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"Americans with a Twist" : Identity Negotiation of Second Generation Adolescents of Asian Indian Descent

Lavina V. Sequeira
Montclair State University

"AMERICANS WITH A TWIST"

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF SECOND GENERATION ADOLESCENTS OF ASIAN INDIAN DESCENT

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LAVINA V. SEQUEIRA

Montclair State University

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Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jeremy Price

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We hereby approve the Dissertation

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of

Lavina V. Sequeira

Candidate for the Degree:

Doctor of Pedagogy and Philosophy

Dissertation Committee:

[redacted]

Department of Educational Foundations

Dr. Jeremy Price
Dissertation Chair

Certified by:

[redacted]

Dr. Joan Ficke, Dean of the Graduate School

[redacted]

Dr. Kathryn Herr

1/18/12

Date

[redacted]

Dr. Douglas Larkin

ABSTRACT

"AMERICANS WITH A TWIST"

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF SECOND GENERATION ADOLESCENTS OF ASIAN INDIAN DESCENT

by Lavina V. Sequeira

Achieving a sense of identity includes not only the ability to know and understand oneself as an individual, but recognizing one's particular place in society. Adolescents of Asian Indian descent carry the burden of straddling two different cultures, two different worlds; often switching between the two in order to know and understand oneself, and be known and understood. While their social location suggests a middle class status and privilege, their appearance signifies a racial ethnic identity. The conflict therefore lies in the acceptance of dual cultural identities and sense of self, and how the same is negotiated through their everyday lived experiences particularly through the institution of the U.S. public school. This qualitative study explored the nuanced meanings of what it meant to be of Asian Indian descent in U.S. public school and the broader context of society. The findings suggest that the adolescents were capable of negotiating their identities in response to changing socio- cultural and educational scenarios. Acceptance and negotiation of a bicultural identity enabled the adolescent Asian Indian Americans to compartmentalize their lives into public and private spheres; the public sphere of Asian Indian and American cultures and the private sphere of Asian Indian ethnicity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction 1

Overview 1

Background of the Study 5

Historical background of Asian Indian Immigrants 6

Statement of the Problem 9

Terminology 12

Chapter II: Literature Review 15

Experiences of Immigrants 17

Immigrant Assimilation Theories 18

Identity theories 25

Psychosocial Identity Theory 28

Identity Status Theory 29

Ethnic and Racial Identities 31

Cultural Ecological Theory 32

Stages of Identity Formation 34

Stages of Settlement Process 35

Assimilation, Identity, Lived Experiences of Children of Immigrants 36

Second Generation Experiences with Schooling 39

Second Generation Experiences of School, Self & Identity 42

Factors Influencing identity of Second Generation Asian Indians 45

Influence of Religion 46

Language and Identity 48

Conclusion 51
Chapter III: Research Methodology 53
Characteristics of Qualitative Research 54
Researcher Positionality 58
Research Study Participants 60
Portraits of the Seven Study Participants 62
Participant Data Table 63
Portrait 1: Introducing Jennifer D'souza 64
Portrait 2: Introducing John Varghese 65
Portrait 3: Introducing Maya Kutty 67
Portrait 4: Introducing Arjun Patel 69
Portrait 5: Introducing Kyra Mehta 70
Portrait 6: Introducing Irfan Ahmed 72
Portrait 7: Introducing Vineeth Reddy 74
Data Collection Procedures 76
Semi-Structured Interview 77
Field Notes 81
Reflexive Journal 82
Data Analysis 83
Data Analysis Procedures 84
Establishing Trustworthiness 87
Ethical Considerations 89
Limitations of the Study 91
Conclusion 93

Chapter IV: Meanings and Experiences of Culture and Ethnicity 95
"American, Indian or Both" 96
Varied meanings of Culture and Ethnicity 97
Preserving Ethnicity and Asian Indian Culture 104
Preserving Ethnicity through Language 105
Preserving Ethnicity through Religion 113
Preserving Ethnicity by Visiting Parents Birthplace - India 115
Transmission of Ethnic Culture 118
Nuanced Meanings of Culture 120
Conclusion 121
Chapter V: "Ties that Bind" 123
Relationships and Friendships between Asian Indian Immigrants 124
Relationships between Second Generation Adolescents of
Asian Indian Descent 128
Relationships and Friendships at School 132
Role of Parents in Maintaining Relationships 136
Parental Interventions and Issues with Relationships 141
Relationships with Parents 148
Parental Expectations 154
Inter-Generational Conflict 157
Relationships Informing Identity and Identity Informing Relationships 163
Private and Public Lives of Second Generation Asian Indians 164
Conclusion 167

Chapter VI: Perceptions, Stereotypes and the Reality of Discrimination 169
Stereotypes and Perceptions of Adolescent Asian Indians 170
Perception of Teachers 171
Perceptions of Peers and Community 176
Model Minority 179
Playing the Stereotype 182
Implications of Perceptions in Education 184
Stereotypes and Discriminatory Identifiers 186
Desi 186
Fresh of the Boat (F.O.B) 188
ABCD 190
Coconut Generation 192
Implications of Stereotypes and Discriminatory Identifiers in Education 194
Difference, Marginalization and Racism 195
Coping with Marginalization, Difference, Racism and Discrimination 200
Public/Private Lives…A Reality 202
Conclusion 204
Chapter VII: Identities of Second Generation Adolescents 205
Ethnicity and a Racialized Identity 208
Religious Ethnic Identity 210
Conflict in Identities 212
A Balancing Act 216
Parents Identity influencing Participants Identity 217

Negotiating Identities 221
Uniqueness: A Bi-cultural Asian Indian American Identity 223
Conclusion 225
Chapter VIII: Looking forward: Education and Identity 227
Understanding Adolescent Identity 228
Theories of Immigration 231
Summary of the Study 233
Lived Experiences in the Context of School 234
Race, Ethnicity and Lived Experiences in School 236
Identity Negotiation of Adolescents of Asian Indian Descent 237
Impact of the Second Generation Adolescent on the Educational Environment 238
Role of Parents 239
Implications for Future Research 240
Conclusion: Immigration, Education and Identity 241
References 245
Appendices 252
Appendix A: Participant Details 252
Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview (Guide 1) 253
Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview (Guide 2) 254
Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview (Guide 3) 255

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For my parents

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Immigrants have dramatically changed the ethnic landscape of the U.S. The process of immigrating into a new country not only marks important changes in an immigrant's life but also creates changes in their identities when they begin to adapt into the host society.

Some researchers argue that adaptation experiences of the immigrant first generation affect the experiences of their children, the second generation (Alba & Nee, 2005; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001). Since schools are places wherein the second generation children spend most of their time, the school becomes an important context that impacts their lives and contributes to experiences that work to either empower or disenfranchise them. For these second generation children of immigrants the school becomes a contested terrain of meaning making and identity negotiation. This study focuses on the perspectives of the seven second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent socially located as having middle class backgrounds; specifically what it means to them to be Asian Indian and American and the various ways in which their identity is negotiated in and out of school.

Overview

The Asian Indian immigrant community represents a fascinating but poorly documented aspect of immigrant culture in the U.S. Their influx into U.S. society is

fairly recent. In 1900 there were fewer than 900 Indians residing in the U.S. However in 2000, the U.S. Census noted that approximately 1.8 million immigrants claimed Asian Indian descent, translating into .6% of the total immigrant population in the U.S. In addition, the U.S. Census 2000 projected that the Asian Indian population would increase to 4.5% by the year 2010 thereby making them the fastest growing immigrant community. The Asian American Center for Advancing Justice using data from the census 2010 results reported that the total Asians in the U.S was approximately 17.5 million, translating into 6% of the total population, while the number of immigrants claiming Asian Indian descent was approximately 3.1 million, translating into approximately 0.9% of the total U.S population (2011).

Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. are not a homogenous group of individuals. The individuals of this group belong to different socio-economic statuses, practice different religions, belong to various sub ethnicities, speak varied languages, hail from different regions of the Indian sub-continent and belong to different generations. In the U.S. context this immigrant group is perceived to be economically and socially successful. In addition, Asian Indians are listed as a racial and ethnic group by U.S. Census and perceived by U.S. society as a racial ethnic minority. As with any other ethnic minority groups in society, they face discrimination due to race, ethnicity, religion, and language. Such perceptions and stereotypes ignore the plight and difficulties of many Asian Indians who struggle to survive and make it in the U.S. Dominant existing ideologies, perceptions and stereotypical images of Asian Indians held by U.S. society adversely affect not only immigrant patents, but also affect their American born children.

For many second generation children of Asian Indian descent, the recognition of being of Indian descent as well as being American does not always happily coexist (Chatterjee, 1993; Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996; Maira, 2002). Commenting on the experiences of growing up in two cultures, Karen Leonard (1997) writes, "Growing up has not been a uniform experience for youngsters of South Asian descent, but most seem to go through a cycle of early identification with American culture and then, later, identification with South Asian culture" (p. 156). As Leonard suggests, Asian Indian children in their formative years identify with their host culture. As they grow older their identity becomes increasingly multi-layered, nuanced and complex in response to societal situations. In the context of U.S. public school, switching between two cultures often leaves most students of Asian Indian descent feeling vulnerable and unsure of their identity (Asher, 2002; Chen, 1997; Hegde, 1998; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Lee, 1996; Takaki, 1989).

The process of self-identification is further complicated as these second generation students belong to different ethnicities, come from varied economic backgrounds, practice different religions and speak different languages. In the context of U.S. public school, some Asian Indian children feel marginalized due to the "model minority" stereotype which is derived from the dominant perception that Asian cultural values, hard work and determination are responsible for success making the group a model amongst other minorities (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Lee, 1996; Portes & Zhou, 1993). In other situations students of Asian Indian descent perceive themselves to be targets of racial discrimination due to ethnic minority status. While others use the perceptions and

the model minority stereotype held by society, community, peers, and teachers for purposes of self-benefit. The lack of consistency in self-perceptions and others' perceptions lead students of Asian Indian descent to feel conflicted about their identities in the context of school.

Marginalization and identity conflict is particularly heightened during their adolescent years. Children and adolescents struggling with identity formation may experience psychological difficulties in the context of dual cultural membership (Berry, et. al., 2006; Park, 1950; Phinney, 1990; Stonequist, 1961), particularly if they are discriminated against and receive negative messages from the larger society about their race and culture (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Stonequist, 1961; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). In addition to marginalization; dual cultural membership, race, ethnicity, and existence of generational differences between the second generation children and their immigrant parents further contributes to difference and alienation.

Generational differences are not only rooted in the lived experiences of immigrants but also in the particular worldview of each generation (Bacon, 1996; Erikson, 1968; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). While the first generation immigrants tend to stress community and collective identities, the second generation children of immigrants allow individualistic expressions of identity (Bacon, 1996; Berry, et. al., 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). First generation immigrants are primarily concerned with surviving; adjusting to the new context, and a new culture, while Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) note that for the second generation adolescents, forging an identity and a sense of self may be their greatest challenge.

In addition to taking on dualistic identities, these adolescent students tend to compartmentalize their lived experiences, contextualized through their everyday lives in school, at home with their families, and in U.S. society. The contextualization of their experiences enables their bicultural identities and creates possibilities for leading public/private lives.

Background of the Study

As previously stated the Asian Indian immigrant diaspora is a poorly documented immigrant culture. A majority of Asian Indians residing in the United States are "professionals," "New Wave" immigrants who arrived since 1970 (Asher, 2002; Bhatia, 2007; Edmonston & Passel, 1994; Purkayastha, 2005). The post-1990 Asian Indians are an interesting group of immigrants. This group is unique in terms of its immigration history, adaptation patterns, educational and professional achievement levels, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, (Dasgupta, 1998; Gibson, 1988; Petievich, 1999; Saran, 1985; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). An important factor contributing to the diversity of this population is the revised Immigration Act of 1990. This act dealt with an unlimited number of visas for family members of U.S. citizens, professional workers and entrepreneurs (Edmonston & Passel, 1994). A current snapshot of the Asian Indian diaspora in the U.S. reflects this diversity.

Historical background of Asian Indian immigrants

Researchers have used various geographical identifiers to distinguish this group of immigrants within the U.S. These individuals are identified in sociological literature as "South Asians," "East Indians," and more recently "Asian Indians" (Bhatia, 2007; Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996; Purkayastha, 2005; U.S. Census). Since 1980, immigrants from India to the U.S. are identified as "Asian Indians" (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990/2000). However some researchers still use the previous terms to refer to immigrants from the Indian sub-continent. For purposes of this research study I will use the term "Asian Indian" to refer to immigrants from the Indian sub-continent to the U.S.

The culturally abstract term "Asian Indian" blurs distinctions which are important in India and subdivide some Asian Indian communities in America (Barringer & Kassebaum, 1989). As with other modern official U.S. government racial categories, the term "Asian Indian" is in itself a broad umbrella classification, encompassing all peoples with origins in the Indian subcontinent. It is worth noting that the U.S. Census has changed over the decades in its classification of Indians: in 1930 and 1940, Indians hailing from India were a separate category called the "Hindoo". In 1950 and 1960 they were classified as "Other Race;" in 1970, Indians were classified as "White" (Gould, 2006). In 1980, Indians and other South Asians were classified as part of the Asian race (Assisi, 2006; Purkayastha, 2005). More recently Indians in the U.S are classified as Asian Indians if they are of Asian Indian origin or if they are of Asian Indian race, or if they are foreign born people from India (Assisi, 2006; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Takaki,

1989; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The U.S. Census uses the term "Asian Indian" to make the group in question clear to avoid confusion with "American Indian."

The immigration of Asian Indians to the U.S. took place in several waves. Researcher Juan Gonzales (1986) drawing from the INS Statistical Yearbook of 1981, notes various waves of Indian immigration into the U.S. A major wave of immigration to California from the region of Punjab in India took place in the first decade of the 20th century. These Indians landed on the West coast seeking work in California's vast agricultural fields (Assisi, 2006; Gibson, 1988; Gonzales 1986; Gould, 2006; Jensen, 1988; Takaki, 1989). Another significant wave followed in the 1950s which mainly included students and professionals. It was this second wave of immigrants that earned the label "model minority." As with other immigrant groups, the first two waves of Asian Indian immigrants faced discrimination when adapting to U.S. society.

Over the decades, the Asian Indian immigrant population has increased exponentially. In 1910, there were less than 5,000 South Asians in North America (Assisi, 2006; Gonzales, 1986; Gould, 2006; Jensen 1988; Takaki, 1989). In 1913, California passed the Alien Land Law of 1913, declaring immigrants ineligible to citizenship, and prohibiting them from buying land or leasing it for longer than three years. It affected the Chinese, Indian, and Japanese farmers in California (Gonzales, 1986; Gould, 2006; Lal, 1999). In 1917, the Immigration Act defined a geographic "barred zone" (Asiatic Barred Zone Act) that prohibited Indian laborers from entering the United States on the basis that India existed in the barred zone (Assisi, 2006; Jensen 1988). In 1918, many individuals of Asian ancestry who had served in World War One

received the right to be naturalized citizens. In 1922, the Cable Act declared that any American female citizen who marries "an alien ineligible to citizenship" would lose her citizenship (Assisi, 2006). In 1923, in a landmark case, United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, the Supreme Court stated that Asian Indians were aliens ineligible for citizenship because even though they were designated as Caucasian, they were not white (Assisi, 2006; Takaki, 1989). It was therefore deemed necessary to clarify the meaning of Caucasian as synonymous with white. In 1924, the Immigration Act denied entry of virtually all Asians to the United States (Jensen, 1988; Takaki, 1989). Joan Jensen in her book *Passage from India* (1988) noted:

> Excluded from immigration, prosecuted for their political activities, threatened with deportation, excluded from citizenship, denaturalized, excluded from land ownership, and regulated even in the choice of a mate in the states where most of them lived, Indians now formed a small band of people set apart from Americans by what truly must have seemed a great white wall. (p. 269)

Such policies and discrimination were overturned by 1946 Luce-Cellar Bill. This bill granted naturalization rights for all immigrants and provided for small immigration quotas for Asian Indians and Filipinos (Assisi, 2006, Gould, 2006). The immigration quota for Asians Indians was set at 100 individuals per year. The Immigration and Naturalization Law of 1965 (Hart-Cellar Act) finally eliminated discrimination in immigration quotas.

With the elimination of immigration quotas, Asian Indian came to the U.S in large numbers (Gonzales, 1986; Gould, 2006). The elimination of immigration quotas in 1965

spurred successively larger waves of immigrants in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The next wave of immigration occurred in the 1980's (Gibson, 1988; Takaki, 1989). With the technology boom of the 1990s, the largest influx of Indians arrived between 1995 and 2000 (U.S. Census, 2000).

The post 1990 group of immigrants, the "new wave" immigrants is a diverse group in terms of educational attainment, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion and linguistic affiliations. As with other immigrant groups they face challenges in adaption to U.S. society.

Statement of the Problem

Research on Asian Indians in the U.S. has alluded to various challenges that the first generation Asian Indian immigrants face upon immigrating into the U.S (Gibson, 1988; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Maira, 2002; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998; Phinney, 2003; Petievich, 1999; Purkayastha, 2005). Their racial and ethnic diversity in following various religions, traditions, customs and languages make some immigrants' adaption to U.S society difficult.

Due to the diversity in their ethnic backgrounds, religions, languages, customs and traditions, many first generation Asian Indians struggle to adapt to the new host society. They depend on their communal networks to help ease the process of integrating into U.S. society. First generation Asian Indian immigrants feel that their ethnic culture and traditions are vulnerable in the host society. Asian Indian immigrant parents especially believe that their culture, ethnicity and traditions are vulnerable due to the

process of immigrating into a new world of changing cultural scenarios, and therefore a conscious effort must be made towards its preservation and maintenance (Bahri & Vasudeva, 1996; Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Maira, 2002; Purkayastha, 2005). Due to ethnic and cultural vulnerability associated with the processes of immigrant integration and adaptation, most Asian Indian parents emphasize the need to preserve and maintain their Asian Indian ethnicity and culture onto their U.S. born children. Some of the ways that ethnicity and Indian culture are preserved is through the expression of native language and the maintenance of religious values and traditions.

Growing up in the U.S. as a second generation individual of Asian Indian descent can be a conflicting experience. In the context of school, the experiences of belonging to dual cultures - Asian Indian and American, creates possibilities for student marginalization, difference and alienation. The second generation adolescent of Asian Indian descent, in traveling between two cultures construct an identity that is neither collectivistic nor individualistic, but rather "… negotiated between the self and the external world" (Hegde, 1998, p. 318). These adolescents' subjectively interpret and make meaning of their social world in the process of forming their identity and sense of self (Berry, et. al., 2006; Bourdieu, 1977; McLeod & Yates, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Examining the background, lived experiences and conflict that second generation students of Asian Indian descent experience during their adolescent years will give researchers a better understanding of students' identity and sense of self as it is negotiated

through the institution of school and their everyday lived experiences. My research specifically focuses on the ways in which second generation adolescent student of Asian Indian descent belonging to the middle class status in the U.S understand their "selves" and navigate their identities through the negotiation of everyday lived experiences. The central question of the research study is: In the context of public schooling, what does being Asian Indian mean to the second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent?

In understanding the above research question, I gained nuanced insights into: the lived experiences of second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent in U.S. public school, the role race and ethnicity plays in the understanding of lived experiences in school and the broader context of society, the complexity of identity negotiation of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent belonging to middle class backgrounds, and the impact of the second generation adolescent identity on the educational environment.

Scant research on Asian Indian immigrants has focused on the adaptation and integration patterns of the first generation immigrants and their descendants into U.S. society, adaption of the 1.5 generation in the U.S, Asian Indian women in the U.S. and the academic achievement and parental involvement in the lives of Asian children in general. Research thus far has neglected the specificities of meaning making and identity negotiation understood through the lens of lived experiences in school of a generation who has grown up in the U.S and to whom U.S. is home.

Given the diversity and the increasing number of the second generation Asian Indian students in U.S. schools, it is imperative that their voices and perspectives be heard, so that appropriate educational policy changes can be made to afford all children of immigrants an empowering education. While change cannot be achieved overnight, this research study can act as a building block to understanding adolescent Asian Indian perspectives and how these perceptions of self and others in the community affect the 'self', identity and education of the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent.

In order to gain a nuanced insight into the formation and negotiation of identity and self of second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent, I used a qualitative research approach. I primarily utilized the qualitative case study method and interviewing as a tool to understand the study participants' perspectives in their own words. Through this approach my analysis focused on the students' meanings of ethnicity and culture; their everyday lives and lived experiences in public schools, and U.S society; and how these experiences, understandings, and perspectives helps inform and shape their identity.

Terminology

This research study uses terminology that has been examined by researchers across sociological, anthropological and educational disciplines. For the purposes of this research study, I use the following explicit definitions to understand the terminology.

Immigrants: “persons who have moved from one society to another and settled into their new society. These are also referred to first generation immigrants” (Berry, et. al., 2006, p.10).

Assimilation: “… the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences…. and is eased insofar as members of minority groups do not sense a rupture between participation in mainstream institutions and familiar social and cultural practices” (Alba & Nee, 2005, p. 11).

Acculturation: “…cultural and psychological changes that result from the contact between cultural groups, including the attitudes and behaviors that are generated” (Berry et. al., 2006, p. 3).

Mainstream: “… that part of society within which ethnic and racial origins have at most minor impacts on life changes or opportunities” (Alba & Nee, 2005, p. 12).

Cultural identity: “…sense of attachment a person has to a particular group, including beliefs and feelings linking them to this group” (Berry, et. al., 2006, p.10).

Ethnicity: “Ethnicity is a social boundary, a distinction that individuals make in their everyday lives, and that shapes their actions and mental orientations towards others” (Alba & Nee, 2005, p.11).

Ethnic Identity: “Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and

modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, with in the large (socio-cultural) setting" (Phinney, 2003, p. 3).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

> I am an Indian American, or so I've been told... I am still trying to find out exactly what this means. I look like somebody from India, but I dress differently, I speak differently, I socialize differently, my friends look different, my values are different, and my identity is different. (Ranchod, 1998, p. 50).

Research into the issues of identity negotiation and lived experiences of the second generation students of Asian Indian descent is necessary to better understand their voice, their perceptions and their sense of self. As Portes and Rumbaut (2001) so powerfully argue, the future of immigrants in the U.S. and U.S. society as a whole depend on the successes and failures of today's youth. Since the Asian Indian diaspora is one of the fastest growing communities in the U.S., due attention must be paid to the education of a generation for whom America is home.

Due to the growing number of immigrants and the children who belong to this population, a nuanced insight needs to be gained into the negotiation of their identities in the light of dual cultural membership, what meanings they ascribe to their identities and the implications of those meanings for their sense of self in the context of school. The research question guiding this study is: In the context of public schooling, what does being Asian Indian mean to the second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent?

The review of literature in the succeeding section is organized into four sections. Section one provides a literature review of immigrant assimilation. Section two provides literature on identity theories pertinent to immigrants, with an emphasis on the adolescent second generation children of immigrants. In section three the implications of assimilation, identity formation on the lived experiences of the immigrants is reviewed. In section four, literature on Asian/Asian Indian lived experiences in school and the broader society with implications for identity is reviewed.

In the first section I reviewed literature on experiences of immigrants in the U.S. In this section I specifically analyzed sociological theories of immigrant adaption and assimilation into U.S. society. I understand adaption, acculturation and accommodation into U.S. society to be major contributing factors that influence the lived experiences, identity formation and identity negotiation of immigrants and their descendants. In addition, as some research posits, adaption patterns and experiences of first generation parents influences the adaptation of their U.S. born children. For this research study it is necessary to understand the adolescent's experiences in light of their parent's experiences and aspirations.

In the second section I analyzed various identity theories pertaining to immigrants. Since my study required understanding the experiences of adolescents, I analyzed a couple of psychosocial, racial and ethnic, and immigrant identity theories. Due to scant literature pertaining to identity formation of the second generation adolescent Asian Indians, the combination of immigrant identity theories and

psychosocial theories helped put into perspective the experiences of immigrants and their descendants in U.S. society

The immigrant's adaption experiences and identity theories provided a framework for understanding the experiences, perspectives and identity negotiation of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent belonging to middle class backgrounds. In sections three and four, implications and meanings of assimilation perspectives and identity theories were applied to adolescent Asian Indians in order to understand their experiences with respect to the schooling and contextualized within the broader framework of U.S. society

Experiences of Immigrants

The U.S. has a long history of welcoming immigrants to her shores. Many immigrants come to the U.S. in the hopes of achieving social and economic mobility while others arrive to avoid persecution and seek asylum (Gibson, 1988; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Le, 2009; Ogbu, 1998; Park & Burgess, 1969; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). Whatever the motivating factors in emigrating to the U.S., most immigrants decide to stay.

The process of immigrating to a new country, governmental policies, and legislation tends to promote vulnerability and marginalization among some immigrant groups (Banks, et. al., 2001; Fordham, 1996; Freire, 1970; Gibson, 1988; Hooks, 1994; Neito, 1999; Park 1950; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Stonequist, 1961). Immigrating not only marks important changes in immigrants' lives but also creates changes in their identities when they begin to assimilate into the host society. Lisa Lowe (1996) harkens

immigrant experiences to a journey; a transition from foreign strangeness to assimilation to citizenship.

Immigrant Assimilation Theories

In an attempt to describe immigrant integration into the host society, sociologists Park and Burgess (1969) defined assimilation as:

> …a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life. (p. 735)

The underlying assumption for this theory is that immigrants from diverse ethnic cultures will be absorbed into the mainstream to share a common culture, norms and behaviors with other majority groups. As part of this concept of assimilation Warner and Srole (1945), note that ethnic groups need to unlearn their cultural characteristics so that they can "…successfully learn the new way of life necessary for full acceptance" (p. 285). Further, the authors propose that dark-skinned Europeans would need at least six generations or more in terms of time in order to assimilate into American society, while for non- Europeans especially Blacks and Asians there was no time frame since assimilation for these groups was considered indefinite. Sociologist Gordon (1964) stated that the reference point of assimilation for all immigrants should be to incorporate "… middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins" (p.72). This perspective states that minority groups need to give up their culture in order

to be more like the majority, in this case being White, protestant, and Anglo Saxon, as a requisite of acceptance. In addition this view assumes that the majority culture remains unaffected. Critics of the old assimilation model, sociologists Alba and Nee (2005), assert that these old formulations of assimilation "… elevates a particular cultural model, that of middle-class protestant whites of British ancestry, to the normative standard by which other groups are to be assessed and toward which they should aspire" (p. 4).

The classical formulation of assimilation posits a linear assimilation perspective that suggests that immigrants and their children gradually transition into taking on the characteristics of the host culture i.e. "Anglo-Saxon" culture. The path of assimilation follows a linear trajectory or a straight line. Further, there is a sense that immigrants consciously break ties with their homeland and commit themselves to being assimilated into the new society (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950; Park & Burgess, 1969; Stonequist, 1961). Gordon (1964) expanded on this understanding by noting seven steps in the process of immigrant assimilation. They are "… cultural/behavioral or acculturation, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behavior receptional, and civic assimilation" (p. 71). Gordon (1964) clarified that cultural assimilation or acculturation into the mainstream culture was needed as a prerequisite to structural assimilation. Before final and irreversible civic assimilation takes place all seven processes must be followed in linearity. This process acted as a guide in determining the extent of assimilation occurring among immigrants.

Recent trends in sociology critique theories of immigrant assimilation in the host society and argue that assimilation is not linear, but rather multidimensional and

segmented (Portes & Rumbaut 1990, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). One such view is "segmented" assimilation conceived by Portes and Zhou (1993) and Portes and Rumbaut (1990, 2001). In critiquing the classical idea of straight line assimilation, the researchers assert that assimilation of immigrant groups take place into different segments of American society depending on factors such as human capital, modes of incorporation into the host society, and family structure. In *Legacies* Portes and Rumbaut (2001) state:

> …while assimilation may still represent the master concept in the study of today's immigrants, the process is subject to too many contingencies and affected by too many variables to render the image of a relatively uniform and straightforward path credible. (p. 45)

They assert that it is implausible to suggest that all immigrants undergo the process of assimilation in a particular way. Rather they argue that the immigrants, specifically the second generation, undergo a process of segmented assimilation wherein the outcomes are not straightforward but varied depending on the minority group. They state that factors such as immigrant parents' history, acculturation rates between parents and children, economic barriers, and cultural resources are responsible for the varied outcomes of assimilation.

In addition, segmented assimilation accounts for and recognizes the diversity among immigrants of U.S. society by noting the concept of an "underclass" in certain cities in which many new immigrant families find themselves upon immigrating (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Further, in emphasizing that some immigrants', especially those from Latin America and Asia, are considered to belong to

racial/ethnic minorities suggest societal hindrances in integrating into mainstream U.S. society (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). These views imply that all immigrants do not achieve upward assimilation. Yet as noted, some immigrants do face downward assimilation and become part of the underclass. The researchers argue that there are 3 different ways in which the new immigrants could assimilate into the host society: (1). Straight-Line assimilation- increasing acculturation and integration into the American middle class. (2). Downward Assimilation-acculturation and assimilation into the urban underclass. (3). Selective Acculturation- preservation of the immigrant community's culture and values, accompanied by economic integration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 53- 54).

The segmented assimilation theory seems to account for heterogeneity among immigrant populations implying that there is more than one way to "become American" thus making it easier to explain variations in educational attainment, economic success and identity formation among immigrant populations. As Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue; "The central question is not whether the second generation will assimilate to U.S. society but to what segment of that society it will assimilate"(p. 55). Therefore while immigrants eventually assimilate into U.S. society, some immigrant groups may undergo downward assimilation. This perspective is different from the classical perspective on assimilation that stated that assimilation was a linear an irreversible process into the 'mainstream'.

In another distinct perspective, researchers Massey and Denton (1985) argue for a model of spatial assimilation, wherein the notion of space is important for understanding

immigrant assimilation. In positing spatial assimilation Massey and Denton (1985) argue that some immigrant groups who experience upward socioeconomic mobility move out of urban living areas into suburban communities which are advantaged and economically affluent in order to be closer and more like the majority.

In refining this view, Alba and Nee (2005) specify that it is not always the case that immigrants and their descendants move into suburban areas to be in close proximity to the white majority. They state that being close to the white majority does not guarantee affluence or a suburban lifestyle. They argue that ethnic spaces can be created anywhere by immigrants and their descendants. Be it in urban areas or suburban enclaves, they assert that the experiences of first generation immigrants affect the type of acculturation and assimilation experienced by their children: the second generation immigrants. In addition, researchers Alba and Nee (2005), and Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001), note that the immigrants' varied socioeconomic backgrounds contribute towards differential levels of privilege when assimilating, which is similar to the segmented assimilation perspective. They too specify factors such as human capital, modes of incorporation into host society, self-categorization and family structure as relevant in shaping the experiences of the first immigrants and their descendants.

Some researchers posit that in order to better understand immigrant assimilation and their adaptation into the U.S. society; attention must be paid to acculturation patterns followed by immigrants and their U.S. born children. Changes occur when one group comes in contact with another wherein the dominant cultural practices of society are integrated into the lives of the minority. However the experiences of acculturating into

U.S. society are not the same for all immigrant groups. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and Zhou 1997(b), distinguish four variants of acculturation: consonant acculturation, consonant resistance to acculturation, selective acculturation, and dissonant acculturation as ways of adapting into a new society. While Berry (1980) notes that integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization are various ways of acculturating and adapting into U.S society. Berry (1998), notes that if immigrants express connectedness to both the ethnic culture as well as the dominant culture, then they are seen to be pursuing the path of integration into U.S. society. Bhatia (2007), in referencing Berry concurs that: "… the optimal acculturation strategy for immigrants is said to be integration" (p. 210).

Many researchers have noted that second generation children of immigrants often acculturate faster than their immigrant parents, leading to conflict between the parents and their children; the problematic termed as 'intergenerational conflict' (Gibson, 1988; Gordon, 1964; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Park, 1950; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Stonequist, 1961). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) considered intergenerational conflict as responsible for dissonant acculturation leading to loss of parental authority, and the rupturing of familial ties.

Dissonant acculturation was seen to be more pronounced in second generation adolescents, due to their status of belonging to two distinct cultures. Sociologist Stonequist (1961) says that the sense of belonging to two different cultures leads to a "divided personality" a "marginal" individual. He notes that "wherever there are cultural transactions and cultural conflicts, there are marginal possibilities" (1961, p. 3).

In assimilating, immigrants try to bridge two cultures; the culture they belong to and the culture of the host country which is often difficult (Anzaldua, 1987; Lee, 1996; Park, 1950; Portes & Rumbaut; 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Stonequist, 1961). Where Asian Indian immigrants are concerned, the assimilation model posited by researchers Arthur Helweg and Usha Helweg (1990) suggest that the assimilation experienced by Asian Indian immigrant parents will directly affect the type of assimilation and acculturation experienced by their U.S. born children. Most Asian Indian immigrants arrive as professionals with credentials to work in high paying jobs. Their adaption into U.S. society is quite different from other Asians from Cambodia, or the Hmong who arrive as refugees. However as posited prior not all post 1990 Asian Indian immigrants have the human and social capital necessary to succeed in the U.S.

Some research notes that many Asian Indian immigrant parents encourage their children to preserve their cultural values and heritage and to take on only desirable aspects of the host culture, in order to succeed in school and achieve upward social and economic mobility (Asher, 2002; Gibson, 1988; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Researcher Margaret Gibson (1988) called this pattern of immigrant integration in society "accommodation without assimilation." Gibson (1988) argues that in negotiating various integration strategies, immigrant parents selectively use the values of the host society in order to help maximize the academic and socio economic success of their children (Gibson, 1988).

The adaptation patterns of the post 1990 Asian Indian immigrants are more complex than the ones reviewed. A major factor that contributes to the complex patterns

is the varied educational, social, religious, and economic status of the immigrant parents. In reviewing the assimilation theories, it seems logical that some Asian Indian immigrants and their children seem to follow the spatial assimilation trajectory as noted by Massey and Denton (1985), while some others seem to be following the trajectory of ethnic spatial assimilation as noted by Alba and Nee (2005), while others may follow segmented assimilation trajectories (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). There may be other sub-trajectories that this population follows in order to assimilate into U.S. society which causes them to have varied experiences in society. In order to understand the experiences of the second generation, it is highly imperative to contextualize their experiences in light of their immigrant parents' adaptation experiences; to understand to what segment of society these immigrants are assimilating into.

Although this research study does not focus primarily on immigrant assimilation patterns, it does provide a nuanced perspective of adaptation experiences faced by the first generation immigrants. I understand these experiences to be crucial in analyzing the lived experiences of the second generation, especially the second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent. In the next section I provided a discussion on various identity theories applicable to second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent.

Identity Theories

The understanding of identity formation is integral to understanding the ways of immigrant assimilation. As noted earlier, the process of emigrating into U.S. society,

socio-cultural factors, human capital, categories of race and ethnicity are important in understanding the identity of individuals. Due to a lack of literature on the formation of identity of adolescents of Asian Indian descent, I reviewed identity theories pertaining to adolescents, racial and ethnic identity theories pertaining to immigrants, and immigration theories pertaining to the Asian Indian adaptation perspective.

Identity formation is a central developmental task for adolescents during which they ask themselves the crucial question "Who am I?" In addition, Erikson (1968) argues during this time adolescents try to understand what sets them apart from others. He notes:

> Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a topology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives themselves in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him. (p. 22-23)

As Erikson notes, societal perception of the adolescents' identity is not only conflicting but important as to how the individual is perceived as well as how the individual analyses their self-perception.

Many researchers analyze identity development through various theoretical lenses and perspectives, such as the psychosocial (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980), the socio-cultural (Lave, 1988; Tajfel, 1981; Wenger, 1998), and immigrant and racial (Berry, et.

al., 2006; Cross, 1995; Helms, 1994; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Phinney, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Some identity development models can be traced to the psychosocial research of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980). The psychosocial models of identity development focus on the understanding of self and identity and takes into account psychological as well as social factors that influences identity negotiation. Proponents of socio-cultural identity theories draw heavily on the work of Vygotsky (1986) who focused on the influence of culture and social context in child development, manifested in the idea of scaffolding in the "zone of proximal development." Identity in this perspective is contextualized and understood in connection with social-cultural relations and group membership. The racial and ethnic identity models proposed by Waters (1999), Helms (1994), and Phinney (1990) perceive identity as a process that occurs as an understanding of the intersection between racial perceptions of oneself as held by others and racial perceptions as held by oneself. Immigrant identity focuses on the race and ethnicity of the immigrant, and includes the modes of incorporation into society, thereby allowing a construction of identity that is relational to society (Berry, et. al., 2006; Ogbu, 1978, 1998; Phinney, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Waters, 1999).

For this research study I drew mainly from psychosocial and immigrant models of identity. These models directly apply to the research study as it provides a framework for understanding the identity of second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent. For the purposes of reviewing pertinent literature on identity formation, I provided a discussion of psychosocial theories posited by Erickson and Marcia with an emphasis on adolescents; where immigrants are concerned I drew from various

perspectives asserted by Portes and Rumbaut, Waters and Ogbu; where specifically Asian Indian identity is concerned I drew from Helweg and Helweg and Moag's theories. All the theories specified provide a framework for understanding the identity of the adolescent Asian Indian individual socially located as having middle class backgrounds.

Psychosocial Identity Theory

Erik Erikson (1968) stated that an individual's identity is subjective and develops over a period of time beginning in childhood, through a process of "reflection and observation" (p. 22). He further stressed that socio-cultural factors play a major role in the development of the individual's identity. Erikson organized life into eight stages, each stage corresponding with a stage in life. Each stage in Erikson's theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life by framing the stage as a dichotomy "organized around a specific crisis that must be resolved in order to increase the likelihood of identity development" (1968, p. 19). Stage five in Erikson's theory is concerned with adolescence; wherein the adolescent confronts questions about this identity. During this stage the individual attempts to answer the question of "Who am I?", and how do I perceive myself?

Adolescence is a critical stage in the individual's life, during which Erikson (1968), argues that the experiences of the past and present stages as presented in this theory need to be integrated in order to have a clear sense of self. Erikson (1968) referred to the adolescent phase in a child's life as the identity-versus-role confusion stage. He suggested two possible outcomes from this stage. They are "identity achievement" and

"identity diffusion." He termed the successful resolution of identity crisis as identity achievement wherein the individual has come to a clear sense of identity and self. In identity diffusion, the individual has failed to resolve the crisis thus resulting in "identity confusion." This hinders the individual in negotiating future crisis. Erikson explains that if adolescents receive encouragement about themselves and their identity, they will emerge from this stage with a having a strong sense of self, while those who are uncertain about their identity, and whose beliefs are not affirmed will have a diffused identity.

In analyzing Erikson's theory it seems as if Erikson believed that it is essential for adolescents to go through an identity crisis in order to resolve any issues of identity in order to achieve a stable identity. The belief that a person resolves conflict, and successfully obtains the goal of that stage, or fails, and has problems with future crises, neglects the possibility of varying degrees of resolution for each conflict. Although most of the understandings of Erikson's theory can be applied to this research study, one major drawback of this theory is that it does not account for minority adolescents' experiences and the role of collective ethnic identities. Further, this perspective ignores the complexity of immigrant experiences in the U.S.

Identity Status Theory

James Marcia extended Erikson's work on identity. He defined identity as "a self-structure – an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (1980, p. 159). Further:

> The better developed this structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world" and "the less developed this structure is, the more confused individuals seem about their own distinctiveness from others and the more they have to rely on external sources to evaluate themselves. (1980, p. 159)

Marcia's model provides a framework for thinking about identity in terms of status. He noted four categories/ types of status in identity formation: *Diffusion; Foreclosure; Moratorium; Identity Achievement.* Marcia pointed out adolescents often experience doubts when seeking to identify themselves and therefore look for alternatives. He argued that in order to arrive at identity achievement the adolescents have to go through active processes of "crisis/exploration" a period of questioning meaningful alternatives between multiple selves in order to seek stabilization (Marcia, 1980). Once the identity crisis is resolved, old roles have been examined and integrated, and a "commitment" to an identity made, the adolescent successfully resolves the crisis and arrives at identity achievement.

Marcia's notion of moratorium seems consistent with Erikson's developmental stage of identity-role confusion. However Marcia departs from Erikson in noting that students in the moratorium status felt much more positive about themselves and about the future (Marcia, 1980). Further Marcia's theory is not linear, it describes an individual's experiences, issues, and concerns which may not precede subsequent status, while Erikson's theory is very linear, with each stage needing resolution before moving on to

the next. For immigrant adolescents, especially second generation Asian Indian Americans, identity development seems more complex than "Who am I?" as posited by Erikson and Marcia but rather "Who am I, and does my identity, culture and ethnicity fit into the host society?"

Although not specifically pertaining to immigrant Asian Indians, Marcia's perspective on identity does relate to the adolescent Asian Indians. These individuals, especially the adolescent Asian Indians, seem to be in the status of "moratorium" in varying degrees wherein they are actively seeking to know their identity.

Ethnic and Racial Identities

In *Black Identities*, Mary Waters states, "arriving as a stranger in a new society, the immigrant must decide how he or she identifies…" (1999, p. 44). In studying ethnic and racial identities, Waters describes three adaption patterns followed by second generation West Indian and Haitian adolescents in New York. She notes that adopting a racial and ethnic identity is dependent on "… an ongoing negotiation between self and other identification" (p. 46). Waters describes three types of identities: 1. American racial identity; 2. an ethnic identity; and 3. an immigrant identity. Waters notes that the identities chosen are not permanent and argues that the chosen identities are usually a product of social interaction, family status, networks, and structure.

Although her study participants identify as West Indian and Haitian second generation individuals, the questions posed by Waters are relevant to this study on Asian Indians. Some of the questions Waters asks: "Do the processes of immigration and

assimilation for nonwhite immigrants resemble the processes for earlier white immigrants? Or do these immigrants and their children face very different choices and constraints because they are defined racially by other Americans?" (1994, p.795) seem pertinent to the questions framing this research study. In addition this study took into consideration the socio-economic status as well as adaption patterns of the participants.

Cultural Ecological Theory

In order to understand and explain student achievement among ethnic/racial minorities Ogbu posited his cultural ecological perspective. This view considered:

> … the broad societal and school factors as well as the dynamics within the minority communities. Ecology is the "setting," "environment," or "world" of people (minorities), and "cultural," broadly, refers to the way people (in this case the minorities) see their world and behave in it. (Ogbu & Simmons, p. 158, 1998)

Ogbu distinguished between autonomous, immigrant (voluntary) and nonimmigrant (involuntary) minorities (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). He hypothesizes that autonomous minorities that usually possess specific ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural identities like the Jews and the Mormons, although prejudiced against, are not subjugated in the socio-political system (Ogbu, & Simmons, 1998). Ogbu notes that immigrant minorities are voluntary minorities from European and Asian countries that choose to migrate to the U.S. for better opportunities. The vast majority of individuals from the immigrant minority acculturates, and eventually assimilates into society by overcoming structural and language barriers and other cultural differences between their culture and the host

culture. The nonimmigrant (involuntary) minorities are those who are part of society against their will. Involuntary minorities belong to what Ogbu termed as "caste-like" minorities (1978) in a previous work. Ogbu and Simmons argue that: "Two distinguishing features of involuntary minorities are that (1) they did not choose but were forced against their will to become a part of the United States, and (2) they themselves usually interpret their presence in the United States as forced on them" (p. 165, 1998). Individuals from the non-immigrant minority have problems in assimilating because they see structures and institution as part of the majority responsible for their subjugation. These individuals tend to develop oppositional identities in relation to society, due to positioning themselves as being subjugated and discriminated against.

Ogbu's work has been critiqued by scholars such as Gloria Ladson Billings, Geneva Gay, Margaret Beale Spencer, who argue that this topology by Ogbu implies that involuntary minorities see themselves as oppositional to the majority, and therefore become complacent assuming that the historical and structural forces does not provide them with equal access to resources available to the majority. Oppositional identities are seen as 'successes' among involuntary minorities (Price, 2000).

While I do agree that this descriptive topology neglects the specificities of minority agency, I understand this perspective to be a springboard in evaluating immigrant Asian Indian socio-economic status, adaption processes and identity of the second generation who overcome barriers due to the cultural capital and accommodate without assimilation, or in some cases selectively acculturate. Most Asian Indians in the U.S. are immigrant minorities. They voluntarily migrated to the U.S. in the hopes of a

better life economically. They not only retain their ethnicities, norms and traditions but also adapt to U.S. society.

Stages of Identity Formation

The second generation Asian Indian adolescents face many challenges growing up in the U.S. Researcher Rodney Moag notes that this situation is unique to the youth, as the first generation parents have always looked at themselves "as Indians in America, rather than Indian Americans" (Moag, 2001, p. 251). In researching immigrant Asian Indian assimilation patterns in the U.S., he observed that there were three possible stages of second generation identity formation. (1). Totally Indian: the child spends his early years under the parents' control, and is rarely exposed to the outside world. (2). Conflict and compartmentalization: Once the child begins school, and he sees a world that is far different from the cultural world he is accustomed to. In this stage children become aware of different cultural backgrounds and stereotypes and struggle to fit in. (3). Reconciliation: The young adult is comfortable with identity, and comfortably approaches two cultures (Moag, 2001, p. 250-255).

The second stage of conflict and compartmentalization is similar to Erikson and Marcia's Role Confusion and Moratorium. However Moag (2001) assumes that all Asian Indian youth will be able to compartmentalize and be comfortable switching between two cultures. Further there is a wide disparity and diversity within the Asian Indian community. In addition each Asian Indian community has different life experiences that are reflective of their status and ethnicity. These nuanced understandings need to be

taken into account while understanding the identity formation and sense of self of Asian Indian American adolescent students.

Stages of the Settlement Process

The identity of the second generation adolescent children of Asian Indian descent, as noted by the Arthur and Usha Helweg (1990), is connected to the values and aspiration of their first generation immigrant parents. The researchers suggested three phases of immigrant settlement that influences the identity of second generation Asian Indians. (1). Entry phase: coincides with the process of immigrating and settling. (2). Holding phase: immigrants maintain a life style accommodating a belief that they will return to India in the near future after realizing their financial goals. (3). Permanent phase: immigrants realize that they will remain in the U.S but curiously may not admit it publicly (p. 164-166).

According to Helweg and Helweg (1990) the entry and the holding phase correspond with the children's school years. They note that this period in the child's life is marked by conformism to mainstream values. The young child feels the need to appear normal to their peers and this feeling is reinforced by the school system. Travels to their parents' homeland are met with disapproval from the adolescent children as they feel different and marginalized, even discriminated against by members of their ethnic community. As adolescents they begin to question their Asian Indian culture and the values and ethnic traditions of their parents, often choosing American culture over Indian culture since they have at their disposal not only their Indian values and traditions but

mainstream values and traditions as well. The Helwegs (1990) suggest that adolescents begin to fabricate their identities in order to avoid stereotypes. They argue that adolescents belong to an in-between place and struggle to find their true selves.

In this section I reviewed various identity theories pertaining to aspects of psychosocial, immigrant, racial and ethnic and Asian Indian perspectives. I stated that due to the lack of available literature on identity formation of the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent, I felt it necessary to evaluate other identity theories in order to contextualize Asian Indian identity. Further, I argued that the perspectives of psychosocial identity theories and racial ethnic theories can be applied to the adolescents of Asian Indian descent in understanding their experiences with identity negotiation.

In the succeeding section I have provided a framework for understanding the identity and lived experiences of the second generation adolescents by combining the identity and immigrant assimilation theories.

Assimilation, Identity, Lived Experiences of Children of Immigrants

Sociologists and researchers note that immigrants and children of immigrants have often felt marginalized and alien in the host country (Berry, et. al., 2006; Gordon, 1964; Mead, 1950; Park, 1950; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Stonequist, 1961; Waters, 1999). This marginalization is due to the immigrants' lack of the immediate social and cultural resources needed to participate in the host society. Therefore, socialization and identity formation among immigrants and their children according to Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) becomes a central and integral part of their lives.

Immigrant adaption is a complex process. Through the various processes of immigrant adaption; linear and segmented assimilation, accommodation and acculturation, immigrants and children of immigrants tend to resist internalizing the definition of what it means to be an immigrant because it perpetuates an understanding of being subjugated into various marginal, social, and cultural categories; an understanding of being the "other" (Anzaldua, 1987; Bahri & Vasudeva, 1996; Berry, et. al., 2006; Maira, 2002; Stonequist; 1961). Anzaldua (1987) in *Borderlands* speaks of the difficulties that come with being a part of the intersection of multiple cultures, races, and languages. She notes an internal conflict in sorting out the nuances of her identity, and suggests that immigrant experiences must be confronted in order to question the role they play in the understanding of the self (Anzaldua, 1987). Due to the marginalization stemming from the aforementioned factors along with other factors such as racial background, ethnicity, culture, and religion causes some immigrants and children of immigrants have problems and issues determining their position, role, and status in society (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001).

The experiences stemming from belonging to another culture, socio-economic status and gender have a personal as well as a collective dimension. This is reflected in the formation of their identities. Immigrant individuals begin their self-identity on the basis of a series of social categories that result in their placement in various social hierarchies (Fine, Powell, Weis, & Wong, 1998; Giroux, 1992; Phinney, 1996; Price, 2000; Tatum, 1997). Kwame Appiah (1990) posits that the ways in which individuals form their identities depend on various complex, cultural, individual, and societal factors.

He notes that individuals construct their identities from a varying 'tool kit of options' that is made available by culture and society (1990). Further, Appiah (1990) and Ngo (2008) note that identities continuously evolve as a response to prevalent economic, political, and cultural forces. As Tatum states, "the social, cultural, and historical context is the ground in which identity is embedded" (1997, p. 19). These views suggest that identity is fluid and relational; ascribed -- or perhaps even inscribed - on individuals by existing social or cultural categories. In addition researchers Berry, et. al., (2006), Gibson, (1988), Phinney (1996), Portes and Rumbaut, (2001), Waters (1999), argue that when considering identity formation among ethnic groups, it is important to take into consideration the collectivistic nature of the communities in which the immigrants exist. It is also important to note that immigrants, in immigrating to another country are not relinquishing their inherited identity; rather they take on dualistic identities (Gibson, 1988). This duality of identities is brought about because immigrant individual belongs to two different cultures; the birth culture and the culture of the land that they emigrate into.

Many second generation immigrants create their cultural and ethnic identities based on the homeland of their parents, while others maintain "racial and ethnic identities" (Waters, 1999) "hyphenated or bicultural identities" (Alba & Nee, 2005; Lee, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). They assert that in order to understand how today's immigrant youth negotiate their cultural worlds one must take into consideration not only acculturation and assimilation patterns but their constructed

evolving identities as well. They also posit that the strategies of assimilation and identity affect the school experiences of the second generation children of immigrants.

The Second Generation Experiences with Schooling

Interest in the educational experiences of children of immigrants has been growing in recent years (Anzaldua, 1987; Gibson 1988; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Moag, 2001; Ngo 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990/2001; Schneider & Lee, 1990; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Much research shows that the cultural background, socio-economic status, language, social networks, and generational issues of immigrants and children of immigrants, serve to structure and influence their experiences, perceptions and responses to schooling (Barringer & Kussebaum, 1989; Gibson, 1988; Kao & Tienda; 1995, 1998; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Ngo, 2008; Ogbu, 1974, 1978, 1998; Schneider & Lee, 1990).

It has been argued that immigrant students from certain cultures do better in school because they are strongly supported by their cultural networks such as their families, communities, and peers (Barringer & Kassebaum 1989; Berry, et. al., 2006; Gibson, 1988; Kao & Tienda, 1995, 1998; Lee, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Schneider & Lee, 1990). While other researchers state that some immigrant minorities are more successful in school due to their status of immigration being voluntary, that enables them to generally hold high academic expectations and have positive dispositions towards schooling (Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Ogbu 1978; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Other research concluded that children of particular immigrant cultures commit themselves to

using education as the avenue to upward socio-economic mobility (Asher, 2002; Banks, et al., 2001; Ogbu, 1978, Gibson, 1988; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Waters, 1999).

Researchers also acknowledge that there exist differences in educational opportunities for children belonging to various immigrant cultures (Asanova 2005; Banks, et. al., 2001; Berry et. al., 2006; Crosnoe, 2005; Fine, et. al., 1998; Gibson, 1988; Ogbu 1978; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Price, 2000). The differences in educational opportunity are due to racial and cultural ethnicity, linguistic barriers, human capital and socio-economic factors. Some second generation children of immigrants have different educational experiences based on these factors. The differences in educational experiences among the children of immigrants lend themselves to differentiated education and instruction. Aside from historical and continuing problems of discrimination, much of the reasons for such differentiation are present in the structural biases in the institution of schooling and society (Anderson & Herr, 2007; Banks, et. al., 2001; Fine, et. al., 1998).

Some research on second generation children of immigrants note that the educational experiences of the second generation children are conceptualized as conflicts between the immigrant culture and dominant mainstream culture (Gibson, 1988; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ngo, 2008; Ogbu, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). This is partly due to the fact that immigrants tend to see themselves in subordinate positions in relation to the host society by internalizing a marginal status due to the incompatibility of values, and belief systems (Berry, et. al., 2006; Giroux, 1988; Ogbu, 1978, 1998). Further Anderson and Herr (2007), Collins (2004) and Waters (1994,

1999) argue that race and ethnicity combines with other forms of inequality, which enables the subordination and discrimination of cultural groups that see themselves as being marginalized. These factors adversely affect their identity. There is a sense that identity not only involves the totality of the individual-collective experiences (Bacon, 1996) but is also based on a combination of experiences that involves the self (Fine, et. al. 1991). Some sociologists (Fanon, 1967; Mead, 1950) have argued that children can develop a sense of self from the experiences they gather from familial societal and peers and social institutions around them. Schools as social institutions become contested terrains that exert a powerful collective influence marked by structural and ideological contradictions that helps both shape and give substance to student resistance and identity (Giroux, 1992; McLaren, 1997). In addition, Erikson asserted that students use academic opportunities provided by educational institutions to negotiate and evaluate their identities. If the school environment is supportive and encouraging then the adolescent will be more likely to successfully resolve any identity crisis (Erikson, 1968).

Second generation student identities are constantly negotiated and transformed not only through the experiences that they have in school but in their lives outside of school (Hall 1995; Lee, 1996; Phelan and Davidson, 1993). Identities are thus formed, changed, challenged and blended, in contexts that are influenced by cultural, racial, ethnic and societal patterns (Alba & Nee, 2006; Anderson & Herr, 2007; Appiah, 1990; Giroux, 1992; Tatum, 1997); Identities in constant conflict struggling for dignity (Collins, 2004; Gibson, 1988; Lee 1995; Ogbu, 1998; Waters 1999); marginalization of groups

who affirm particular identities in resisting oppression (Aronowitz & Collins, 2004; Giroux, 1985; McLaren, 1997).

For adolescent children of immigrants, schooling becomes a contested space to work out their identities; it enables student resistance necessary for understanding the totality of an immigrant's identity (Appiah, 1990; Giroux, 1992; Fine, et. al. 1991; Matute- Bianchi, 1986; McLaren, 1997). It is crucial as Ngo (2008) posits that before we make assumptions about any children of immigrants, we need to look carefully at the totality of discourse between the student's culture, immigrant adaptation patterns and the existing representations of their identity as assumed by dominant culture in order to understand and value the students' sense of self.

Second Generation Experiences of School, Self and Identity

Research notes that students from some Asian communities are perceived as the "model minority" (Asher, 2002; Kao, 1995; Lee, 1994, 1996). In addition, research conducted on Asian immigrants and their descendants shows that socio-economic status along with their cultural capital contributes to their educational aspirations and charts an avenue for upward social mobility (Asher 2001; Gibson 1988; Kao 1995; Kao and Tienda, 1998; Lee, 1994, 1996; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001).

The 2010 U.S. Census reports an impressive number of Asians from China and India have achieved tremendous success as measured by income and educational attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Some Asian Americans are considered to be

doing so well academically, socially and economically that they are called the "model minority" (Asher, 2002; Kao, 1995; Lee, 1996; Yang, 2004). Such stereotypes have made many Asian scholars critical; they contend that the model minority stereotype about the success of Asian students obscures the plight of many struggling Asian Americans (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ogbu, 1998; Lee, 1996). Further, as Yang (2004) states the poor self-image of many Asians directly contradicts the idea of Asians as the model minority.

Since the Immigration Act of 1965 the immigrant population in the U.S. has become more diverse ethnically, and fragmented socio-economically (Alba & Nee, 2005; Edmonston & Passel, 1994). As researchers Zhou (1997 b), Lee (1996), Alba and Nee (2005), argue, some Asian children live in linguistically distinctive neighborhoods delaying their grasp of English. Due to the lack of sufficient knowledge of the English language they retain a marginal status in school. Further, Lee (1996) states that Asian students mask feelings of depression, frustration, and desperation. Yet their difficulties are largely invisible because aggregate data and research on Asian Americans suggests that they are doing quite well. There are a disproportionate number of Asian students who find it difficult to succeed academically. For example, of the total Asian population in 1990, 88% of Japanese immigrants were found to complete high school as compared to 31% of Hmong (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). In 2000, Vietnamese Americans had a college degree attainment rate of 20% of the total population, less than half the rate for other Asian American ethnic groups. The rates for Laotians and Cambodians are even lower than 10% (Le, 2009; U.S Census Bureau, 2000). Lee posits that as the model

minority, Asian Americans are not only marginalized but "…simultaneously exalted and ignored in the U.S. imagination" (1996, p. 2).

Where identity is concerned, Tuan (1998) argues that the tug and pull of being Asian and American contributes towards their marginalization: They are not fully accepted as Americans; are perceived as the model minority when compared to other minority groups (blacks and Latinos); and they are still considered foreigners compared to whites. Their racial ethnicity marginalizes them. In addition, Asian children sometimes try to shape themselves into being the successful model minority. In doing so, they unconsciously participate in their marginalization. Tuan (1998) argues that subsequent generations of Asian American have to construct their identity in response to their social environments. Dubois (1903, 1996) aptly characterizes the resulting tension as a "double consciousness", a "two-ness" (p. 3), a feeling of being an insider as well as an outsider. The "double consciousness" of Asian immigrants can become an insightful construct of being able to view the world through both the dominant as well as marginalized lenses. The danger of double consciousness resides in conforming and/or changing one's identity to fit the perceptions of dominant society.

Moreover, even within the same ethnic group, immigrants and those who are American-born differ vastly in outlook and world views due to intervening social and structural changes (Tamura, 2001). The discourse in identity seems to emphasize a "generational issue" (Erikson, 1968, Lee, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) differences between the first-generation (parents) and second-generation (children) leading to a

dichotomy or intergenerational conflict (Hernandez, 2004; Crosnoe, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001).

The conflict in identity as noted earlier is more pronounced during adolescence, when the individual is actively seeking to understand and form an identity. Researchers Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder (2006) state "second generation youth must deal with two cultural worlds of their own families and cultural communities, and of their peers, schools and the larger society" (p. 6). In doing so, they form a duality in identities that could either marginalize them or work towards their empowerment. The authors add that adolescents can take on various identities such as an ethnic identity based on their ethnicity, a national identity based on the country they live in or a bi-cultural identity, ascribing to both their ethnicity as well as their nationality.

All second-generation immigrant children share an important commonality: they will spend essentially their whole lives in a country different from that in which their parents were born (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez- Orozco, 2001). For the first generation, the desire to "return to roots" expresses a sense of displacement that is, in most cases, based on emotional reasons and it is in the second generation that the nostalgia for the country of origin lives on (Maira, 2002).

Factors Influencing Identity of Second Generation Asian Indians

Literature on Asian Indian immigrants notes that all Asian Indians bring with them a strong sense of their native culture, customs, and traditions. They try to retain their culture in order to preserve their identity. The Asian Indian group of individuals has

been known to maintain an ethnic identity and acculturate into mainstream society while holding on to some of their core values concerning language, religion, customs and traditions (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981).

Two of the core values that contribute to the lived experiences, identity formation and negotiation of second generation Asian Indian adolescents in the U.S. are language and religion. In this section I will review literature pertinent to the formation of ethnic identity in the second generation due to language and religion.

Influence of Religion

India is a diverse country in terms of religion and language. According to Deka (2007), India is the birthplace of four eastern religions namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism (p.135). The researcher notes that: "Although India is a Hindu dominant nation; it represents the highest religious diversity in South Asia. The other religious groups include Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi (Zoroastrianism), etc." (p. 135).

With regards to Asian Indian immigrants, and their descendants' in the U.S., researcher Kurien (2001) states that: "there are no national or regional figures on the proportions of Indians in the United States belonging to various religions" (p. 267). While this may be true, Raymond Williams, in writing about immigrants' religious affiliation in the U.S. claims:

> In the United States, religion is the social category with clearest meaning and acceptance in the host society, so the emphasis on religious affiliation and identity

> is one of the strategies that allows the immigrant to maintain self-identity while simultaneously acquiring community acceptance. (Williams, 1988, p. 29)

As stated by Williams, religion is one of the ways in which immigrant's self-identify; it is part of their ethnic identity that gains acceptance from the host society. Upon immigrating, most Asian Indians attend religious gatherings and organizations as a part of the acculturation process and as a means of expressing their ethnic identity (Helweg & Helweg, 1990). These include observance of Indian religious festivals; participating in *pujas,* or other religious services. Saran notes that most Asian Indian immigrants with children consciously turn to religion while in the U.S. since "…they see this as a way of raising Indian consciousness among their children" (Saran 1985, p. 42).

In the case of adolescent children of Asian Indians, parental influence in their lives plays a vital role in the construction of their religious and ethnic identities. Religion is seen as an instrument not only for ethnic self-identification but as a way of curbing Americanization. However Kurien (2001) found that self-identification due to religion as a marker of cultural ethnicity is stronger as immigrants in the U.S., than as Indian nationals in India. She states that: "While many differences between Indian immigrants such as region, language and caste are in the process of weakening, religious differences and tensions seem to have been exacerbated in the immigrant context" (p. 264). She theorizes that religion and religious organizations become an important means of forming an ethnic community in the host country and tend to mobilize support for its members and provide material benefits to those who are part of the group.

Therefore religion and religious identity becomes more prevalent in the U.S. context because it creates and sustains a strong Asian Indian ethnic culture. Further as Warner argues, it is important to the immigrants to preserve their religious identity because: “Americans view religion as the most acceptable and non-threatening basis for community formation and ethnic expression" (Warner 1993, p. 1058).

Language and Identity

Researchers postulate that an important part of cultural assimilation (acculturation) into mainstream society is learning the native language (Gibson, 1988; Gordon, 1964; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Gordon (1964) considered cultural acculturation, of which language is a part, to be a pre-requisite for assimilation. Some researchers have noted that many immigrants and children of immigrants live in linguistically distinctive neighborhoods, which delays their grasp of English (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998; Zhou, 1997). Since the English language is considered to be the main source of communication in the public schools today, some children of immigrants retain a marginal status in school. The lack of fluency negatively affects their identity. While Portes and Rumbaut (2001) note that since they grow up in the U.S. most second generation Asian Indian children tend to be bilingual. Most speak English and a native language reinforced by their parents and their cultural ethnicity. Portes and Rumbaut (2001), argue that the greater the exposure of the individual to their bicultural world, the greater the chances of bilingualism. Further they mention that biculturalism and bilingualism are important indicators of student academic achievement.

Language is a marker of one's ethnic identity. According to researchers De Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1996): "Ethnic identity is in essence… embedded in the presumed cultural heritage of the individual or group… Ethnicity can most readily be symbolically represented contrastively. It may involve self-consciously perceived variations in language and customs from others" (p. 356-357).

All Asian Indian immigrants tend to be bilingual. They are fluent in English and their native language. Some may speak three or more languages, in addition to English and their native language. Most post-1990 Asian Indian immigrants feel that it is beneficial for their American born children to know the native language as a means of preserving their cultural ethnicity and ethnic identity (Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Saran, 1985). Asian Indian parents believe that ethnic identity is important for identification with the ethnic group, due to a common historicity between its members.

One of the ways Asian Indian ethnicity is preserved is through learning the native language. Learning native language or mother tongue contributes to Asian Indian ethnic identity. The phrase "mother tongue" has varied meanings in the Indian linguistic context. It can mean the language spoken at home which may be a dialect of a regional language or official language of the nation or it can mean the community language spoken by people belonging to a certain geographical location in India. According to Gail Coelho (1997), the mother tongue of an individual signifies a community language by which to which a member claims membership. She says:

> In popular Indian usage, the term mother tongue does not have its usual linguistic meaning; it is used to mean "community language," the language a person claims

> as a marker of membership in a cultural community. Such a claim does not necessarily indicate actual fluency in the language; for example, a Mangalorean who has lived all her life in Madras, and for whom English is a first language, would typically identify herself as Mangalorean and claim Konkani as her mother tongue, even if she has never been to Mangalore and is hardly fluent in Konkani. (Coelho, p. 4, 1997)

As argued by Coelho (1997) even though the immigrant individuals may have never lived in a particular geographical location and are not fluent in their mother tongue, they would still claim that language as their mother tongue as a way of rooting themselves in the community. Individuals speaking the same mother tongue are bonded together through shared cultural experiences.

As mentioned before, an important part of acculturation process of immigrants and their descendants is the adoption of English language usage. With the first generation of immigrants, Gordon (1964) notes that English language adoption is necessary and crucial, while Portes and Rumbaut (2001) note that in succeeding generations there may be a use of the mother tongue, however the preference is towards English language usage. Some researchers also note that learning the mother tongue is not something that American born children of immigrants are particularly interested in (Dasgupta, 1982; Maira, 1997). This is an area of ethnic identity that leads to intergenerational conflict (Gibson, 1987; Ogbu, 1992). Eventually Alba and Nee (2006) posit that assimilation may lead to the gradual decline of 'ethnic and linguistic markers' in succeeding generations. As Dasgupta (1997) hypothesizes, the post-1990 second

generation children of Asian Indian immigrants lay claim to two identities, one being Indian while the other being American. The Indian part of the identity (ethnic identity) is preserved through native language usage while the American identity is embraced through the acceptance of dominant values and perceptions of U.S. society (Dasgupta, 1997).

Conclusion

This research study focuses on the specificities and nuanced meanings of the second generation adolescent children of Asian Indian descent lived experiences who are socio economically located as middle class; the understanding of their "self," the in-betweenness of two cultures, and the formation of bicultural identities in the context of the U.S. public school system.

In this literature review I explored various perspectives on assimilation and identity pertinent to the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent. I have argued that in order to understand identity negotiation of adolescent Asian Indians their lived experiences need to be contextualized within the framework of immigrant experiences. In the literature review I stated that first generation Asian Indian immigrants are voluntary minorities who tend hold on to their ethnicities, traditions and norms even when adapting to U.S. society. Due to this fact their U.S. born children negotiate their identity based on their ethnicities, background, parental involvement in their lives, religious, and linguistic affiliations.

I have alluded that due to the complexities of their experiences, students of Asian Indian descent are marginalized in the U.S. public school system. Since the influx of Asian Indians to the U.S. is quite recent, the topic of marginality among the adolescent second generation Asian Indian in U.S schools due to the evolving identities is not well explored. In addition, research is practically non-existent which documents the lived experiences of the children of the new wave post-1990 Asian Indian immigrants. Since the history and demographics of Asian Indian Americans is increasingly multi layered, complex and diverse, so are their needs, concerns, and educational realities (Asher, 2002; Maira, 2002; Prashad, 2000).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the U.S. public school system, second generation children of Asian Indian descent are exposed to not only American culture and its diversity, but receive contradictory messages about their Asian Indian culture. As they reach adolescence, these second generation students develop different strategies in order to adapt and fit in with their peers at school. They belong to both the Asian Indian and American cultures, and yet neatly fit into neither. Their identity is therefore fluid and sometimes marginal, often reevaluated in response to changes occurring in their everyday lives.

This research study required an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives, lives and experiences towards which qualitative methodology is best suited (Patton, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (1994), and Merriam (1998) argue that qualitative methodology has an interpretive character which aims to discover the meaning participants make of their lives and their world, and the sense they make of their experiences. It seeks a deeper truth by studying participants in their natural settings by using a holistic perspective in understanding complex human behavior (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Cresswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006).

Through this study I evaluated various ways in which second generation Asian Indian adolescent students negotiated their identity and made sense of their everyday experiences. I utilized an interpretive methodology to explain my research question: In

the context of public schooling, what does being Asian Indian mean to the second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent.

In exploring this research question, I gained nuanced insights about their cultural and ethnic identity by taking into consideration the impact factors such as race, religion, language, gender, parental and communal involvement played in the lives of the participants.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Since this research study required an in-depth and nuanced understanding of identity formation and sense of self of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent, I utilized qualitative research methodology to explore participants' perspectives.

In defining qualitative research methodology, Merriam (2002) stated that qualitative research is: "… an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). While Creswell (1994) defines a qualitative study as:"… An inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting." Further, Merriam (2002) argued that: "Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities –that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and function" (2002, p.17). In addition, these and other researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) synthesized and identified key characteristics of qualitative research

methodology. Some of the key concepts used in this research study are summarized in brief.

Naturalistic

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) claim that qualitative research involves a naturalistic approach. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 2). The researcher attempts to observe, describe and understand settings as they are (Patton, 2002) by maintaining an "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 1990, p. 55).

Interpretive

Qualitative research has an interpretive character which aims to discover the meaning participants make of their lives and their world, and the sense they make of their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Boland (1991) posits that research that is interpretive starts with the assumption that reality is socially constructed. A researcher who uses an interpretive approach accesses the participants' reality through social constructions such as language and shared meanings in order to discover the meaning that participants make of their lives.

Descriptive

Qualitative research reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the presence of the participants' voices in the text (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). This provides a "thick description" of the participants' understanding/perspective of a given context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; and Patton, 2002). Denzin defines thick description as: "A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another" (1989, p. 83). A thick description gives readers an understanding and insight into the emotions, thoughts and perceptions of the participants.

Researcher as primary instrument of data collection

The researcher acts as the "human instrument" of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). The natural settings are a source of data with the researcher being a key instrument. Since understanding the participant's view is the goal of this research, by being adaptive and responsive the researcher is ideal for collecting and analyzing data. The subjectivity of the researcher can be looked at as a resource rather than a source of bias.

Inductive Data Analysis

In using inductive analysis Patton (2002), states that patterns, themes, and categories of analysis of the data"…emerge out of the data through the analyst's interactions with the data" (p. 453). Researchers gather data to build concepts and hypotheses, through observations and intuitive understanding in order to make meaning of the participants' experiences. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), "They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather the abstractions are built as particulars that have been gathered are grouped together" (p. 6).

In summary, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of them in terms of the meanings people bring to these contexts. Further, qualitative research methodology is a holistic, inductive, inquiry process towards data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). The researcher is a primary instrument in the collection of data and the analysis (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2002). The researcher is personally involved in the process and seeks an insider's perspective. A qualitative researcher assumes that reality is socially constructed and therefore seeks to understand the meaning the participants make of their lives. The data is emergent and rich with thick descriptions.

Since the objective of my research is to explore and obtain a deeper understanding of identity negotiation of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent in U.S. public schools, the qualitative research methodology was the most appropriate, as it took

into consideration the multiple realities, attitudes, perceptions and experiences of the study participants.

Qualitative research uses a variety of materials and approaches such as case studies, interviews and visual texts, journals and essays that appropriately describe the meanings in individuals' lives (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Patton, 2002). For this research study, I used case study methodology. Merriam (1998) states that "a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p.19). In order to fully explore the meanings that the students brought with them, I employed the case study research method. In addition, I utilized an inductive approach towards data analysis that focused on holistic, rich descriptions of data. The data for this study contains rich and thick descriptions of the participants' views and perspectives in their own voices, collected through a range of semi-structured interviews.

In this chapter I describe the various procedures and methods used to conduct this research study. The methodology for this study is described in seven sections: 1. Researcher positionality background and context of the study; 2. selection of participants; 3. portrait of each participant; 4. data collection management and analysis procedures; 5. trustworthiness of this research study; and 6. ethical issues and limitations of the study.

Researcher Positionality

What interested me most about the second generation adolescent children of Asian Indian immigrants is their experiences and struggles with identity negotiation due

to the in-between spaces they occupy between two cultures. This in-between space is a rich source of student empowerment and student marginalization.

The idea for the study came in part from observation of my daughter who is a second generation Asian Indian American. I noted her constant struggles with being Asian Indian and being American. Her identity was wedged between two cultures that marginalized her. In addition, there seemed to be a disconnect between her understanding of her "self" and "perceived self" as assumed by society. My daughter's understanding of her "self" as a complex and complicated being of cultural consciousness made her resist conformity to societal labels. In my daughter's case, I realized that the problem did not lie in her inability to commit to one identity over another; rather it was the perceptions that are dominant in society that did not neatly fit her reality.

In association with other Asian Indian parents I noted similar patterns recur with their second generation U.S. born children. These children seemed unsure of their identities. In the presence of other Asian Indians and their ethnic community and at home they were Asian Indians, while in school they were Americans and took on the norms of the dominant society. This made me question what made these individuals feel the way they did, and why they seemed to constantly conform or negotiate their identities in response to societal perceptions. What did it mean to these individuals to belong to two cultures; feeling a need to be recognized as individuals, and at the same time conforming to dominant U.S. values resulted in the emergence of public/private lives.

Being of Asian Indian descent myself allowed me to have a familiarity with the Asian Indian community, which was advantageous because it allowed relatively easy

access to the first study participant. The closeness I felt with the participants due to shared perspectives of culture provided a nuanced insight into the meanings and lives of the study participants. I was an insider to the Asian Indian group due to being of Asian Indian descent myself and an outsider due to the status of being a researcher. In using the insider perspective, I acknowledged that I might be subject to researcher bias wherein my subjective preferences intrude into the process of data collection, data analysis and its interpretation. Researchers Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen, (2007), and Merriam (2002) argue that the advantages in using an insider's perspective while conducting the study may be weakened or strengthened or could shift during interaction with the participants based on shared experiences of race, gender and class. While, Hill (2006) suggests a researcher often experiences being an insider as well as an outsider given the fact that the researcher is situated and located by the participants during the research process. In order to minimize researcher bias I employed an insider- outsider's perspective in an attempt to be objective in understanding the lived experiences of Asian Indian students.

Research Study Participants

The participants for this study were middle class second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent residing in the state of New Jersey who attended U.S. public schools. These study participants met the following criteria: (1) The individual is a U.S. born second generation adolescent of Asian Indian descent; (2) Both parents of the individual are first generation immigrants hailing from India and who emigrated from

India post 1990; (3) The individual is approximately between the ages of 16-18; and (4) The individual is a high school student attending New Jersey public schools.

The most appropriate way to solicit potential participants was through the use of purposeful sampling techniques. Purposeful sampling is "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This type of sampling is typically used when the researcher focuses on a strategically selected number of participants to obtain in-depth information and insight into an issue about which little is known. According to Merriam (1998), "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight, and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61).

Using purposeful sampling, participants were selected based on certain characteristics and stated criteria. Some of the characteristics were religion, language, the birthplace of the parents, and socio-economic status. The main criterion for the selection of the study participants was that they are second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent between the ages of 16-18, studying in the U.S. public schools. These study participants parents hailed from India and immigrated to the U.S. post 1990.

My familiarity with the Asian Indian community enabled me to access the first study participant. From the first study participant I was able to get referrals for two more study participants. Locating and contacting these participants was problematic. Their parents choose to not have their children participate in the study. After months of solicitation, I was able to access two more participants. These three participants were able to suggest referrals for many other potential participants. With regards to purposeful

sampling Patton (1990) notes that the researcher select "cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is good examples for study, good interview subjects" (p.182).

Not all individuals referred by the initial study participants met the criteria of this research study. In order to better understand the diversity and range of perspectives existing within the Asian Indian diaspora in the U.S., I sought study participants who belonged to different religions, ethnicities, and spoke various Indian languages at home. After months of deliberation and solicitation, I gained access to seven research study participants. Of the seven participants selected, three participants were Hindus, one participant was Muslim, and the other three participants were Christians. All participants belonged to different cultural ethnicities. There was nearly equal representation in gender; four were male and three were female. Although there was some variation in socio-economic status, most participants were firmly middle class and lived in predominately white suburban neighborhoods. In the next section I provide a brief portrait of the seven participants who took part in this research study.

Portraits of the Seven Study Participants

Seven participants voluntarily took part in this research study. Of the seven participants, four were male and three were female. At the initial interview, six participants claimed Asian Indian descent, while one participant claimed South Asian descent. Three of the seven participants were 18 years old, while the others were 17 years old. All research participants attended their local public schools. During the eight

month interview process, three participants who were 18 years of age were either enrolled or anticipating enrollment in prestigious out of state universities. The other four participants who were 17 years old were in their junior year of school at the time of the research study. The following table briefly summarizes the important characteristics of each participant who took part in this research study. All participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy. Each participant was also assigned a last name, because ethnicity can be contextualized and geographically located in the Asian Indian context.

Research study participants Data table

Name	Age	No. of times interviewed	Religious affiliation	Parents birthplace	Mother tongue	Parent education attainment	Parent work
Jennifer	18	3	Catholic	Maharashtra	English	Father: PhD Mother: MA	Scientist Adjunct
Maya	17	4	Protestant	Kerala	Malayalam	Father: M.Sc. Mather: BE	Engineer Engineer
Kyra	17	3	Hindu	Gujarat	Gujarati	Father: MBA Mother: MA	Business Business
Arjun	18	3	Hindu	Bihar	Bihari	Father: PhD Mother: PhD	Scientist Scientist
Vineeth	17	3	Hindu	Andhra Pradesh	Telagu	Father: BE Mother: MA	Engineer Social work
Irfan	18	3	Muslim		Urdu	Father: BA Mother	Business Housewife
John	17	3	Protestant	Kerala	Malayalam	Father: M.Sc. Mother: M.Sc.	Engineer Engineer

Portrait 1: Introducing Jennifer D'Souza

Jennifer's parents were born in India. Jennifer's father hails from Mumbai, a large metropolitan city in the state of Maharashtra, located in North West India, while her mother hails from Bengaluru the capital city of the State of Karnataka. Her father, is a scientist by profession, and emigrated to the U.S. to pursue research in microbiology. Upon completion of his studies, he decided to settle in the U.S. He currently owns a business firm that deals with medicines and medical supplies. Jennifer's mother works as an adjunct for a local community college. Both parents are naturalized American citizens. The family moved into an exclusive New Jersey suburb about eight years ago. In terms of ethnicity and geographic location, Jennifer's family can be classified as "Bombayites or north east Indians" due to location of origin or "Roman Catholic" by virtue of religion.

Jennifer's Self-description

Jennifer is 18 years old and the eldest of three siblings. All three siblings were born in the US. Jennifer hails from a middle class Asian Indian family. She stated that she preferred to attend the local public school and so do her siblings as opposed to private schooling. While in school, Jennifer was interested in forensics and received many state awards and accolades for public speaking. She was a member of the school marching band and school fencing team. She perceived herself as not being a high academic achiever, but rather classified herself as an A- to B+ student. She mentioned being fluent in reading and writing in Hindi; the national language of India but she does not speak her

mother tongue. Language communication in her household was predominately English. She mentions that her immediate and extended family members consider English as their mother tongue. Currently Jennifer is pursuing a career in medicine.

Jennifer's perceives her upbringing to be modern most times, traditional in certain aspects of culture. She argues that she is expected by her family and community to follow certain traditional Asian Indian values as well as to adapt to mainstream American culture. Religion is very important to Jennifer's family; they are parishioners of a local U.S. Catholic church. All family members are actively involved in church activities. Jennifer is not only involved in the church music ministry but discharges duties as a youth Eucharistic minister.

Jennifer was the initial contact and the first study participant. I chose to interview her due to the fact that she was female, spoke English as her mother tongue, followed Catholicism and whose parents hailed from the North Eastern India. I interviewed Jennifer at her convenience on three separate occasions over the course of six months. When I first interviewed Jennifer in the month of May, she was a senior in high school. When I interviewed Jennifer the third time, she was registered as a pre-med student in one of the prestigious educational institutions in the tri-state area.

Portrait 2: Introducing John Varghese

John's parents were born in India. His parents hail from the state of Kerala in South India. John's father immigrated to the U.S. with his parents as a teenager. He studied in the local public school. Later he pursued an engineering degree from a

prestigious university in New Jersey. John's mother has an engineering degree from India. Both of John's parents are currently computer professionals. His parents are American citizens through naturalization. In terms of ethnic categories John could be classified either as a "Malayalee" by language affiliation or a "Keralite or south Indian" by Indian state affiliation or "Protestant" through religious affiliation. The family lives in a suburban area in NJ.

John's Self-description

John is 17 years old, and the older of two siblings. Both were born in the U.S. John and his siblings were enrolled in a Christian school from K-8 grades. After the 8th grade both were enrolled in the local public school. John perceived himself as a high academic achiever. He mentioned "acing" all of his tests and exams in school, and being bored if he was not sufficiently intellectually challenged in any subject area. He was enrolled in honors classes and AP classes for his senior year. He argued that his senior year in school would be easier, as he was taking college level classes in junior year in order to prepare for college. He is considering a career in bio-medical engineering. With regards to extra-curricular activities, John is heavily involved with the music department at his school as well as at his ethnic church. He plays a few musical instruments such as the guitar, clarinet and the piano. He is part of the men's choir at school and is the music conductor for the choir at church. In addition, he has attended many state level music contests. Where sports are concerned, he enjoys playing basketball and tennis. He

mentioned being semi-fluent in speaking his native language "Malayalam." However, he asserted that English was the main mode of communication within his immediate family.

John's perceived his upbringing to be very modern. It is recommended by his parents to follow traditional Asian Indian cultural norms; however the same is not enforced. As Protestants, religion is very important in John's family, and he and all of his family members are actively involved in church activities. John stated that he feels very proud to conduct at church at school a young age. He shared that he not only conducts music but is an accomplished singer and Jazz musician.

I chose to interview John due to Indian state affiliation, religion and gender. When I first interviewed John, he was in his junior year at school. I have interviewed John thrice during an eight month period. Currently he is in his senior year at high school. During one of the interviews, John shared that he was stressed about college enrollment and his career choices. He was in the process of choosing a school that ranked high in bio- medical technology. Most of his choices were Ivy League colleges.

Portrait 3: Introducing Maya Kutty

Maya's parents hail from Kerala, a state in South India. Maya's parents immigrated to the U.S. due to better job prospects. Her parents were very unsure in the beginning if they wanted to settle in the U.S. due to cultural conflicts, but after a couple of years of working in the U.S. they decided to stay. Maya's parents are professionals who work in managerial positions in their respective companies. Maya's parents and her older sibling are naturalized American citizens. In terms of ethnic categories Maya could

be classified either as a "Malayalee" by language affiliation, "Keralite or south Indian" by Indian state affiliation or "Protestant" through religious affiliation. They live in an exclusive middle class suburb in New Jersey.

Maya's Self-description

Maya is 17 years old and the younger of two siblings. She is a U.S. citizen by virtue of birth. She is currently a junior in the local public school. In academics, she perceives herself to be a B student. She mentioned excelling in language arts. She shared that she is very meticulous and detail oriented. Maya notes that she enjoys music especially singing, and is part of the choir at her school, as well as the ethnic church she attends. She has taken part in many music competitions run through her school as well as her church and received many awards and accolades for her singing. She notes that she is not much involved in sports. However she participates in the soccer program that is run by the recreation department of her town.

Maya was born in the U.S. while her older sibling was born in India. Although they were born on two different continents, she asserts that their upbringing is very much the same. She perceives her upbringing to be very traditional. Both siblings are expected to follow ethnic cultural norms and traditions, while learning to assimilate into mainstream American culture. Where religion is concerned Maya shares that her family attends church services every weekend. They attend a local ethnic church that caters specifically to people who hail from the Southern part of India. Maya as well as her mother are heavily involved in church activities.

I chose to interview Maya due to her ethnic background, gender and religion. When I first interviewed Maya, she was 16 years old. I interviewed Maya four times over the space of eight months. She is currently in her senior year at the local public school. She mentioned being interested in business and would like to consider business management as her career. However she did lament that the people in her ethnic church would look down upon her for not choosing a career related to either medicine or engineering.

Portrait 4: Introducing Arjun Patel

Arjun's parents hail from the state of Gujarat, located in Northern Indian. Arjun's parents came to the U.S. as students. Both parents have earned doctorates in their respective fields of study. The family lives in a predominantly white suburban area. In terms of ethnic culture, they are "Guajarati" by virtue of state affiliation, "Hindu" by religion, and "Gujarati" by native language. Arjun's parents are naturalized American citizens while Arjun and his sibling are Americans by birth.

Arjun's Self-description

Arjun is 18 years old and the younger of two siblings. Arjun describes himself as being very individualistic, meticulous and goal driven. He states that he has excellent leadership skills and therefore finds himself in positions of leadership, in the school and student governing committee. As a student he considers himself to be a high academic achiever. He is musically inclined and part of the school's band. Further he plays the

Indian musical instrument called the “Tabla” (a percussion instrument comparable to the drums) at the Hindu temple his family attends. Often Arjun accompanies his mother as they perform as a duo, at ceremonies held at the Hindu temple.

Arjun perceives his cultural upbringing to be very modern. Asian Indian traditions are expected to be followed but are not enforced. Arjun stated that he is very close to his older brother and his mother. His brother is currently studying at an Ivy League business school. Arjun mentioned feeling that his brother is smarter than him intellectually and therefore he felt the need to match, if not better, his brother’s academic accomplishments.

I chose to interview Arjun because of his relative socio-economic affluence, the background of his parents, his specific cultural ethnicity and gender. When I first interviewed Arjun he had just finished high school and was preparing for college. I have interviewed Arjun twice. During the second interview he proudly shared that he had been accepted in an Ivy League school specializing in Business Administration. He was excited and looking forward to starting "a new chapter in his life," as he put it.

Portrait 5: Introducing Kyra Mehta

Kyra’s father immigrated to the U.S. due to job prospects. He currently owns his own business. He originally hails from the Northern state of Gujarat in India. Kyra’s mother was born in South Africa and raised in England. However her family’s roots are in Gujarat. Kyra’s parents are naturalized American citizens. Ethnically Kyra’s family

can be viewed as “Guajarati” by virtue of state and language affiliation or “Hindu” by religious association. They live in a suburban neighborhood.

Kyra’s Self-description

Kyra is 17 years old. She is the younger of two siblings. She is a senior at the local public school. Kyra does not consider herself to be a high academic achiever. She mentioned that she is an ‘average’ B student. She is involved in sports and is a member of the school’s varsity soccer team. Kyra also plays for one of the state’s premier soccer clubs. Kyra states that she is musically inclined. She is a member of the school marching band. She is interested in politics and is a member of the student council. Kyra states herself as reserved and polite.

Kyra perceives her upbringing to be shaped by American values. Very few Asian Indian customs and traditions are followed in Kyra’s family. These traditions are followed only when the grandparents are visiting. Kyra does not see herself and her family as being particularly religious. Sometimes she attends ceremonies that are held at the temple, and at other times she accompanies her mother when her mother is performing classical Indian dance for temple celebrations and events. Celebrating Diwali the Hindu festival of lights, and partaking in a few religious ceremonies is the extent of her religious affiliations.

I chose to interview Kyra specifically due to the background of her mother. I wanted to know if the cultural upbringing of her mother made any difference in her upbringing. I have interviewed Kyra three times. During the first interview Kyra shared

being a little overwhelmed with the college application process. She mentioned wanting to pursue a career in medicine and technology although she was not clear of the specificities herself

Portrait 6: Introducing Irfan Ahmed

Irfan's parents were born Indian. Irfan mentioned that during the partition of India after independence in 1947 into India and Pakistan, some family members decided to immigrate to Pakistan while others remained in India. Irfan's grandparents on either side were the ones who stayed back in India. Eventually Irfan's grandparents decided to voluntarily move to Pakistan with their young teen children (i.e., Irfan's parents). Thus Irfan's parents are Indian by birth and Pakistani by choice. They later took on Pakistani citizenship. The parents moved to the U.S. in 1980, and now have U.S. citizens. The family lives in a white suburban neighborhood. Irfan's father is a businessman and owns an ethnic restaurant. In terms of ethnicity, Irfan can be viewed as "Muslim" through religious affiliation, "Pakistani" through country origin or "South Asian" through geographic location. Irfan defines himself as being of South-Asian descent.

Irfan's Self-description

Irfan is 18 years old. At the time of the interview he was a senior at the local public school. He is one of three siblings. Irfan asserts that all three siblings are very close to each other. He considers himself as an average student where academics are concerned. He enjoys playing basketball. He is on the school basketball team and also

plays for a county basketball club. He stated that everyone is surprised that he plays basketball well, since it is perceived that children of Asian Indian descent don't play basketball. In addition, Irfan likes acting and dreams of being an actor in the future. He believes that he is an outspoken and social individual.

Irfan is Muslim by religion. He mentioned that religion is very important to him. When he was younger he attended the religious school run by the mosque. He knows how to read the Koran in Urdu. He is not only fluent in speaking his native tongue, Urdu, but is fluent in writing and reading Urdu as well. Irfan is closer to his mother than his father. He converses in English with his siblings and Urdu with his parents. Irfan stated that his upbringing is traditional where religion is concerned, and modern due to acceptance of American views. He asserted that his mother would have liked for the children to have a more religious upbringing, but due to his father's modern outlook, Irfan asserts that his siblings have a modern upbringing.

The reason I choose to interview Irfan is because of his Pakistani Indian background. His perspective will provide a unique insight into identity formation due to his ethnic background of belonging to both Indian and Pakistani cultures. When I first interviewed Irfan he was 17. He shared being worried about what his mother would think of his career choice, i.e., acting. He mentioned that he lacks application where academics are concerned and therefore is not sure if he could get into a good college, but would do his best to get into a good college in order to please his parents.

Portrait 7: Introducing Vineeth Reddy

Vineeth's parents both immigrated to the U.S. for better job prospects. They currently hold professional jobs in their respective companies. Both of his parents originally hail from Andhra Pradesh, a southern state in India. Their mother tongue is "Telagu." Vineeth is fluent in speaking his mother tongue, but is unable to read or write Telagu. He is also fluent in reading Sanskrit, the language the Brahmin priestly class uses in reciting the slokas. Ethnically Vineeth's family can either be viewed as "Andhrites," due to state affiliation; or "telagu" due to the language; or "Hindu" due to religion or "Brahmin's" according to caste. The family lives in a suburban neighborhood that is close to the public school he attends. Both of his parents are naturalized U.S. citizens.

Vineeth's Self-description

Vineeth is 17 years old. He is enrolled in the local public school. Vineeth is the older of the two siblings. He mentions not being close to his sibling. Academically he considers himself to be an average student. He described himself as being reserved and shy. Vineeth mentioned being part of a community outreach program that is run by his school. He enjoys community service as he feels the need to give back to the community he belongs to. He enjoys playing basketball, but gave it up as he says that he was not tall enough. Vineeth and his friends enjoy role-playing, especially Dungeons and Dragons. Vineeth and his friends' role play in secret, and use code names for characters to refer to

each other in code when in school so as to not run the risk of being ostracized by their peers.

Vineeth considers his upbringing to be religious and traditional. He helps his mother with various programs and events that are run by the Hindu temple. Vineeth belongs to the priestly class and is a Brahmin by birth. He had the thread ceremony performed when he was about 13 years old. His parents hope that he will eventually discharge his priestly duties. When he was younger he attended a religious school to learn the slokas, the Hindu prayers and invocations that are used in religious ceremonies. He mentions knowing all the Hindu slokas by heart.

I chose to interview Vineeth due to his socio-economic background and his extremely religious upbringing. When I first interviewed Vineeth he was in his junior year of school. He is currently a senior. He shared being apprehensive about his future and that he was not sure about his choices but would like to pursue a career in business.

Summary

I chose to give all participants' a first and last name pseudonym. In the Indian cultural context, ethnicity can be identified by the last name and geographic location. The selected participants belonged to middle class families. I was unable to get variation I desired in socio-economic status. When the participants were interviewed for the first time, they were all studying in public schools in New Jersey. By the third interview some participants were enrolled in prestigious colleges around the local tri-state area.

In the next section I will discuss data collection procedures used in this research study.

Data Collection Procedures

Little research has been devoted to understanding the meaning of what it is to be a second generation adolescent of Asian Indian descent in U.S public schools. Specifically how the second generation adolescents negotiate their bi-cultural identities. For this research study, I used the case study research method. The conclusions drawn from the case study contains nuanced understandings of the study participants lived experiences and perspectives. For purposes of theme analysis I compared and contrasted participant responses. In addition, in order to obtain a complete picture of the participant, and a more holistic interpretation of the situation as possible, I interviewed the participants in the setting they were most comfortable at, i.e., their private homes. Merriam (1998) noted that: "The researcher must physically go to the people, setting, site, institution (the field) in order to observe behavior in its natural setting" (p.7).

Where data collection and analysis is concerned Merriam (1998) states that, "… interpretations of reality are accessed directly through observation and interviews" (p. 203). In order to understand participant perspectives I utilized a semi-structured interview. The primary instrument of data collection and analysis are the researcher and the participants themselves. Data collected came from three sources. They were; semi-structured interviews, researcher reflexive journal, and field observations. In the following section I describe each of the data collection procedures in greater detail.

Semi-structured Interview

Research interviews are based on the conversations of everyday life (Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). They have the potential to convey to others a situation from the respondent's own perspective in their own words. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), through interviewing: "… one learns how people see, understand, and interpret their world" (p.195). The interviews document the perspectives of the participants in order to uncover the meaning of their experiences. They call for a deeper understanding of the situation using an insider's perspective. According to Kvale (1996), the qualitative interview seeks to describe the meanings and the lived experiences in the world of the participants. Further, the interview is gathers descriptive data in the participant's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how the participants interpret their world (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 1998).

Researchers note that qualitative interviews can be broadly classified into three categories: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Merriam 1998; Patton, 2002). In a structured interview, the content may be too rigidly set by the researcher and hence the stories and experiences of the participant may be lost. In the unstructured interview sometimes called as guided conversation or open-ended interview (Rubin and Rubin, 1995), the researcher allows the participant to define and direct the content of the interview. In a semi structured interview, there is a possibility of getting comparable data across participants. This type of interview uses an interview guide.

Taking the above reasoning into consideration and, in order to get some comparable data across participants, I used a semi-structured interview process. This approach gives the study participants the freedom to explore further understanding and meanings of their world and the role this plays in the understanding of identity and lived experiences. It was most appropriately suited method for this research study.

A semi-structured interview is conducted with a fairly open framework to allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Merriam 1998; Patton, 2002). This approach uses open-ended questions, some suggested by the researcher and some that arise naturally during the interview. From the initial open-ended style of questions, follow-up questions based upon the responses offered by the interviewee are designed in order to discover more details about the respondent's particular experience (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1998). The semi-structured interview approach provides more focus than just conversation. It allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the participants (Patton, 2002; Seidman 1998). The objective of this approach is to understand the participants' point of view rather than to make generalizations.

The interview process was conducted in three stages. All participants were interviewed three times. The initial interview was conversational, exploratory and consisted of several open-ended questions with frequent use of probes and a flexible sequencing of questions. In addition, I used an interview guides during the interviews when it when necessary in order to get comparable data. The interview guide consisted of general questions that I asked the participants in order to locate them in the research

study (See Appendix 1: Interview Guide Questions). In the second interview I used more probing questions to check for meaning-making. I used a third follow up interview to compare and contrast participants' perspectives. I interviewed some participants a fourth time in order to double check meaning making. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The recordings were then downloaded onto a computer and transcribed verbatim.

Procedure

The initial contact with potential participants was made by telephone and by email. I first contacted the participants' parents by telephone and explained the goals of the research study. Some parents agreed to let their children take part in the study while many disagreed due to time and participant criteria constraints. I emailed a brief synopsis of the goals of the research study to those parents who showed interest. I then arranged for an appropriate time to meet the participants and their parents in their homes in order to gain informed consent. I gained consent from the parents to interview the participant a minimum of three times in the privacy of their homes. Once consent was given, I made an appointment to interview the participants at their convenience.

I began the first interview process by explaining to the participant the purpose of the interview. I explained the format of the interview, indicated the length of the interview, addressed terms of confidentiality and allowed the participant to clarify any doubts in regards to the interview process. I requested permission from the participant to record the interview. Most of the talking was done by the participant; I interrupted as

little as possible as long as they did not stray too far from the intent of the interview. Throughout the process I kept the interview relaxed and conversational. The conversation was recorded with the help of a digital voice recorder. Each interview lasted approximately an hour.

The first interview was designed to establish the context of the participant's experience. I asked participants descriptive questions from a previously prepared interview guide to describe key events and experiences. Because the intent was to extend the information obtained, some of the questions were about “tell me more;" "what happened next."

In the second interview I used probing questions and comments as well as interpretive questions. The questions were designed based on the answers given by the participant from the previous interview. I addressed the interpretations arising from the first interview by asking specific questions, pursuing deeper understanding as I followed up with their explanations and disagreements. I also used examples from pop culture in order to understand what they felt about the portrayal of their ethnicity by the media, and whether the portrayal modified or strengthened their previous perspectives and claims. This helped me gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences and perspectives.

In the third interview I probed for further details and cross checked information when accuracy was in doubt. As mentioned earlier most the study participants were interviewed three times. I needed to use the fourth interview with two participants in order to understand issues that arose in the third interview.

Field Notes

Another research tool I used in this research study was maintaining field notes of the research study through observations. Merriam (1998) asserts "observation makes it possible to record behavior as it is happening" (p. 96). Maintaining field notes as a record of the participant observations helped me notice elements around the participant that the participant may have considered routine. These subconsciously informed their behavior. Some elements that I observed and described were the physical setting, the participants themselves, their body language and other subtle changes in their behavior. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006) and Gay and Airasian (2003), the descriptive part of the observation notes represent the researcher's best effort to objectively record the details of the interview, such as details of setting, the respondent and dialogue reconstruction.

I also reflected and recorded my own behavior in response to the participant's behavior as well as the participant's response to my behavior during each interview. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) and Gay and Airasian (2003) argue that it is necessary to keep a reflection of the interview process in order to minimize researcher subjectivity and prejudices. They argue that the reflective part of the notes is an attempt to acknowledge and control the researcher's behavior and the effect of the researcher's behavior on the participant. Interviews combined with observations enabled me to holistically interpret and describe study participants' perspectives and experiences.

Reflexive Journal

The third data collection research tool that I used for this study was the reflexive journal. I maintained an introspective record in order to track my bias and prejudice that arose during the course of this study. This was a crucial means to continuously and crucially work on my biases and how they may affect the outcome of the study. Researchers, Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (2007), Maxwell (2005) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that it is crucial and necessary to be aware of these concerns, biases and prejudices and how they are shaping the research, and to think about how best to deal with their consequences. Making regular journal entries enabled me to look at the research study holistically. Further, by keeping a researcher journal, I engaged in an ongoing dialogue with myself. Some examples of the reflexive journal entry were: (1). Today I am interviewing Vineeth. The last time his parents interrupted throughout the process. Is there a way to minimize parental interruption and supervision? I feel like they don't trust me. This I am surprised about, I am Indian too. Maybe I should interview him in the library. (2). I interviewed Irfan today at Starbucks, since he wanted to be interviewed there. His sister is with him again and she is one of my former students. Am I compromising the research study by letting her be around? (3). This study is going nowhere. I cannot make sense of what they are saying. I feel like I am not asking the right questions. Got to remember to modify questions during interview two. (4). Think I am doing okay. Got the first theme, I am on to something…"

As evidenced by the above entrees in the reflexive journal, this introspective record helped me to take stock of my biases, feelings, and thoughts, so that I could better

understand how these were influencing the research study and minimize the influences that negatively impact the study.

Data Analysis

All participants were interviewed a minimum of three times. Each interview consisted of the interview transcript, participant observations, and reflexive journal. All interviews were recorded with the help of a digital voice recorder. The purpose of recording the interview was to help preserve the authenticity of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Interviewing each participant a minimum of three times generated a huge amount of data. In order to manage data effectively, I created separate electronic folders for each participant. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. After each meeting, the participant interview was downloaded into the appropriate folder. Once the interviews were downloaded, they were transcribed verbatim for purposes of coding. Each transcribed interview was identified by the date of the interview and the participant name. For purposes of confidentiality, I encrypted all participant files using Windows file encryption software v 1.2. I maintained a backup of all files on a flash drive. I also maintained field notes for every participant that contained descriptive and reflective sections per interview as well as the researcher reflexive journal to maintain a record of my biases.

Data Analysis Procedures

In qualitative research, collecting data and analyzing data occurs simultaneously. In the following section I will discuss procedures of data analysis.

Data collection and analysis was done simultaneously. Merriam (1998) asserts "…the right way to do data analysis is to do it simultaneously with data collection" (p.162). The data of the study came from the researcher reflexive journal, observations and field notes, transcribed participant interviews, and the participants. Merriam states that "Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation and the first document read" (2002, p. 119). Data analysis involves organizing, classifying and categorizing data, and searching for patterns that can be coded for meaning making. Once the interview was downloaded, I transcribed it verbatim. I also made observation entries per interview with each participant. The observations and field notes from the first interview shaped the questions of the succeeding interviews. The questions that were asked during the first interview were general (see Interview One). Some questions asked were: (1). Tell me about a typical day is school. (2). Tell me more about some of the extra-curricular activities in which you are involved. (3).What role do your parents play in selecting academic subjects or extracurricular activities? (4). Tell me about friendships with peers created and maintained in school. These questions and others generated a wide range of responses. I then modified the second interview based on each participant's responses. However, there were some questions in Interview two that were asked of all participants (see Interview Two). Some questions asked were: (1). what are some interesting experiences when visiting India? (2). in what way does your ethnicity

affect who you are? (3).In what way does your Asian Indian culture inform who you are? (4). Why is learning the mother tongue important to you? As in interview two, interview three was modified according to the responses given by each participant. Some of the questions asked in Interview Three were: (1).Were you discriminated against in school, and can you tell me about those experiences? (2). How do you identify yourself and why do you identify yourself in that way? (3). Are there labels that best describe you as in individual? (4). How do you see your culture and ethnicity fitting into U.S. society? (5). what makes you comfortable with the identity you have chosen for yourself?

As a qualitative researcher I used an inductive approach to knowledge development wherein observations were made, general patterns among these observations were noted, and tentative conclusions about the patterns of these relationships were drawn. As the data was being transcribed, it was analyzed and interpreted for meaning making. Analyzing and interpreting data helps the researcher move forward from pages of text to meaning making. The reflexive journal helped in this regard; because I wrote memos to myself as an introspective record of my hunches, perceptions, and frustrations-anything that I felt would affect the method and outcome of the study.

After transcribing all interviews, general patterns were coded. Researchers Bogdan and Biklen, (2006), and Patton, (2002) state that by developing a coding list the data can be sorted into various categories and themes that can be physically separated under various topics upon recall. Some of the coding categories were: friendships in school; academic achievement in school; perceptions of teachers; importance of family relations; understanding the mother tongue; importance of religion; discrimination faced

in school; feelings of difference and marginalization in school; understanding my ethnicity; understanding my identity; and understanding myself. As the data was being coded, I noticed distinct themes emerge. Some of the coded data was organized and categorized around themes that reflected the subsidiary questions of the study, while other data reflected new themes. These themes were the basis for the third and fourth interview. Some of the themes that emerged were: (1). The influence of parents on the lives of the participants. (2). Constant negotiation of identities, racial/ethnic and bicultural. (3). Religion, language and ethnicity as important markers of identity. (4). Emergence of public/ private lives. (5). Acceptance of biculturalism. (6). Difference, discrimination and marginalization in school.

After the third interview I stopped interviewing the study participants because of saturation of information and perspectives as regular themes were emerging in all the interviews. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that it is time to stop collecting more data when "[there is a] exhaustion of sources, saturation of categories, emergence of regularities and over extension" (p. 350). Once the data was categorized and interpreted in themes, I reported the findings from the participants' perspectives using rich descriptions. The data obtained from the participants, observations, and reflexive journal informed me as a researcher to understand the meaning the participants make of their experiences and lives. Since I used the case study method for this research, I developed portraits for each individual participant and then checked across participants to understand what meaning the study participants make of their lives and experiences and how these experiences inform identity negotiation.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that the trustworthiness of a research study is important in evaluating its worth. They suggest four criteria to establish the trustworthiness of a study. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

I established the trustworthiness of this study by satisfying the four criteria as follows.

Credibility of the Research Study

The credibility criteria involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible and/or believable and truthful (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that one of the ways of establishing credibility of a research study is through triangulation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation is a technique "of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible" (p. 305). Triangulation according to Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, (2007) means "… using different sources of data (multiple participants and multiple perspectives), different methods of data gathering or different researchers or collaborators to provide varying angles on the research question." (p.152) I established the credibility of the research by triangulation of sources (participants) and methods (interview, observations and journal) in order to examine for consistency. Triangulation helped me reduce bias in the data, since the findings were cross-checked by involving the perspectives of the sources and different methods. This helped me as a qualitative

researcher to make sure that the findings generated were not from a single source or method or my personal bias.

Transferability of the Research Study

The transferability criteria involves showing that the findings of the research study has applicability in other contexts or settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For the purposes of establishing transferability, I used thick descriptions. Researchers Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), describe thick description as a way of achieving trustworthiness of the research study by describing participant perspectives and phenomena in detail, such that other researchers can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn in the research study are transferable to other settings. The findings of this study cannot be generalized; it deals with a specific context and situation, in this case being the identity negotiation of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent in U.S. public schools whose parents immigrated to the U.S post-1990. However the results and findings of this study can be transferred by other researchers depending on the context of the study.

Dependability of the Study

The dependability criterion emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is the responsibility of the researcher to describe the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affect the research as well change the ways in which the researcher

approaches the study. I established the dependability of the research study by keeping a reflexive journal and field notes of the interview. I documented all procedures taken for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study and to keep the researcher bias in check.

Confirmability of the Study

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is a criterion of trustworthiness of a research study that refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. One of the strategies used to establish confirmability is through a reflexive journal. Lincoln and Guba describe a researcher reflexive journal as a diary in which the researcher makes regular entries during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In these entries, I recorded decisions for methodological changes and the reasons for making the changes based on logistics, context, setting, and my reflection of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and consequences for the participant were taken into account as this qualitative case study dealt with human participants. Stake (2000) notes, "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spheres of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 447). As a qualitative researcher, I considered it my primary responsibility to be aware of ethical issues in research and avoid threats, deception or misrepresentation in dealing

with the study participants. Since I was indeed invading their private space, I tried my utmost to make sure that the participants did not feel uncomfortable and offended by my presence.

In addition, all matters of confidentially were strictly adhered to as set forth in the IRB guidelines. I gained permission from the university's review board (IRB) to conduct the study. I obtained parental consent of study participants since some of the participants were minors. I gained informed consent from the participants themselves and I gave all participants the option to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time. The times and dates of the interview were set at their convenience with prior approval from their parents.

After gaining consent, I maintained participant confidentiality, by securing all data relating to the participants. All interviews were downloaded into my private computer. The interviews were encrypted. Interview transcriptions, observation notes and reflexive journal were secured at my private residence. I ensured the anonymity of the study participants by not including their name or any other identifying characteristics in reporting the results of the study. These strategies helped me maintain all ethical standards related to this study and helped minimize negative consequences to the participant resulting from this study.

Limitations of the Study

Several factors limited this research study. Some factors were due to my positionality as a beginning researcher while other factors were limitations due to the participants. I will discuss these in greater detail.

An Immigrant Mother

Being a mother with two young children limited how far I could travel in order to conduct participant interviews. As a recent immigrant to this country, I did not have a strong communal support or the resources to help with the upbringing of my children. This resulted in being an almost "absent mother." Asian Indian culture tends to marginalize women who are not stay at home mothers. Due to feelings of guilt I made sure to be home when my children arrived from school. Therefore I accessed participants who lived within an hour's drive from my home. This may have adversely affected the quality and data of the participant pool.

Perceived Friend to Objective Researcher

Being of Asian Indian descent I gained relatively easy access to the participants. However this was a limiting factor since I was studying an issue pertaining to individuals belonging to the same culture. Although I did do my best in employing an insider-outsider perspective, I must admit that at times my bias and interpretations may have influenced the interpretation of the study participant's experiences during data analysis. Further, all participants felt very comfortable in my presence; there were times when I

had to consciously move away from being a "perceived friend" to an "objective researcher." There were times when some participants expected advice from someone who had "been there, done that," someone who was not their parent, someone who was their friend. It was very easy to get involved; I saw in them my child and her struggles. I had to consciously stop myself from becoming involved in their lives

Study Participants

All participants came from middle class families with the exception of one study participant. As much as I tried to get variation in socio-economic status I was unable to do so. All participants belonged to middle class backgrounds. Since I used purposeful sampling techniques, most participants recommended others who belonged to their same ethnicity and socio-economic status. I must also mention that I live in a middle class suburban white neighborhood. My first study participant Jennifer lived in the same town as I do and so the participants that she recommended belonged to the same town. Most of the participants recommended came from the same or adjacent towns within the county. Due to time constraints and a lack of support networks, I had to choose from the available pool of participants.

In addition, locating the participants was no easy task. Some of the participants wished to be interviewed late evening after partaking in extracurricular activities. Most of these participants lived in suburban areas that seem isolated during nightfall. I did not feel safe as a woman to interview participants at late hours even if it meant interviewing

them in the comfort of their homes. In this regard I may have missed opportunities to access great data.

Limitations of the research question

The research question was structured to understand meaning making of adolescents of Asian Indian descent. Although I was not looking to generalize findings I hoped to get some comparable data across all participants. I did get comparable data across participants, but due to the inability to obtain diversity in socio-economic status in my participants, I missed out a key component of data that could be extremely valuable to this research as well to other researchers studying Asian Indians in similar contexts. Therefore the results of this study may be transferred to adolescent Asian Indian students who belong to the middle class U.S. society.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed case study methodology and interviewing as the most appropriate method for this research study. I provided in brief portraits of the participants so that the reader will be familiar with their background when understanding nuanced meanings and perspectives of identity in the context of school. I described data collection and data analysis procedures. As mentioned, data collection and analysis was conducted simultaneously. As a researcher I used a critical perspective in interpreting participant meanings and understandings. The main themes that emerged during the research are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

The data is organized four major themes and are presented as chapters in this study. The four major themes are: “Meanings and experiences of culture and ethnicity” in which I analyze the nuanced meanings that the study participants associate with the words culture and ethnicity. I used the same meanings to evaluate the ways in which the participants perceive the need and importance for the preservation of Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. I analyzed the role that Indian culture and ethnicity and American culture plays in the participants' lives and the implications in negotiating a bicultural identity. In “Ties that bind” I discuss the role of friendships and relationships in their lives. In “Perceptions, stereotypes and the reality of discrimination”, I discus the discrimination, alienation and difference felt by the participants in the context of school. I provided an analysis of the implications of the discriminatory labels on their identities. In “Identities of the second generation adolescents” I discuss the negotiation of various identities in response to contextual situations. I argue that these identities work to empower as well as marginalize them in the educational system.

CHAPTER IV

MEANINGS AND EXPERIENCES OF CULTURE AND ETHNICITY

"I am Indian, I look Indian, I feel Indian, but I am American; I know I am American, I was born here, I like it here….what more can I say." Jennifer, D'Souza

This quote succinctly captures most of the study participants' views on Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. In locating themselves as adolescents of Asian Indian descent in the context of schooling, the study participants differentiated between Asian Indian ethnicity and Asian Indian culture. They stated that they are perceived as generic Asian Indians in the U.S while their specific ethnicity was overlooked. In addition, the participants perceived themselves to be Americans of Asian Indian descent and located themselves as bicultural individuals. They argued that due to this perception they were comfortable in ascribing to a nationalistic Asian Indian identity as "Indians" and an American identity as "Americans" in the U.S.

Therefore the central focus of this chapter is to understand and explore the varied meanings of culture and ethnicity and the need for preservation and transmission of Asian Indian culture and ethnicity according to the second generation adolescent children of Asian Indian descent.

In order to gain a better understanding of the role of Asian Indian culture and Asian Indian ethnicity from the participants' perspective and the meaning they attached to ethnicity and culture, I asked each participant during the interview process what

meaning they attached to the words "culture" and "ethnicity." In interpreting their responses I make the argument that the participants keep their Asian Indian ethnicity private and share this ethnicity with other individuals of similar ethnic backgrounds, while their Asian Indian culture is public and shared with others in U.S. society. In addition I argue that due to the influence of their parents, these second generation adolescents believe it to be extremely important to preserve and maintain their Asian Indian ethnicity. Their dualistic frame of reference lends itself to the participants claiming dual cultural membership

"American or Indian or Both"

Asian Indian parents, especially the first generation immigrants, believe that they are "Indians in America" and through their children try to retain seemingly idealized notions of "Indian-ness." From the parents' perspective Indian culture seemed to be synonymous with Indian ethnicity. The Asian Indian parents feel that their Indian culture and ethnicity is vulnerable due to social interactions with the host society and therefore they instill in their children the need for its preservation and maintenance. Their American born children seem to understand the importance of maintaining and preserving their culture and ethnicity. However their view and perspective on Indian culture and ethnicity is different from their parents' perspective.

Varied Meanings of Culture and Ethnicity

Some study participants used the word "culture" to suggest a lifestyle, while others argued that culture was their background, religious traditions followed, and their ethnicity. Most of the participants' responses implied that the meaning of culture and ethnicity was reinforced through strong familial ties: a sort of common 'family culture' that intertwined practicing religious rituals, following traditions, and speaking the native language.

Arjun, one of the participants interviewed noted that culture influences the family lifestyle, culture is a philosophy, a way of being and interacting with others who belong to the same culture and ethnicity and finding one's place within that culture. He summed up the meaning of culture by saying:

> I guess it would mean the lifestyle that exists in a household. I think culture influences the lifestyle. I'm cultural in that I know the social conventions of being Indian, like touching the feet of an elder or having a puja. I know all that. I would say that contributes to the culture. Many times my parents will speak to me in Guajarati. Even though I can't speak it very well, I understand. And then of course, these things I'm doing like playing tabla, it all builds a culture that I don't know too much about. But I am committed to learning more. It's like finding myself. It's about a lifestyle, about a philosophy; you can learn a lot of good things from a culture, respecting lifestyle choices, maintaining an ethnic identity.

In the above quote, Arjun associated the meaning of culture with shared understandings of ideas, perspectives and social norms. These meanings contributed to his understanding of Asian Indian culture. He argued that culture is shared with other individuals through learned cultural traditions, norms, values and ideals. In addition he stated that his culture contributed to his ethnicity and ethnic identity. Here, Arjun implies that Indian culture is common to all members of the Indian community regardless of one's ethnicity. In this sense then culture is an evolving process; dominant views, perspectives and traditions of a society that all its members ascribe to a given period in time. Having a shared membership with others of his culture and ethnicity helped Arjun in self-identification. In Arjun's case ethnic identification was understood as a way of belonging, connecting and having a shared history with others of the same ethnicity while culture was seen as common to all Indians.

Other study participants, specifically Kyra and Irfan mentioned that culture was a personal lifestyle that the family followed which helped them self-identify in relation to others in their own culture as well as others in society. For instance Kyra notes: "We follow the Indian culture and lifestyle at home, even though my brother and I were born here. I don't know much about my culture but I do identify with others who have the same culture." Here Kyra uses the word "culture" interchangeably to mean Asian Indian ethnicity.

In addition to understanding culture as a personal lifestyle, other study participants argued that culture was about perception. For instance Jennifer argued that culture is not only a personal lifestyle choice but also meant how others perceived her as

an individual. She said "I think culture is the way you live, where you are from, and how others understand you." Here Jennifer uses the word culture to refer to both Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. While Maya mentioned that culture is an identifier of her ethnic background. She said: "Culture is how I identify myself here, given my background." She adds "… as a Malayalee I identify with others who speak Malayalam."

Referencing all of the above quotes by Arjun, Maya, Jennifer and Kyra; it seems implicit that both Asian Indian culture and Asian Indian ethnicity are important aspects of their identity. The Asian Indian culture is important because they see it was a way of maintaining common Indian values, traditions, lifestyles, and societal perception while the Asian Indian ethnicity is important due to self-identification and ethnic group membership within the context of U.S. society. Maya further posited that it is important to remain connected with her Indian culture and ethnicity. She says that her Asian Indian culture and ethnicity makes her unique and sets her apart from her peers in school. She mentions:

> I want to be a part of my culture as much as I can even though I'm not in a place where it where it happens as much I want it to. Cause in America living in America I go to school, I speak English. I listen to American music. We are completely Americanized now. But our culture makes us unique. So I try to keep in touch with my roots in any way that I can.

Maya notes that even though she would like to be part of her Asian Indian culture, she is unable to do so because of living in the U.S where cultural transactions with others belonging to her Asian Indian culture and ethnicity are few and far between. She argues

that although she tries to keep in touch with her Indian culture and rarely does so, she has learned to accept the norms, the language and the interactions of American culture. Maya's frustration of not knowing enough about her Asian Indian culture, belonging to two cultures and self-identification with both is evident. She states that although she is American by birth, it is her Asian Indian culture that she perceives makes her unique.

Similarly, other study participants asserted dual cultural membership. For instance Vineeth says, "I belong to both, Indian and American, but I think I am more like Indian;" while John argued, "I will be Indian no matter what, I identity with them, but was born here so I am American too;" and Kyra argued: "I am American, but I am Indian too." Reiterating all of the meanings of culture, it is evident that there is a degree of self-identification associated with meaning of Asian Indian culture and well as American culture. While all participants identify with American culture, the participants argue that they will identify more with Asian Indian culture.

However there were some aspects of culture that they chose to not share with others. John notes that because of others perceptions he chooses to not share his ethnicity. He states: "… they don't understand, why share". What John is implying here is the characteristics that make up his ethnicity as a "Malayalee", he chooses to not share with others in society. Other study participants too differentiated between their Asian Indian culture and Asian Indian ethnicity. The study participants argued that the Asian Indian culture was common to all Indians and therefore they identified with the culture. In addition U.S. society perceived them to be of the Indian culture. All Asian Indians regardless of the country they immigrate to, share common ideals, values, norms, and

traditions as 'Indians.' Therefore the study participants identified with the Asian Indian culture.

Some study participants noted that they willingly shared their Asian Indian culture with their friends. Jennifer, Arjun, Maya and Kyra mentioned that their friends are always interested in their Asian Indian culture such as Indian movies, music, dress, food, customs and traditions. Jennifer states: "They want to know more about the movies and …oh specially the dresses. They feel it is so colorful and bright." But Maya and Kyra stated that although they share their Asian Indian culture willingly, their ethnicity was shared with friends rarely. Kyra asserts that although she surrounds herself with American friends, she still has an Indian ethnicity that she shares with others only when they are interested. She says:

> I obviously live in America; I speak English other than the languages I'm taking in school. I surround myself with mostly Americans, and then I have another side, an Indian community. So I share that side with my friends sometimes when they are interested, and then I have other customs and traditions that I share with others of my community.

Similarly, Maya and some other participants stated that they would share their Asian Indian ethnicity with others when necessary. Maya states: "Sure I am Indian, they know that, but I am a Malayalee too, they don't know that." While Vinneth notes: "I am a Brahmin, you think they understand my customs, no, but they understand I am Hindu and Indian."

As suggested by the above quotes, the participants perceived that their friends were interested in their Asian Indian culture and not in their ethnicity and therefore shared only those aspects of ethnicity when necessary, while Indian culture was shared willingly. These study participants understood ethnicity to be related to commonalities in language, religion, religious traditions, and parental home town/ state affiliation in India. All participants mentioned that they did not know much about their Indian culture even though they were capable of identifying with it. However, they mentioned that they were involved in their ethnicity at home and in their community. The participants added that the degree of their involvement in their Asian Indian culture and ethnicity depended on their parents.

Accordingly, the Asian Indian family, especially the elders and parents provide their American born children with their first experiences as members of Asian Indian ethnic group in the U.S. All participants mentioned that they were either directly or indirectly influenced by their parents to learn certain aspects or "behaviors" that were believed to be necessary in order to be part of the ethnic group. They had to learn traditions, customs, ideals and values in order to have a shared membership with others in the group. In having a shared ethnicity, the participants and their parents understood themselves in relation to others as members of the Asian Indian diaspora in the U.S.

With regards to ethnicity, there is a distinction in the portrayal of ethnicity between individuals who belong to the same Asian Indian ethnicity, and the Asian Indian culture as portrayed to U.S. society. Most Asian Indians share a common culture in that they are Indians hailing from India. This contributes to their nationalistic identity as

Indians. Factors such as religion, language, and parent's place of birth contribute to ethnicity.

The study participants perceived ethnicity to be due to religious affiliations such as: Muslim, Hindu, and Christian; on linguistic affiliations: Kannada, Hindi, Guajarati, Tamil, Telagu, etc. and the geographical location in India from which their parents originally hail (i.e., North India, South India) or the Indian states (Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, etc.). Affiliation to any of these groups, "sub ethnicities" play an important role in India in individual and group self-identification. Ethnicity in India becomes an important marker of identity however in the U.S. the role of these ethnicities is private. All Asian Indians immigrants ascribe to a nationalistic identification as "Indians in America" while the second generation take on dual identifications in which certain aspects of their ethnicity are private and shared with those who belong to the same ethnic community.

In the U.S. self-identification with other members speaking the same language and belonging to the same religion plays an important role in the private lives of the individual. This ethnicity based on members having similar shared characteristics in religion, language and parental birthplace is private whereas the shared common Asian Indian culture is public and shared with others in U.S. society. It is this common Asian Indian culture that the participants noted that they were willing to share with others, while their ethnicity being private was shared with those of similar religious, linguistic and background affiliations.

In the following sections I analyzed two major factors, religion and language that contribute to the Asian Indian ethnicity and Asian Indian culture in the context of the public/ private lives of the study participants. In addition I will analyze the ways in which religion and language help in the preservation and maintenance of Asian Indian ethnicity and Asian Indian culture.

Preserving Ethnicity and Asian Indian Culture

As evidenced in the previous section on meanings of culture and ethnicity, most of the participants interviewed differentiated between their Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. Based on the influence of Asian Indian ethnicity, Asian Indian culture and dominant American culture, popular ideas and perspectives, most participants claimed that having dual cultural membership (Indian and American) is very important in their lives.

Where Asian Indian ethnicity was concerned, all study participants noted that ethnicity was very important for purposes of self-identification with members belonging to the same background. In this regard the study participants mentioned religion and language to be two major factors contributing to their Asian Indian ethnicity. Some participants saw the practice of religion, and religious traditions and beliefs as a major contributing factor towards the preservation of ethnic culture and an integral part of their ethnic identity, while others interviewed saw the usage of native language as important. All study participants mentioned that learning the native language or 'mother tongue,' practicing their religion and religious beliefs, following cultural norms and traditions was

important to their parents as their parents saw these factors as ways to preserve the Asian Indian culture and ethnicity in the U.S.

Preserving Ethnicity through Language

In the previous section on meanings of culture I stated that the participants have private lives, depending on whether they wished to share their Asian Indian culture or Asian Indian ethnicity. I argued that most of the participants interviewed were unwilling to share their ethnicity/ private lives with others. One of the factors contributing to ethnic identity that was considered private, and to be shared with others of the same community was speaking the mother tongue. By "mother tongue," I mean the language spoken as a regional/ community language or a dialect of the official scheduled languages of India.

In this section I will analyze the ways in which language, specifically speaking the mother tongue helps preserve Asian Indian culture and ethnicity in the U.S. In order to understand the role of language I will first analyze what "mother tongue" means to the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent and the ways in which the mother tongue and other expressed languages are pivotal in ethnic identification.

Mother Tongue, an Ethnic Identifier

The Indian subcontinent is linguistically diverse. Each state in India has its own unique language. Therefore if an individual hails from the southern state of Tamilnadu, then the individual would be able to speak ‘Tamil,’ the common language of the people of Tamilnadu. However, people from all Indian states speak “English” and “Hindi;” the

two languages that are the most common modes of linguistic communication. Hindi is considered the official language of India while English is considered the official subsidiary language (Census of India, 2001). Schedule 8, article 344 (1) and 345 of the Indian Constitution lists English and Hindi as the official languages of the Indian union. Hindi is the official language of India, and English is classified as the 'other' official language. English is widely used for all commercial, judicial and educational purposes. Hindi is primarily spoken by a vast majority of India as not only an official language, but as the "mother tongue" of people belonging to the geographical location of Northern India.

Immigrants from India to the U.S. bring with them linguistic diversity as well as other cultural and ethnic factors. One of the ways that the first generation Indian immigrant parents stress the preservation of culture and ethnicity to their children is through learning the native language or their "mother tongue." Accordingly, the native language could either mean learning the mother tongue in the household, learning the official scheduled language which is also a state language of India or learning the official language of India, i.e. 'Hindi.' Those individuals who claim an ethnic regional membership and identity, most often learn an official scheduled language as their mother tongue in their homes, while those who claim a nationalistic identity as an Asian Indian claim that 'Hindi' is their mother tongue and learn Hindi at an Asian Indian school that caters to learning the national language of India.

Some study participants interviewed mentioned sharing a closer bond with other individuals having the same kind of linguistic background. For instance Maya notes: "I

don't speak Malayalam very well, but I do understand it. I feel closer to others who speak Malayalam; we seem to have the same background." While Arjun argues, "there seems to be an unspoken bond with those who speak Guajarati, but it is not shared with all… with others its either English or Hindi is spoken." In addition Irfan states: "…I feel closer to those who speak Urdu, there is an instant connection." And further he adds: "…I cannot speak with everybody, only those who are in my community and my home."

In the above section, it is clear that the regional language contributes to the ethnic identity of the participants. Additionally the regional language is shared with others who belong to the same community. Therefore language (regional and mother tongue) is part of their private lives and is shared with others who belong to the same background. For instance Arjun notes that there is an unspoken bond with those who speak Gujarati which is not present with others. There is a further distinction here. Communicating using an official language of India (English and/or Hindi) with other Asian Indians contributes to their public lives while communicating in their mother tongue is part of their private lives and reserved for those who belong to the community.

There is a societal perception that by virtue of being of Indian descent, most individuals need to know the official language of India, i.e. 'Hindi'. Therefore when the study participants were asked about their mother tongue some readily confirmed it to be Hindi, which may not be necessarily true. This was noted in two of the participants interviewed, Jennifer and Kyra. Both Kyra and Jennifer mentioned Hindi to be their mother tongue, when in actuality Kyra's mother tongue is Gujarati and Jennifer's is Konkani. Both claimed to not know their actual mother tongue as it was not spoken in

their homes. However they did mention that it was important that they learn 'an' Indian language, and in both cases it was Hindi. Both Kyra and Jennifer felt that if they know to speak Hindi they were not only sharing their Indian culture but were also preserving their Indian ethnicity. When asked if they would ever want to learn their mother tongue, both argued that even if they did, they wouldn't be able to share with others.

The importance of native language usage or the "mother tongue" as a marker of ethnic identity was stressed by some participants interviewed. This thought was echoed by John who noted: "…I had to learn the language. They felt that is was in my best interest to learn." While Jennifer mentioned: "My mom and dad really wanted me to learn the language, so that when we visit India we could talk and connect to our extended family." The thoughts shared by John and Jennifer emphasize the value first generation Asian Indian parents place on learning the native languages of India. Second generation Asian Indian children are actively encouraged to learn their native language or the language spoken in the household, their "mother-tongue." Immigrant parents hold the perception that expressing the native language is necessary, and vital for collective cultural identification and to make sense of the complexity of their American born children's bi-cultural identity.

As alluded to earlier, learning the mother tongue is accomplished by either learning the language at home or by taking classes after school or on the weekend. In the New Jersey tri-state area there are many private institutions that cater to learning the languages of India. Asian Indian parents that enroll their children in such schools often go to great lengths to make sure that their children actively participate in the learning

process. Jennifer mentioned that her mother drove her to an institution that catered to learning the Hindi language every weekend so that she could learn and familiarize herself with Hindi. She mentioned: "…I was not of driving age then, but my mom drove me. If she could not do it, she had a neighbor take me. We carpooled sometimes." Arjun noted his mother made sure that he did not miss a class. He further mentions that it was his mother who insisted that he learn the language as a way of preserving his Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. He said:

> My mom wanted me to learn the language, although I wasn't into it all that much in the beginning. She took the initiative, made sure to drive me to every weekend class. Sometimes she cancelled appointments so that I be there on time. It made no sense to me, but she felt that it was a way of not becoming too American and of course retaining our heritage as well

Similarly John said: "My mom spoke to me all the time. At first I replied in English, she did not give up, sometimes at parties she asked others to speak to me in my native tongue."

This desire to preserve ethnicity through language seems strong among some of the participants' parents. Some participants' parents choose to have their children learn the national language of India, i.e., Hindi as opposed to learning their mother tongue. This was the case with Jennifer and Kyra. Their parents expected them to retain their Asian Indian culture rather than their ethnicity. It is unclear why some of the participants' parents choose a nationalistic view of culture as opposed to native ethnicity. It seems contradictory that the ethnicity which is so dear to all Indians while in India does

not have much significance for some Asian Indian immigrants after immigrating to the U.S. One implication is clear though, all Asian Indian parents fear that their ethnicity and Asian Indian culture will be lost due to contact with the norms of dominant U.S. society and therefore stress the learning of the mother tongue.

As mentioned in the previous section Asian Indian parents feel that their ethnicity and Asian Indian culture are vulnerable to change due to accommodation and adaption patterns into U.S. society and pressures of belonging to a different society, and therefore they do their best in preserving cultural and ethnic values, traditions and beliefs through native language. Further, it seems as if some Asian Indian parents feel that the native language is one of the first aspects of Asian Indian culture that could be lost in succeeding generations and therefore they stress to their children the need to learn the native language or the national language.

Research notes that learning the mother tongue is not something that American born children of immigrants are particularly interested in (Dasgupta, 1982; Maira, 1997). Most participants interviewed noted that they resisted learning the language as it was 'foreign' to them. But as they grew older they began to understand their parents' emphasis on learning the native language. Arjun continues "… I did not understand it in the beginning now that I am older I understand the need to speak for preserving culture."

With regards to preserving Asian Indian culture and ethnicity through language, I make the argument that while the immigrant parents or the first generation Asian Indians directly or indirectly tend to stress the preservation of a cultural or ethnic identification

through language. Their children, the U.S. born, retain the native language if they feel that it is necessary.

As stated earlier, Asian Indian parents feel that it is important to learn the native language as a way of preserving Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. Asian Indian parents encourage their children to speak the language so that they can be able to converse with their grandparents and other family elders who may not be fluent in English. Jennifer mentions: "I need to learn because all of my Indian friends and cousins knew how to speak. But the main reason was that I wanted to communicate with my grandparents." However Maya states that even though it may feel weird, she needs to learn the native language because it is a part of her life and her culture. She says: "I mean I have to get over this and speak, because it's just such a big part of my life, it's my culture."

The need for learning and expressing the native language differed among the participants and their families. While some participants like Jennifer and Arjun were aware of the pressure to learn an Indian language, other participants like John, Maya and Irfan noted that there was no pressure to learn their mother tongue; learning their native language or mother tongue was based entirely on their own volition. Irfan stated that his parents did not have to force him to learn the native language; he just felt the need to learn. He argued:

> I speak Urdu and English, English to my siblings, and with my mom Urdu. It's important to me because when I grow up I'm not gonna always be around American people. To my mom's family, I speak Urdu as well. Not knowing…it's gonna be awkward at times. I'm always gonna wanna know how to speak Urdu.

Speaking Urdu was an integral part of Irfan's ethnic identification. He felt he needed to know the language. Learning and speaking the language Urdu helped Irfan in the process of self-identification with his extended family as well as others in his community. Maya however shared that although she is interested in learning the language and knows to speak well, she chooses to not speak as she is afraid of being ridiculed by others who belong to her culture. She mentioned that while she was younger, she resisted speaking her native language Malayalam, since it did not sound right. Other participants like John, Vineeth and Arjun also agreed that that they resisted learning the language as it sounded strange and felt 'foreign' to them. But as they grew older they began to understand the importance of learning the native language as a way of preserving their ethnicity. Vineeth, a Hindu Brahmin who belongs to the priestly class by birth mentioned that in order to preserve his ethnicity, his parents made sure that he not only learned their native language 'Telagu' but also studied Sanskrit and the slokas. He said:

> My parents said I had to learn Sanskrit, the slokas and stuff. So I attended class on the weekend at a family friend's place, he is a priest. Because we belong to the priest class, we need to make sure that we know and my mom did everything to make sure we did.

Vineeth's parents stress that as a Brahmin and a priest by birth, he needs to have a good understanding of the religious texts in order to eventually continue and discharge priestly duties on his own. In this case, Asian Indian culture, learning the native language, religion and ethnic identity is intertwined. It is difficult for Vineeth to separate his

religion and language from his ethnicity. In Vineeth's case, through language and religion ethnic culture is not only preserved but transmitted to future generations as well.

Preserving Ethnicity through Religion

In the previous section I argued that language was an important marker of the participants' ethnic identity. Linguistic fluency in the native tongue served to maintain and preserve ethnicity. In this section I posit that religion is another important identifier of Asian Indian ethnicity. Practicing religious traditions was seen as important in preserving ethnicity.

Most of the participants mentioned that there is a strong connection between language, religion and ethnicity. Some participants like Irfan and Arjun when interviewed mentioned that it may be possible to some degree to maintain a separation between Asian Indian culture and ethnicity and one's religious affiliation. Irfan notes:

> … I know that religion does play some sort of a role in my culture. But I think it is entirely possible to separate the two. One can feed off the other and contribute to the other, but it is not necessary that religion is the only aspect to contribute to culture.

Although Irfan later went on to mention that religion is important in understanding his ethnic identity as an individual, he does mention that it is possible to separate his religious beliefs from his Pakistani culture. A similar thought was echoed by Arjun who talks about the distinction between religion, ethnicity and Asian Indian culture. He shared:

> I never really saw religion as doing much for me. Ethnic culture yes, certain morals and principles are unique to the Indian culture which I will follow; religion is something that might contribute to the morals… I think I would be more for culture than religion, I don't see religion as having much of a bearing on culture.

In the above two quotes, it seems as if certain norms and traditions that are common to all religions is part of the Asian Indian culture, whereas some traditions or religious practices are specific to the ethnicity. Arjun and Irfan are able to separate religion from Asian Indian culture in varying degrees, but not from their ethnicities and their private lives. Other participants like Jennifer, John, Maya note that religion is part of who they are and is important in self-identification, and that religion cannot be separated from their ethnicity and Asian Indian culture. Where religion is concerned, another implication would be that it is easier for immigrants to assimilate into U.S. society due to the commonality of religion. It might be harder for those immigrants who belong to other religions. It is to be noted that Jennifer, John and Maya are Christians. Since 76% of Americans in the U.S. claim Christianity as their religion, I believe it is easier for John, Jennifer and Maya to assimilate in U.S. society, due to a common perception of religion. In this sense then religion becomes part of their public lives, one they share with others in society. It may be harder for Irfan, Arjun, Vineeth and Kyra to be accepted into mainstream culture because they belong to other religions. Religion therefore becomes a part of their private lives and ethnic identity, one that is shared with others of the same affiliations.

It's even harder for Vineeth because he defines himself through his religion. He is unable to separate who he is from his religion. Vineeth mentions that although he likes the lifestyle in the U.S. he would still continue to be a Hindu. He said:

> I am a Hindu. I am a Hindu by birth and will remain one. I guess you could call me an Indian Hindu. Don't get me wrong. I like the lifestyle here. But this is my religion and I have to be true to my duty of being a Brahmin.

An important understanding about the second generation American born children of Asian Indian immigrants is that the children choose what they want to retain in terms of ethnicity, Asian Indian culture and traditions. This difference in perspective often leads to conflict. Asian Indian immigrant parents often hold on to their traditional values and beliefs while the American born children of immigrants straddle two cultural worlds. Researchers note that the differences in values and beliefs between two generations, the first and the second leads to "intergenerational conflict" (Gibson, 1988; Ogbu, 1992; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Researchers further note the conflict is due to the differences in adaptation and acculturation patterns between immigrant parents and their U.S. born children. This perspective of intergenerational conflict will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Preserving Ethnicity through Visiting Their Parents' Birthplace-India

Another way that Asian Indian parents believe that Asian Indian culture and ethnicity can be preserved is by visiting India, their birthplace. Almost all Asian Indian families tend to live in nuclear units in the U.S. consisting of parents and children. It is

fairly common for members of the extended family, particularly grandparents, to visit for months at a time or for the family to visit them in India as a way of reconnecting with their ethnic culture.

Most Asian Indian families visit India every 2-3 years in order to connect and maintain their Indian roots. Many first generation Asian Indians immigrants to the U.S. have retained close ties with India, maintaining contact with friends and relatives and travelling to India at regular intervals. For the first generation Asian Indian immigrants, visiting India is like going home to family, traditions, customs and views that they have grown up with and hold dear. This is the ethnic culture they feel the need to share with their American born children. This perspective implies that Asian Indian parents are concerned about the vulnerability of culture and therefore feel the need to preserve culture in order to maintain their Asian Indian ethnicity.

With regards to the study participants, Maya, John, Vineeth and Jennifer mention that they visit India as a way of being in touch with their ethnicity. They state that they remain connected with their culture and ethnicity by visiting family and friends and places of interest in India. Maya says that visiting India is a way of understanding her background and learning more about values, traditions and rituals of another country, a country where her parents grew up. She says:

> It is where you're from. It's good to know where your roots are 'cause that's where my parents grew up like you know at my age they were living life so differently in a, you know in a completely different country which different

> values and rules and daily life rituals that you go through. So it's really nice to see all those things that my parents had in their childhood.

Similarly Jennifer notes that is important to visit India so that she can understand her parents' culture and in some ways try to understand herself. She says: "I like to visit India, I not only understand my parents' background, it's like finding myself… Who I am."

Visiting India helps give Jennifer a sense of her roots and her identity. The same thoughts were echoed by most of the study participants. Although stark scenes of poverty and dirt in some areas of India did make some of the participants cringe, for the most part they enjoyed going back so that they could reconnect with extended family, and to explore and understand the birthplace of their parents.

Summary

In this section, I argued that most Asian Indian immigrants felt the need to preserve their ethnicity through learning the native language, maintaining ties with extended families, and through religious traditions. Further, some aspects of ethnicity, especially speaking the mother tongue and religion, were considered private by the study participants and shared with those individuals who belonged to similar backgrounds. These factors are important markers of their ethnic identity and helped them self-identify with others who belonged to the same ethnicity.

Transmission of Ethnic Culture

First generation Asian Indian immigrants bring with them a set of norms, values, preferences and beliefs from their birth country. Some literature on Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. supports the perspective that these immigrants bring with them a strong sense of their native ethnicity and its customs and hope to transmit the values and traditions of their ethnicity to their U.S. born children (Dasguputa, 1998; Maira, 2002). Transmitting ethnicity to their children is no easy task. These parents face many challenges in transmitting their ethnicity to their American born children. Due to a lack of a strong ethnic support/community system, often ethnic beliefs and customs tend to get watered down or modified.

As noted in the previous sections, immigrant parents tend to hold on to their ethnicity because of the notion of displacement of roots. It is true that Asian Indians do adapt and assimilate into the host society. However the need for ethnic retention and transmission is particularly strong among the first generation Asian Indian immigrants. As argued in the previous section, ways of preserving ethnicity to the next generation is through native language acquisition, religious values and beliefs and socio-cultural norms.

Most of the participants, as noted in the previous section, did mention that they were either learning the native language of their ethnicity "mother tongue" or the national language of India i.e., Hindi. Only two participants, Irfan and Vineeth were literate in their native language; they knew to read as well as write the script. The other study participants did know how to speak, but they could neither write nor read their mother

tongue. Further Maya and John mentioned that their parents did not push them to learn the language but rather hoped that they would learn on their own volition.

In addition, there are religious and social customs and beliefs most Asian Indian parents expected their American born children to follow. One such social norm is in the area of dating. Dating is seen in the Asian Indian family as a precursor to marriage only. Friendships with the opposite sex are frowned upon. In terms of religion, certain religious rituals and customs are required to be followed. In the case of Arjun and Kyra religious rituals and customs were not adhered to. Therefore it is quite possible that although the ethnicity was preserved for the current generation, the role of ethnicity in subsequent generations would likely lessen. Even in Vineeth and Irfan's case, although a conscious effort was made to transmit religious views to subsequent generations, it is not clear if the views and traditions would transmit to future generations. Another social norm that was expected to be followed is that elders must be respected due to their age and experience. However, due to the interactions with dominant U.S. culture and adaptive patterns of the American born children many ethnic beliefs are substituted for 'popular beliefs.' These were all potential areas of intergenerational conflict.

Often first generation immigrant parents themselves lack the specific ethnic and cultural knowledge to pass on to subsequent generations. Without communal support it becomes increasingly difficult to transmit ethnicity. Whatever ethnic and cultural knowledge they do try to transmit, their children are unable to apply due to situational circumstances of living in the U.S., as the children are constantly negotiating their own

cultural identities. Nevertheless Asian Indian parents hope that their children will preserve and maintain their ethnicity and cultural heritage.

Nuanced Meanings of Culture

In the previous section, I analyzed the public and private meaning of ethnicity and the role ethnicity plays in maintaining and preserving Asian Indian culture. In this section I will analyze the participants' understanding of culture.

A couple of participants interviewed maintained that it is hard to understand culture and oneself in relation to others when there is no strong communal support system in the U.S. Irfan, a Muslim by birth says: "… I don't mind the culture. I like the culture a lot actually. It's just, I'm never around it so how am I supposed to be used to it." Irfan further mentioned that his culture is American, because he does the same things as other American children. He says: "I think my culture's American. We all relate to each other. We do the same thing, same hobbies. There's nothing different." However he makes a distinction between the American culture and his Pakistani culture. He says that he does not mind the Pakistani culture, but he has never been around it, so he does not know much about it. But he is always around American culture and so he prefers to identify with the American culture instead. Similarly another participant, Kyra mentions: "… I guess my culture is no different than any other American kid and I am okay with it." Irfan and Kyra's view suggests an embracing of American culture due to a lack of an ethnic support system in the U.S. Both Irfan and Kyra mention that their culture is similar to that of U.S. culture because of the existing commonality of a 'popular culture.'

The study participants feel that they have shared interests, values, beliefs, expectations, and perspectives with others in U.S. society and are capable of identifying with it. Due to these shared views Jennifer, John and Arjun maintain that it is just easier to accept American culture, because of the commonality of views and values and belief systems between themselves and their peers in school and U.S. society.

The mainstream American culture is but an amalgamation of common views, perspectives, ideologies and interests held by individuals who belong to the culture. It is therefore implicit that all the participants acknowledge the influence of mainstream American culture in the lives and are capable of identifying with it since they are all part of that culture. All the participants in this study are Americans by birth and therefore find areas of commonalities in music, technology, media, social conventions etc. between themselves and other Americans. This is the idea of 'culture' as understood by Irfan, Kyra and reinforced by Arjun and Jennifer. The commonality of views and perspectives helps them self-identify with American culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent differentiated between the meanings of Asian Indian culture and Asian Indian ethnicity. The participants understood Asian Indian culture as common traditions, customs, norms, perspectives that are shared by all Asian Indians, regardless of their background. They understood ethnicity as specific and related to religion, language and place of parents' birth. To this set of study participants religion and language were two

important markers of their Asian Indian ethnicity. In addition they did not share ethnicity with others due to the perception that it will not be understood. They considered ethnicity to be part of their private lives and shared with those who belong to the same group while Asian Indian culture was shared with others in U.S. society.

Further, immigrant Asian Indian parents seem to be "Indians in America" while their children followed a dualistic frame of reference. To the second generation children, America is home and therefore they were comfortable in adapting the norms and perspectives of U.S. society. The parents' felt that their Asian Indian culture and ethnicity was at risk and therefore encouraged their children to preserve and maintain culture through learning the native language, maintaining ties with extended family, following social customs and norms, and maintaining religious values and traditions.

In the context of school they identified with American culture due to the commonality shared perspectives. Since they were perceived to be Indian due to phenotype, they chose to identify with Asian Indian culture and like their parents identified with 'Indians in America'.

CHAPTER V

"TIES THAT BIND"

"My relationships give me a sense of who I am. I understand myself as not only an individual but I understand myself as the sum total of all relationships."

John, Varghese

Adolescence is a crucial time in the life of an individual in forming a sense of identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). During this period in their lives most adolescents are in a continual process of understanding themselves through interpersonal relationships. In the case of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent, interpersonal relationships play an integral role in formation of their identity. These relationships are compartmentalized into their public and private lives. It is through personal friendships and relationships with family, friends at school and community that enable the second generation adolescent children of Asian Indian descent to understand their negotiated identity.

In this chapter I analyzed the nuanced role of such relationships in the public and private lives of the study participants. I argue that these relationships not only sustain strong ties and mutual understanding that seem to bind the participants to their peers at school, to culture, ethnicity, family, and community, but also help distinguish and compartmentalize their ethnicity and Asian Indian culture into public and private lives. In addition I analyzed the overwhelming influence of parents on the peer friendships developed and maintained by the study participants and the role that social class plays in

creating and sustaining privilege among Asian Indians. Further I argue that the influence of relationships, parents, and privilege in the maintenance of the public and private lives is internalized in ways that promote a notion of a bicultural identity among the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent.

Relationships and Friendships Between Asian Indian Immigrants

Research notes that immigrants of a diasporic culture tend to identify with other immigrants who belong to the same ethnicity and culture (Gibson, 1988; Lee, 1996; Ngo, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001). It is the displacement of ties and familial bonds and the need for a sense of community in a foreign land that bonds immigrants together (Ngo, 2008). In the Asian Indian context, most Asian Indian immigrants tend to identify and bond with other Asian Indians. The shared perspectives of culture, traditions, and languages, and most importantly the understanding of being an immigrant in a foreign land tends to seemingly solidify the bond among Asian Indians in the U.S. In a later part of my discussion, I will show that the bonds developed are complex and nuanced and shaped by factors such as ethnicity, language, religion and social class.

The immigrant Asian Indian in the U.S. strives for close relationships with others that belong to their Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. Therefore after settlement in the U.S., many Asian Indians build cultural and ethnic networks with other immigrant families and friends as a way of preserving and maintaining their ethnicity. Due to the adaptation and acculturation problems associated with the process of emigrating, it stands to reason that upon arrival to the U.S., most Asian Indian immigrants try to retain a sense

of ethnic identity by gravitating towards the familiar in a foreign land. First generation Asian Indians try to maintain close ties with their new found community. This allows them to retain a high degree of ethnic identification with other members of their Asian Indian community.

The diaspora of Asian Indians in the U.S. is very diverse in terms of its ethnicity. The members of the diasporic community of Asian Indians in the U.S. hail from not only different parts of the sub-continent of India, but from parts of Africa, United Kingdom, and other countries of South East Asia. Further these members of the community belong to different generations and religions. Within the Asian Indian Diaspora, members affiliate and identity themselves with various ethnicities and subcultures, but, also identify themselves within the broader framework of a common identity of the 'Asian-Indian.'

Some study participants mentioned that it is much easier for their parents to develop and maintain strong relationships with others of their ethnicity in their community. Jennifer mentions that the cultural familiarity and the physical phenotype coalesce to form a common cultural and ethnic background and invokes a shared worldview. She states:

> What's interesting is that is that Indian people happen just to be friends with other Indian people. Like you just find another person who looks like an Indian and you're like oh yeah that's someone I can talk to, it is weird. It doesn't happen with other people it happens mainly to Asians. Like my mom was at church the other day and she saw an Indian outside the church. She went right over to her

> and said hey. Now they are friends. The other day I was in Washington DC for a band trip and I saw an Indian waiting for the bathroom so I went and sat with her and talked to her. I have no idea why, I just did. I guess the familiarity in the way we look and our ethnic background seemingly brings us together.

In Jennifer's quote there is an implicit understanding that most Asian Indian immigrants tend to be bound by shared perspectives, ideals, customs, values and traditions and lifestyles, which is why they retain the sense of familiarity around each other. The fact that they are immigrants, sharing similar hopes and dreams for the future in a foreign land, while retaining remnants of nationalized identity, and patriotism for the country of their birth (i.e., India) brings individuals of various Asian Indian ethnicities together. Thus when one Asian Indian meets another, there is a seemingly instant familiarity, an unspoken understanding of the other Asian Indian, even though the other may belong to another religion, background or ethnicity.

An important aspect of this shared familiarity among Asian Indians is the learning of psychosocial behaviors towards other Asian Indians. Maya posits that her parents are friends with other people of their identified ethnicity. She says that her parents find it easier to talk and be with other Asian Indians because they all have the same kind of experiences in adapting into U.S. society. In addition, Maya notes that one important factor to consider is the 'back –home' experience. She states that the sharing of these common experiences give her parents a sense of belonging and camaraderie with others when meeting at places of worship and other ethnic and cultural get-togethers. Further she says that Asian Indians are just friends with other Asian Indians by virtue of being

Asian Indians. That fact alone is enough to develop friendships and relationships. At one point she said:

> Sometimes my mother finds it easier to talk to other Indian people they talk about the situation in India and then they discuss the situation here. She is always comparing notes. She does not do that with her American colleagues at work. My father too, all his Indian friends get together and talk about back home. This ethnic church I go to, Indians are friends with other Indians. Some parties I attend I see Indians everywhere. All talk about their experiences, and this and that. You don't have to become friends, you just are friends.

Other participants like John, Arjun, Kyra and Vineeth echo the same perspective that their parents are friends with other Indians and have strong relationships them. John notes that he has grown up seeing these types of connections between other Asian Indians. He says that the connections and relationships with other Asian Indians is a form of a deeper connection and is usually automatic; a given.

Summary

As argued in this section, most Asian Indian immigrants seek out other individuals that belong to their community, culture and ethnicity to guide them as they begin the process of adapting into the American culture (Helweg and Helweg, 1990; Purkayastha, 2005). Towards the goal of adaptation and integration, they seek help and advice from other members belonging to the Asian Indian diaspora to make their transition in U.S. society as problem free as possible. They attend various cultural

functions, religious activities, and partake in cultural rituals and traditions held by the community as a way of preserving and maintaining their ethnicity, and Asian Indian culture. They also involve their children in maintaining friendships with other Asian Indians.

Relationships Between the Second Generation Adolescents of Asian Indian Descent

In order to maintain and preserve culture, as well as to have similar experiences, immigrant Asian Indian parents encourage their children to have friendships with other Asian Indians belonging to the same ethnicity and background. Second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent try to maintain close ties with other Asian Indians especially those who belong to the same ethnicity and cultural background as themselves

John argues that when you see another Asian Indian you immediately know what they have been through in the process of immigrating and adapting to U.S. society. It is an unspoken implicit perspective, a belief, an interpretation and a shared understanding that binds most Asian Indians together. John states:

> I feel it's something that I've been brought up with. I don't think it's more like a feeling; it's more of a strong connection. If you ask me what it means, it more of a deeper connection beyond…with the Asian Indian community there's no need for an introduction. I'm actually going to a conference this weekend. Just that camaraderie that comes with it, that connection that you have, just an intimate

> automatic connection with them. I think it's a very strong connection and I think it means a lot to everyone.

All study participants acknowledged the implicit nature of their relationship with other Asian Indians when they came in contact with each other. They noted that with other Asian Indians there are feelings of mutual familiarity, an automatic connection, as John states, which is capable of generating genuine camaraderie. However the number of instances for these kinds of feelings and connections are sparse at best. Some participants mentioned that their relationships with other Asian Indians were limited and different from the type of relationship their parents have with other Asian Indians. John says:

> I know that my parents meet other Asian Indians a lot. I meet them only at church. There are not many second generation Asian Indians in the town I live in, and none in my grade at school. So apart from church and sometimes a family friend who comes to visit us, that's pretty much all the contact I have with them.

John mentions that his parents are in contact with many other Asian Indians from their preferred networks. He notes that he meets Asian Indians only through church and family friendships. Therefore opportunities to form strong connections and relationships with other second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent are limited.

Other study participants also shared a similar view that that their contact with other Asian Indians was limited to family and religious gatherings. Vineeth, Jennifer and Maya posit that their parents encouraged them to have friendships with those of similar backgrounds and perspectives; i.e., the individual should belong to the same Asian Indian

ethnicity. Maya and Vineeth specifically mentioned that they have strong friendships with others of Asian Indian descent, and that their relationships with others of their ethnicity seem to parallel the relationships their parents have with others belonging to the same ethnicity and culture. Maya notes:

> I go to an Indian church. It is much easier I guess because my parents know them and so I know them as well. I really have good connections with their children. In fact I think they are my best friends. We do share the same experiences of growing up in the U.S., which kind of brings us together.

Here Maya argues that the similar experiences of growing up in the U.S. bring together the second generation children of Asian Indian descent who were born in the U.S. Vineeth however mentions that his parents prefer that he have only Asian Indian friends rather than being friends with other peers belonging to different cultures. He says:

> They want me to have Indian friends, so we go to these functions that I sometimes have no interest in attending I will have someone to talk too. But sometimes I don't want to have Indian friends; they are like me, same culture, I want someone different, somebody who likes the same things as I do, not someone who my parents want.

As evidenced in the above quote, Vineeth especially prefers to develop friendships with those individuals who share similar perspectives and interests as he does rather than those who his parents prefer. Vineeth's thoughts are consistent with other study participants who mention that while their first generation immigrant parents prefer closer ties with members of their ethnicity, they themselves prefer maintaining friendships and

relationships with those who share the same perspectives and interests as they do, not only in school but out of school as well.

All the study participants were born in the U.S. Therefore their experiences with other Asian Indians, of ethnicity and culture are very different than that of their parents. Even though Maya shares her relationships with other Asian Indians are the same as that of her parents, the experiences and challenges that second generation Asian Indian individuals' faces is very different than that of their parents. The first generation Asian Indian immigrant is more concerned about surviving and assimilating into a foreign land, while their second generation children are more involved in negotiating the two cultures to which they belong. In the first generation the roots and nostalgia of home (India) lives on; this becomes an important factor in the first generation immigrants' lived experiences, while the second generation not only consider the U.S. their home but deal with latent issues and problems of their birth culture (Berry, et. al., 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). While the immigrant first generation Asian Indian immigrant parents consider themselves as "Indians in America," their children who are born in the U.S. take on hyphenated or bicultural identities (See Chapter VII).

Summary

All participants acknowledged that it is easier to maintain relationships with other individuals who belong to their ethnicity. They argued that it was easier due to their parents maintaining of friendships with each other. The participants also posited that they felt familiar with other Asian Indians due to shared perspectives of culture. In addition,

the participants shared that it was easier for their parents to maintain friendships through preferred networks; however their association with the individuals of similar ethnicity was limited to church and family friends. Therefore even if they preferred to, it was not always possible to develop close friendships, and maintain relationships, with other Asian Indians of similar ethnicity and background.

Relationships and Friendships at School

As mentioned in the previous section, most second generation adolescents of Asian Indian American descent would prefer to maintain relationships with others having the same perspective and shared interests, in school and out of school. Where relationships in school are concerned, most second generation Asian Indian adolescent students tend to compartmentalize, classify and categorize relationships and friendships based on shared interests in academics, sports, extracurricular activities and to some extent ethnicity, based on parental influence. This is best summed by Arjun who mentions:

> I'd say the first group that I classified would be very good friends, people I care about I hold dear and would do things for, help them out, they are ones whose share similar interests like I do. The second group that I know through music lessons, they're good friends, I know the people. If they need something they can let me know, but I don't see them on a daily basis. I don't see them that often so I don't talk to them that much or associate with them that much, just in those specific social settings. For the last group I would say, pretty much whenever my

parents get together with their friends or something, then we'll meet up. We're friends in the sense that we talk and, we share a relationship through our parents.

Arjun categorizes three different groups where friendships are concerned. The first group of friends is peers in school who share similar perspectives and interests. The second group of friends, he meets through a specific social setting such as extra-curricular activities of the school program related to music. The first two groups of friends belong to different ethnicities, not necessarily Asian Indian. While in the last group the friends are family friends who are predominantly Asian Indian. In Arjun's case, relationships with those belonging to the same Asian Indian ethnicity did not have as much value as other relationships that were based on shared perspectives and common interests.

All study participants interviewed mentioned that they categorized and compartmentalized friendships based on ethnicity and shared interests in music, academics and sports, and in some cases based on parental influence. Some participants, specifically Vineeth, and Maya, mentioned that they could not bring their friends who belonged to another culture home for a visit, since their parents would not approve of the friendship. In other words friendships were encouraged; however most second generation Asian Indian students needed to have prior parental approval to bring friends home, especially if the individuals belonged to other cultures. This was one of the issues that led to conflict between the Asian Indian parents and their children. The fact that these Asian Indian parents screened who their children could and could not be friends with led to much conflict: inter-generational conflict. I will discuss this concept in a later section of this chapter.

With regard to relationships, study participants Jennifer and Maya mentioned that they categorized relationships based on friendships in school, in church and friends of the family. Both noted that their best friend would be a family friend. In the Asian Indian community, "family friends" would be individuals that belong to similar ethnicities and background. Maya says that she prefers being friends and maintaining relationships with her family friends, since they share similar lifestyles, backgrounds and religious beliefs. She notes that family friends provide a good balance over school and Indian friends, because that gives her the opportunity to maintain and develop close relationships with them. She says:

> My family friends are more attuned to the same type of lifestyle that I have. I prefer them over the others. Most of them are Catholic, they go to church sometimes. They live around the U.S. Sometimes we plan and meet up in someone's home. Then there are my other Indian friends. When I am with family friends, you can see more of the culture there, accuracy, whereas obviously when I'm with my school friends and Indian friends it's completely different. When I'm with my family friends, it's kind of like a happy medium between the two.

In the case of Maya, family friends are individuals that belong to the same ethnicity, and may or may not have the same religious affiliation. Maya argues that her family friends are a happy medium between Indian friends and school friends. She feels that her ethnicity and culture is accurately represented when she is with her family friends. In Maya's case I interpret that she is able to maintain close relationships with family friends.

Similarly Jennifer mentions that her best friend is someone who she grew up with. Her parents were neighbors with an Asian Indian couple with whom they developed a strong relationship over the years. The children maintained a strong relationship with each other as well. Jennifer posits that this is possible because the two families have similar lifestyles and perspectives. She notes that their parents manage to meet occasionally during the school year, but during the summer they take family vacations together. Jennifer shares that because of the efforts of their parents that they, the children are good friends with each other. She says:

> My parents say that we are like two peas in a pod. We could not have been this close if my parents like didn't maintain their relationship all these years. We practically grew up together. It is so nice when we meet sometimes, we share so much, we share our summer vacations and I think that it may be in some way due to my parents. I have some really good friends but I know that she is my best friend.

Both the quotes by Maya and Jennifer that are referenced above imply that parents are responsible for the cultivation of close friendships of their children. Due to parental efforts both Maya and Jennifer can claim to have a best friend. It should be noted that Maya's and Jennifer's best friends belong to the same ethnicity as they do. Here family friends are not only those who share the same interests but belong to the same ethnicity as well.

Summary

In this section I argued that study participants developed and maintained relationships based on shared interests, perspectives and ethnicity. It was noted that Arjun and John preferred friendships with other students in school who have not only challenged them intellectually but with whom they shared common interests. The rest of the participants maintained relationships with children of family friends especially those who belonged to their same background and ethnicity. I also argued that parents screened their children's friendships and were supportive of their children's friendships and relationships with individuals of similar background.

Role of Parents in Maintaining Relationships

Most participants mentioned that being part of the Asian Indian community and developing friendships with others from similar Asian Indian backgrounds was due to their parental involvement. Vineeth mentioned that his mother was heavily involved in the cultural activities of the community center. Every time his mother went to the center he tagged along and that is why he has many friends from his ethnic background. He mentioned that when he was younger, he felt that he was forced to take part in the cultural activities held by his community and to help out in the community cafeteria. He said:

> When I was younger, I had to take part in the activities, and then I had to work when I go there. I had to go help out and in the cafeteria; I'd have to serve or something. I did not like it all, being forced to do stuff.

He continued by saying that since he is older, the people at the community center ask him about this future plans. He mentions that it is annoying as he has no answer. He says that he wishes he was not so well known at the center. He wishes that his mother was not so involved, because he could spend time with his school friends instead. In Vineeth's case, he prefers school friends over ethnic friends. He feels that he has common interests that he can share with his school friends and that he is unable to do the same with his ethnic friends.

Further, Vineeth says that his parents wanted him to learn classical Indian music, so that he could play during religious ceremonies held at the community center. But he wanted to learn the guitar. Vinneth mentions that his parents were very opposed to the idea of him learning to play the guitar. He says if it was anything to do with Indian dance or music, it would be much easier to get permission, because that would mean being connected to his culture. Playing the guitar was not considered to be part of his culture. He says:

> I just felt like they opposed guitar because it's not in the culture. For Indian dance or music, they would have had no trouble driving me all over the place, but when it came to guitar, if I really pushed to have lessons I'm sure they may have, but I know they're not as inclined. With Indian stuff, it comes a lot easier, because then I can play and help out at the center.

Irfan argues in the same vein:

> Now that I know to read the Quran, I have to go and teach the youngsters at the mosque… But I don't want to; I would rather be doing other things. I sometimes

> feel I have no choice. Don't get me wrong, I love my religion, but why do I have to be so involved?

And Kyra argues:

> I have no idea why I have to go to the temple. I go sometimes because I am forced to. I don't like it; I don't meet anyone there who is a friend. I would rather play soccer at the club, I have many friends there.

As evidenced by Kyra's, Vineeth's and Irfan's quotes some second generation adolescents do not want to be forced into communal activities, or attend religious services, but their parents make them feel as though they have no choice. They are more accepting about partaking in communal activities if they are involved in communal activities voluntarily. Further, Vineeth argues that although he has some friends in the community center, he still prefers to maintain friendships with peers in his school due to shared interests, rather than develop friendships with those with whom he has nothing in common. He feels forced to be involved in the community activities and wishes that he was involved with his community activities voluntarily. Vineeth shared that he is involved in a social work group from his school. These students help out in the community by raking leaves, clearing garbage from sidewalks, serving in the soup kitchen etc. Vineeth argues that would rather help out with his school group than help out his ethnic community at the center. From Vinneth's quotes I interpret that he does not feel an affinity towards the Asian Indian community's communal activities due to parental pressure, and to other Asian Indian peers at the center due to a lack of shared interests.

Meanwhile study participants Maya, John and Arjun indicate that they like being part of the communal activities of the Asian Indian community. They actively participate in activities that are organized by their community and have developed good relationships with other members of the Asian Indian community. Maya mentions that she spends lot of time at church with her friends. She shares that she is part of the youth group at her church. One of the ways of connecting with the younger generation at the church community is by having conversations about their school life and personal life. She says that if she wanted to hang out with them, it would be easier because their parents know each other and thus their friendship would be approved and sanctioned. She shared that she is in the music ministry and loves singing during services and that her parents approved of her involvement.

Similarly Arjun shared that he plays the "tabla" the Indian version of the drums. He indicated that he accompanies his mother on the tabla when she sings for religious gatherings held by the temple. He shared that he has even provided accompaniment to other musicians in concerts held by his community. Arjun mentioned that he felt extremely proud when the members of his community at the temple asked him to play at various religious conventions held in the tri-state area. He notes:

> I felt so proud when they asked me to play. I mean I am just in school and playing with all these great musicians is a once in a lifetime opportunity. In the beginning it bothered me to go to the temple, but my parents never forced me. Even now, I go when I want to and I play when I feel like it. But playing at that concert gives me bragging rights among other members of the community.

When Arjun mentioned strong relationships with the Asian Indian community, he actually meant relationships with members who belong to the same religious ethnicity, i.e. 'Gujarati Hindu,'

It is noted that when the participants mentioned being involved in the community center, they actually meant community centers that were centers run by the religious sect they were affiliated with. In Arjun's and Vineeth's case, they are community centers run by different sects of the Hindu religion. Both Arjun and Vineeth and their parents follow the Hindu religion, however the sects of the religion are different. While Vinneth is a Telagu Brahmin, Arjun is a Gujarati Brahmin and both are Hindus. Modes of worship vary according to ethnicity.

Therefore in the case of these study participants, 'community center' actually meant a religious center. Almost all participants had strong relationships with their religious community with the exception of Vineeth who felt that he was forced by his parents to be involved in the activities. When the study participants were not forced by their parents to be part of the Asian Indian community, they felt good about themselves and maintained strong friendships with the community members including religious community members in various capacities, thus identifying positively with the Asian Indian ethnic community to which they belonged. But when forced to be part of the community as in the case of Vineeth, and in some specific situations Kyra as well, they did not feel good about themselves and it negatively impacted their identity.

Parental Interventions and Issues with Relationships

As noted in the previous section, sometimes immigrant Asian Indian parents disapproved of their adolescent children's friendships, specifically if the friendships involved individuals that did not belong to the same ethnicity. Jennifer shared that she brought a school friend home one day and her mother mentioned to her that she did not approve of her friendship because she was Italian American. Jennifer's mother felt that there would be nothing in common between the two cultures and therefore disapproved of her daughter's friendship. Jennifer indicated being sad and confused, but believed she understood her mother's concern. Similarly Maya mentioned that is stressful to bring a friend home if parents don't approve of them. She posits that it is especially stressful if the friend belongs to another culture. And so to avoid stress and conflict she chooses to not bring home friends who belong to another culture.

Vineeth mentioned that he has many friends who belong to the same ethnic background and religion. Although he previously mentioned that he did not have friends at his religious community, he clarified that he did have friends that belonged to the same ethnicity who visit his community center when religious and cultural functions are held. He stated that these friends lived around the tri-state area. They visit his community center and temple for religious gatherings. He notes:

> … sometimes we meet at the community center, our temple runs it and sometimes we meet at functions held by the temple. Sometimes I feel like I don't want to go, but then I do because my some friends will be there. Makes things a little easier… Makes like my parents definitely happy.

Vineeth indicates that his parents are happy when he visits the temple voluntarily. Also, it should be noted that the friends that Vinneth mentions in the above quote are family friends.

Most of Vineeth's family friends belong to the same religion as he does i.e., Hindu. Vineeth's parents approved of these ethnic friendships while other friendships, especially the ones developed at school were frowned upon. Irfan too mentioned that his parents, especially his mother, preferred that he have friendships with others belonging to the same religion i.e., Islam. He laments that cannot bring his two best friends (one of African American descent and the other of Puerto Rican descent) home. He says:

> They are my best friends, but I cannot bring them home. My mom doesn't like it and I don't know what my father will say. She wants me to have friends of my same culture at the mosque, I am not sure I like them, we have nothing in common. My friends we play basketball, .and we have each other's backs. I meet them after school or on weekends, but I cannot bring them home.

In the above referenced quote Irfan's parents do not want him to develop friendships outside his ethnicity and religion. Irfan shared that his mother feels that he is becoming too westernized by having friendships outside his culture and therefore disapproves of his school friendships. At a later stage in the research interview, Irfan confirmed that his mother did not want him to have friendships with others belonging to a different ethnicity because she is worried that the Islamic culture might somehow be lost because of individuals who embrace mainstream ideas and perspectives. Irfan indicated that his mother argues that their religion has beliefs and traditions that are frowned upon by U.S.

society, due to a lack of understanding of the Islamic religion, and therefore strongly recommends that Irfan not develop friendships with other individuals outside his ethnicity and religion. In it very clear in Irfan's case that his mother prefers that he have a religious identity as a Muslim first and foremost, rather than a cultural South Asian identity.

Not all study participants' friendships were based solely on parental approval. As some study participants stated, relationships with other individuals depended on their familiarity with the Asian Indian culture and ethnicity.

Maya notes that it is easier to bring a friend home from school if that friend is of the same ethnicity. She mentioned having conversations with her friends from church about how unusual it is to have her school friends who belong to another culture over at her home. Maya shares that it is sometimes hard for her school friends to understand her culture and ethnicity even though they belong to the same school and belong to the same community. She mentions:

> I might have a few friends together but I don't see that just happening because of how we were brought up; the two different cultures. I think that my church friends and my family friends would have an easier time adjusting to culture than my school friends adjusting to my culture. I feel like, I don't think they would be able to understand our culture.

From the above quotes, there seem to be two factors at play when discussing relationships and friends; one is parental approval, and the second is a presumed lack of understanding of Asian Indian culture and ethnicity by the participants. In other words, it

is easier to maintain friendships with individuals of the same ethnicity because parents approve of such friendships. A major reason is the preservation of Asian Indian ethnicity and culture and the commonality of shared perspectives, ideals, norms and traditions. The second factor framing the relationships is a perception on the part of the participants that others will not understand their ethnicity which may or may not be the case. Therefore ethnicity becomes part of their private lives. In the above quote Maya uses the word 'culture' to mean ethnicity. She argues that her school friends may not be able to understand her ethnicity while her church and family friends would.

A third factor that contributes to issues with relationships is the participant themselves. Some of the study participants mentioned that they cannot maintain strong relationships with individuals who do not share the same interests and perspectives as they do even if they belong to the same ethnicity as themselves. Arjun's and John's relationships were based not only on criteria of shared perspectives but also on the level of educational achievement of the other individuals. Arjun notes:

> …Individuals who share similar interests with me or are involved in many clubs and activities and organizations as I'm in. And they have to be academically gifted as well. Additionally sometimes we likely hang out in a social setting. Maybe afterschool, before school, I've considered those to be good friends of mine.

In Arjun's case a strong relationship with other individuals is fueled by similar interests and a high level of academic achievement. In other words, it did not matter which ethnic culture the other individual belonged to so long as there existed some areas of commonalities between the participants and the individuals concerned. Thus, in the case

of Arjun and John the quality of the relationships maintained and friendships cultivated was dependent upon the value placed on shared interests and perspectives. John especially uses intellectual excellence as a standard to cultivate friendships and to better himself academically. He notes:

> Don't get me wrong, but I cannot make friends with every Tom, Dick and Harry. For me to be friends with someone is to be challenged by them on an intellectual level. They have to be really smart, in honors or AP classes. I feel that I can better myself if I have such friendships.

He further mentioned that it did not matter which ethnicity the school friend belonged to as long as he was challenged intellectually. He posited that his parents approved of these intellectual relationships.

This attitude on the part of the participant makes it problematic when it comes to maintaining school relationships with other students of Asian Indian descent. One of the reasons is that most of the individuals, whom the participants considered academically excellent, were peers who like the participants belonged to the middle class in society. These students have the capital, as well as opportunities, along with parental support to strive to achieve academic excellence. Not all students have the opportunity to do so. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that maintaining friendships with peers who do well in school is a typical privileged upper- middle-class mentality among most immigrants. This is because immigrants, specifically Asian Indians, see education as a vehicle to socio-economic success. Therefore they develop and maintain friendships with other peers in school who could be instrumental in attaining their academic goals.

But the friendships developed and maintained in school with other peers with similar academic achievement seemed superficial at best. As Arjun notes:

> You can never really have a best friend. Once you are finished with school the friendship has run its course, where do you go from there? In college you meet new people and will be challenged by different issues. I don't know, but I have a feeling that is impossible to maintain these relationships, as most can be speculated upon. I have some great friends that I think with all of us going to different colleges; it will become increasingly hard to keep in touch. It remains to be seen what happens when are all home for the holidays. It's not going to be the same.

There seems to be an acceptance of relationship finality in Arjun's tone. It is unclear whether he is sad about the change or whether he is implying that there will always be other opportunities for lasting friendships and it is okay to have superficial relationships that work to one's advantage so long as it helps in individual enablement.

With regards to the participants' parents, both John and Arjun mentioned that their parents approved of their intellectual relationships with the peers from school and that it did not matter to their parents which ethnicity their friends belonged to. They stated that they were able to bring these friends home and implied that their parents knew each other as well. They forcibly stressed that these friendships were based on the criteria of successful academic achievements. What they failed to mention was that all the individuals that they had intellectual friendships with were of Asian or Asian Indian

descent. There seems to be a selection within a selection on the part of the participants where relationships were concerned.

It is unclear whether it is actually academic achievement that brings them together or whether it is their Asian or Asian Indian culture that brings them together. It may be a combination of both factors. These second generation Asians Indian Americans do develop friendships with other Asian Indians outside of school, but where the maintenance of strong relationships is concerned, some second generation Asian Indian Americans tend to develop friendships with peers who hold similar perspectives, who are gifted academically and, who could be Asians or Asian Indians as well.

Some literature on academic achievement of Asians in general documents that Asians in general use education as a vehicle for upward socio-economic mobility (Asher, 2002; Gibson, 1988; Lee, 1996; Maira, 2002; Ogbu, 1987; Portes & Rumbaut; 2001). Further some immigrant literature documents that some immigrant and second generation students tend to associate themselves with others of superior academic aspirations (Asher, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). These views perpetuate stereotypical notions of the Asian student as being hard working and academically gifted and lends itself to the concept of the "model minority." Asian Indians as part of the Asian group are considered part of that model minority which many researchers have posited is nothing but a myth. In the next chapter (Chapter VI), I will discuss the idea of the model minority as a stereotype and include various nuanced perspectives, including the model minority understanding as important for the formation of the second generation Asian Indian bi-cultural identity.

Summary

As argued in this section, parents play an important role where the relationships of their children are concerned. Parents in this study expected their children to maintain relationships with others of their ethnicity and background. Most of the participants did have strong relationship with peers in their ethnic community. In addition, some participants maintained friendships with peers whom they considered to be academically accomplished as an avenue of self-betterment in academics. It was observed that those individuals whom the participants considered to be superior in academics were of Asian and Asian Indian descent.

All the above sections stress the role of parents in the lives of their adolescent children. In the following section I discuss the relationships of the adolescents with their parents.

Relationships with Parents

As mentioned in the previous section, where their adolescent children's friendships are concerned, immigrant Asian Indian parents play a very important role in the cultivation and maintenance of relationships. All participants have indirectly or directly alluded to parental role and approval as necessary for friendships. Further some study participants, especially Maya, Vineeth, Irfan and Kyra, note that usually immigrant parents (including theirs) stress that it is important to have friends among peers of their own ethnicity as a way of preserving their Asian Indian ethnicity and culture.

Preservation of Asian Indian culture and ethnicity, and educational success is a recurring theme among Asian Indian families. Even where friendships and relationships of their children are concerned the goal seems to be the preservation of culture. As previously evidenced most immigrant Asian Indians maintain strong and lasting relationships with other Asian Indians. It seems implicit that their children, the second generation U.S. born are expected to be friends with others belonging to the same ethnic culture as well. The commonality of background, ethnicity, culture, similar lifestyles, the 'back home situation' acculturation and adaption patterns, norms and perspectives bind all Asian Indians together.

As noted in the previous section most participants were comfortable having friends of the same ethnic culture. These relationships were approved by their parents who believed that developing and maintaining relationships with others of the same ethnicity was one of the ways of preserving Asian Indian ethnicity. Where relationships with peers in school are concerned, most participants shared that they have many friends in school. All study participants distinguished between the many friends in school as acquaintances, and close friends as friends who were academically gifted. Some study participant's preferred to maintain close relationships with those individuals who were as academically gifted as themselves. All study participants posited that their parents encouraged them to maintain friendships with individuals who belonged to their ethnicity, who were understanding and aware of the Asian Indian culture, and who were academically gifted.

In addition, all study participants stated that their parents were actively involved in their lives, some more so than others. However they indicated that although both parents were actively involved in their lives, the role of parental involvement was quite different. All study participants saw their mother as being more available to them emotionally than their father. In this regard John mentions:

> I am more closer to my mother than my father, I feel like she gets me, she understands me. Of course I will go to my dad if I need something, but the initial point of contact is my mother. Sometimes she softens the blow when it comes to speaking to my dad about me or my siblings. Let's just say that my dad is there for the big things, but my mom she is always there.

Similarly Jennifer mentioned that it was her mother who was more involved and attuned towards her needs than her father. Jennifer mentioned that her father worked long hours. Although he was present on the weekends, for the most part he was not available. Similarly Irfan shared:

> If I need anything, I go to my mother, she is always there. When I want to go out with my friends, I ask my mother first. Same if I want to go to the movies. My mother understands my feelings. My father too, but it's different, he is always working so he is never around and he is strict.

Immigrant Asian Indian parents seem to play traditional parental roles as evidenced by the above quotes. With the exception of Irfan, both parents (mother and father) had professional careers. Among these parents, it was the father who was the breadwinner of the household, someone who not only provided financial and physical stability but at

times was emotionally distant from his family. It was the father who was the chief disciplinarian in the household while the mother was the nurturing one who was always available and provided the required emotional support.

In addition, all the study participants seemed to identify more with their mother than their father. Maya, Jennifer and Kyra mentioned that even though their mother could be annoying at times they were glad that their mothers were involved and engaged in their lives. It is interesting to note that the girl participants of this research study found their mother's involvement and attitude annoying at times, while John, Irfan, Arjun spoke very highly of their mothers. Surprisingly all participants noted that it did not matter that their father was not intricately involved in their lives, it was expected as part of the culture and ethnicity of the family. Arjun sums up this perspective well by saying:

> My father works long hours and late sometimes, I know we are important to him, but he does not need to show to us that we are important. We know that, it is a given. It is kind of expected that he is absent from our dinner conversations. My mother is the one who is always around. And this is not just my family I have observed this in other Indian families as well. It seems typical of Indian culture.

The notion of the absent father seems typical in the Asian Indian culture. The father works hard to make sure his family is economically well provided for while the mother provides emotional support. This view of the traditional roles and expectations of parents in the lives of their children is a norm in Asian Indian culture.

As mentioned in the above section, the father not only maintained the role of a strict disciplinarian, but also was an 'absent parent' in the case of some study

participants, in order to justify the financial expectations and ambitions of the family. Even with the father being absent, there were not many issues of inappropriate behavior as 'shared by the participants. The study participants indicated that their inappropriate behavior as individuals is a reflection of bad upbringing and brings shame to the entire family. Therefore they all strongly asserted that they would not do anything in terms of behavior and attitude that would be considered disgraceful and bring shame to the family.

The influential role of the parents was a major recurring theme of this chapter. Another important view that showcases the importance of parental role in their children's lives was the perspective of sacrificing friendships that do not meet parental approval. It was noted during the interviews that sometimes the participants sacrificed their relationships with friends in order meet with parental approval. As Jennifer mentions:

> I was very close to this person from school and I brought her home one day. My mother made it very clear that she did not like her. I was angry at first and then sad and then I realized maybe my mother is right after all and so I am not friends with her anymore. My mother is more important than my friend anytime.

Similar thoughts were echoed by Irfan and Kyra who mentioned that they would definitely take their parents views and opinions into consideration in matters of academic choices, relationships, etc. These study participants looked towards their parents for approval in all aspects in their lives. This deferential attitude on the part of the children towards their parents is present in a collectivistic culture wherein there is a strong interdependence between parents and children (Bhatia, 2007; Maira, 2002).

As mentioned in the last chapter, most first generation Asian Indians immigrate to the U.S. in the hopes of economic betterment. The widely held conception that the Western world provides them with better prospects educationally, economically and professionally lures them to these shores. On their part they work diligently in order to ensure a better life for their families, especially their children. In the Indian perspective the "family" is an important societal unit. In the Asian Indian diaspora in the U.S., family holds a very important position in the formation of Asian Indian cultural standards and traditions. Society's views and perspectives have changed over the years but some traditional values of the Asian Indian family seems to have remained intact while others have been transformed to adapt to changing cultural scenarios.

As previously mentioned all research participants expected their father to be away in order to make a good living for the family. The everyday adolescent issues were dealt with primarily by the mother. There seems to be an implicit agreement between the parents as to the roles they take on. It is a way of maintaining the Asian Indian notion of the family intact in the U.S. Most Asian Indian adolescent children in the U.S. learn that the family is important and that any inappropriate behavior on their part would bring about shame and disgrace on the family and tarnish the family name. Immigrant parents think of themselves as sacrificial personalities and believe that their children need to understand the value of the sacrifices they make in order to study well and do well in school; the end goal being financial security and upward social mobility.

Parental E*xpectations*

Immigrant Asian Indian parents expect their children to do well in school. According to some immigrant Asian Indian parents, children who are not doing well in school bring disgrace to the family. Individual scholastic achievements are considered family achievements. Irfan says that his parents expect him to be a high achiever and be more accomplished than his peers and classmates. The implication of this view is to be smarter than the Americans. He argues:

> My parents always say get smart, have new ideas, special ideas, go to college. Define our own role over here. Just try and be better than them in their own country. Use only some things of this culture that will help your future.

Irfan's views on parental role and expectations seem consistent with research that suggests that immigrant parents expect their children to take on specific values, views and notions of American culture that will help them in the future, while maintaining their ethnic values and traditions. Gibson (1988) terms this perspective as "accommodation without assimilation", while Portes and Rumbaut (1996, 2002) and Lee (1996) would call it "selective acculturation."

Further, Asian Indian immigrant parents make sure that their culture, ethnicity and traditions are not lost by stressing the maintenance of ethnic values on to their children. One of the ways immigrant parents assert this view is by portraying themselves as sacrificing for the family and that there needs to be a return on those sacrifices that were made. In this regard, Irfan says:

> My dad dropped out of school, my mom as well. It was a common thing back then, because it was very hard to get money for my dad. When he came over here, it was a golden opportunity for our kids, a great education, a great job, make a good wealth for ourselves, become independent. Basically, this is the life I want you to live. If I don't do that, it's gonna hurt him really much. He believes… when my parents look at me they think I'm doing bad at school. They're really hurt, they're speechless especially my Dad who would say "he has no idea what I been through to get here for him, the taxes I pay for him at school." That's why we have to live up to that. Not because of the stereotype, because we have to be smart, just because of our parents.

Herein lies the difficulty. Most Asian Indian parents expect their children to fulfill cultural expectations of their ethnicity and upbringing and be successful and yet assimilate into U.S. society. Asian Indian parents expect their children to act and 'be' a certain way, their point of reference being their own upbringing in India. All the study participants interviewed mentioned that although their culture was not forced upon them, their parents did expect them to retain their ethnic upbringing. Some participants noted that their parents feared that they were becoming too 'Americanized' and therefore made sure that their children learned the native language, played an Indian musical instrument, and followed traditional ethnic norms etc. For instance Irfan noted that his mother's biggest fear was that she was losing him to the American culture and therefore made sure that he attended the mosque in order to learn his native language Urdu and to strengthen

his religious beliefs (see Chapter IV). For these parents, an important issue and potent fear is the potential loss of their children to the U.S. culture.

When the participants showed more of an affinity towards U.S. culture, their first generation immigrant parents felt that their children were not loyal to their ethnicity and culture, causing conflict and concern. The presumed lack of loyalty towards one's ethnicity is equated as a lack of family loyalty. As Maya notes:

> I do love my culture but sometimes I get annoyed with it. There are things that I can and cannot do. If I do these things my parents get upset they feel like although I am not being loyal. I don't understand what is not there to be loyal. This is my home and my country, how can they expect me to follow things as they did it?

Similarly Kyra notes:

> I am supposed to be and act a certain way and if I don't do that then I am insulting my parents. It's weird. I see the same issue play out in others' homes as well, students like me, my ethnicity. I don't know why but it is there. It is the strangest thing. Sometimes I try just to please my parents and sometimes I don't.

Most of the study participants expressed frustration at their parents when they were unable to make their own choices and be true to their selves as individuals. As evidenced by the above quotes, Kyra and Maya were made to feel that they were in some way disloyal to their parents and Asian Indian ethnicity if they chose the American ways over the Asian Indian ways. Each ethnicity has valuable visible markers that denote the ethnicity of that particular culture in the way they dress, the language they speak, and

traditions and norms they uphold. Therefore, when the adolescent study participants choose American culture over their Indian ethnicity most parents seem to fear that all visible markers of their ethnicity will eventually be lost. This strikes at the core of the Asian Indian value system.

Curiously, one of the main reasons that Asian Indians immigrate to the U.S. is to make a better life for themselves. They leave behind a society close to their hearts. It seems paradoxical; a double standard to leave behind a society in search of a better life and yet instill in their children a love for the society that they choose to leave. Further most Asian Indian immigrants willingly take on the citizenship of the U.S. while relinquishing the citizenship of their homeland and yet when their children resist the traditions of parental birth culture, parents are aggrieved. Differences in values, perspectives and opinions lead to conflict between the two generations or intergenerational conflict.

Inter-Generational Conflict

The second generation adolescent Asian Indian participants find themselves traveling between two cultures, the culture of their parents and the culture they were born into. Sometimes they receive conflicting messages from both cultures. What is good in one culture has a weird connotation in the other. Asian Indian parents stress that in order to achieve socio-economic success; one must be responsible and work hard. In other words a strong work ethic is necessary for moving up the socio-economic ladder. While some study participants understood the need to work hard, others felt like they were missing

out on life in general. Such types of attitudes, differences, and perspectives, lead to conflict between the two generations. Generational differences are not only rooted in the lived experiences of immigrants but also in the particular worldview of each generation (Bacon, 1996; Erikson, 1968).

As mentioned in the previous section, Asian Indian immigrant parents tend to stress community and collective identities, while their children, second generation Asian Indian Americans are more individualistic. Research by Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) finds that the first generation immigrants are primarily concerned with surviving, adjusting and assimilating into a new land of changing cultural scenarios while their children try to find themselves, their identity, and a sense of self.

In the case of the study participants, all noted that they were very aware of the unique place they occupy; between two cultures the Asian Indian culture of their parents and the American culture that they were born into. They note that they constantly try to navigate between the two cultures in order to find their identity in this in-between space. To illustrate this perspective consider the following quote by Arjun. He says:

> I am very aware that I belong to both cultures and yet don't fully belong. I will happily take on the American culture because this is my home, but I cannot forget my roots. That will always be with me no matter where I go. Sometimes I feel conflicted. I want to do what my parents tell me to do, sometimes what they say makes sense, sometimes it doesn't, dating for example and respecting elders, but then I am me, I don't have to conform, No why should I conform? Maybe I will

> be neither here or there, but an in between and I am okay with that. I think it is pretty cool actually.

Arjun is happy with his chosen identity that is negotiated in the in-between space between two cultures. He thinks that the uniqueness of his positionality makes it "cool;" i.e., cool to be an Asian Indian American.

Further, re-reading Arjun's quote, I am struck by the tone of rebellion, the need to not conform to the perspectives of his parents especially where dating and respecting elders are concerned. Arjun mentions that if he feels like he wants to date then he should be allowed to, and he also posits that although respecting elders is always a good thing to do, he wonders why he has to respect elders that he does not know. Jennifer too mentions in the same vein:

> Every time someone comes home I am supposed to be respectful, And my parents stress that, but what I don't understand is why do I have to be respectful, I don't know you and you don't know me, so let me say my hello and move on. It irritates me when I sit there with a fake smile and pretend like I care I don't. And then when I get up and go, I get an earful in the kitchen.

As Jennifer suggests the idea of respect has a different meaning in the Asian Indian culture. Being respectful is the norm and all Asian Indian children are required by their parents to be respectful of elders. But Jennifer does have a point, she feels that respect needs to be based solely on reciprocity and a mutual understanding of the parties involved and is not a given. Irfan and John too mention that it is hard to respect someone

when you don't know them personally. Irfan adds "…when we have guests home, I conveniently disappear. This way I don't have an argument with my parents."

Respecting others, especially elders, is one area where the two generations seem to have a problem. Another area is dating the opposite sex. Dating in the Indian culture is seen as a precursor to marriage only. Dating is not only frowned upon but is considered shameful as well. Parents feel ostracized by other Asian Indians in their community when their teenage child dates individuals who do not belong to their ethnicity and culture. In addition, Asian Indian immigrant parents believe that dating is just not something to do when in school. Maya posits that the rule of no dating and discipline are two aspects of her ethnicity she does not like. Maya says that she feels conflicted about her culture as she feels it is conservative when it comes to discipline and dating. She says:

> I personally think that Indian culture is conservative. It's not something that I dislike but it can be annoying at times. Like discipline is a big thing. And like oh like boys and girls dating. I'm like oh my gosh what a big scandal but it's really not.

Similarly Jennifer argued "My mother said that I should not bring any boyfriends home. That I shouldn't date. No boys at home period." However when asked about their parents' choice if they did date, Maya said "if they had a preference they'd want him to be Indian. If he's Indian what a great bonus cause then it's like you still have the culture." Note again the emphasis on the part of the immigrant parents for the preservation of ethnicity and culture.

While Arjun notes that if he does decide to date his parents will be supportive of his choice. The same thoughts were echoed by John as well. Again I am struck by the differences in parental perspectives on dating where their adolescent children were concerned. Asian Indian parents do not want their children to date period! However, Asian Indian parents seem more accepting if their sons' date as opposed to if their daughters date. Daughters are not allowed to date because parents fear the shame caused to the family by the effects of dating i.e., sex and pregnancy before marriage.

Jennifer notes that even if she does bring boys home as friends, they are not allowed to go to her room under any circumstance. Irfan on the other hand states that his parents would be opposed to him dating girls of another culture; however he says because of this very prohibition on dating that he will rebel and date girls of other cultures. But when it comes to marriage it will be only be with someone belonging to his culture, within his family, and also approved by his parents. He says:

> My parents say I shouldn't date but if I do I should date another Muslim and a cousin, it's crazy. That's why I want to date someone from another culture. But I don't think I will be able to marry her, I don't know what my mom will do. I cannot do that to her.

Another important point to note is that if the children do decide to date, the parents expect the significant other to belong to their ethnicity and culture.

Apart from dating and respecting others, another possible area of inter-generational conflict is the Indian culture in general. As Maya observed and as is shared by the other participants as well, the conservative nature of the Indian culture can be

problematic at times. Asian Indian culture is seen as suppressive and restrictive by the study participants as opposed to the U.S. culture that is more about individual freedom and self-actualization. The participants do agree that the collectivistic nature of Asian Indians can clash with the individualistic nature of the people of the U.S. It is the very nature of the Asian Indian culture that causes the participants to rebel against it. In this regard John says:

> I think something in the Indian nature causes us to rebel against it. My parents always have this perception as to what will other Indians think. Sometimes it is what others who live at home think. We were born here, it shouldn't make a difference but it always does. I think that is one of the reasons why we are sometimes against our culture, because it really does give us much freedom to be ourselves.

The above referenced quote is interesting, because John does note that parents are always worried about what others may think of their life in the U.S. In a sense immigrant parents are judged by the extended family in India about their upbringing of the children, i.e., how much of their ethnicity is still retained, and how well adjusted their children are. This is another area of conflict between the immigrant parents and their U.S. born adolescent children.

All issues stated in this section related to inter-generational conflict does affect the identity formation of the second generation adolescent Asian Indian. Often the adolescents feel conflicted about their role, with emphasis on loyalties to is seem consistent with some literature on second generation Asian Indian American adolescents

that states that in traveling between two cultures they construct an identity that is negotiated and situational, sometimes marginalized, neither collectivistic nor individualistic, but rather bi-cultural.

Relationships Informing Identity and Identify Informing Relationships

Most of the research participants noted that relationships with peers in school, their parents and with the Asian Indian community were factors that informed and contributed to the formation of their nuanced identity. John argued that his relationships and friendships define who he is as an individual. He says:

> … it's because of the ethnicity, the friendships and relationships I share with them, my parents, my community. We share the same perspectives, the same beliefs I feel like which makes up the essence of my being exactly who I am.

John's thoughts provide an insight into how second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent perceive themselves. Kyra too mentions that she understands herself through the relationships she maintains. She indicates, like John, that her individuality consists of the experiences and relationships she has with others. She posits: "I think I am what my experiences with relationships make me. When friends look at me and say here is Kyra…I think that is who I am."

Other participants like Irfan and Vineeth mention that although experiences, relationships and friendships that makes up their individuality, there is still something more and that is religion. Irfan like Vineeth says that he is unable to separate his religion from his experiences; in the end this is what informs him as an individual. He states:

> I don't know but I think my experiences unique because I am Muslim. As much as I like the U.S. culture and think it is the same as my culture, it is actually not the same. There is a very important difference, I have these experiences because I am Muslim, whatever I do, I am a Muslim, whatever relationship and friendships I have, I am a Muslim.

Maya, Jennifer, Kyra and Arjun mention that relationships are important and inform who they are as individuals. They are quick to assert that the relationships and friendships are based on ethnicity and because of that specificity they have unique and varied experiences. All study participants posit that they are capable of accepting both cultures. As they mention in Chapter IV with all its issues and problems they still have the best of both worlds. These participants see themselves as unique individuals with bi-cultural identities. This idea of a bi-cultural identity can be understood through the various relationships and friendships maintained by these second generation Asian Indian American adolescent students.

Private and Public Lives of Second Generation Asian Indians

As suggested in Chapter IV on meanings of culture, all research participants compartmentalized their experiences implying public and private lives. The private lives they shared with their specific ethnic community and the public lives were for the benefit of the others who belonged to mainstream society.

Where relationships were concerned I noticed this same dichotomy, a separation of public and private lives. For instance Maya and Jennifer both mentioned that their best

friends were people who belonged to their culture and were therefore aware of the differences in ethnicities. They also mentioned that they shared ideas and perspectives and it was just easier because they belonged to the same culture. Maya stressed:

> My friend, we share everything, she understands me and I do her, it is just that simple. When I have an issue or problem about my culture and tell her about it, she understands, I feel like she is going through the same things as I do. I am not sure if others would understand the same things.

Maya does mention in the research interview that she has a good friend who belongs to another culture. She says they get along really well and share common interests in music and sports, but she says that she will not be able to talk to her about issues of her ethnicity. She says:

> I cannot share specific issues related with culture with her, I don't think she will understand. Especially dating, she does not understand why I cannot date, so sometimes I think culture specific things are best left private.

As evidenced by the quotes stated above, Maya separates her relationships with friends. She feels that issues with her Asian Indian culture and ethnicity are best understood by those of the same culture and ethnicity; others may accept it but will never truly understand since they do not belong to the same culture.

Arjun on the other hand specifically mentions that he reserves his ethnicity for those who understand and not his friends from school, who he perceives don't understand his ethnicity. He says that the intricacies of an ethnicity are best understood by one who belongs to the same ethnicity. He notes his best friend is someone who does not belong

to his ethnicity and so he does not share his culture with him. He asserts that his identity is Asian-Indian American and that is all that matters, but to his ethnic friends from the community center he is a Gujarati Indian American. He notes:

> To my best friend I am Asian Indian American, but to my friends at the center I am a Gujarati, the American is assumed. There is really no point in explaining otherwise. I will share my ethnicity if asked for it, if not it does not matter; he is still my best friend.

Similarly other participants have also mentioned that others in society perceive them as Asian Indian Americans. But they feel that they will be Indian even though they were born in the U.S. and to those of their ethnicity, they identify themselves through their ethnicity and not the public nationalized identity of being an Asian Indian.

Moreover they add that there is a sense of the exotic, that characterizes someone from an Asian Indian culture and so they readily play the part of the 'American of Indian descent.' They argue that romanticized perceptions of Asian Indians are because of media and films from Bollywood (the Indian version of Hollywood). Further they note that many of their friends like Indian food and Indian music. In fact they mentioned that Indian fusion rock is very popular with their school friends. In addition, the study participants mention that along with the idea of the Asian Indian come certain stereotypes that could be played to their advantage, i.e., the model minority, gifted and high academic achiever. For instance Arjun notes that when it comes to choosing someone to be on the debate team, everyone wants the chosen person to be of Asian Indian descent. He says:

> When it comes to choosing someone on the debate team they look around for someone of Asian descent and then they see me and say well he is Asian Indian he has to be smart so let's have him on our team. Now why would I share with them that I am Gujarati, it will confuse them even more.

Even Vineeth notes that he hides his ethnicity and religion from his friends. He says that he has many Indian friends from the center who know him as a future Hindu priest. He says he does not want to share that part of himself with his best friends. To them he is an American of Asian Indian descent. Similarly Irfan says that although he is a Muslim he hides that from his best friends by acting and behaving a certain way, to them he is an American of South Asian descent.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that the participants maintained friendships based on their parents' approval. All participants mentioned that the relationships they maintained were mostly with individuals who belonged to the same ethnicity.

All study participants can be considered as belonging to the middle class of U.S. society. They had the opportunity, support and capital to succeed academically. Some study participants' maintained relationships with those individuals who had similar or better academic accomplishments than they did. They saw success in school as success in the future with upward socio-economic mobility. However these relationships were superficial as they were merely instrumental in individual self-actualization.

In addition, parents played a major role in influencing the friendships that their children have in school as well as friendships and relationships out of school. Parents in this study preferred that their children develop friendships with others of their own ethnicity and religion, so that the Asian Indian culture and specific ethnicity could be preserved and maintained. This and other issues like dating and respecting elders caused stress between the participants and their parents leading to intergenerational conflict. Even with all the conflict the study participants stressed that they would never disgrace the family name.

As noted all participants shared only those aspects of their ethnicity that portrayed them as Asian Indian. Their ethnicities were private and shared with only those that belonged to their specific ethnicity and Asian Indian culture. They were able to maintain the public/private dichotomy in their relationships as well. In addition all participants seemed content with this separation and dichotomy of public vs. private. Their lives and relationships were not only compartmentalized into public and private lives but internalized and accepted as the norm as well. These relationships contributed to the notion of a bi-cultural identity.

CHAPTER VI

PERCEPTIONS, STEREOTYPES AND THE REALITY OF DISCRIMINATION

> Why do people think of me in this way? They form opinions even before they know me. Some of these opinions are just not true… all this because I look different and because my culture is different. Seems like people are afraid of difference…
>
> Maya Kutty

In the previous chapters I focused on how the adolescent children of Asian Indian immigrants negotiated their lives and identity in order to adapt and fit into the educational milieu and the host society. While it was clear that the process of assimilation was painful and fractured for some Asian Indian immigrant parents, their American born children tended to either assimilate at a faster pace than their parents or selectively acculturate into the same host society (Gibson, 1988; Moag, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut; 1990/2001; Portes & Zhou, 1997).

Immigrating into a new land brings cultures together. Each culture has certain perceptions of the other culture that leads to perceived stereotypes. These stereotyped notions and traits of individuals of a certain culture tend to either positively or negatively impact the identity of individuals belonging to that culture (Bhatia, 2007). In this chapter, I will evaluate the meanings of some of the common stereotypes and perceptions held by teachers, peers and mainstream society about Asian Indians and how the same understandings, perceptions and stereotypes marginalize the second generation

adolescent through notions of discrimination and difference. I will provide a discussion about how these differences work in the educational setting, as well as in the lives of the second generation adolescent students.

Stereotypes and Perceptions of Adolescent Asian Indian

The Asian Indian American individual is a complex individual culturally as well as ethnically. Asian Indians are not considered white, neither are they considered black, but they are perceived as "the other" by U.S. society. In addition, Bhatia (2007) argues that Asian Indians consider themselves culturally and ethnically diverse and therefore perceive themselves to be the 'other' as well. To be perceived as "the other" and to consider oneself "the other" creates a continual sense of displacement as well as enables the re-negotiation of identity in response to the societal and self- perceptions. Hegde posits that: "… the theme of being other continually echoes in the lives of the immigrants, displacing and deferring their sense of self" (1998, p.51).

These individuals belong to both cultures, Asian Indian as well as American, and yet they are neither. They occupy an in-between space, a space in which they negotiate their identities based on the changing perceptions and responses to society and the community around them. Since they are considered as "the other," mainstream society has certain perceptions and stereotypical notions about them. Some of these stereotypes and perceptions are discussed below.

Perceptions of Teachers

Most second generation Asian Indian American students are perceived as studious, academically gifted, well mannered, industrious and respectful by their teachers as well as their peers. Further, since they seem to be so well adjusted they are considered part of be part of the model minority. These perceptions, especially those held by teachers are sometimes detrimental to the second generation adolescent of Asian Indian descent in the educational milieu.

All the study participants interviewed noted that their teachers always seemed to have high expectations for them. They further mentioned that their teachers expected them to be academically gifted, industrious, respectful and well organized. Arjun states:

> My teachers expect me to be smart and intelligent. I think I am but I find it strange that all Indians are viewed the same way. It is nice sometimes because the teachers know what to expect from you and your work, but at the same time it can be unnerving too. They have such high expectations and then if you don't meet them, it feels strange.

Arjun observes that to be unable to meet the teacher's expectations is unnerving. Jennifer and Maya in the same vein mention that the teachers expect them to be intelligent since they are perceived as such. They assert that they often match the expectations, but at times when they were unable to do so, the teachers are surprised. Just as Arjun and Jennifer observed, Maya too mentioned that teachers expected students with an Asian Indian background to be polite and respectful. She argued that she knows many Indian kids who are not. In addition she stated that not all Indian kids are intelligent; some of

them do struggle in school but because of the stereotype that all Asian Indian students are smart, the plight of the struggling students is overlooked. She stated:

> My teachers think that all kids who are Indian are polite, respectful and intelligent. But I know so many Indian students who are not. Some students are just plain rude. Some of them need extra help in studies. Somehow I don't think anyone notices them…because all are supposed to be smart.

Due to this perception held by teachers, most Asian Indian students are generalized to be intelligent and respectful. As Maya argues, not all students of Asian Indian descent are respectful and intelligent.

Such perceptions of Asian Indians are not only held by teachers, but also held by other individuals working in the educational system. Consider Jennifer who shared that when she was filling out her college admission forms, people in the administration office took one look at her and then her grades and then asked her why her grades were not all A's. Similarly Maya mentioned that when she shared that her ambition was to go into a business school, most people including her family and church friends were surprised, because as Indians one is expected to either be a doctor or an engineer, anything else is unacceptable. Vineeth too mentioned that people at the temple were surprised when he mentioned that he was interested in business rather than medicine or engineering. This is another stereotype that exists that most Asian Indians will be either doctors or engineers.

Most of the study participants mentioned feeling pressure in matching up to these perceptions and stereotypes of being high achievers, gifted students, respectful and courteous. However they did acknowledge that in some occasions is it good to be labeled

as intelligent and respectful. They argued that it is beneficial to live up to some of the stereotypes and perceptions of others because it affords them a privileged status. Arjun argued:

> I never thought of this…but I think I am privileged because of who I am and what others perceive me to be. I like to be thought as someone who is intelligent and gifted and courteous. Why would you not want to be known as one… being this way brings a lot of benefits. I mean I am always considered for the Science team and others are not, but then you actually have to be it.

Arjun makes a distinction here. It is good to be perceived as intelligent because of the benefits that it accords the individual (in this case Arjun being considered for the school science team) but then Arjun says that he actually has to be intelligent to be perceived as intelligent.

However, Irfan notes that living up to the stereotype of being intelligent is not always helpful. He posits:

> I look Indian, so teachers think I am smart, …well I think I am but I have other things to do, I am not that interested in school work, so when I don't get good scores they wonder why. Sometimes I need help … I don't get any.

Irfan further argued that because he looks Asian Indian and is perceived as intelligent, teachers and peers assume that he does not need help with his studies, when he argued that most times he does. He shared that because of the perception held by teachers, he feels ashamed to ask for help. Similarly Kyra notes that sometimes she feels ashamed to not do well in academics because of the perception held by teachers and society that as an

Asian Indian she is supposed to excel in academics. Kyra mentions that having an Asian Indian background implied that she is intelligent and a high achiever in school. She argued that her teachers and others expected her to be academically gifted. She feels that she is not and other Asian Indian students are not as well. She wished there were no generalizations about Asian Indian students. She says:

> Teachers and my friends expect me to be smart. But I am not. Especially for the PSAT's when I did not get the required score, they looked at me strange. There are others who are not as smart as well. I had to do well in the PSAT's. Everyone in my family is smart and Asians are supposed to be smart so I had to be too.

She further explains:

> My cousins are really smart. My brother's pretty smart too. I guess you are labeled, like Asians, Japanese, and Chinese and Indians are labeled as really smart. Oh you're Asian, you're really smart. The same goes for Indians. Feels like I have to live up to that. The people who check or read the PSATs automatically label you, or you just labeled yourself, when they look at the paper and they look at your ethnicity than they compare that to the score and say oh she's Indian she must have a good score and they look at it and say oh that was great or that wasn't great.

As argued by Kyra, by virtue of being of Asian Indian descent, she is expected to be academically gifted. She noted that all Asians are lumped together and labeled as intelligent. She says that she definitely does not want to be stereotyped and labeled,

because if she cannot live up to it, then she would be disappointed. She notes that others in her family are intelligent and she feels ashamed that she is not. At the same time she says that she needs to do well because it could get her into a good college. She says:

> I don't want to feel ashamed but it comes almost automatically. I will be disappointed because if I don't live up to that. I don't know. Just the people who are grading it will have a different view of me or something if I don't get a good grade. It might not get me into a good college. I know the PSATs don't have anything to do with college, I know SATS do. So I need to do better.

Kyra is concerned about how others perceive her. She feels ashamed to have not matched the expectations of others' perceptions, especially those in her community.

A similar implicit understanding of what it means to be an Asian Indian in academia was present among the other study participants as well. Each participant mentioned that they liked the stereotype of being perceived as being academically gifted. However all study participants also mentioned feeling pressure to live up to this stereotype. Some participants, specifically Arjun and John, considered the stereotype of being academically gifted a positive one while Kyra, Maya and Jennifer mention that although they like the stereotype they feel pressure from family, their community, and peers to live up to the same. Some feel ashamed that they are unable to live up to the stereotype. For instance both Kyra (as referenced above) and Maya feel ashamed that, since they are unable to live up to the communal perception of the 'intelligent' Asian Indian. Consider Maya who states:

> I feel ashamed sometimes to not be intelligent. I mean I do okay, but I guess when you are an Indian; an Indian-American okay just does not cut it. I think more than Americans it is the Indians who think that you should be smart and pay back parents' hard work.

Maya makes an interesting point in noting that it is not the American society that perceives her to be intelligent; it is the Asian Indian community that strengthens the notion that they should be intelligent in order to reward their parents' hard work.

Striving to be labeled as intelligent and working hard to get good grades in school as a way of rewarding their parents' work is another implicit understanding among the Asian Indian community in the U.S. Some participants embrace the idea of rewarding their parents' efforts while others feel that this places an undue burden on them. Arjun and John both mention that as immigrants their parents have worked hard to give their children a good life and the best way to reward their hard work is to work hard themselves, which means getting good grades.

Perception of Peers and Community

On the issue of perceptions held by others of immigrant Asian Indians in school, Arjun mentioned that he is aware of the perceptions that other students and teachers hold of students with an Asian Indian background. He says that when it suits him he will play the part. He says:

> When it suits me to be Indian it's always nice to wear that skin. When it suits me in a group setting or when kids are looking at me and say who should be in their

> group, and they'll be like you're the Indian kid you're usually smart or they approach me with a question or something like that. When it suits me, it's nice to be known as Indian rather than as an American.

Irfan also mentions that he prefers to be Indian, especially when it suits him. This is due to the existing perception that Asian Indians are smarter. Irfan says that since he has the phenotype of Asian Indians, he does not mind publicly passing as one. He says he likes the stereotype of intelligence that is associated with Asian Indians.

Almost all study participants noted that they liked being thought of as more intelligent than others with the exception of Maya, Kyra and Vineeth who believed that these stereotypes were too stressful, since much was expected of them. They felt ashamed to not match up to the expectations of their teachers and peers. Further they both mentioned that it would indeed bring shame to the family name if they did not do well in school. Kyra posited: "It would really be shameful to be an Indian and not do well in school. Imagine what the parents have to go through." While Vinneth says: "I feel bad that I am not a good student, I hope they will be able to accept that."

The fact that Vineeth and Kyra are unable to meet parental and communal expectations in academics makes them feel vulnerable at times. To escape from the shame he feels, Vinneth role plays with some of his school friends. One of the games that they play is "Dungeons and Dragons." He says "… when we role play we are all equal, no one is smarter than the other, all are smart." Vineeth role plays in order to escape reality. The stresses of being intelligent and living up to expectations seem too

much for Vinneth to overcome. Vinneth did mention in a later interview that he will make it up to his parents for not being academically gifted.

Arjun feels that he has no choice but to do well in order to pay back his parents for the sacrifices they have made. He says, "My parents have worked really hard and I have to pay them back by doing well in school. I personally would not do anything to bring dishonor to my family name." He includes that he is happy to pay his parents back. Interestingly Arjun too notes that he would not do anything to bring shame and dishonor to the family. Irfan asserts that this is why students of Asian Indian descent work hard to be high achievers - because they want to get away from the shame and dishonor that they might bring upon their parents. Irfan mentioned that he feels the need to live up to the stereotype of being smarter (as an Indian) because of his parents, who struggle and sacrifice to give him a good education. He says the only way he can be better than others is to get a good education and be better than 'them' (Americans) in their own country.

Notice the views of the study participants. Most of them try to do well because of the stigma attached to an Asian Indian student who is not intelligent. In addition the study participants believe that they will shame the family name if they don't meet academic expectations and perceptions of teachers, parents, community members and peers. This reinforces the extremely strong role the Asian Indian community, parents specifically play in the student lives of the second generation adolescent.

Model Minority

Another stereotype that exists when referring to the Asian Indian ethnic group is the model minority. Mainstream society and media characterize the Asian immigrant as the model minority; a broad generalization that Asian immigrants are smart, hardworking and achievement-oriented and achieve the 'American Dream.' This stereotype does seem positive and flattering to the Asian community, but as Lee (1996) states, the label of a model minority in education is dangerous and possibly derogatory, because it is an assumption that causes one to neglect the educational difficulties of the struggling Asian Indian students.

As explained in the previous section, all participants noted that teachers, peers and their community perceived them to be smart, intelligent, hardworking and academically successful as students. These views fuel the perception that Asian Indians belong to the model minority. However this isn't always the case. Consider Maya who says:

> My friend, she is struggling a lot and she is a Bangladeshi, but because she looks Indian everyone thinks that she should be smart. They say all Indians are smart, how can all Indians be smart, I don't consider myself to be smart. I just don't get it. Sometimes they say "oh you can do it" or "why don't you help them". Well who is going to help me?

Vinneth in the same vein notes: "I am a B student, I don't know why they expect me to get A's none of my friends do." Irfan too states:

> I am Pakistani and everyone thinks I am Indian. Sometimes I like being thought of that way, but other times it is annoying. Yes some students work hard, but not

> everyone wants to, many like to play and bunk classes like me. And I am not smart, they think I am.

While John notes:

> When group work is assigned, everyone wants to be in my group. Why do they have to get the benefit? I prefer working alone. I earned the grade, I keep it. If others want the grade they need to work too. Sometimes I feel like I am doing work for others.

Similarly Arjun argues:

> They put this whole bunch of people with me. I am like a tutor, the guy who knows everything. It is very gratifying at first, since they look up to you, and the teacher thinks you are really good too… and then I get fed up, I don't want to do someone else's job. Sure I am smart, but I do work hard and others should do the same as well.

As the previous quotes suggest, not all Asian Indians can be categorized as being well adjusted or academically gifted. Not all students fit the definition of the model minority. Some students (as in John's and Arjun's case) prefer to work alone rather than be part of a group. Others like Kyra, Irfan, and Maya acknowledge that they are not intelligent.

With regards to student social adjustment, what John and Arjun mentioned fuels another perception of an Asian Indian student, one who is nerdy, reserved and does not have many friends. Indeed the word Asian itself is a broad term encompassing people from the diverse continent of Asia. Some are intelligent, while others struggle to get good grades. Further there is a sense that Indian students are being discriminated due to

their potential of performing well academically as evidenced by Arjun's and John's quotes, while others may have adjustment issues. If the above perceptions are accurate, then using the term "model minority" to refer to Asian Indians in the educational milieu becomes an assumption; unless one is being specific as to which group is being referred to. Even researcher Stacey Lee (1996) notes that the term 'Asian' is in itself a broad umbrella term used to encompass, categorize and generalize diverse people from China, India, Japan, East and South East Asia. Within each of the Asian communities, and diasporas in the U.S there exist various ethnicities, religions, languages, generations, immigrant and those who are U.S. born. Therefore when the success of the Asian group is mentioned, it is not clear which Asian community is being referred to. So she asserts that this stereotype of the model minority can be a dangerous assumption on the part of the teachers, mainstream media and society.

From the preceding discussion on the model minority stereotype it is evident that existing stereotypes and perceptions tend to polarize the second generation Asian Indian American students along academic, cultural and ethnic lines, based on their background and their diasporic affiliations. The very notion of the model minority stereotype tends to homogenize the Asian community as a whole since it oversimplifies and assumes the lived experiences of the second generation Asian Indian American student. Although it is true that some Indians do perpetuate the stereotype there are many who don't and therefore the assumption of the stereotype becomes very inconsistent where education is concerned since it begins to speak to the concept of differentiated instruction and equity in education.

Playing the Stereotype

All study participants mentioned that at times they play the stereotype. However in playing the part, the participants agree that if they work hard, they will not have to play the stereotype, rather they will be the stereotype.

The idea that hard work leads to success works in two ways: first, the parents instill this idea of a strong work ethic in their children, and second the children themselves work hard due to the view that they need to be obligated to their parents for their hard work. Consider the first case in which parents instill the idea in their children that hard work and a strong work ethic will lead to success. This view is consistent with the findings from Gibson's (1988) study on immigrant Indians in California, in which parents are inclined to believe that hard work helps one achieve a better socio-economic status and therefore they instill in their children the value of hard work and academic success. In another study Ogbu (1978) reported similar conclusions that immigrants believe that if they work hard they will succeed. They are many other documented research studies that subscribe to the same view that hard work will lead to socio-economic success (Asher, 2001; Lee, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

In the case of the participants who were part of this study, most of their parents believed that working hard will help one succeed in the future, will help in financial success and will help in upward social mobility. This same work ethic is instilled in their children. Arjun asserts that this view is another aspect of culture he does not see in American children. He says a strong work ethic among Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. is due to the fact that they are immigrants. However, he argues that it is a stereotype

that all Asians are hard-working, because he believes that some are not. Still, he says that this is another difference between the American community and the Asian Indian community. He says:

> I think because of the fact that most of us are children of immigrants we work hard, while most white cultures have been here for 3 or 4 generations and are kind of used to working maybe not necessarily hard. But they are not pushed as hard or their parents wouldn't push them as hard. Our parents push us to succeed to be better than them.

Therefore Asian Indian students succeed to the familial role played in their lives. As mentioned by Arjun parents play an important role in instilling a strong work ethic in their children, because they believe hard work translates into future success. Even though Asian Indian parents play a valuable role in the lives of their children, some find the support extended to them by their parents stifling and pressuring since they feel an obligation to succeed. Further as Maya notes not all students are gifted students; therefore even if they wanted to get good grades they would be unable to do so. She feels that the Asian Indian community in general puts too much emphasis on the academic achievements of the students as a way of measuring student achievement and future success. She argues:

> Even if I wanted to get good grades, I cannot, I know my limitations. But my parents and the aunties in church say I should be smart because I am Indian. It's strange the emphasis everyone puts on education. I wish they all would chill out.

In addition she argues that all Asian Indian students are expected to excel in specific subjects like Math and Science. She asserts:

> I don't understand why they think I have to do well all the time. I am not that good of a student. I don't like Math and Science all that much and yet I am supposed to get good scores. How am I supposed to get good scores when I could care less about Math, I like English instead. But everyone expects me to do well. It's hard.

From all the above quotes it is clear that the stereotype of an Asian Indian student is someone who is intelligent, hardworking and good at certain subjects. Although this stereotype seems flattering and positive, it tends to neglect the plight of those who are not academically gifted and those who struggle with their school work. Further it puts a lot of pressure on the student to succeed due to the value placed on being obligated to the parents. However, all participants did acknowledge the fact that good grades and hard work translated into future economic success. As implied in this section all participants suggested that if they work hard it is quite possible that they will succeed socio-economically. It is not necessarily playing the role of being intelligent but rather being intelligent.

Implications of Perceptions in Education

Some views expressed by the participants are consistent with literature on Asian immigrants in general that the academic success of the Asian student is due to the positive attitudes held towards education (Asher, 2001; Lee, 1996; Schneider & Lee,

1990; Wong, 1980). In other studies conducted on the success of Asian Americans, teachers identified Asian students as being high achievers, industrious, quiet, organized, well-adjusted and respectful. As noted earlier this stereotype tends to neglect those students who struggle and are not good students. Still all the participants in this study mentioned that they understood how important it was to do well in school and get good grades, because then they could get into a good college and eventually have a good job. Education in this sense was seen as a vehicle for upward economic mobility. Further, where the achievement of educational goals was concerned most participants turned to their families for help in achieving the same. Consider Kyra who says:

> I have to do well in those SAT's because my future depends on it. I have to do well. Now I am taking extra classes for the SAT's. My parents said that I could focus on one subject at a time and get a better score. If I can get into a good college, it will be good. And my parents are always around helping out. Sometimes I have my Indian friends over to discuss the classes.

Following along in the same vein Jennifer too notes:

> My friends come over all the time. We go through the work and prepare for the test. When I don't understand I call my dad and he usually helps. I think it is very important to do well, because a good education eventually translates into a good job and a brighter future.

These views on education used for upward economic mobility is consistent with literature on academic achievement on Asians in general. Researchers Ogbu (1987) and Gibson (1988) note that Asian Indian students seemed more committed to using education as an

avenue to upward socio-economic mobility and often turn to their family, peers and community networks to facilitate the achievement of future educational goals.

Stereotypes and Discriminatory Identifiers

It has been argued that because immigrant Asian Indians and the second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent are doing so well that they do not experience any discrimination. That is not always the case. As with any minority in the U.S. immigrant Asian Indians are the targets of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. In the succeeding section I will discuss various terminologies and acronyms such desi, F.O.B., ABCD and coconut generation that are used often derogatorily to denote a person of Asian Indian descent. Further I will offer an explanation as to how the same derogatory terms work to marginalize and discriminate against second generation Asian Indian Americans.

Desi

Most South Asians are called "desi"(Bhatia, 2007; Purkayastha, 2005). I understand South Asian to mean people hailing from the sub-continent of India, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, and Bangladesh to name a few. The word desi comes from the word "Desh" meaning "country". Bhatia (2007) defines desi as "…people of South Asian origin, who have ancestors or roots in countries such as Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka" (p.241). This implies that an individual termed "desi" could belong to any country from South Asia. The peculiarity however is that in recent years

the word desi has been popularized by Indian media, films and immigrant Indians to mean a person hailing form the Indian sub- continent or a person of Asian Indian descent.

Desi has many meanings. The word itself conjures up a picture of the homeland and notions of patriotism for the same (Bhatia, 2007). Desi could also conjure portrayals of Asian Indians who are gifted and intelligent. These meanings have positive implications. Some of the participants interviewed viewed the word desi with pride since it included an implicit understanding of their true self. As Vineeth posits: "Desi means me, or people like me. I like it, most times. It kinda signifies who I am." While Maya shares: "Desi is who I am actually, it is nice to be known as one." While other participants think that being called a desi is fun and cool. In this regard, Irfan states:

> I like the word desi, people call me that all the time. I like the fact that people consider me to be smart. It's crazy fun. Sometimes when we go out, all of us desis hang out. It's cool man. We make fun of other desi's too. We say "oh look at that one, he does not know how to dress, or talk, whatever."

Note how Irfan uses the word "desi," he is aware that it is a popularized term for Asian Indians and he thinks that it is nice to be perceived the same. However the same word is used degradingly too. In Irfan's opinion desi means someone who is uncouth as well. These views suggest that Asian Indians understand varied positive and negative connotation of the word desi.

Most of the study participants used the word desi interchangeably. Some participants even spoke of 'desi culture,' 'desi food,' 'desi fashion.' In this sense desi has a positive meaning. It creates an aura of the exotic.

Fresh of the Boat (F.O.B).

Fresh of the boat (F.O.B). is an acronym to denote recent young adult Indian immigrants to the United States (Bhatia, 2007). It reflects a degrading perception on the part of the host society and the Asian Indian diaspora towards the young immigrants. The usage of this term signifies an individual of Asian descent in general, not necessarily specific to Asian Indians. A fresh of the boat individual has much to learn in terms of the customs and values of the host country, he or she is unable to let go of their birth culture, values and traditions that is required in order to successfully assimilate.

In regards to this study, most of the participants interviewed had not heard of the term F.O.B. with the exception of John and Arjun who stated that their fathers were F.O.B.'s. John shared that his father immigrated to the U.S with his parents when he was a young adolescent and endured a culture shock while in school. This could explain why John's father felt a loss of Asian Indian culture.

Arjun shared that his father came to the U.S. to pursue a higher education degree. Arjun notes that at that level in academia, one is respected and if the word F.O.B. was used, it was used in jest. He explains:

> My father came here to get his doctorate. At that time people respected you, because they felt like one had to be really smart to get here. He had his religion and traditions; one being that he was and still is a Vegan. His friends thought he was weird and made fun of him at times. But it was innocent, never derogatory.

In contrast consider John's statement:

> My father endured a lot in school. His classmates made fun of him all the time by calling him an F.O.B. They made him feel that he did not know anything, that he was this weird geeky kid with an even weirder name. They assumed he followed some strange customs and traditions, worshiped the cow and did not converse well in English.

Comparing the two quotes it is clear that the term F.O.B. does have a derogatory meaning, but the emphasis of degradation is on the young adult rather that the educated academic in the university.

The F.O.B. acronym conveys the illusion of a geeky young immigrant, not fluent in the English language, mainstream culture and traditions. The conceptions of F.O.B.s as such are more prevalent and widespread in the school milieu as referring to a recent immigrant to the U.S. The F.O.B term conveys a negative meaning about recent immigrants. Education unconsciously seems to harbor such conceptions due there is a lack of literature and understanding about what constitutes the other.

Almost all study participants noted that they would be very upset if anyone called them an F.O.B. The participants considered themselves to be well grounded in their dual cultures - American and Asian Indian. In addition the study participants noted that the term wouldn't apply to them since they were not born in another country, rather the U.S is their home. They do acknowledge that they could be mistaken to be F.O.B.'s as they share the same phenotype with recent immigrants from India.

Intuitively, Arjun observed it isn't so much the host culture that is the problem where this particular perception was concerned rather it is the immigrants themselves

who are the issue. He says that the idea of the F.O.B. is more prevalent in the Asian Indian community itself. He notes that those who immigrated previously and decided to take up citizenship status degrade the ones who recently immigrated. He observed that it is common in the workplace where some Asian Indians make derogatory remarks about new Asian Indian immigrants.

ABCD (American Born Confused Desi)

As noted in the previous section, an F.O.B. is a recent immigrant to the U.S.; the acronym "ABCD" is specific to second generation Asian Indians born in the U.S. ABCD has two different meanings. ABCD means "American born cool desi" or "American born confused desi" (Dasgupta, 1993; Prashad, 2000).

All participants wholeheartedly agreed that they are ABCD's. They readily accepted the meaning 'American born cool desi.' However they completely disagreed with the negative meaning particularly the word 'confused.' Jennifer retorted by saying: "Sure I am an ABCD, but do I look confused to you, I don't think so." While Maya noted it depended on how the acronym was used when directed at her. She said if it meant cool desi, she is okay with it, but if it meant confused, then she would disagree. Arjun noted that he liked the term ABCD because it denotes a fusion of two cultures. He states:

> I like the term ABCD. I think it has a positive meaning. Think of it this way, the words are American and desi, that's who I am, two cultures. The confused part makes no sense; I don't know who made that up, the cool is okay.

Similarly John notes: “ABCD…I love it. It’s two cultures that’s who I am. The confused part I don’t understand. I am not.”

The thoughts and feelings are of the participants parallel the literature available on this particular topic. Some researchers note that second generation Asian Indian American youth are considered outsiders to their own culture and labeled with the derogatory acronym ‘ABCD,’ ‘American Born Confused Desi’ (Prashad, 2000). They are further characterized by their own culture as being “alienated, boorish and culturally deprived” (Dasgupta, 1993, p.26).

Research suggests that the term "ABCD" not only conjures negative perceptions about the second generation Asian Indian American student but also reflects generational differences. Authors of Indian descent such as Vijay Prashad, Jhumpa Lahiri, Mitra Kalita describe in their writings the confusion of the second generation Asian Indian youth in belonging to two cultures. Prashad in *The Karma of Brown Folk* (2000), Lahiri in *The Namesake* (2003), and Mitra in *Suburban Sahibs* (2005) note the ways in which first generation Asian Indian immigrants and society attempt to make second-generation youth feel “culturally inadequate and unfinished” (Prashad, 2000).

All participants however vehemently deny being confused. They do agree that it is possible that others may assume that they are confused, but in fact they are not. They note that it is an ill-conceived notion on the part of individuals in mainstream society, media, peers and their community who consider them to be ‘the confused generation.’ They posit that it is the media along with other mainstream fiction that showcases them to be confused. They note many Bollywood pictures that describe a second generation

Asian Indian as an ABCD. Maya notes that it is more the Asian Indian diaspora that degrades an individual as an ABCD as they believe that belonging to two cultures makes the American born Asian Indians confused since they belong to both cultures and yet completely belong to neither.

Coconut generation

Another common term to describe second generation Asian Indian Americans is the 'coconut generation.' This literally means like a coconut brown on the outside and white on the inside. This label assumes that Asian Indians "act white" and prefer to be white rather than be darker and associate with minorities who are darker in skin color.

Most of the participants interviewed noted that they do not act white. They disagreed with the perception of acting white but rather embraced the reality that they chose to be an Indian or American when it worked to their benefit. Consider Vinneth who says:

> I do not act white but I don't have any black friends either. I have lots of Indian friends, white friends and Spanish friends. I don't know why but I never had a black friend. That does not mean I don't like black and prefer white, I am just me, an Indian and I will act that way if I have to. If I have to be American then that's what I will be.

Arjun mentions that he too does not have any black friends. He says that he does not understand why the black-white dichotomy exists and why it is important how he acts. He does however agree that if there was a choice to be made between being a certain way

then he would choose to be white than black. He says, “If I had to choose, I guess I would choose white I suppose. But who wouldn’t? That does not mean I prefer white over black. It just means I am me.”

Irfan views the term "coconut generation" positively. He asserts that he is aware of the stereotype that exists that most people who are brown are called coconuts, in a sense brown on the outside, white on the inside. He says that he is like that and sees nothing wrong with it. He says:

> I'm like that. I think we’re all like that. It’s a negative stereotype. Brown people acting white. It is but then it isn’t as well. There’s no rule telling us we have to live like Americans when we come here. We just choose to because we wanna blend in like them. Basically, we’re acting like them. I think that’s totally normal. In a way, we actually are, me and my sister for example, my cousins, we act like Americans. I think you can call us coconuts. It is offensive in a way too. They believe, why are you acting like us. You come from over there acting like this. Just because we’re here doesn’t mean you need to act like us too. I think it's both.

As Irfan mentions mainstream society (i.e., white society) does not want immigrants to blend in while at the same time requires them to assimilate. Mainstream society expects immigrants to be different. Immigrants are discriminated against for being different and discriminated against for wanting to blend in.

In addition, as posited by some study participants the mainstream society may contribute to difference and discrimination, but it is also the Asian Indian diaspora in the U.S that tends to generate and fuel perceptions that lead to discrimination and difference.

Implications of Stereotypes and Discriminatory Identifiers in Education

Many anthropologists and researchers note that the educational system is organized to maintain the status quo of society. McLaren (1997) observes that schooling confers a superior value to the elite culture which is generally white, while disconnecting children of the immigrant sections from their cultural realities and opportunities. However where Asian Indian students are concerned, due to the existing positive stereotypes, they are considered the educational elite. While their educational merits are capitalized upon, their ethnic culture is neglected. In addition, Asian Indian American students bring to the learning environment vastly different experiences of understanding. The belief that "all Asians are smart" and are the “model minority” puts a tremendous amount of pressure on many who are not. As evidenced in the previous quotes not all Asian Indian American students are academically superior students. Structural and institutional factors existing in schools tend to further marginalize these students. The constant negotiation of their everyday experiences, perceptions and stereotypes affects their relationship with learning and their interpretation of the learning environments.

To further complicate their learning process, they are devalued for not fitting the norm of the ‘Asian Indian.’ This in turn has implications for identity formation. In this fluid, evolving process, the participants engage in the explorations of their identities in

order to feel comfortable, and in order to commit to one. The status of belonging to an immigrant community and being stereotyped as the model minority marginalize the Asian Indian American student as the 'other.' The duality in the cultures brings about a duality of identities which sociologist Stonequist (1961) says leads to a 'divided personality' a 'marginal' individual. He states "Wherever there are cultural transactions and cultural conflicts, there are marginal possibilities" (1961, p. 3). Since school is one of those places in which cultural transactions take place, it is here that the participants are most marginalized and differentiated against.

Difference, Marginalization and Racism

As noted in the previous section the second generation Asian Indian American is stereotyped as smart, intelligent, hardworking and respectful. They are perceived to belong to the model minority, which works against many Asian Indian students. However even with these perceptions and stereotypes, they do face discrimination and marginalization. Some of the discrimination has racist overtones.

For instance Irfan says that he has always felt discriminated against because of the color of his skin. He says:

> In middle school when I was young it kinda bothered me. They would look down on you because of your culture and color. Maybe the 9/11 thing had a role in it.

They thought they were better than everybody. They always looked down at you. He specifically recalls one incident saying:

> Like in elementary school, I was always around different cultures. I'd didn't see anybody from my race in my school. I used to watch a lot of TV in elementary school and I always saw like, white people in TV shows, black people, I never saw anybody from my race. I always felt like they were superior to me. I always felt like I didn't belong over here. I was made to feel like that.

Other participants also mentioned that they were discriminated against due to the color of the skin. Vineeth too mentioned that he is sometimes discriminated against because of the color of his color. He says:

> I don't know why but sometimes I feel that being brown is not good. The white students make all kind of jokes about brown people. But why, they are immigrants too, it's just that they came here centuries ago and we came here two decades ago and legally too. What's the difference? I think it has everything to do with color.

Vinneth's implication in the above quote is interesting. He is suggesting that Asian Indians came into the U.S. legally unlike previous immigrants and there should be no reason why he is made to feel different. Be that as it may, he thinks the difference is mostly due to color. Consider Maya who says that she did sometimes wish to be white to avoid the stereotype that people who are brown are terrorists. She says most people lump all those who are brown together, without understanding that there are different cultures in Asia. She says:

> The stereotype that most brown people do the sacrifice killing you know. They like throw bombs or whatever and they say it's a sacrifice. When people see that

> and they see like you know like the brown skin they automatically think it's everyone with brown skin. So many countries in Asia have people with brown skin like India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other eastern places. Afghanistan people and Indian people are so different, its two completely cultures but in the eyes of somebody who's American or white I should say Caucasian they see it as like the same exact thing. Like anybody can be a terrorist you know from any culture but because of the recent news it's been associated with brown people. And people make jokes about it. Even in my school, they make comments.

She says that one of the reasons for the discrimination is the stereotype that all brown people are considered to be terrorists. Maya says because of her color she has felt discriminated against at school. She says: "kids are making jokes all the time, brown jokes, smelly jokes, terrorist jokes but underneath all those jokes they probably really aren't as accepting of other cultures." She reasons this out by mentioning:

> As a Caucasian kid you grow up and you're around all these Caucasian things and you probably grow up with Caucasian friends and then something new comes along and when something new comes along it's like why are you so different. They don't like different. So they'll make jokes and stuff.

Irfan too notes that most people are afraid of difference. And because Asian Indian immigrants look different and have different ways of being, they are not accepted. That is why they make inappropriate jokes about one's background, ethnicity and religion. He says his Asian Indian classmates, even though they are smart are made to feel different

because of their color and ethnicity. He says where Asian Indian students are concerned, they have to hear a lot of cab driver and smelly food jokes. He says:

> What we do, they feel like it's weird to them. It's different. Because it's different, they feel that it's not acceptable. They think it's totally different to them. They're not used to it. That's not how they're raised. They believe their culture is superior to others, they're better than you, they (Americans) believe they're better than us, they believe their culture is superior. This happens all the time, in school too, out of school, to me, to my Indian friends, everywhere.

Other participants like Arjun and Jennifer and John mentioned encountering difference, albeit positively. Arjun says that teachers and others expect him to be a high achiever and respectful and he is both. In fact where achievement is concerned he likes being identified as Asian Indian, because of the positive stereotype that Asian Indians are smarter. He says that the teachers in school expect him to have a strong work ethic and he does. He said that he has never been discriminated against in school due to the color of his skin. Jennifer too mentioned that the only difference she has faced is being treated better than other students due to her academic accomplishments. While John mentioned that he was almost expecting to be discriminated because of his background but it did not happen, in fact it has been the very opposite. He asserts: "… I almost expected that when I walked in but there, everyone here is extremely accepting. No one's ever judged me by that standard."

However Maya asserts that students of color, in some way shape or form do feel the difference and discrimination in school at some time or the other in their lives. I

shared with Maya that one of the other participants in this study had mentioned not feeling any discrimination due to ethnicity. She said that it is just not possible. She shared: "I don't believe it. Anyone who is brown faces discrimination."

It is to be noted that those participants that felt discriminated because of the color of their skin were darker in complexion while those who did not face discrimination due to color were very light complexioned. To further complicate matters, Irfan says that color and religion sometimes go hand in hand as being strong reasons for being discriminated against. He shares that he is a Muslim by religion. He said that after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York; people started making terrorist jokes about his ethnicity. He admits that the negative stereotypes about the Muslim culture are often fueled by people of his own community due to their questionable actions. Sometimes he says that it a personal lifestyle choice on the part of Muslim individuals that contributes to marginalization and discrimination. He says some students in his school wear head scarves, and are looked down upon for wearing a head scarf because it goes against the popular customs and beliefs. He says that there are bad people in all religions, not just in his religion. He says that it is not right to say that his religion and culture is bad. He says:

> I guess when there are some students in our school who wears scarves. Stuff like that. They ask me, why they are wearing scarves, what's that about? Maybe the clothes they wear, what my mom wears. They just feel their better than us. There are bad people everywhere, remember the crusades. It's just weird why all Muslims are singled.

Whereas Maya and Jennifer mentioned that they had not faced any discrimination in school due to religion. Both observed that almost everyone in America was Christian, Catholic or Jewish, and since they belong to the same religion, they were able to fit right in. Both said that having Anglicized names helped as well. Maya noted that most Asian Indian names in the U.S. ended with Patel and since theirs didn't, it helped them.

Coping with Marginalization, Racism and Discrimination

Each participant in this study had felt difference and marginalization in some form in the context of school. Depending on the nature of the discrimination the study participants developed defense mechanisms in order to successfully cope with student marginalization. Consider Irfan who says that he will not tolerate being picked on due to his religion. He says that he will defend it no matter what. He says:

> … when it comes to religion I'm never gonna pick the American side. Even what they say to me, I'm always gonna find a way to defend it. If they say a joke on me and they have a joke about it I just reverse it and say a joke on their culture. But it still hurts.

He does include that he does his best to blend in. He mentions that his family is very supportive and that gives him the strength to cope with difference and discrimination. He says that as long as he is with his family he will be supported. He stated:

> I realized this country is made up of different cultures. Everybody has their own role here and I'm always around my family. That's the only thing that matters to

> me. I don't care what other people think about my race, as long as I'm with my family that's all that really matters.

Irfan leans on his family when he is discriminated against. Maya however notes she has to be careful how she responds to discrimination. She says:

> If I said something back they might think I am attacking them or they will draw their own conclusions and not like me even more. So I have to be careful and choose my words wisely. What I say may make people not accept me.

In other words Maya chooses not to confront discrimination as she cannot risk not being liked and accepted. She said when she was younger the jokes about herself or her community hurt, but as she grew older she learnt to cope by learning to blending in. She says:

> When you're in high school you go through that period where you're trying to fit in. And I never really changed myself for anyone to an extreme but I guess I just tried to focus on more American things to get along with other people. I did not want to explain things, so I didn't if it is not asked for.

Jennifer says she has never felt discrimination. She even goes so far as to say that discrimination and racism are acceptable sometimes. She says: "a little bit of racism is acceptable, when it is just brown jokes once in a way, but continuously saying things that's where it gets really bad." Jennifer has internalized the messages of discrimination and racism. John on the other hand says that he just walks away when faced with messages of discrimination. He says:

> What's the point? It's not worth the hassle and trouble. I will just walk away. After all those with that kind of mentality are bigots, they need to look at the mirror before pointing fingers at others. In fact I feel sorry for them.

John would rather walk away from confrontation than fight for his beliefs, values, ethnic culture and traditions. This fuels another perception that most Asian Indian students are very laid back and can be easily manipulated.

The Public/ Private Lives…A Reality

As discussed, all the participants faced some kind of difference in the context of school. For some participants the differences did not marginalize them rather empowered them, while other participants felt marginalized and discriminated against due to stereotypes, perceptions and racism.

All participants as evidenced by the above quotes learned behaviors to cope and blend into the school milieu. In school they are all second generation Asian Indian Americans. They seem to take pride in the label and identity that they have chosen. Most are happy to share their Indian-ness when called for. This is the public face they showcase: of an Asian Indian who is well-adjusted, academically gifted, respectful and courteous. As some of the participants argued, they did live up to the expectations; in part they are successful due to the strong support they receive from their parents and the Asian Indian diaspora.

On a superficial level they seem to be successful negotiators of their identity. Ethnically this group of participants is very diverse. This diversity involves various

modes of student learning, adaptabilities, capabilities and ways of knowing. The participants who were interviewed chose not to share these unique traits with others in the school system. They had faced discrimination, some more than others, so all participants learned behaviors to blend in, something that they would never admit to their teachers and peers. They played the role of the "model minority" even when there was a perceived clash of traditions and values. They all mentioned being content switching back and forth between two cultures, their Indian culture and their American culture by adaption to educational circumstances.

As evidenced through the articulation of their voices there seems to be a restlessness; the feelings of frustration that they are unable to neatly fit into a perfect compartment. Although they are quite content with the unique place they occupy in society, I understand that the participants have left much unsaid. Switching between cultures is never easy; there are always instances when one culture was preferred over the other. Just like John's father who felt a loss decades ago, these participants feel a loss that they are unable to define. It is possible that this is indeed due to the uniqueness of their situation; an individual neither here, neither there; an in-between, a marginal, someone who is in the fringes and not the center; someone who is the second generation Asian Indian American.

Conclusion

One of the goals of education is to enable student empowerment. In the case of the second generation Asian Indian American, this goal of education is not fully realized. On the one hand they are applauded for assimilating and being the model minority while on the other they are devalued for holding on to their cultural ethnicity. While education wants them to assimilate into being like the majority i.e., white, they are ostracized for trying to be white. The cultural transactions that take place in the school system tend to isolate them by creating a dissonant experience tending to cause a disconnect between the two cultures. Albeit unknowingly on the part of participants, mainstream cultural messages are internalized and considered the norm.

This chapter on perceptions and stereotypes showcases how commonly held cultural perceptions of society fuel Asian Indian stereotypes and the model minority myth. In addition the same stereotypes and unique cultural in-betweenness contribute to their negotiated dualistic bi-cultural identities.

CHAPTER VII

IDENTITIES OF SECOND GENERATION ADOLOSCENTS

India is a very diverse country in terms of customs, traditions, religion and language. Each part of India has a very unique set of cultural customs and affiliations. It is not surprising that these unique affiliations are part of the first generation Asian Indian immigrant's ethnic identity. In order to understand ethnic identity of American born second generation Asian Indian adolescents, we must take into consideration the unique understandings of culture as maintained and transmitted by their parents as well as the nuanced perspectives of their understanding of ethnicity and culture.

Parents act as agents of cultural socialization in the preservation and transmission of Asian Indian ethnicity and culture. Through the incorporation of cultural and religious values, social norms, and traditions, parents try to instill in their children a sense of commitment and ethnic pride. Subconsciously all these factors help the participant to understand who they are as an individual in relation to others. This thought was echoed by Arjun and Jennifer (see section on Meanings of Culture- Chapter IV).

In the research interviews all the participants mentioned that preserving their cultural ethnicity as an Indian is not only important to their parents, but also to themselves. They added that their ethnicity is preserved by following specific cultural norms, religion, and the expression of native language. All of the above factors helped shape their ethnic identity which they chose to share with peers, and their community. In addition parental influence played a major role in actively shaping their children's ethnic

identity. As argued previously, for the American born Asian Indian adolescents, ethnic identity is understood not only through the lens of native language usage, religion, background of the parents, and adherence towards social and ethnic values, but also through a common shared Indian culture with others belonging to the same ethnicity. Phinney (2003) suggests that ethnic identity can be looked at as a construct, a relational dynamic containing the individual's choices, affiliations and associations with others belonging to the same ethnic group.

All participants in the research study mentioned that their parents were responsible in helping them form an ethnic identity. Jennifer says that Asian Indian parents stress the importance of maintaining friendships among peers of their own ethnicity as a way of preserving culture and for positive self-identification. This perspective was observed to be common among the study participants and their families. Most Asian Indians are friends with other Asian Indians. The commonalty of ethnicity and Indian culture and similar lifestyles bind them together. Most of the study participants mentioned identifying consciously or unconsciously with others who belonged to the same ethnic group due to a commonality consisting of similar traditions, behaviors, values, and beliefs.

All participants agreed that ethnicity was essential in maintaining a sense of ethnic identity and self-identification, and therefore they felt that it was necessary to be committed to learning more about their cultural ethnicities. Having such a positive self-identification with one's ethnicity is not only empowering, but very constructive in understanding the self-identity of the American born adolescent children of Asian Indian

immigrants. The participants feel that their ethnic identity as individuals of Asian Indian origin sets them apart. For instance, Jennifer mentions that her Indian roots make her unique. She mentions that her lifestyle choices contribute to having a strong ethnic identity as an Indian. She shares:

> I am completely Indian. I cannot call myself an American, because of my culture, my lifestyle, my choices and my background. If I do have to identify myself I would say that I am an Indian living in America. I would not want it any other way.

Similar thoughts were echoed by Arjun and Kyra who noted that being Indian is a major part of who they are as individuals. They are able to identity with their ethnicity in a positive way. However Maya and Vineeth mentioned that although being identified as Indian has its prerequisites it has a lot of downsides as well. He states that it is the downsides of ethnicity like discrimination due to color or stereotypes that leads some to identify negatively with their ethnicity. Vinneth shares:

> If you have an Indian identity it makes people believe that you are smart. Many times it is not and then they look at you, like shouldn't you be like this and why are you like this, not smart. Just because you have an Indian ethnicity does not make you smart.

Most of the negative identification with ethnicity takes place when there are stereotypes of people belonging to particular cultures involved. I analyzed the role of stereotypes in identity formation in Chapter V. I argued that these stereotypes negatively impacted the self-esteem of the study participants. Some study participants viewed the model minority

stereotype as positive while others considered it detrimental depending on specific educational contexts. Another negative identifier is phenotype due to skin color and an assumed race.

Ethnicity and a Racialized Identity

Ours is a visual world and the difference in the color of skin is prominent in some ethnicities. Many who belong to these ethnicities feel that they are treated differently based on the color of the skin. Such individuals may tend to negatively self-identify with their ethnicities. Some of the study participants mentioned being discriminated against due to the color of skin. This affects their ethnic identity as Asian Indians.

Some participants have mentioned that they wished they were white in order to assimilate easily into mainstream society, thereby homogenizing themselves. Maya says she feels conflicted about her ethnic identity and Asian Indian culture at school. She recalls an incident wherein she felt conflict about her ethnic background saying:

> It was around the time that I was just entering high school. I think that was a time that I kind of had a little bit more conflict cause that's when you really start to question your identity as being American, Indian because that's when you really get into like kids telling you what's cool and what's popular but I mean there are definitely times when I when I said like if I was white things would be so much easier. And there's definitely still gonna be times like that. There's always gonna be that type of struggle for Indian American kids, they are like a different race.

Maya says that it does help being white because it is the expected norm. Maya here focuses only on her ethnicity as an Indian but on race and the color of the skin. In other words one could have an Indian background and white and be accepted, while being Indian and darker is different. Even Kyra mentions a similar thought. She says: "When I was younger. I wished that I was more American, more white. I was probably in middle school then. How could I be American and brown"? Similarly Irfan mentioned that one would not know he was of another ethnic culture if they heard him speak. He says it all comes down to his race and skin color. These quotes by Irfan, Maya and Kyra suggest that racial identity is not only understood as an ascribed phenotype, but as an ascribed phenotype of ethnic culture. In a way it implies that the second generation American born Asian Indian recognizes that they are different due to the color of the skin. It not only signifies an important identification of their culture and ethnicity but also acts as a function of that culture.

The idea of racial and ethnic identity is immersed in perception. There are two factors that are needed for this perception: one the ethnic group of which the individual is a member i.e. the perceived and two, the other, mainstream group or the perceiver. The dichotomy of the perceived - perceiver maintains social hierarchy and cultural stratification and leaves many Asian Indian adolescents feeling marginalized. Laura Uba (1994) posits that the individual's experiences with racism are the "root" of conflict and marginalization. Even the Census categories stratify individuals on race. Stratification maintains social hierarchy and contributes to the disenfranchisement of immigrants.

Religious-Ethnic Identity

Both Jennifer and Maya mentioned that religion has a big role in shaping their identity. Jennifer said that both her parents were involved in religion and it was natural for her to be immersed in it as well. She said that her mother started to get her involved by asking her to pray every day. She also mentioned that her mother made her join the choir at church. She said she hated it, because she could not sing. Jennifer thinks that her mother asked her to join the choir at church because her sibling was in choir too. She says:

> I hated choir. I think mom made me go because Katie (sibling) was in it. I didn't like it one bit. I was very upset with her. I understand why she did it. She wanted me to be part of the church activities especially choir, but I just couldn't. I couldn't sing. I just mouthed the words sometimes. I told my mother it was Katie's thing not mine.

Jennifer shared that when her mother realized that she was not enjoying being part of the choir, she asked her to play an instrument instead. Jennifer then decided to continue being in the choir by playing a musical instrument instead of singing. She did not like that as well. Jennifer mentioned that she did not want to be part of the choir and finally she dropped it. She says that she is much happier now. She mentions that being in the choir is her sibling's way of connecting with religion not hers. She says: "I will find other ways to connect, just not through choir."

Maya on the other hand said that she was very involved in the religious activities of her church. She said that she sings in the choir and loves it. She says that many in her

church belong to her ethnic background and therefore she had many friends among them. She says she attends retreats with them sometimes. She says:

> I love singing. I sing for my church. I am in the choir. On weekends we practice, so I know most of them personally. After practice we often talk about our lives, school and stuff. Our parents are involved in the church activities too. Sometimes they are in charge of it. We go to retreats sometimes through church. I know many on a personal basis. It's good, I like it. I used to be in this Christian band, made of people from the church. We sang at Christian events that are related through other events at churches and parishes.

Both Maya and Jennifer mentioned that religion plays a big role in their lives. Maya mentioned that she spends lot of time with her church friends, and is part of a youth group. She identifies with her religion. Both Jennifer and Maya shared that religion was very much a part of their lives and part of who they are as individuals and their ethnicity.

For the most part, participants were involved in religion and religious activities only if their parents were part of it as well. Arjun and Kyra took part in the traditions and celebrations of the temple because their parents involvement in the activities. In Irfan's case, his mother wanted him to be more religiously inclined and scribe to the identity of a Muslim in America. Vinneth and Jennifer mentioned that they were immersed in religion without even knowing it. It is part of their lives. In Vineeth's case, he made the conscious choice to have the Upayana (thread) ceremony performed, in which one is dedicated to serving God as a priest. Vineeth mentioned that religion defined who he is. He mentioned that it would be hard for him to separate his ethnicity and his identity from

his religion. He says that religion defines who he is. While Kyra and Arjun's involvement in religion was restricted to visiting the temple a few times a year. They mentioned that religion was not a big factor in self-identification.

Conflict in Identities

All the participants acknowledged that American culture as well as Indian culture and ethnicity inform their identity. Some participants at first seemed to identify more with Indian culture as opposed to American culture while others seemed to prefer the American culture. For example Maya mentioned that she feels that her is more Indian than American. She says:

> I am completely Indian. I cannot call myself an American, because of my culture, my lifestyle, my choices and my background. If I do have to identify myself I would say that I am an Indian living in America. I would not want it any other way.

Although Maya identified herself as an Indian, she was still comfortable with adapting herself to the two different cultures. I pointed out to her that she is American by birth and that she had mentioned previously that she wanted to blend in to the American culture so as to not draw attention to herself and her ethnicity. She said that that may be true, but she would still self-identity as Asian Indian. Jennifer mentioned a similar view. She too said that she has Indian roots and therefore would identify more with the Indian culture than the American culture.

Both Maya and Jennifer mention that they are Indians first where cultural ethnicity is concerned and then they are Americans. Jennifer and Maya have adapted to the Americanized version of an Indian culture. This is the public ethnicity as an Indian that they are willing to share with others. Arjun too notes that he does like having an Asian Indian cultural background, although he prefers the lifestyle in the U.S. He asserts that the U.S. is his home and therefore he sees himself completely immersed in American culture. He says that America defines him.

> I appreciate the Indian culture but I like the lifestyle here. I always liked it here better here than in India. I guess I'm too embedded in this Americanized version of culture now. It's kind of like my comfort zone. I can go back (to India) any number of times, but this is my home. America defines me.

Arjun mentioned that he is used to the American culture and thus identifies himself as American first by virtue of birth and Indian second by virtue of ethnicity. However he said that if he was asked to choose a label to describe himself, he would say that he is Asian Indian American. He also stated that he will not forget his Indian heritage and will always appreciate it. He mentions that when necessary he will use his Indian background. But for the most part he is American. He shares:

> I would identify myself as an American first because I was born here - I was brought up in this culture. I like the fact that I have a rich heritage that's outside of the American lifestyle. So Indian American, as cliché and generic as you'll find it, is probably the best way to label myself. But I am American first, cause I've

> been brought up in this culture, I have an Indian background and obviously that heritage shouldn't be forgotten. I'll appreciate it. Use it when I need to.

Arjun seems to reveal his true self in this quote. He states that he is American, but will use his ethnicity as an Asian Indian to his benefit. Further he reveals:

> When it suits me to be Indian it's always nice to wear that skin. When it suits me in a group setting or when kids are looking at me and say who should be in their group, and they'll be like you're the Indian kid you're usually smart or they approach me with a question or something like that. When it suits me, it's nice to be known as Indian rather than as an American. But other than that, I guess I identify myself as American because I care about what happens to this country more than that country (India). I feel it's done a lot for me and my parents since they moved here. I only draw the distinction of when I'm Indian is when it suits me.

What is striking about Arjun's quote is the notion of using his identity as an Asian Indian to his benefit. Kyra, Irfan, Jennifer all have alluded to the same notion of being American, having an American identity while at the same time using their Asian Indian identity to their benefit. These thoughts parallel Margaret Gibson's 1988 study on assimilation patterns of Asian Indian in Sikhs, in which she notes that parents instill in their children ways of assimilating into American society, while at the same time learning how to use the system to their benefit and retain their Asian Indian culture and ethnicity. The importance of parental influence is reveled in Irfan's quote. He shares:

> Deep inside, I don't feel American, I feel Pakistani. I think this is because of my parents. That plays a main role. Because they weren't born here, they were raised in Pakistan. That's their country and mine too. So I will use that when I can. They can't say that America is their country completely, I can. They can tell me about Pakistan. Everything over here is nothing like Pakistan. I don't know I feel weird sometimes, but I am American, I was born here, American culture is my culture, it is my identity.

What makes this view from Irfan interesting is that he as stated earlier he prefers to be Indian, and other times Pakistani, especially when it suits him. He does not mind publicly passing as an Asian Indian due to the stereotype that Indians are academically smarter. He shared that he likes the stereotype and will use it to his benefit. Yet in this quote (above) he acknowledges his true self, his Pakistani roots and his ethnicity and will use this ethnicity to his benefit. Where Irfan is concerned he considers himself Pakistani and identifies with Asian Indian culture. He also states that he is an American. His identity is even more complex than the other study participants. He is not ascribing to a bi-cultural identity rather he is negotiating a pan-ethnic identity.

As evidenced from the above quotes, some participants assert that they are American and self-identify with American culture. They are also perceived as Asian Indians and share a nationalistic identity of being an 'Indian' with other Asian Indians in society. But in private, and when it works to their benefit they identify themselves as Asian Indians, and specifically in Irfan's case Pakistani and sometimes Asian Indian. In addition, the participants identified more with the American culture in their public lives

while privately hold on to the views and notion of an Asian Indian ethnicity. As Maya stated that they have learned to be "Americans in America with an Asian Indian twist".

A Balancing Act

Although the participants mentioned their affinity towards American culture, most of them do feel the tug and pull of belonging to two different cultures. They perceive themselves as straddling two very different cultural worlds. In addition they perceive themselves to be capable of making sense of their lives and identity negotiated in a bi-cultural context. In some instances the participants are capable of negotiating their lives; i.e., they learned to modify adaptation to selectively acculturate into American society. At other times choices between cultures in specific circumstances lead to conflict (Gibson, 1988; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990, 2001; Zhou, 1997).

For example Irfan says that sometimes he feels split in maintaining the roles of being Pakistani and American. He says:

> These are 2 cultures. American and Pakistan. I'm never in the middle. I'm always moving over here. Sometimes, being with my family brings me back a little bit but I'm always racing to the American culture. That's why I always want to be American.

For instance here Irfan feels conflict between two cultures. It seems as if he is voluntarily trying to reject his ethnicity in favor of being an American. Of all the study participants interviewed Irfan seems to be the most marginalized in terms of his identity. He is not comfortable in occupying an in-between space between two cultures as most

others seem to be. Kyra on the other hand mentions feeling conflict only in specific instances where parental influence was concerned. She says:

> I think I've felt conflicted sometimes, like I cannot bring anyone home and not go out and, oh dating…no dating. I know for a fact that my parents wouldn't approve. They are conservative in that sense. But otherwise it's okay. I'm Indian, I'm American, oh well.

Similar thoughts were echoed by Jennifer, Maya and Vineeth as well. Vineeth went so far as to say that he wished his parents were not so rigid in their views, so that he can lead a life that any other normal American child. Jennifer mentioned that she could never bring boys up to her room as her mother would give her the "look." While parental influence was rigid in the case of the female participants, the male participants had no problems in dating or staying out late. Both Irfan and Arjun mentioned that their parents trusted them and would respect their choices.

Parents Identity Influencing Participants Identity

The above factors discussed such as race, religion, and perception affect the identity of the adolescent Asian Indian. Another important aspect to consider that informs their identity is the experiences and identity of their parents.

Experiences with adaptation into U.S. society contribute to the identity of their parents. Consider the following quote by John about his father who immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager:

> My father came here to study. He was a teen then. It was such a culture shock for him. Both cultures were so different. In some way I guess my father expected to be eased into the system, that didn't happen, he was thrown and expected to swim. He had to learn the system fast in order to survive. He became Americanized very quickly. Sometimes when we speak, I feel like he still feels sad like he lost something in the transition that he could retain something of himself and his culture.

As John notes, his father felt a loss of ethnic culture and identity as an adolescent first generation immigrant. He felt that the school system did not value his Asian Indian ethnicity and culture. Further belonging to a different ethnic culture as opposed to U.S. culture made him the target of racial innuendoes and stereotypes. He realized that others perceived him to be different, "the other," and therefore made him the target of difference and discrimination. He therefore learned to modify his identity and give up aspects of his cultural ethnicity in order to be accepted by his peers. Due to his personal experiences, John's father feels that there should be an inclusion of the study of Asian Indian culture and other immigrant cultures in the school curriculum in order to foster respect and understanding for those immigrants who historically and socially feel devalued.

John's father's view is consistent with some Asian Indian immigrant literature that notes that most first generation immigrants feel the loss of culture (Helweg & Helweg; 1990; Moag 2001; Portes & Rumbaut; 1990). One of the ways that this cultural loss can be lessened is to include certain aspects of culture, such as study of languages, historical personalities, religious traditions and customs as part of the school curriculum.

With regards to this research study, some participants mentioned that there needs to be some inclusion of Asian Indian culture and ethnicity in the curriculum in order to mitigate the cultural loss felt and to acknowledge the uniqueness, historicity, accomplishments and achievements of Asian Indians and immigrants in general.

Not all first generation Asian Indian immigrant parents felt the loss of Asian Indian culture. Some immigrant Asian Indian parents readily embraced the American culture since they felt that it was better for themselves and their children for purposes of structural assimilation into U.S. society. Some participants acknowledged that their parents experienced an initial cultural disconnect which they were quickly able to overcome with help from their extended families and community. Kyra argued that her parents readily embraced the new culture of the host society and never looked back. She mentioned that her father sometimes feels sorry for those who hold on to their Asian Indian culture and ethnicity in the U.S. She states:

> My father always says that we have to be Americans. He says he feels sorry for those who are unable to adapt. He is not demeaning our culture, but in a way I guess he thinks that adapting to American culture is better for all of us. In order to get ahead that's what needs to be done. So he says do what they tell you in school, this is where we live.

Kyra's father's point is view is different from the other first generation immigrant parents of this study who felt a loss of Asian Indian culture in adapting to the American culture. In the preceding quote, Kyra's father is implying that the host culture is superior and therefore Kyra asserts that she was always encouraged to be Americanized. So she posits

that her family; herself included, do not think it is necessary for her to learn about her Asian Indian culture at school. She notes:

> My parents don't feel, and I don't think that I have to learn about my culture at school. I am born American so I really don't need to know about the history of India. If I want to I could learn at home. This is a different society here and we need to be able to be here.

Both John's father's view and Kyra's father's view stand in stark contrast to each other. One feels the need of a culturally rich curriculum that involves the contributions and perspectives of all cultures while the other feels that it is not needed.

Where the participants are concerned Kyra seems comfortable about the lack of representation of her Asian Indian culture at in the curriculum at her school, while all other participants mentioned that it would more empowering to learn about different cultures, views and perspectives at school. Maya for instance notes that it would be nice for other students to know about the Asian Indian culture. She says:

> I wish we did some learning about Asian Indians and their contributions at school. It would be nice for others as well to see what our culture is about. After all we are Americans, I mean we have black history, then we learn about the Indians, oh and the Jews. We learn a lot about some cultures while others are neglected. But I guess it's okay though, because I get a dose of it at home.

Like Maya other participants like John, Jennifer and Arjun are attuned to the fact that their Asian Indian culture is largely ignored by the school system. They do acknowledge the need for inclusion of some aspects of Asian Indian culture in the curriculum, but not

necessarily their Asian Indian ethnicity. They note that it does not affect them to not learn about ethnicity in school, since they learn about their ethnic heritage at home and in their communities.

Education fosters and nurtures this common culture-embracing individual actualization while the learning of other cultures and ethnicities seem superficial at best. This view of learning about cultures through education implies the indoctrination of all students into a common Eurocentric culture. It is therefore not surprising that some participants' parents feel the loss of ethnic culture; that in striving for individuality and a common culture they may have compromised their ethnic roots.

Negotiating Identities

All the participants seemed capable of negotiating their identities in response to specific situations in society as well as in the context of school. Further some mentioned having an American identity first and an Asian Indian identity second, while others mentioned having an Asian Indian identity and having a preference for American culture.

As referenced in the previous section most second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent experience cultural conflicts which makes them question their identity as an individual. This occurs when there is a clash of value systems between one that is collectivistic with one that is individualistic. Still, when asked to identify themselves many seem to identify first by ethnicity. Kyra mentions that she sometimes thinks of herself more Indian than American because that is who she is. She says:

> I am probably more Indian over American I'd say. Cause that's who I am. I don't consider myself fully American. I live in America. Well if people asked me I would say I'm from America but I'm American Asian Indian.

However she also mentioned that by virtue of being born in the United States she identifies with American culture as well. She mentions:

> I am an Asian Indian, culture is very important to me, I am American at the same but when somebody would ask me who are you I would first answer, I'm Indian or Asian Indian but I live in America. I'm American by birth; I've lived here for all my life. I don't fit the stereotype of Indians. I am more comfortable with American culture.

She further reveals that being part of both cultures is the best of both worlds. She says:

> It's the best of both worlds. It's being an Indian and at the same time being an American. I can connect back to my home, culture, grandparents and then at the same time I can be friends with students at school and have fun at the same time.

The same thoughts were echoed by the other participants particularly Maya, Jennifer and John, who maintained that were Asian Indian first and then American. However it is to be noted that they were very selective as to when they identified themselves as Asian Indian versus American. With their family and ethnic culture they were Asian Indian Americans or Americans of Asian Indian descent; with their peers at school, in academic and mainstream society they aligned themselves with an American identity. All the participants occupy a unique cultural space with the exception of Irfan, an in-between

place between two cultural worlds and are capable of fluid movement within those spaces.

Uniqueness: A Bi-Cultural Asian Indian American Identity

> Being me is like being both, Indian and American. I think it's fun to switch back and forth. Two things at once; but it's fun. I don't know if I'd be more 1 than the other. I feel like if I wore more Indian clothes and I chose to be more Indian. I still feel like I wouldn't fit in as much because even though I try so hard, I still would have that look. If I was to go to India again, I still feel that I wouldn't fit in. Even in America, when I go to school every day I'm wearing American clothes but I still don't have that look. Being more of one or the others might not work out in any circumstance because I would be more of one than the other. I look Indian because my skin is different than everyone else's. I wear American clothes and I speak English. So I am both and I am very comfortable with it. I enjoy it. I like going back and forth. I like who I am. I like the uniqueness: the best of both worlds.
>
> Kyra Mehta

All participants were capable of taking on multiple identities. Some of them mentioned that they liked switching between two cultures; they had the best of both worlds. Arjun notes that the difference in the public/private spheres of life is due to the parents who stress the maintenance of ethnic culture. Arjun says the reason he feels Indian sometimes is because of the cultural aspects of Indian culture. He therefore

identifies with it. Being born in America he accepts and lives by the social norms of this country. He says that in a way he is getting the best of both worlds. He stated:

> I feel like an Indian because of the cultural aspects. The way I was raised is very similar to the way Indians are raised all over the place. The respect, the values that we hold are very much Indian, but I was born an American. I was born in this country; I've lived by the social norms of this country. The way I see it, I'm getting the best of both worlds.

Further he says he likes showing his friends parts of his Indian culture. He says that showcasing his Indian culture, makes him unique as compared to the generic white American. He also likes the fact that his friends are intrigued by his Asian Indian background. He says:

> I don't mind showing, parts of my culture. So for example, I've brought my tablas to school. I also play the violin. For the orchestra I play jai ho from Slum Dog Millionaire, sometimes I play the tabla with the orchestra so I really love to show parts of my culture. I like the fact that I am Indian and it makes me unique in some sense. No offense, but not like the generic white Americans kind of. My friends and others are intrigued by it as well.

As a summary, consider this quote from Arjun. It is reflective of the other participants as well. He mentions that he has learned to adapt to circumstances and situations that make him choose one culture over the other. He identifies himself as American nationalistically, Indian culturally, and ethnically Gujarati. He says:

> I think I've come to adapt to being both American and Indian when circumstances warrant it. I like to get the best of both worlds. I like the unique twist to being Indian American. Nationalistically, I think I am more American but with regards to how I act culturally, I consider myself as more Indian. I don't like some aspects of American culture and I only share those aspects of my Indian culture that I think is important to share.

All participants noted that they voluntarily shared their Indian culture with others, while their ethnicities due to religion and language were private. In addition all participants with the exception of Irfan were capable to switching between two cultures. In terms of identity all participants choose a bicultural identity due to dual cultural membership.

Conclusion

Culture helps build an individual's identity. Erik Erickson notes that understanding one's identity formation becomes the main focus during adolescence. He further notes that identity is often multifaceted and changes periodically in response to various socio-cultural, religious, and ethnic factors. All the participants mentioned that their ethnicity, Indian culture as well as American culture influenced who they were as individuals. They argued that religion, language and parental influence were all important factors that influenced their ethnicity. In addition they mentioned that they chose specific aspects of ethnicity to be shared with other individuals from their community as well as others from society.

In addition, the participants seemed to compartmentalize their experiences and perceptions into public and private lives. The private life was reserved for those who belonged to the same ethnicity. In the public sphere of their lives they took a nationalistic identity in that they were Indians and a nationalistic identity in that they were Americans. All participants claimed dual cultural membership. Further they seemed to relate more with American culture than Indian culture due to the commonality of values, ideas and views among peers. Overall they learned to selectively negotiate between the public and private spheres of their lives

Most of the study participants self-identified as Asian Indian Americans which was contradictory to some of the views maintained that they are Americans first and then Indians. Some participants noted that they are Americans due to the virtue of birth, but at times will use their Asian Indian heritage to their advantage. This goes to show that the second generation identity is indeed complex with layers and levels of public and private selves. These ideas seem consistent with the bi-cultural theme, in that they straddle two different cultural worlds, the immigrant world of their parents, their culture and extended communal networks and the American world of education, school, peers and media. They have learned to make sense of their uniqueness and negotiate the in-between spaces they occupy as individuals. All study participants learned to selectively acculturate and claimed dual cultural membership and a fluid bi-cultural identity.

CHAPTER VIII

LOOKING FORWARD: EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

Immigration has changed the U.S. landscape. In emigrating into the U.S. immigrants bring with them their customs, values, beliefs and traditions. Difference in the value systems between the two cultures; the host culture and the culture of their birth is one of the reasons that immigrants face problems in adapting and acculturating into U.S. society. In addition, researchers have argued that the very status of being an immigrant creates possibilities for discrimination, due to the retention of marginal and racial ethnic status in society. Researchers further emphasize that while first generation immigrants are concerned with surviving in a new context, their children the U.S. born face problems in identity formation due to dual cultural membership.

In order to understand identity negotiation of the post 1990 second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent, I reviewed various psychosocial, immigrant, racial, ethnic, and Asian Indian perspectives on identity. I argued that the some perspectives of psychosocial and immigrant identity theories can be applied to the adolescents of Asian Indian descent when analyzing their experiences with identity negotiation. Using a combination of adolescent identity and immigrant assimilation theories, I provided a framework for understanding the identity and lived experiences of the second generation adolescents economically located as having middle class backgrounds.

In evaluating a synthesis of these two theoretical lenses; adolescent identity development and immigration theories, I argued that in order to understand identity

negotiation of second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent who belong to the middle class socio-economic strata of society, their experiences need to be contextualized within the broader framework of parental immigrant experiences of adaptation into U.S. society. I stress the perspective that the Asian Indian adolescent voices, experiences and meanings presented in this study although unique cannot be generalized to include all second generation adolescent Asian Indians in the U.S., since the participants who took part in this study belonged to middle class backgrounds. They lived in affluent neighborhoods. They were privileged in terms of human and social capital.

In the following sections I offer a brief understanding and shortcomings of the theoretical lenses when applied to this research study given the specificities and uniqueness of the study participants. In addition, I suggest ways in which this study could provide a basis for future research on adolescent Asian Indians in the U.S.

Understanding Adolescent Identity

Adolescent identity theorists describe adolescence as a period of reflection and assessment of identities before committing to a 'personal identity'. Researchers such as Mead (1950), Marcia (1980), and Erikson (1950, 1968) note that during this period an individual considers all available options and identities before achieving a personal identity. In considering options, the researchers argue that the individuals go through a period of "psychological moratorium" in which they undergo "identity crisis", before establishing a true sense of personal identity.

With regards to this research study, some participants seemed comfortable with their chosen dualistic identities as Asian Indian Americans while others seemed to be going through a period of active "identity crisis" in order to arrive at their chosen identity. This was particularly true in the case of Vineeth and Jennifer. Vineeth used video games as an avenue to work out various identities as a way of understanding his true self, while Jennifer disregarded and rebelled against parental notions of identity in order to find her own identity.

As previously stated (see chapter VII) some participants argued that they were comfortable in their chosen identity, which implies that they underwent identity crisis and arrived at successful identity achievement. Applying the perspectives of adolescent identity development, it can be assumed that the participants had tried on various identities before committing to 'an identity.' However the results of this study revealed otherwise; all study participants were in psychological moratorium and undergoing active identity crisis.

Where these participants were concerned, the path towards identity achievement was not as simplistic as the literature suggested. At home and in their communities, the participants were committed to being Asian Indians due to the availability of cultural role models posed by parents and other members of their ethnicity. At school however they tried on new identities depending on the contextual situations, changing cultural scenarios in order to fit in and avoid alienation and marginalization. Their identities at home seemed almost fixed, while the identities in the school milieu were fluid, dynamic and relativistic. What was even more revealing was that the participants wanted to be more

like their peers; they wanted to be "white" in the school context, in order to blend in. Even though they belonged to middle class backgrounds and were privileged due to their socio-economic status and social capital, they were still marginalized for their racial phenotypes. The study directly showcased the school environment as the main factor contributing to their marginalization in turn influenced the formation and negotiation of their identities.

Constant social change, tension between the rigidity of ethnic and cultural traditions and exposure to U.S. value systems made the identity formation and negotiation of the second generation adolescent complex, nuanced and ambiguous. In addition, the ability to take on dualistic identities within the context of school while maintaining a strong ethnic identity with other Asian Indians problematized current models of identity formation.

The emergence of the public private dichotomy; public private lives, and possible public/private selves may indeed be one of the main categories of identity formation that influences identity negotiation of the second generation adolescent Asian Indians. This dichotomy may be specific and characterized by those adolescents who are socially and economically located as belonging to the middle class. Successful resolution of the dichotomous lives and selves may bring about true identity achievement. Adolescent identity theories and immigrant theories needs to be revisited in order to an account for such dichotomy and nuanced perspectives.

Theories of Immigration

As stated in the literature review, most immigrants face challenges when assimilating into the host society. Traditional models of immigrant assimilation proposed by various classical sociologists have been critiqued for linearity of immigrant assimilation into a "white" mainstream (Gordon, 1964; Park & Burgess, 1969; Stonequist, 1961). Researchers such as Portes and Rumbaut (1990, 2001), Lee (1994, 1996), Massey and Denton (1985), Alba and Nee (2005), and Gibson (1988) argued that immigrants follow various 'bumpy paths' in adapting into U.S. society; important reasons being that contemporary immigrants not only face varied social and economic environments but also possess vastly disproportionate economic capital and status. In order to explain variation in immigrant assimilation, these researchers use various theoretical perspectives of immigrant assimilation such as the melting pot theory, pluralism, segmented assimilation, accommodation without assimilation, spatial assimilation, and structural assimilation as ways of immigrant adaptation into the host society. They state that the path immigrants follow either by choice or through necessity in adapting to U.S. society is directly responsible for the variation in lived experiences and accounts for differences in meaning making and worldviews of immigrants.

The researchers further noted that the experiences of the first generation immigrant parents affect the experiences of their second generation children. They state that while the first generation is primarily concerned with surviving and adapting into the host society, their children the second generation are more concerned in understanding and attaining a stable identity. While the first generation parents maintain a collective

memory of their ancestral homeland and entertain notions of returning, the second generation individuals consider themselves foreigners and follow a dualistic frame of cultural reference. Adding to this complexity, the first generation immigrants tend to ascribe to a collectivistic identity while the second generation allows freedom of individualistic expressions of identity. These differences not only contribute to intergenerational conflict between the two generations but also influence the lived experiences of the second generation adolescent.

With regards to this research study, all participants were privileged due to their middle class backgrounds. They perceived themselves as privileged in the school system and discriminated by the same milieu. They felt privileged in belonging to the 'model minority' and marginalized for being part of an immigrant racial ethnic community. Their dualistic frame of reference in viewing others perceptions and their own self-perceptions lent itself to a 'double consciousness', a way of viewing the world through their lens as well as through the lens of dominant society. In some ways this double consciousness constrained their identity achievement within the social context of education.

Implicit throughout this research study was the notion that culture, socio-economic forces, societal forces and parental adaptation experiences impacted the identity of the participants. While these factors provided insight into the experiences of the second generation adolescent Asian Indian youth, none of these factors captured comprehensively the nuanced experiences of identity negotiation of the participants. A more robust theory needs to be developed in order to contextualize and succinctly

describe the second generation Asian Indian adolescents' experiences, and understand how the totality of the experiences informs their identity and true selves, and its implications on education.

Summary of the Study

The totality of experiences leads adolescents of middle class Asian Indian descent to embrace a dual cultural membership that creates possibilities for marginalization and well as empowerment within the context of schooling. According to these participants, schooling becomes a contested terrain where identity is negotiated in response to perceptions, discrimination and dominant ideologies. The U.S. school plays a contributing role in either accentuating or alleviating identity conflicts faced by these adolescents.

In order to gain a nuanced insight into the formation and negotiation of identity and self of second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent, I used a qualitative case study method to explore the question of the research study is: In the context of public schooling, what does being Asian Indian mean to the second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent?

Seven participants voluntarily took part in this study. All participants belonged to middle class backgrounds, were between 16-18 years of age, were studying in U.S. public schools, and whose parents immigrated to the U.S. post 1990. The participants reflected the diversity existing in the Indian diaspora in the U.S. and paralleled the diversity present among individuals in India. My analysis focused primarily on the students'

ethnicity and culture; their everyday lives, their lived experiences in schools, and in mainstream society, and how these lived experiences, understandings, and perspectives helped inform their negotiated bi- cultural identity.

In analyzing the above research question, I gained nuanced insights about the participant's identity. Some of the insights obtained related to the variation in lived experiences of second generation adolescent students of Asian Indian descent in U.S. public school, the role race and ethnicity played in the understanding of lived experiences in school, and in society; the complexity of identity negotiation due to their middle class backgrounds, and the impact of the second generation adolescent student's identity on the educational environment.

Lived experiences in the Context of School

The main question of this research study was to understand the meaning the adolescents attached to the word Asian Indian and how they negotiated their identity in the context of school. I chose to study the post-1990 immigrants because of their varied diversity and reasons for immigrating. While previous waves of Asian Indian immigrants were professionals, these groups of individuals were not only professionals but were also extended family members of prior immigrants, and individuals who had economic capital in India. Therefore their children, the U.S. born due to variation in capital had nuanced lived experiences in adapting to U.S. society that informed their identity in the context of schooling.

With regards to the study, the results indicated that first generation Asian Indian immigrant parents held on to their perceived ethnicities, traditions and norms even when adapting to U.S. society. The parents stressed the maintenance and preservation of Asian Indian culture and ethnicity on to their children because they felt that their culture was vulnerable in the host society. Learning the mother tongue, visiting the parents' birthplace, adhering to cultural norms and traditions of Asian Indian ethnicity were seen as ways of preserving ethnicity and maintaining ethnicity for future generations. This led the study participants to differentiate between their Asian Indian culture and Asian Indian ethnicity. The participants shared only those aspects of cultural ethnicity that they perceived was understood by their peers in school. They shared their Asian Indian culture with others because they felt that their peers were more interested in their culture.
The study participants understood Asian Indian culture as traditions, customs, norms, and perspectives that are shared by all Asian Indians in the U.S., and therefore shared a collectivistic identity with other Asian Indians in the diaspora. The participants understood ethnicity as specific and argued that religion and language were two important markers of ethnicity that contributed to their ethnicity. The differentiation between Asian Indian culture and Asian Indian ethnicity led the participants to distinguish and lead public and private lives. The ways in which they lived their perceived ethnicity contributed to their private lives while the Asian Indian culture was shared with others in U.S. society.

All participants seemed content with this separation and dichotomy of public versus private. They all were of middle class upbringing, and as specified in the previous

sections were privileged in the educational context; yet their lived experiences suggested that although they had the capital, they were still immigrants, and were categorized and perceived as an racial ethnic minority and treated as the 'other' in the context of school. Their lived experiences in the context of schooling revealed their marginalization.

Race, Ethnicity and Lived Experiences in School

The study participants mentioned being discriminated against in the school environment due to their race and ethnicity. Some participants felt marginalized due to the existing stereotypes and perceptions held by others, and present as a dominant ideology in the educational milieu. The marginalization felt in school seemed to alienate these participants in specific contexts. The alienation and marginalization felt, and discrimination incurred negatively affected the self-esteem of some participants. Participants like Jennifer and Kyra internalized messages of racism and discrimination. They stated that "a little bit of racism and discrimination was okay and allowed." Other study participants developed coping strategies to negate the effects of discrimination felt due to racism. Some participants chose to walk away while others ignored racist innuendoes. This was one of the reasons why the participants chose to compartmentalize their lives into public and private. The private life was shared with people who belonged to the community while the public lives were shared with all peers in school and the broader context of U.S. society.

Some participants wished that they were lighter in skin tone 'like generic Americans', or 'white' because they felt that the lighter they were the less discrimination

they would face in school. Secondly the participants were relieved to not have stereotypical Indian last names. They alluded that the last name was a source of discrimination, because it signified one's ethnic background. Third some participants mentioned that they were discriminated against because of their religious affiliations. Irfan in particular mentioned that due to his Muslim background he felt alienated in school. All participants mentioned that the fact that they were considered part of the model minority removed them from educational opportunities for academic achievement. Lastly all participants mentioned being alluded to notions of privilege in school due to the middle class backgrounds.

Identity Negotiation of Adolescents of Asian Indian Descent

The study participants were comfortable in switching between what they viewed as two cultural worlds and therefore took on bi-cultural identities. To the second generation adolescents, America was 'home' and therefore they were comfortable in adapting to the norms, values and perspectives of U.S. society. In addition due to the difference in perspectives and worldviews, they seemed to adapt faster into U.S. society than their immigrant parents.

With regards to their identities, all participants self-identified and labeled themselves as Asian Indian Americans, which was contradictory to some of the views professed, that they were Americans first and then Indians. Some participants noted that they are Americans due to the virtue of birth, but at times will not hesitate to use their Asian Indian ethnicity to their advantage when it came to educational opportunities in the

context of school. They were able to perceive themselves in this light due to their privileged middle class status and ethnic upbringing.

These ideas seem consistent with the bi-cultural theme, in that they straddle two different cultural worlds, the immigrant world of their parents, their culture and extended communal networks, and the American world of education, school, peers and media. In the educational system however, all participants stated that they were Americans. The reason they chose an American identity over their bi-cultural identity in the context of school was to blend in as much as possible in order to avoid marginalization and alienation. At times when they perceived that they were considered unique by their peers due to their bi-cultural identity, they chose to be Asian Indian Americans and in other instances they were Americans. But in the confines of their homes and in their communities they were like their parents "Indians in America."

There was a sense of fluidity in identity in the context of the school environment that was constantly negotiated due to societal perceptions and self-perceptions and rigidity in identity in their Asian Indian communities. This "double-consciousness" led to their marginalization as well as empowered them. The duality of cultures gave them a unique dualistic frame of cultural reference. They learned to make sense of their uniqueness and negotiate the in-between spaces they occupy as individuals.

Impact of the Second Generation Adolescent on the Educational Environment

A key finding of this study is the pervasive and dominating role the Asian Indian parents played in the cultural lives of their adolescent children. In this research study

Asian Indian parents influenced all aspects of the children lives. This set of parents preferred that their children develop friendships with others of their own ethnicity and religion, so that the Asian Indian culture and ethnicity could be preserved and maintained. They also influenced their children's friendships in school. Friendships with others in school as allowed as long as the 'friend' was more academically gifted. This made the participants a marginalized privileged class in school.

All participants had the opportunity, parental and communal support and cultural capital to succeed academically in school. Some study participants' maintained relationships with those individuals who had similar or better academic accomplishments than they did. They saw success in school as success in impacting the future with upward socio-economic mobility.

Role of Parents

All participants acknowledged the importance of the parental role their lives. However some issues like dating and respecting elders caused stress between the participants and their parents leading to conflict. Even with the conflict the study participants stressed that they would never shame or disgrace the family name. They even went so far as to say that they were obligated to their parents and therefore would respect their opinions and follow them to the best of their ability regardless of their own opinions.

Implications for Future Research

Due to scarce research on Asian Indians in the U.S., this study specifically focused on the Asian Indian group as part of the growing immigrant community. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized to the immigrant community, some findings could be applied in order to conduct further research on the immigrant population, their educational needs and how best these needs can be met in the educational system.

In addition, the educational community must recognize that every student needs the opportunity for an empowering education. When students feel marginalized, it affects not only their self-esteem and identity, but can negatively impact the educational milieu. In this research study many participants felt that they were discriminated against. Administrators, educators and students alike need to come together to respond for student discrimination and alienation and their effects on the individual student. Educational policies and practices must be put in place in order to afford every student a chance towards individual self-actualization.

Pertaining specifically to this study and the Asian Indian community, this research is just the beginning in understanding how adolescents of Asian Indian descent negotiate their identities. In this study, I focused on a few factors such as race, religion, language, ethnicity, as important markers of identity. Further research studies can be taken in order to understand the impact of gender and social class on identity formation and the intersection of a combination of factors in order to get to nuanced perspectives of identity. The results of this study challenge the existing models on Asian Indian identity.

Further research into aspects of identity of Asian Indian will provide a stronger theory for future studies in understanding the negotiated bi-cultural identity of Asian Indians. In order to get a better perspective on identity and meaning making of the Asian Indian community, it is preferable to solicit many more participants than this study has used. In addition, if the participants reside in different states, belong to different socio-economic statuses, speak varied languages and showcase the vast diversity of India, one will be able to get a clearer and more nuanced picture of the Asian Indian in America.

This study could also act as a springboard into further research on the relationships between Asian Indian parents and their U.S. born children. In this research study I did not explore in depth the concept of shame and disgrace inherent in not fulfilling the accepted parent- child roles. This is important in the understanding of a collectivistic community; the role of shame and the sense of obligation towards parents.

Conclusion: Immigration, Education and Identity

The process of immigrating into a new country can be a painful process for many immigrants. Assimilating into a society that is culturally different from their own causes many challenges for first generation Asian Indian immigrants. In particular, the host society may require the immigrants to give up some of their cultural beliefs, values and norms in order to successfully assimilate. The host society may even require that the immigrants modify and question their identity in light of mainstream perceptions.

Some researchers suggest that the process of immigration itself is problematic in the educational setting (Asher, 2001; Lee, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Schools and

educational institutions teach the immigrants one perspective, a dominant perspective, in order to successfully acculturate themselves into the host society through a Eurocentric lens, which makes immigrants feel devalued due to the loss of birth culture.

With regards to Asian Indian immigrants, most Asian Indian parents were unable to separate their ethnicity from their Asian Indian culture; while their adolescent children were capable of maintaining a degree of separation between the two cultures. The adolescent Asian Indian participants found it easier to ascribe to a nationalistic view of being Asian Indian due to mainstream perceptions of U.S. society, while their private ethnicities were reserved for individuals that belonged to their ethnic community. However the Asian Indian diaspora as a whole retained a minority status in society due to their immigrant status and the beliefs and perspectives of mainstream society.

Beliefs and perspectives held by mainstream society often shape educational systems. These cultural beliefs and perspectives of mainstream society are transmitted in the form of knowledge. In the context of second generation Asian Indian Americans, cultural values and beliefs of the mainstream society learned in school influenced their lived experiences and ways of being. This causes a disconnect with Asian Indian cultural values that necessitates many second generation Asian Indian American students to lead a dualistic lifestyle, one that is public and the other that is private.

In addition, in response to the changing educational scenario, the second generation Asian Indian American adolescents fabricated identities in order to avoid stereotypes, difference and discrimination. They tend to conform to an American identity in the school system and Asian Indian in their homes and community. In response to the

cultural and mainstream messages received in the educational milieu, this set of Asian Indian adolescents not only successfully negotiated stereotypical labels and perceived identities, but occupied a unique in-between space that although considered marginal was full of empowering possibilities.

Where this group of study participants are concerned, there seems to be an underlying tension in the negotiation of their identities in the context of school. While they subscribe to a notion of a common culture in school that glorifies an individualistic identity, they publicly ascribed to a nationalistic identity as Asian Indians in school and mainstream society, and they privately subscribed to a collective ethnic identity away from school, within their communities. All participants noted that there is a common school culture that they are part of; in that they are Americans, however, while ensconced in their communities they were Asian Indians.

Even though this dualistic cultural perspective generated some confusion and tension, immigrant Asian Indian parents believed that in order to succeed in school, one needs to be adaptive in the educational milieu. They are aware that their children, the American born, will face a culture at school that could be very different from their own. Yet they encouraged their children to take up the 'common culture' of school in order to succeed and to accommodate without assimilating (Asher, 2001; Gibson, 1988). Researchers Portes and Rumbaut (1990, 2001) note that this type parental attitude is typical among upper middle class immigrants.

Further, the idea of embracing a common culture in school and maintaining a private culture at home, speaks to the dichotomy of the public/ private lives of all the

participants. It is in the school that most adolescents spend their time. It is where they learn customs and traditions of the mainstream society, it is where they learn to either assimilate into mainstream society or selectively acculturate within the dualistic cultural framework. In trying to fit in, negotiate, and find their place within this culturally dualistic framework, the Asian Indian community tends to portray inaccurate perceptions and stereotypes about themselves, about their identity, and ways of being. Because of their dual culture frame of reference, second generation adolescents of Asian Indian descent are perceived by mainstream society through the stereotypical lens of "Asian Indians" while they perceive themselves to be "Americans with a twist."

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Participant Details

Date:

Time and place of interview:

Survey Questions: (All participants were asked these questions during the initial meeting)

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Year in School

4. Address

6. No. of years in NJ

7. Parents Place of Birth

    Father:

    Mother:

8. Parents Occupation

    Father:

    Mother:

9. Year of Immigrating into U.S:

10. Parents Ethnicity:

Appendix B: Semi Structured Interview1 (Guide 1)

Name:

Date, Place and Time of Interview

1. Tell me about a typical day in school from the time you arrive until the time you leave.

2. Elaborate and tell me what specifically do you like about school

3. What don't you like about school?

4. Who do you spend time with most when in school and why

5. Define a friend

6. Are you parents' part of an Asian Indian community?

7. What kinds of Asian Indian community activities do you partake in?

8. What are your experiences in partaking in the communal activities?

Appendix C: Semi Structured Interview 2 (Guide 2)

Name:

Date, Place and Time of Interview

1. What does it mean to connect to your Asian Indian culture?

2. Tell me about any interesting experiences that you might have had while visiting India.

3. What is it like to speak in your mother tongue?

4. In what ways do you connect to your Asian Indian culture?

5. What aspects of your culture do you consider as most important to you?

6. Have you ever experienced a conflict in identifying with your Asian Indian culture?

7. Did your parents have to face any kinds of challenges because of their ethnicity/

Appendix C: Semi Structured Interview 3 (Guide 3)

Name:

Date, Place and Time of Interview

1. Can you elaborate what makes you feel different in school/
2. What kinds of behaviors did you have to learn in order to feel accepted?
3. Are there instances in school where you and your classmates were treated differently by teachers or staff?
4. Have you felt discrimination at school? Tell me about it.
5. If others in school were to describe who you are as an individual, how would they describe you?
6. Why are you not comfortable with the perception they hold of you?
7. How do others perceptions affect you?
8. What are your experiences of feeling different?
9. If I were to ask you who you are as an individual, how would you describe yourself?