopkeeper was shocked. He told me that no one buys those books now. So, he stopped keeping those books in the store”. Shaina faced a similar experience while looking for traditional toys in India. She shared:

I was looking for the simple toys that we used to get [in India]. Like not the fancy gadget ones. We get fancy stuff here [in U.S]. I was specifically looking for the
plain rattles or the musical hangings for ‘palna’ [crib] because we don’t get those type of hangings here [U.S]. But I just didn’t find any [in India]. Like in 2-3 stores. They just didn’t have it

Interestingly, few participants even pointed out on the differences in the home arrangements and home décor in Indian homes and the immigrants’ homes in the U.S. According to the participants, today homes in India were renovated with “Modern” touch and imported home-décor and home arrangements. Whereas, most of the participants reported that they had consciously used a lot of Indian décor and artifacts in their homes in the U.S. According to the participants, the Indian décor and artifacts helped them recreate the essence of India in their homes.

In conclusion, this was one of the noteworthy findings of the present study. According to the participants, Asian Indian population, living outside India, made conscious efforts so that their Indianness and the Indian identity were not lost amidst the larger host culture. Whereas, the Indian counterparts living in India, had an increased preference for western ideologies and behaviors.


CHAPTER V

Discussion

Culture-Parenting Nexus

Over the past few decades, there has been increasing recognition that culture plays an important role in shaping human behavior (Ho, Bluestein, & Jenkins, 2008) as well as many aspects of family functioning, including the way in which parents socialize their children (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Every culture is characterized by its own unique ideas about how one needs to feel, think, and act as a functioning member of that culture (Bornstein, 2012). These rules and norms are further passed down from generation to generation as they are believed to promote stability and harmony within that society (Ho et al., 2008). As indicated by Bornstein, Putnick, and Lansford (2011), these cultural beliefs and norms help parents in constructing and shaping their parenting patterns. Using culture as a frame of reference, parents make decisions regarding which characteristics and values should be encouraged or discouraged or which traits are appropriate or detrimental for their children (Bornstein, 2012; Lodhe, 2009).

Given this context, the culture-parenting interplay gets particularly challenging for immigrant parents who raise their children in a foreign culture, away from the native culture. Upon immigration, these parents have to constantly negotiate between the contrasting demands and values of the two cultures and then make new decisions regarding their child-rearing practices (Lodhe, 2009). Significant pressures arise for immigrant parents as they are continuously trying to bridge between the two cultures.
Immigration-Parenting Linkages

In order to understand the parenting goals and behaviors of immigrant parents, it is important to first understand these parents’ acculturation patterns to the host culture. Acculturation closely shapes aspects of immigrants’ parenting such as childrearing practices and disciplining techniques. As a result, understanding parents’ acculturation patterns and their adaptation to the host culture enables us to get greater insights into their parenting philosophies (Deepak, 2005).

Acculturation patterns of Asian Indian immigrants. Consistent with the literature, the Asian Indian immigrant women in the present study, showed integrative acculturative patterns with regards to their adaptation to the host culture. As indicated by Dasgupta (1998) and Wakil et al. (1981), these women worked hard to maintain a balance between the two cultures by adopting new norms of the host culture, while holding on to specific norms from their native culture. In addition to maintaining the native practices and retaining the “Indianness” at home on a foreign soil, the participants of the present study were equally willing to identify with the tenets of the American culture and operate as a cordial member of the American society.

When the members of the Asian Indian diaspora come into contact with the host culture, they do not simply relinquish old values and ideologies for new ones, but they engage in a selective and a conscious adaptation (Dhruvarajan, 1993; Raghavan et al., 2010). They acculturate selectively such that, they hold onto their core ethnic values at home (e.g., food, language, religion) however, in their interactions outside home, they easily adapt to the essence and the requirements of the larger host society (Wakil et al.,
1981). According to Srinivasan (2000), “within the family, they are Indian to the core; outside the family, in the larger society, they are Americans” (pp. 138). In this sense, adaptation to the host culture, is not just about acculturation but rather it must be seen as creative solution for integrating the contradictory demands of both the cultures (Jain & Forest, 2004). Based on the participants’ narratives, it can be argued that these participants made ongoing negotiations while synthesizing the two cultures and, in the process, they create their own versions of being “Indian” at home and being “American” while participating with the host culture.

The present study showed an interesting phenomenon, wherein the participants described themselves as being more “Indianized” than their counterparts living in India. The participants justified this phenomenon in reference to the westernization of Indian society and the changing family dynamics. The Indian cities, especially the urban metropolis, have undergone significant changes in the recent years (Singh, 2005). According to Tuli and Chaudhary (2010), these changes were evident in aspects like the dressing preferences, changes in the moral beliefs, changing beliefs regarding marriage and child-rearing practices. Today, English has become a dominant language of communication in India, not just for professional success but also for day-to-day interactions. As a result, the participants felt that the belief that children living in India breathe in Indian values was no longer applicable. According to them, the parents in India were adopting western philosophies and mannerisms at the cost of traditional Indian values and morals. The participants indicated that there was as much need for parents in India, to preserve their children’s native language and traditional Indian values, as it was
for immigrant Asian Indian parents. However, according to the participants, the parents
living in India, especially those in urban cities, consciously provided their children with
western experiences. On the other hand, the members of Indian diaspora, made conscious
efforts to not let their Indian values to get influenced or diluted by the larger host culture.

Preference for Indian enclaves, increased socialization and participation within
the Indian-community, authentic celebration of Indian festivals, re-arranging homes with
“Indian” touch, and conversing in native language at home, were some of the measures
used by these participants to create a “mini-India” and re-create Indian experiences for
their children on a foreign soil. According to Dasgupta (1998), in doing so, the Asian
Indian diasporic members also strived to retain a sense of a culture that may no longer
exist on the Indian continent. This could be one of the reasons why some of the materials
that carried the basics of Indian culture and moral teachings, were more easily available
to the Asian Indians living in the U.S. than those living in India. For example, the kids’
story books and traditional toys which were once common tools of imparting the moral
values in children, were no longer easily available in India due to its diminishing demand.
On the other hand, because of its higher demand among the Asian Indian immigrant
population, these materials were exported from India for the members of Indian diaspora
settled outside India.

Parenting strategies of Asian Indian immigrants. The participants of the
present study strived to raise their children with a successful balance of two cultures.
They allowed their children to blend within the larger culture, at the same time made sure
that their children retained the core ethnic values. Participants of the study employed
various strategies to re-create traditional Indian experiences in the U.S and familiarize their children with the ethnic values. At the same time, these mothers made equal attempts to socialize their children within the American culture and strengthen their ties with the American peers. For the participants of the present study, as long as their children retained the basic Indian values and participated in the Indian community activities, they willingly helped their children to blend within the host culture.

This is consistent with the literature. Past studies have shown that Asian Indian immigrant mothers identify with the tenets of the host culture and adopt more liberal approach in aspects like discipling techniques, dressing and etiquette. For example, Jambunathan and Counselman (2002) showed that the Asian Indian immigrant mothers adopt authoritative parenting approaches rather than using punitive and authoritarian styles, common in India. However, when the parenting goals are concerned about value maintenance and cultural transmission in their children, these mothers tend to adopt a rather “conservative” approach than their Indian counterparts living in India. As noted by Ganapathy-Coleman (2013a), Asian Indian immigrant parents were particularly unwilling to let go of some of the core traditional values and practices. These mothers wanted to ensure that they their children retained some of the traditional values and created an “Authentic Indian” ethos in their homes.

**Maintenance of core Indian practices in daily lives.** The participants indicated that they continued to maintain and preserve some of the core Indian values while living in the U.S. In order to meet this goal, the participants actively engaged their families in
celebration of Indian festivals and participation in religious practices. They further indicated that maintenance of the native Indian language was equally imperative.

**Celebration of festivals.** The present study found that celebration of the traditional festivals was one of the key mediums through which these parents met the goal of exposing and familiarizing their children to the Indian traditions. The participants tried to recreate the festive celebrations and environment as similar as possible to those found in India. Lodhe (2009) found that the participants reported feelings of loss when they were unable to provide complete experiences to their children, largely owing to cultural limitations in the U.S. A similar theme emerged in a study by Inman et al. (2007), wherein they reported that for first-generation Asian Indian immigrant mothers as well as fathers from their study, participation in religious services and observing Indian festivals enabled them to retain their ethnic identity on a foreign land.

It is important to understand that celebration of festivals in India is a social affair. Celebrations are conducted on a large scale, at community-level, involving family members, friends, and neighbors (Singh, 2005). Similarly, the participants of the present study celebrated the festivals with Asian Indian friends and relatives. Participation in the celebrations conducted by the Indian community (e.g., Hindu Center) was a medium of strengthening their ethnic identity and sense of belonging to the “Indian” community. Contrary to this finding, Bhattacharya (2008) found that the Asian Indian immigrant men in the study participated in the festive celebrations for enjoying food and peer-company and not for maintaining a sense of belonging to the Indian immigrant community. As a
result, despite participating in the celebrations, more than 50% of the participants in that study reported feeling lonely and socially isolated.

**Participation in religious activities.** The present study found that holding on to one’s religious beliefs and practices was essential for the Asian Indian immigrant mothers. These were instrumental in the successful retention and transmission of their ethnic cultural values. It was important for them that their children understood and followed the religious teachings. Most participants sent their children to the Sunday school organized by the Indian temple. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies like Dasgupta (1998); Farver et al. (2002) and Inman et al. (2007). Religion was considered to be a significant phenomenon for the Asian Indian culture and moreover had a significant influence on acculturation preferences of the Asian Indian immigrants living away from homeland.

According to Kurien (1998), Asian Indian immigrants become more conscious of their religious identity and become more religious after immigrating from India. Many participants in the present study were actively involved with volunteering their services during religious festivities. Some volunteered in the administrative processes while a few volunteered as teachers in the temple’s Sunday-schools. According to Ganapathy-Coleman (2013a), participation in religious activities was not only important for immigrant children but also helped immigrant parents to regulate their own Indianness.

**Preserving heritage language.** It was imperative for the participants that their children retained their respective native languages. Various strategies were adopted by the participants and their families to ensure that children learned and spoke the native
language. Further, participants reported that teaching children their native language was particularly important so that the children could converse easily with the family members and relatives living in India, particularly the grandparents. Similar findings were observed among Eastern European immigrants in the United States (Nesteruk, 2010).

Most participants acknowledged that it was important to expose children to the native language during their early childhood years. This was simply because, once children begin socializing with the larger American community, they get predominantly exposed to English and teaching the native Indian language becomes difficult. As a result, most participants had begun familiarizing their children with the Indian native linguistics and dialect since their early childhood. Interestingly, participants who had teenaged children accepted the fact that eventually children minimized the use of native language even at home. However, the participants indicated that as far as their children were able to have basic communication in the native language, especially with their grandparents or during gatherings in the Asian Indian community, they did not mind the increasing usage of English.

Definition of Family under Transnational Conditions

The definition of ‘family’, in the Asian Indian culture, is not limited to the nuclear unit. Rather family ties can be described as being collectivistic, allocentric and interrelated (Tuli, 2012). For most participants, though their parents and siblings lived in India, they did not consider this as being two separate households, but rather continued to operate as a single-family unit. The participants indicted that they continued to share strong relational ties and close involvements with members from their immediate as well
as extended families, living in India. Srinivasan (2000), explained that because most immigrants came to the U.S. for professional advancements and/or for better economic opportunities, “home”, for the members of Indian diaspora, always equaled India. Even though the family members may not be physically or structurally living as a “joint” family, under one roof, behaviorally and emotionally they operated by the norms of joint living (Singh, 2005).

The importance and the position that the participants’ parents held in their lives were reflected in a number of ways. First, it was the fact that the geographical distance caused by immigration did not deter the participants from being able and willing to fulfill their filial obligations and duties towards their ageing parents. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mehrotra and Calasanti (2010) and Pettys and Balgopal (1998). Second, these immigrant mothers consciously tried to build and maintain strong grandchildren-grandparent bonds. Ganapathy-Coleman’s study (2013b) revealed that one of the primary socialization goals of Asian Indian immigrant parents, living in the United States, was to raise their children with the values of family-closeness, sharing and caring with the members of immediate as well as extended families.

A few other examples reflecting participants’ esteem for India-based parents could be indicated as: teaching their children the native language specifically to be able to communicate with India-based family members and choosing to live in Indian neighborhoods to cater to their parents’ comfort, during their stay in the U.S. Furthermore, it was strongly indicated by the participants that the technological advancements and telecommunication services made it much easier for them to maintain
day-to-day involvement of and communications with their transnational family members. ICTs act as a major “protagonists” in making lives easier for transnational families (Bacigalupe & Cámara, 2012).

Preference for Indian Enclaves and Indian Community Resources

One of the particularly salient themes to the present study, was related to the considerable importance laid by the participants on the need to live in Indian neighborhoods. It is important to note that all the participants of the present study chose to reside in Indian enclaves, amongst Indian neighbors. The participants showed this geographical preference simply because, the towns and neighborhoods with a larger Asian Indian concentration, usually tend to have a higher number of Asian Indian community resources like Indian grocery stores, restaurants, temples, and the alike. It is important to understand that these amenities, particularly the temples and grocery stores, were imperative for the participants as these enabled them in keeping specific aspects of their “Indianness” alive on a foreign land. Mankekar (2002), examined how Indian grocery stores enabled the construction of “India” and “Indian culture” for the members of Indian Diaspora settled in the San Francisco-Bay Area. It emerged that availability of some of the popular Indian brands in these stores created a feeling of nostalgia among the Indian immigrants and it brought back memories of home. According to Mankekar (2002), “through the products they sell, Indian stores enable the cathexis of different fragments of the past on to commodities, enabling both the consumption and (re)production of ‘Indian culture' in the diaspora” (pp. 87).
Similarly, temples and Indian community centers became important sites for socializing with other Asian Indian friends and families. In addition, temples and the Indian community centers also became important social setting wherein the feelings of belongingness to ‘Indian’ community and identity as an ‘Asian Indian’ were further strengthened (Bugg, 2014). Further, it emerged in this research that activities like regular visits to temples, performance of religious rituals and participation of their children in *pathshala*s become hands-on medium for teaching their children Indian values and religious principles.

**Indian-Touch to their American Homes**

The researcher made observations about participants’ home with regards to the home arrangements, décor and the possessions of traditional Indian artifacts in their homes. It was worthy of noting that most participants’ homes had some form of traditional Indian touch to them. Most participants had bought traditional possessions from India, like wall hangings, or traditional Indian handicraft items and artifacts. Furthermore, these traditional arrangements and possessions were a part of the main-living space, such that it could be easily displayed. It could be said that the participants of the present study used these as a medium for protecting as well as projecting aspects of the Indian culture. Interestingly, while exploring the importance of traditional possessions for Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S, Mehta and Belk (1991), reported that the Asian Indian immigrants brought the traditional artifacts along to the U.S. specifically to represent “India” in their new settings. Further, their study revealed that these possessions played a key role in anchoring the Indian identity of these immigrants on a foreign land.
Implications of the Research

According to Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001), psychological well-being of immigrants is closely associated to their ability to maintain a balanced combination of strong ethnic identity (native culture) as well as strong national identity (host culture). They further suggest that the immigrant-receiving countries must take into account the needs and preferences of their newcomers as they try to adapt and integrate to the larger society. However, given the diversity among immigrant groups and their preferences, there is a need for culture-sensitive research in order to understand specific needs of specific immigrant groups. The present study provides insights to the experiences of Asian Indian immigrant women and their preferences on cultural value retention and transmission. It helps us better understand some of the challenges that these women face in adapting to a new culture and raising their children with a blend of ethnic value retention and adaptation to the host culture. The findings of this study are particularly important in the recent scenario, wherein the outlook and attitudes towards immigrants, and among immigrants themselves, has shifted from “melting pot” (complete assimilation to host culture) to “salad bowl” (wherein each individual unit retains its core values, yet together, they are a unified whole) (Farver et al., 2002).

This study makes significant contributions to the literature on ethnic communities and contributes in understanding the experiences of transnational families. The findings of the present study have important implications for both: research as well as practice. These findings are particularly beneficial for researchers and academicians who are interested in exploring: the culture-parenting nexus, the immigration-acculturation
linkages, cross-cultural psychology and comparative family studies. The findings of this study can be compared with the studies on other immigrant groups in the United States. Similar transnational dilemma and parenting strategies have been noted among members of other immigrant groups, coming from collectivist backgrounds, like Eastern European immigrants (Nesteruk, 2010; Nesteruk & Marks, 2009; Nesteruk & Marks, 2011), Asian American immigrants and African American families (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000). The similarities and differences in the experiences can be accessed for formulating policies for immigrants in the U.S.

Furthermore, this study makes important contributions to the fields of human services and welfare domains like counseling, family therapy, and child-welfare services. A better understanding about how the women of this cultural group operate and function, with close ties and dependency on the family members, will enable professionals like counselors, clinical therapists and family therapists to create services and interventions that would better cater to the needs specific to this immigrant group. Varghese and Jenkins (2009), suggest that while counseling Asian Indian women, the professionals must take into consideration that the functioning of these women is closely embedded in the lives of the members of the immediate as well as extended families. Further, this study has elucidated the role of ICTs in bringing transnational families closer and transforming the psychology of immigration. Bacigalupe and Câmara (2012), suggest that the clinicians who work with transnational families need to acknowledge this role in family process and they could employ ICTs within sessions to involve the intergenerational family abroad.
This study also has significant implications for school educators and school counselors. While working with Asian Indian children, these professionals must take into consideration the context in which these children maybe reared. As highlighted by Raj and Raval (2013), understanding the cultural context of parenting is important because immigrant parents living in the U.S may adopt parenting behaviors which may not be in sync with the parenting patterns of the larger American societies. Though, these children may have been largely raised in the host country, their parents may continue to embed norms and practices from the native culture. Also, the professionals need to take into account that in most cases, parents are not the sole members in shaping the behaviors and ideologies of the children in Asian Indian households. This study has established that even under transnational circumstances, grandparents have significant role in shaping the upbringing of the children in the family.

**Limitations of the Research**

Despite the numerous strengths and significant implications to the fields of research and practice, the present study had some limitations too, which were worth noting. The first limitation of the present research can be indicated with regards to its sample size. The sample size of this study was small; because of which, the results may not be generalizable to the entire population of Asian Indian immigrant women, living in the United States.

Secondly, almost all participants of the present study resided in, or around Asian Indian neighborhoods because of which it was easier for them to replicate the traditional Indian cultural experiences. As emerged in the study, this was one of the key features
which enabled the participants in successful value transmission in their children.

However, this may not be the case for Asian Indian immigrants residing in communities with limited access to Indian resources. The present research failed to capture the experiences or the challenges faced by Asian Indian immigrants living in non-Indian neighborhoods.

A third limitation was related to the participants’ demographic characteristics. Most participants in this study were well educated and belonged to affluent socio-economic status. Further, with regards to their religious affiliations, participants either identified themselves as Jains or as Hindus. As a result, the experiences shared by the participants of this study may not reflect the experiences of Asian Indian immigrants with a different educational qualification and/or with the Asian Indians belonging to a different religious background. For example, the experiences shared by a Hindu or a Jain, may not be relatable to those of Sikhs. Further, it was beyond the scope of this study to address all the cultural variabilities that exist between various Asian Indian communities. As highlighted by Singh (2005), it is difficult to offer a generalized perspective of Asian Indian families and belief-system because the Indian society was very vast and was characterized by variations that existed between regions, between religions, between classes, and between various caste groups.

Future Research

In future, the findings of the present research may be enriched by replicating this research on Asian Indian immigrants practicing Indian religions other than Jainism and Hinduism (E.g., Sikhs, Muslims, Christians). Given that Christianity is a dominant
religion in the U.S, it would be particularly interesting if a similar study may be recreated with Asian Indian Christian immigrants, living in the United States. In future, similar study could also be conducted with Asian Indian immigrants belonging to a lower socio-economic status. It would be interesting to explore their adaptation to the host culture and understand their experiences of raising their children in the host culture. In addition, the tenets of the present research may be further explored by building an extension of the present study. An extension of this study could be conducted to study the experiences of Asia Indian immigrants residing in towns and cities with limited availability of Indian community resources like Indian grocery stores, Indian restaurants, and temples. It would be rather interesting to understand how these immigrant parents, with limited access to and/or availability of Indian resources, maintained their traditional cultural values or how they recreate their “Indianness” on a foreign land.

A unique theme emerged in this study pertaining to the “more Indianized” attitude and behavior of the Asian Indian immigrants than their counterparts living in India. In future, a comparative study could be conducted between Asian Indians living in India and the Asian Indians settled elsewhere. The attitudes and behaviors of both the groups can be assessed for maintenance and retention of traditional cultural roots and the parenting goals for value transmission in their children.

Furthermore, given that the present study focused only on the immigration and parenting experiences of Asian Indian immigrant mothers, future research could be conducted to include the experiences of both: Asian Indian immigrant mothers as well as fathers. This could either be done by considering couple interviews or by interviewing
both the parents separately and then assessing the similarities and differences in mothers’ and fathers’ parenting goals in immigration. In general, future research, pertaining to the findings of the present study, would benefit from working with a larger sample size.
References


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Retrieved from https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states

Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board
School of Nursing & Graduate School Building
Room 333
Office: 973-503-5189
Fax: 973-655-3022

Apr 19, 2018 8:01 AM EDT

Dr. Pearl Stewart and Harshi Shah
Montclair State University
Department of Family and Child Studies
1 Normal Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07043

Re: IRB Number: IRB-FY15-16-199
Project Title: SS Immigration experiences: Maintenance and promotion of cultural values among Indian immigrants and their children

Dear Harshi:

After an expedited review, Category: 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Montclair State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved your Renewal request on April 18, 2018. The continuation is valid for one year and will expire on April 18, 2019.

Should you wish to make changes to the IRB-approved procedures, prior to the expiration of your approval, please submit a Modification. After your study is completed, you will need to complete a Project Closure.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB requirements, please contact me at 973-655-5189, cayusalRB@montclair.edu, or the Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely yours,

Mylka Biascochea
ComplianceCoordinator
IRB/IACUC
Appendix B

Demographic Survey

This information will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purposes of the study.

1) Where were you born? _________________________________________

2) Do you have children? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   If yes, then please indicate the following details for each child:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Birth?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 1</td>
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<td>Child 2</td>
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<td>Child 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
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</table>

3) What year did you come to the U.S? ______________________________

4) Please indicate your gender ______________________________

5) Age in years ________________________________

6) Please Indicate your marital status:

   ☐ Single, never married ☐ Divorced

   ☐ Married ☐ Live-in relationship

   ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

7) Please indicate your religious affiliation __________________________

8) Please indicate your mother tongue ______________________________
9) What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If currently enrolled, indicate the highest degree received)

- No schooling completed
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Associate degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Master’s degree
- Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- Doctoral degree (for example: PhD, EdD)
- Other _______________

10) Please indicate your occupation ______________________________

11) What is your annual household income:

- Below 30,000
- $30,000-$50,999
- $60,000-$80,999
- $90,000 or more
- Don’t know or prefer not to say
CONSENT FORM FOR ADULTS

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you sign this form.

**Study’s Title:** Immigration experiences: Maintenance and promotion of cultural values among Indian immigrants and their children

**Why is this study being done?**
The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of Indian immigrants in the U.S and how migration may have influenced their sense of being Indian. The study also seeks to explore Indian immigrant parents’ experiences in raising their children in a host culture.

**What will happen while you are in the study?**
An Interview will be conducted with each participant. The interview will be scheduled on the day, time and location convenient to both the participants and the researcher. The participants will complete a demographic form prior to the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded.

**Time:** The interview will take about 60-90 minutes to be completed.

**Risks:** There is no more than minimal risk involved while participating in this study. You may experience some inconvenience due to the time commitments and scheduling issues. In addition, there may be some discomfort in sharing your experiences about immigration and parenting in a host culture.

**Benefits:** It is believed that your participation in this study will help me and others understand the experiences of Indian immigrants in U.S and their experiences in maintaining and promoting their cultural values in a host culture.

**Who will know that you are in the study?**
Except the researcher, no one else will have access to your real names and identity. Throughout the study, you will be referred to by your pseudonym and whatever you share in the interview will remain highly confidential.

Although we will keep your identity confidential as it relates to this research project, if we learn of any suspected child abuse, we are required by NJ state law to report that to the proper authorities immediately.
Do you have to be in the study?
You do not have to be in the study. You are a volunteer! It is okay if you want to stop at any time and not be in the study. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Nothing will happen to you.

Future Studies: It is okay to use data in other studies?
Please initial: ________ YES ________ NO

Do you have any questions about this study? Please call or email:
  o Ms. Harshi Shah, MA Student; Email: shahh9@mail.montclair.edu
  o Dr. Pearl Stewart, Associate Professor; (Ph.) 973-655-6840; Email: stewartp@mail.montclair.edu

Do you have any questions about your rights as a research participant?
Please contact Dr. Katrina Bulkley, IRB Chair, at 973-655-5189 or reviewboard@mail.montclair.edu

As a part of this study, is it okay to audiotape the interview session?
Please initial: ________ YES ________ NO

One copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

Statement of consent:
I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. My signature also indicates that I am 18 years of age or older and have received a copy of this consent form.

Print your name here  Sign here  Date
Harshi Shah
Name of Primary Contact  Sign here  Date

Dr. Pearl Stewart
Name of Principal Investigator  Sign here  Date
Appendix D

Interview Guide

1) How did you decide to come to U.S? (Reason for migration)

2) Did you always want to come to U.S? (Was that on your mind/ was that your plan)?

3) How would you describe your experiences of being in U.S as an Indian (immigrant)?
   o How easy or difficult was it for you to maintain your sense of being an Indian?
   o What were some of the things that you may have done to maintain your sense of being Indian?
   o Tell me something about the challenges that you may have faced in maintaining your identity as an Indian in a host culture (U.S)?

4) What are some of the processes/ activities that you engage in order to retain or promote your ethnic identity or values?

5) Is it important to you that your children maintain the Indian heritage?
   o any specific norms or values of your culture that you would definitely want to promote in your children?
   o any specific attributes or values of your culture that you may actively/consciously not want to promote in your children?

6) What are the benefits and the challenges of having children grow up in the U.S?
   o First tell me about the benefits- what are the benefits of raising children in U.S?
   o What are the challenges, according to you, of raising your children in U.S?

7) How does raising children in India differ from raising children in the U.S.? (for example: disciplining, role of other adults in child rearing process)

8) Is there anything else that you would like to add or share? Any concluding comments?