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Lived Experiences of Indian Women Technology Professionals Working Temporarily in the United States

Sudha Nagarajan
Montclair State University

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LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INDIAN WOMEN TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

WORKING TEMPORARILY IN THE UNITED STATES

A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

SUDHA NAGARAJAN

Montclair State University

Upper Montclair, NJ

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Dissertation Chair: Dr. Leslie Kooyman

Dissertation Co-Chair: Dr. Angela Sheely-Moore

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INDIAN WOMEN TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

WORKING TEMPORARILY IN THE UNITED STATES

of

Sudha Nagarajan

Candidate for the Degree:

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program: Dissertation Committee:
Counselor Education

Certified by:

Dr. Leslie Kooyman
Dissertation Chair

Dr. M. Scott Herness
Vice Provost for Research and   Dr. Angela Sheely-Moore
Dean of the Graduate School   Dissertation Co-Chair

Dr. Kathryn Herr

4-15-19

Date   Dr. Dana Heller Levitt

ABSTRACT

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INDIAN WOMEN TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS

WORKING TEMPORARILY IN THE UNITED STATES

by Sudha Nagarajan

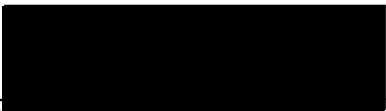This original and topical qualitative study explored the lived experiences of ten Indian women technology professionals working in the U.S. on non-immigrant H-1B visas. This study examined the role of cultural socialization and acculturative processes in the development of cultural identity. Narratives of the participants were interpreted using the Voice-Relational Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982, 2015; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2006). The first theme of *negotiated compromises* explored the impact of gender role expectations associated with cultural socialization on career and marriage options, relational interdependence, and adaptation to changing sociocultural environments. The second theme of *cultural plasticity* interpreted ways in which the participants adapted their ethnic identity and cultural values in keeping with gender role expectations of their heritage culture as well as adaptations to global exposure. Concepts of the Acculturation model (Berry, 1997, 2005, 2010, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010), Relational-Cultural Theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991), and Third Space Theory (Bhabha, 2004) were used to present a rich discussion of acculturation, familial and cultural connection, cultural conformity and cultural adaptation. The findings revealed that these lived experiences of work-related relocation of a temporary nature were associated with cultural anchoring as well as global exposure, and it enabled these women to develop cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 2004).

Keywords: Indian women, H-1B, negotiated compromises, cultural plasticity, cultural hybridity

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This acknowledgement is my humble validation of the belief and support I received from many people in completing my dissertation. The pursuit of a doctoral degree was a distant dream for me because, for many years, I had not identified professional pursuit as one of my life goals. Call it serendipity or planned happenstance, I found myself exploring my strengths in the counseling discipline. It has been a steady growth for me professionally, as a counseling practitioner and an instructor, and more importantly, it has enhanced me personally. Along this journey I have had the steadfast encouragement and support of my husband Ravi, who unstintingly canvassed for me to recruit participants, and encouraged me intellectually, questioned me critically, and proudly acknowledged my professional achievements.

I have had the privilege of working with two Co-Chairs on my Advisory Committee, Dr. Leslie Kooyman and Dr. Angela Sheely-Moore. Both of them have been very encouraging and receptive in my scholarly endeavor. They have waded through the density of my writing over several drafts, and I have to thank their patience and diligence in keeping me focused on the finish line towards my goal for graduation. I would like to credit Dr. Kathryn Herr for introducing me to the complexity and richness of qualitative research, as well as the Voice-Relational Listening Guide as a possible approach for interpretation. Not only did Dr. Herr introduce me to this creative technique, she persistently encouraged me to explore the ambiguity of the findings so that I could present them with the depth worthy of a qualitative researcher. Also on my dissertation committee was Dr. Dana Levitt, and I have very much appreciated her sharp observations and constructive feedback, helping me organize my thoughts logically and presenting them succinctly.

DEDICATION

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.

(Muir, 1911, p. 78)

This quote of John Muir that has played in my mind for many years. Indeed, as much as I have valued my individuality, I have always felt connected with those around me who have shaped my destiny. I draw from my father's sense of adventure to seek experiences in new lands, from my mother's strength of character and openness to life's opportunities, from symbiotic harmony with my sisters, from the endurance of motherhood, and from the unconditional love of my husband who inspires me to believe in myself.

I believe that individuals are unique and yet share universal ways of being and connecting with the world around them. Those connections are natural as well as acquired. Diversity and ambiguity within the human condition makes the human experience more wholesome than the sum of its individual parts. This dissertation has been for me an insightful exploration of some relationships between individuality and connectivity and uniqueness born of constant adjustment. I humbly thank all the ten participants who shared their lived experiences. I salute all those connections that have helped me achieve this scholarly distinction.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This was a qualitative study designed to explore the lived experiences of ten Indian

women technology professionals who relocated to the U.S. for work on temporary work visas.

The narratives of the interviewed women provided rich information on the circumstances of their

relocation, conditions involved in acculturation, and adjustments made in response to different

sociocultural contexts. My research interest was in focusing attention on the impact of cultural

exposure during short-term international experiences. Rather than exploring immigrant

experiences, I chose to investigate non-immigrant experiences that are more impermanent. The

transient nature of the relocation impacted the choices and personal agency of these women and

added complexity to their cultural adaptation.

Cultural identity, referred to as a "complex set of beliefs and attitudes" based upon

perceptions of "cultural group membership" (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2003, p.178), is

sharpened in contact with another culture that is different from one's own (Wang, 2007b). I was

curious to understand some of the connections between one's gendered and ethnic identity and

the possibility of sociocultural influences of a different environment. Specifically, I wanted to

understand how individuals are affected by their exposure to two cultures simultaneously.

Typically, international moves involve some amount of adaptation to new cultural

environments. Adaptation and adjustment is part of the process of *acculturation,* a concept from

the Acculturation model, which described it as the composite of psychological and sociocultural

changes in individuals and groups as a result of a move (Berry, 1997). Besides learning about

their acculturation experiences, my interest was in examining how a group of Indian women

adapted to living and working in the U.S., and how their connections with others influenced their choices and values.

This study explored experiences of women and focused on cultural and relational connections maintained by them in different contexts, an approach celebrated by proponents of Relational-Cultural Theory (Miller, 1991). My study was oriented towards an understanding of women in connection with significant others in their families, and adaptability to their sociocultural and work environment. This was a study of the individual in relational context, of polyphonic voices that interact and seek balance between competing needs of the self in connection with others.

The concept of the self is founded on qualities of individuality or distinction from others (Hermans, 2001). However, a person has multiple personal and social selves that are engaged in internal and external dialogue, where different parts of the self compete, suggesting both unity and discontinuity in the management of the self (Hermans, 2001). Further, forming a sense of self involves decision-making regarding beliefs and values, relationships, and career choices, typically determined during stages of human development (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011). According to Brofenbrenner (1986), adapting to traditions practiced by our family and systemic interaction with different environments in which we live is instrumental to the ongoing development of our identity.

In the wake of increased globalization, the process of cultural development has become much more complex as cultures interact and influence one another individually and societally. Globalization has led to complexity in the development of cultural identity with the rise of globally mobile and globally literate citizens. Travel, whether recreational or work-related, emigration for educational pursuits and immigration to other countries by choice or to seek

refuge, are ways by which people encounter new cultural environments. It is important to consider the dynamics involved in the interpretation of the self in changing sociocultural environments. In this context, life experiences of people who relocate provide authentic accounts of the impact of cultural exchange on the changing self. The rationale for designing this study of a group of individuals engaged in a short-term move for work was two-pronged, to try to capture the complexities involved in (a) prioritizing needs of the individual in relation to significant others and cultural expectations, and (b) while adjusting to the changing environment during transient international relocations.

According to Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001), a sojourner or expatriate is an individual who temporarily relocates to another place. Thus, an international sojourner is an expatriate who moves to reside in another country typically for purposes of work or study (Sam & Berry, 2006). In this study, the term 'expatriate' was used interchangeably with 'non-immigrant' to denote an individual who has made an international relocation for a limited amount of time expecting to return to their country at the end of their assignment. Non-immigrants permanently reside in their country of domicile (in this case, India), but temporarily live in another country (in this context, in the U.S.) for education, career advancement, business or healthcare purposes (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2019).

Recent research trends indicated an increase in self-initiated relocations for professional growth, especially for women who sought redress for discriminatory practices in organizations that stifle their careers, and often from developing countries (Tharenou, 2010). According to research by Valk, van Engen, and van der Velde (2014), women also initiated expatriation for personal growth especially since it provided opportunities for transformative experiences and improved personal circumstances such as marriageability, whether financially, or through

increased scope of finding suitable partners. Alternatively, women sought such assignments for

purposes of self-emancipation from restrictive work environments and social pressure to marry

and settle down with a family (Altman & Shortland, 2008). However, Hartl (2003) reported that

Indian women represented only 4% of the total population of women engaged in expatriate

assignments globally. The disproportionate gender representation leads to information on

expatriation to be focused on male experiences, leaving female voices to be less heard. In order

to study and discuss international experiences of professional women from India, it is important

to develop an understanding of contemporary Indian women's gendered experiences in India.

Ethnocultural Profile of Professional Indian Women in Contemporary Times

There are many dichotomies in India regarding political, ideological, sociocultural, and

economic contexts, as well as gender and class disparities (Haq, 2013). This inherent diversity

within the community poses challenges for cultural interpretation that is rooted in historical

practices while subject to contemporary adaptations. To illustrate, women in India have

historically occupied a lower status in a culture steeped in hierarchy based on gender, social

class, age, and seniority (Das & Kemp, 1997; Haq, 2013; Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997).

Research literature depicts contradictions related to the empowerment of privileged

Indian women pertaining to gender role, social class, caste, and region, which create sharp

disparities within and between groups (Chanana, 2003; Haq, 2013; Nath, 2000; Patel &

Parmentier, 2005). On the one hand, privileged women are increasingly educated and able to

enter male-dominated professions, and on the other, women still contend with workplace

discrimination as well as gender role expectations to prioritize family roles over their work roles

(Haq, 2013; Nath, 2000).

In contemporary times, the number of educated women in professional careers in India has increased steadily, albeit as a function of social class (Nath, 2000). Urban culture in the Indian context, in the wake of economic liberalization and response to globalization, has given rise to increased female employment and dual-career families (Gupta, Banerjee, & Gaur, 2012b). Nevertheless, even professional Indian women with privileged social class upbringing and access to education and professional achievement experience barriers in the workplace (Nath, 2000). Some of their challenges relate to male preference to hiring at senior management levels, being overlooked for job promotions and jobs requiring travel, perception of lower intelligence and less competency, and gender role restrictions related to marital status and motherhood (Kelkar, Shrestha, & Veena, 2002; Nath, 2000). However, within this section of an urban, upwardly-mobile society, women are deferring marriage and motherhood for career, seeking better work-life balance by utilizing social supports and being pragmatic to use their unique soft skills (e.g., possessing high levels of relational and communication skills, sensitivity, empathy, interactive leadership style) to succeed instead of competing with their male counterparts (Budhwar, Saini, & Bhatnagar, 2005; Nath, 2000).

Research suggested that Indian women reared in a traditional upbringing were predisposed to being submissive, collaborative, nurturing, and non-assertive (Budhwar et al., 2005). Indian women are exposed to socialization practices encouraging strong family ties, restrictive relationships, well-delineated gender roles, and a lack of self-differentiation (Sandhu & Madathil, 2008), with the potential of these qualities being reflected in their professional lives. In contemporary times, Indian women are conflicted by their gender-role expectations that continue to espouse marriage and family obligations rather than seek a career that takes her outside the home (Haq, 2013).

Educated, career-oriented Indian women still felt obligated to curb their career aspirations for that of their expatriate spouses due to patriarchal socialization and marital obligation (Gupta et al., 2012b). Indian women continue to be held to traditional gender role expectations contributing to work-family conflict that limits their career prospects (Patel & Parmentier, 2005). Addressing disparities among Indians in terms of intersecting social identities of gender, social class, color, caste, ethnicity, religion, and marital status, Haq (2013) highlighted that despite the passage of Constitutional laws, Indian women were still subjected to discrimination in social and work environments, and struggle with gender-centric organizational policies (Chanana, 2003).

Haq (2013) also reported that professional women belonging to the more privileged middle-class pursued education and careers, found financial independence, and enjoyed the self-esteem and respect it brought to them in the community. Although Indian women are still under-represented in the business sector and earn less than their male counterparts, many have broken glass barriers to enter traditional male professions: the armed forces, government and educational institutions, and the private sector (Haq, 2013; Nath, 2000).

Balancing the role dichotomies of being productive in the workplace and yet submissive and deferring to males in the family for decision-making was highlighted as common experiences for professional Indian women (Haq, 2013). Perceptions about working women in India in contemporary times were described as "contradictory, paradoxical, and pluralistic" (Srinivasan, Murty, & Nakra, 2013, p. 219). Personal career aspirations often competed with societal expectations for Indian women to follow traditional family roles, impacting career centrality and persistence, irrespective of income and position (Srinivasan et al., 2013).

Although limited, research on professional Indian female expatriates highlighted that Indian women are increasing their social and economic capital through education and career

advancement (Valk et al., 2014); however, those who engage in such pursuits belong to the more educated and privileged social class. Based on a study of professional Indian women, Valk et al. (2014) reported that their supportive families enabled them to undertake educational and career development, however, they were also restricted from seeking international assignments on account of family disruption concerns. However, this report is based on one research study with a small segment of Indian women expatriates. Clearly, a more detailed study is warranted. Related literature also pointed to disparities in women's empowerment based on gendered socialization practices affecting privileged as well as less privileged women from Indian society in present times (Gupta et al., 2012b; Haq, 2013; Srinivasan et al., 2013).

Historically, there has been an increase in women in the IT industry in India with associated financial and social empowerment (Ahuja, 2002; Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Indian women enjoyed individual autonomy on account of financial empowerment and this translated to parity in the workplace as well as the home, with their spouses and extended families (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007). Despite this equalization, studies also highlighted the fact that Indian women tended to prioritize their family life over work (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Often managing both added to the spillover of stress experienced from working in a high-paced industry (Darshan, Raman, Rao, Ram, & Annigeri, 2013; Kavitha, Kavitha & Arulmugan, 2012). Relatedly, it was also reported that although these women were more socially emancipated, many of them still preferred to have their marriages traditionally arranged by their parents rather than choosing a partner on their own (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007). Although Fuller and Narasimhan's (2007) study is more than a decade old, their trajectories for work culture, lifestyle, and choices are just as valid if not more.

Although there is an increasing trend for women to enter the IT industry in India, which has allowed them to develop their professional careers and enjoy greater personal agency through their empowerment, they are still exposed to social and institutional disparities (Ahuja, 2002; Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012; Nath, 2000; Raghuram, 2017). Further, working in this industry was reported to induce chronic stress owing to the nature of technology work being fast-paced, requiring long hours, frequent travel, constant updating of technological skills, and managing work-life balance, resulting in vulnerability to depression and increased alcohol use (Ahuja, 2002; Biao, 2005; Darshan et al., 2013; Raghuram, 2004; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Gendered socialization practices among the Indian community further complicates social messages received and interpreted by Indian women as seen by conflicting reports on women's empowerment (Haq, 2013; Nath, 2000; Srinivasan et al., 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The dearth of qualitative research on non-immigrant acculturation experiences of professional Indian women laid the foundation for this investigation. As a researcher, I was interested in exploring the impact of temporary relocation on the personal agency of Indian women professionals, their relational compromises, and cultural adaptation. The significance of the need for this study becomes apparent when the representation of this population of non-immigrants in the U.S. is considered.

According to a Pew Research Center report, between 2001 and 2015, 1.8 million H-1B visas for highly skilled professionals have been issued in the U.S. for first-time employment, of which 50.5% of these visas have been given to Indians (Ruiz, 2017). Additionally, foreign students graduating from U.S. universities with degrees in STEM subjects have applied for Optional Practical Training (OPT) that allows them to extend their stay in search of employment

(Ruiz, 2017a). Students from India and China accounted for 57% of those approved for OPT and secured jobs between 2012 and 2015, many of whom applied for H-1B visas and stayed on (Ruiz, 2017a). The trend has been for the number of foreign graduates on OPT to surpass that of those on H-1B visas, beginning to decline in 2017 in response to tightened immigration policies (Ruiz & Budiman, 2018). Nevertheless, there is a significant section of the U.S. population that is comprised of non-immigrants from India, on H-1B and OPT visas, employed in the technology and finance sectors (Ruiz & Krogstad, 2017). Significant to the rationale of this study, this section of the U.S. population is not represented in counseling research.

Individuals on H-1B visas in the U.S. are typically employed in the finance and technology industry (Ruiz, 2017). Technology work is very stressful on account of its global nature, fast-pace, stringent deadlines, requiring constant updating of knowledge skills, and vulnerability to psychological stress, depression, and alcohol abuse (Darshan et al., 2013; Kavitha et al., 2012; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Research also pointed to the vulnerability of Indian women in the global IT industry related to gender imbalance, career stagnation on account of dual career considerations, safety concerns on international assignments, as well as stress of H-1B workers spilling on to wives unable to work in the U.S. despite being educationally qualified and exposed to domestic violence (Biao, 2005; Purkayastha, 2005; Raghuram, 2004).

Uprooting oneself from familiar surroundings and transplanting into a significantly different sociocultural environment can be challenging. In the field of mental health, qualitative research designed to understand the cultural implications of Indian women technology professionals on an international relocation for work is valid and original. Additionally, women working in a gender imbalanced industry that is inherently stressful due to the its nature, and unable to access their known social supports in India can add to the psycho-emotional load that

counselors should be aware of and trained to respond to in a culturally sensitive manner. This

section of the U.S. population could require counseling services for themselves and their family

members, and would be well-served by culturally sensitive counselors who are aware of the

stresses of their situation related to cultural factors, work conditions, and vulnerability related to

immigration policy.

This study is original in counseling research and topical since it focused on current

immigration policy reform impacting non-immigrant experiences of Indians in the U.S. The

recent call for immigration reform in the U.S. is a contentious issue, the majority of Americans

viewing that immigrants strengthen the country whereas some fear the opposite, also differing in

relation to political affiliation, with Democrats leaning to welcome immigrants and Republicans

wanting to stem the flow of immigration (López, Bialik, & Bradford, 2018).

In response to recent calls for immigration reform in the U.S., the community of

international technology professionals on H-1B has been impacted by decisions to: 1) restrict

accepted petitions from foreign firms; 2) recruit local graduates; and 3) change the monetary

compensation of technology workers (USCIS, 2019). This has resulted in technology companies

rejecting candidates needing work visas, and some graduating students have opted to return to

their home countries or explore other countries such as Canada (Rauhala, 2019). For some

people, this state of uncertainty or a decision to return has dire consequences because they would

lose their livelihood, access to special healthcare services, some professionals are stuck in

underpaid jobs because they cannot switch jobs owing to their visa sponsorship, and other life

decisions (Bhuiyan & Castillo, 2019).

The research problem was characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and

ambiguity (VUCA; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Bodenhausen and Peery (2009) used the

attributes of VUCA to study the nature of social categorizations that influence group perceptions,

behavior, and memberships in cross-cultural exchange. In the context of my study, *volatility* was

indicated by intercultural and intracultural similarities and differences between Indian and

American culture, requiring adaptation for effective functioning biculturally. The research

problem was marked with *uncertainty* owing to the recent calls for immigration reform,

increasing the vulnerability of those on H-1B visas.

The *complexity* of the phenomenon was apparent from examining several moving parts of

such experiences: how these assignments were initiated, what challenges were faced, what were

some personal, organizational and social resources, how did these experiences relate to psycho-

emotional wellbeing, and how did these experiences intersect with self-perception? Many other

questions relate to gaps in our knowledge about this population and this phenomenon of

international relocation for work. It would be relevant to know what occurred during the

acculturation process for professional Indian women when negotiating new cultural

environments. The *ambiguity* involved in this research problem related to the fact that this

phenomenon was understudied, making a large part of it unknown, suitable for inductive

processes to interpret gathered information.

Research Question

The rationale for the study related to the dearth of knowledge on gendered and ethnic

experiences in non-immigrant relocation experiences for professional Indian women. The

research question addressing that phenomenon was framed as: What are the lived experiences of

Indian women technology professionals in the context of temporary career-related relocation to

the U.S.? While the research question was broad, encompassing lived experiences of Indian

women technology professionals on short-term relocation, my interview questions were designed

to prompt participants to speak about their: 1) choice to relocate; 2) personal agency in making independent life decisions; 3) impact of their relational connections; 4) gender role expectations in changing cultural environments; and 5) cultural identity with respect to acculturative experiences.

Theoretical Framework

This research study was framed within the model of acculturation psychology and acculturative stress (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2009) because this lived experience of international relocation involved adaptation. Acculturation is the process of psychological and sociocultural change that individuals and groups experience subjectively and contextually in pluralistic societies (Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturation involves strategies to cope with culture shock, which is described as chronic affective reactions to new social environments (Furnham, 2011; Ward et al., 2001). Acculturating individuals engaged in psychological and behavioral shifts in personality and cultural values are likely to experience acculturative stress in the process of adapting and managing the compatibility and incompatibility in cultural norms, values, and identities (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Acculturation of non-immigrants is different from that of long-term immigrants as the former group are temporary residents in an alien country and adapt mostly on the superficial level in terms of culturally compatible behaviors, and much less to underlying norms and values (Haslberger, 2010). The rationale for choosing the acculturative process of non-immigrants for this study was to explore the needs of women exposed to different sociocultural environments. A non-immigrant experience offers individuals the opportunity to converse with heritage culture as well as new cultural exposure. Since this subject is under-researched, especially in the context of Indian women professionals, it rendered itself well to research.

The Acculturation model was applicable to understand the processes and strategies involved in this relocation, and explained the nature of culture learning in adaptation, acculturative stress and biculturalism. While developing the themes in my findings, I also drew from concepts of Relational-Cultural Theory [RCT] (Jean Baker Miller Training Institute [JBMTI], 2018; Miller, 1991). A basic tenet of RCT is that personal growth is a function of connection with others that is facilitated by empathic exchange (Duffey & Somody, 2011; JBMTI, 2018; Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004; Miller, 1991). The use of RCT in the interpretation of my findings strengthened the discussion of the role of relational and cultural connections in international relocation and growth of women. Similarly, the findings in my study expanded the discussion of cultural adaptation beyond biculturalism to one of cultural hybridity based on Third Space theory (Bhabha, 2004). Third Space Theory refers to the transformative development of an individual in the process of acculturation, retaining connections to old identities and adapting to new ones so that the composite becomes a hybrid identity (Bhabha, 2004).

Overview of Methodology

The study was designed as a basic qualitative inquiry using interview format to gather information on the lived experiences of professional Indian women working in the technology industry on temporary assignments in the U.S. The philosophical orientation of the study was identified as constructivism, which is rooted in co-constructed interpretations of lived experiences that are plural, and explored through dialoging collaboratively with participants and listening intentionally in order to accurately present expressions of their voices (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Ponterotto, 2005). Using a constructivist perspective in qualitative research signifies the acknowledgement that there are likely to be multiple

experiential realities and taps into the richness and complexity of research (Creswell, 2003;

Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005).

The use of a constructivist approach in qualitative research is indicated for studies that

are gathering foundational information about under-researched phenomena, and the information

is therefore emergent and inductive, rather than deterministic and generalizable (Haverkamp &

Young, 2007). Such an approach acknowledges the voice of the researcher in the meaning-

making process which requires reflection and is co-constructed with participants through

dialogue (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). The Voice-Relational Listening Guide (VRLG) based

on the work of Carol Gilligan and associates (Gilligan, 1982, 1995; Gilligan et al., 2006; Jack,

1999) focuses on women's voices representing different needs, some voiced and heard and some

silenced. In this study, the VRLG was used for the purpose of data analysis.

Professional Significance

It has been established that the experiences of professional Indian women engaged in

international relocation for work is under-researched in the counseling profession. This was an

original study focused on feminine perspectives of relocation and acculturation, filling gaps in

knowledge on the experiences of this section of the population. The findings of this study can be

incorporated into counseling instruction as it informs counselors about the role of cultural

socialization in gendered acculturative experiences, and stressors involved in the life of globally

mobile technology professionals. The study reminds counseling practitioners and counselor

educators to emphasize the salience of cultural sensitivity in assessment, case conceptualization,

and in developing multicultural counseling competencies in practice. This study also

demonstrated the effective use of blending theoretical approaches to study complex research

phenomena, enriching the interpretation of findings, pushing existing theoretical frameworks

such as the Acculturation model to the possibility of incorporating the concept of cultural

hybridity in counseling research and counselor education.

Summary

Chapter one has been an overview of the research study and provided a conceptual map

to establish the rationale for the study and the significance of the research question to the

counseling profession. Based on gaps in knowledge regarding the acculturative experiences of

Indian women in the technology industry in the U.S., and the professional significance, this study

explored the role of cultural context in the realization of their career objectives. The focus of

chapter two is a comprehensive review of the contextual literature covering seminal and

contemporary research to understand the cultural context of this study that plays a role in the

choices and personal agency of contemporary Indian women working in the IT industry. It also

synthesizes key aspects of the Acculturation model and its role in expatriation, and explicates the

constructs of Relational-Cultural Theory (Miller, 1991) and Third Space theory (Bhabha, 2004)

to establish their alignment with the findings of this study.

Chapter three is a detailed description of the research design, including the philosophical

perspective for a qualitative design using constructivism, research question, methodological

details pertaining to the sample, inclusion criteria, research tool, data collection method and

protocol, data analysis procedures, research credibility and researcher positionality. In chapter

four, I present my findings using two themes named *Negotiated Compromises* and *Cultural*

Plasticity, describing ways participants made relational adjustments and ideological adaptations

to maintain connections with their family and cultural environments. Finally, in chapter five, I

discuss the findings as related to existing literature and theoretical perspectives. The final

chapter also includes the implications of this study for counseling and counselor education. The

chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations of the study and suggestions for future

research.

Definition of Terms

accompanying spouse/domestic partner: an individual accompanying the employee on the work

assignment on account of being defined as a spouse or domestic partner (Expat Research,

2019)

*acculturation***:** includes all phenomena that occur when individuals and groups from different

cultures come into contact with each other, resulting in changes to original cultural

patterns (Berry, 2008)

*acculturation strategies***:** consisting of the attitudes and behaviors in response to intercultural

exchange (Berry, 2008)

*acculturative stress***:** a response by individuals to life events during intercultural exchange;

described as the affective, behavioral, and cognitive shifts in response to psychological

acculturation (Berry, 2006)

*adaptation***:** psychological, emotional wellbeing, and sociocultural acquisition of culturally

appropriate skills to negotiate the new culture effectively (Berry, 2008)

*assimilation***:** an acculturation strategy where individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural

identity and seek interaction with other cultures (Berry, 2008)

*biculturalism***:** the existence of two different cultures in one region; the ability to interact in

bicultural societies effectively (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010)

central relational paradox: when people in relationships experience disconnection, they strive to

keep parts of themselves and their needs out of the relationship in order to maintain

connection, causing a relational paradox (Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004)

cultural hybridity: used in the context of cultural identity, it was described as "a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity" and signifies a transformed, constantly evolving identity in reaction to cultural exchange (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5)

cultural identity: sense of belonging to a group through identification in terms of ethnicity, gender, religion, age, region, and social class, to name a few (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011)

culture shock: affective, behavioral, and cognitive responses to intercultural exchange (Furnham, 2011)

diaspora: scattering of people of an ethnic origin across parts of the world other than their heritage country (Merriam-Webster, 2019a)

ethnic identity: self-identification with respect to ethnic label (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001)

ethnicity: a sense of belonging to a particular ancestry and origin (Phinney et al., 2001)

ethnocentricity: viewing the world through the lens of one ethnic group (McAuliffe & Associates, 2008)

ethnocultural: relating to the culture of an ethnic group (McAuliffe & Associates, 2008)

expatriate or sojourner: person who leaves their country to live in another country; an employee transferred internationally from a parent company to a subsidiary or joint venture with a multinational company (McNulty & Brewster, 2017)

expatriation: short-term relocation to another country, usually used in association with work (McNulty & Brewster, 2017)

gender role: the role ascribed to and/or assumed by members of a gender, often associated with particularistic meanings by one's ethnicity (Eisenchlas, 2013)

gendered experiences: reflecting the experiences of a particular gender (Merriam-Webster,

    2019b)

globalization: the coming together or linkage of countries in a harmonious way (Berry, 2008)

heritage culture/cultural heritage: culture of the country-of origin in which one is socialized

home country national/parent country national: citizen of the country in which the employee is

    originally based from (McNulty & Brewster, 2017)

host country nationals (HCN): people representing the nationality of the country where an

    individual is expatriated (e.g. U.S. national is a HCN to someone expatriated to the U.S.

    from another country) (Varma, Toh, & Budhwar, 2006)

integration: acculturation strategy where the individuals maintain original culture but also

    interact with other cultures on a regular basis (Berry, 2008)

intersectionality: intersection or overlapping of social identities (Collins & Bilge, 2016)

marginalization: occurs when individuals and groups are unable to maintain their cultural

    heritage due to enforced cultural loss and have little interest in interacting with others

    often due to discrimination or exclusion (Berry, 2008)

microaggression: "brief and commonplace daily, verbal, behavioral and environmental

    indignities, intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative

    racial slights and insults to the target person or group." (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271)

multiculturalism: concept referring to the existence of different ethnic groups in plural societies

    and maintaining their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness (McAuliffe & Associates, 2008)

relational competence: "The capacity to move another person, to effect a change in the

    relationship, or effect the well-being of all participants in the relationship might be called

    relational competence." (Jordan et al., 2004, p. 15)

relocation: move to live in another location (Merriam-Webster, 2019c)

repatriation: return to country of origin after relocation (Valk, van der Velde, van Engen, &

> Szkudlarek, 2012)

separation: an acculturation strategy where individuals hold on to their heritage culture and

> avoid interaction with other cultures (Berry, 2008)

sojourn/sojourner: a temporary stay; a person who stays abroad temporarily (e.g., for study,

> travel, work, healthcare needs) (McNulty & Brewster, 2017)

trailing spouse: the spouse who follows or accompanies the employee who moves for the work

> assignment (Expat Research, 2019)

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore lived experiences of non-immigrant Indian women technology professionals acculturating to relocation in the U.S. The terms 'expatriate,' 'sojourn,' 'non-immigrant' and 'international assignee' were used interchangeably in this dissertation to mean an individual who is living and working in the U.S. for a limited time, expected to return to their country-of-origin at the end of their work assignment. This study examined the narratives of ten women to better understand their lived experiences, focusing on their personal and relational compromises, and lifestyle and attitudinal adaptations during international relocation.

Literature on expatriation and acculturation research is comprehensive, and mostly gathered using quantitative methodology, calling for more qualitative research (Berry & Bell, 2012). This study was designed as a basic qualitative research inquiry to listen to lived experiences of relocation. Additionally, the representation of women undertaking work-related international relocation is significantly lower, making most of the research representative of male perspectives (Hartl, 2003). Moreover, the participation of Indian women in global assignments is very low, and therefore, very little is known about their experiences (Tung & Haq, 2012).

This study was designed to address this research gap and provide information on lived experiences of career-motivated international moves of Indian women technology professionals, with particular attention to the stressors associated with such moves and the nature of working in technology industry. The presentation of my findings would be less meaningful if they were not contextualized to the experiences of contemporary Indian women working in the IT industry. In order to provide context, since the participants in this study are Indian women technology professionals, this chapter will first elaborate the ethnocultural profile of contemporary Indian

women with emphasis on women working in the IT industry. Some of the research cited in this

review is dated but included as a reference, highlighting the need for research on this population.

In order to examine women's personal identity and cultural growth, identity research concepts

will be described from Relational-Cultural Theory (Jordan et al., 2004; Miller, 1991) and Third

Space Theory. This chapter will continue with a review of contextual research to examine the

role of acculturation with reference to non-immigrant experiences using the Acculturation model

(Berry, 1997, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010). In addition, since this is a study on international work-

related relocation, this chapter will include a section on expatriation research and the

implications of work-related immigration policies impacting IT professionals.

Ethnocultural Profile of Professional Indian Women in Contemporary Times

The ethnocultural profile of a population refers to the ethnic identity of that group and is

built around the values, norms, and traditions practiced by members who identify themselves

with the group (Hall, 2005). The cultural makeup of that group could pertain to such social

identities as race, ethnicity, language, religion and shared customs that give the group its

uniqueness (Hall, 2005). Chadda and Deb (2013) described Indian culture as large, patriarchal,

and collectivistic. Other characteristics typical of Indian culture are of hierarchy based on age,

status, and seniority, and clearly delineated gender roles (Das & Kemp, 1997; Dupree, Bhakta,

Patel, & Dupree, 2013; Purkayastha, 2005). These characteristics will be elaborated in the next

sections to contextualize the ethnocultural profile of the women in my study.

Role of Individualism-Collectivism in Ethnic Culture

In this context it is important to understand the concept of individualism and collectivism

because it is relevant to the discussion of ethnic culture. Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier

(2002) described individualism as a "worldview that centralizes the personal—personal goals,

personal uniqueness, and personal control—and peripheralizes the social" (p.5). This is a very

succinct definition of the concept of individualism tasked with maintaining a positive self-image

well-differentiated from others, having an internal locus of control, pursuing one's personal goals

to achieve meaning and wellbeing (Oyserman et al., 2002). According to Markus and Kitayama

(1991), expressing one's emotions with freedom was an accepted aspect of individualism.

Individualists seek parity in relationships, and participate in groups for self-serving purposes

(Oyserman et al., 2002). Based on Hofstede's (2011) dimensional approach, individualism refers

to cultures in which individuals are responsible for themselves and relational connections are lax.

On the other end of the dimension, collectivism represents group cohesion and tighter

interdependencies, sense of belonging and collaborative decision-making, where group norms

being flouted leads to shame (Hofstede, 2011).

      Oyserman et al. (2002) described collectivism as the antithesis of individualism. From

this perspective, collectivism values group cohesion and responsibilities associated with group

belonging. The individual is a part of the larger in-group with common beliefs, values, and

practices as opposed to the out-group who don't share those values and norms (Oyserman et al.,

2002). Self-concept for collectivists is contextual, associated with their identification with the

group; nurturing close relationships and subsuming individual needs for others is valued

(Oyserman et al., 2002). For collectivists, meaning and wellbeing is derived from fulfilling the

expectations and obligations of their roles in society, thereby avoiding disappointment to group

members. Further, collectivists believe in an external locus of control and suppress emotional

expression for the greater good of the group because it maintains group balance (Markus &

Kitayama, 1991).

Group identification is fixed and membership in the group is clearly bounded, and it requires individuals to adapt and adjust when required rather than break group norms (Oyserman et al., 2002). Finally, collectivism represents diversity because group membership refers not only to family but also extends to the intersectionality between other identities such as ethnicity, religion, and nationality (Oyserman et al., 2002). All of these characteristics are associated with Indian culture, which has long been identified as collectivistic, valuing group cohesion, familialism, interdependence, and well-delineated gender roles (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Dupree et al., 2013).

Gendered and Culture-Specific Socialization Practices of Indians

In order to situate my research study meaningfully, it is important to understand the cultural context of Indian professional women in contemporary times. In view of cultural socialization practices influencing gender roles, it is pertinent to get a clearer picture of social practices within the Indian community. However, it is important not to lose sight of complexities related to intragroup variability and individual differences.

Indian culture has been described in terms of "unity in diversity," alluding to the cultural homogenization due to overall economic development as well as inherent diversity based upon locational disparities (Panda & Gupta, 2004, p. 34). There are many cultural values applicable across India such as collectivism, hierarchy, focus on individual relationships, in-groupism, family orientation, and tendency to react with situational behavior (Panda & Gupta, 2004). Countries that have marked intracultural diversity in terms religion and language, such as India, are likely to have many heterogeneous sub-cultures that influence ethnic identity (Sng, Neuburg, Varnum, & Kenrick, 2018). Further, cultures that are close-knit have well-established social norms and demonstrate lower tolerance for non-conformity (Sng et al., 2018).

In the context of gendered identity, it is important to understand the cultural socialization of Indian women. Research indicated that Indians follow patriarchal socialization practices, with prescribed gender roles that are more often subjected to disparities than equality (Buddhapriya, 2009; Gupta, Banerjee, & Gaur, 2012a). Apart from the discrepant sex ratio in India favoring boys (U.N. Population Fund, 2013), disparities were reported in terms of literacy and employment statistics for women who are disadvantaged in both aspects of educational achievement and labor participation (Tung & Haq, 2012). Although women were guaranteed constitutional rights after the formation of the Indian Republic in 1947, due to a lack of enforcement, women still experience discrimination at several levels in India (Budhwar et al., 2005). Women experience discrimination at birth, in educational opportunities, and within the labor market and income, which lags as a function of reduced educational and employment opportunities, as well as differential socialization practices (Budhwar et al., 2005). Moreover, traditional upbringing to be submissive, collaborative, nurturing, and non-assertive increases the expectation that women bring these qualities to their professional lives as well (Budhwar et al., 2005). In terms of international careers, it is possible for women to be restricted by the dualism that requires choosing between career and parenting responsibilities (Budhwar et al., 2005).

Researchers reiterated the paternalistic ideology of expecting women to follow gender-role stereotypes of being the spouse to fulfill family obligations even if it came at personal expense (Gupta et al., 2012a; Gupta et al., 2012b). Although Mani's (2013) study on Indian women was not restricted to the IT industry, what was striking was the finding that job mobility and travel was restricted for Indian women on account of responsibilities of the home, and single women often faced parental opposition in this regard. The study also reported that Indian women's careers were often subsumed for that of their husbands, which meant that they moved

for their husband's transfers even if it meant giving up their jobs or taking sabbaticals without

pay (Mani, 2013). Added to this is the practice of patrilocality that results in women moving in

to live with the husband and his family, thereby sometimes having to start a new job after

marriage (Mani, 2013).

        Paradox of Privileges and Disparities. Research also indicated that Indian women have

made a lot of progress in terms of breaking some traditional barriers to enter professions such as

banking, civil service, IT and Human Resources (HR), in addition to healthcare and teaching

(Budhwar et al., 2005). Some Constitutional amendments were passed in 1992 that have enabled

Indian women to participate in local government, along with strides in economic sectors through

membership in the chambers of commerce to empower and emancipate women to develop

professionally (Budhwar et al., 2005).

        In the wake of increased participation by Indian women in the labor force, Dhawan

(2005) found that women negotiated multiple roles, that of being a traditional housewife and

mother, as well as one of a career woman, being educated and empowered to make independent

decisions. Study participants positively evaluated the role of a housewife on account of

perceptions that being a wife and mother added value to womanhood (Dhawan, 2005).

Participants in Dhawan's (2005) study also reported aspirations of achieving greater autonomy

through the pursuit of careers. It was reported that using a social-relational context to understand

identity development in women was more meaningful considering the role society played in the

interpretation of their identity (Dhawan, 2005).

        The paradoxical state of women in Indian society can be discerned from freedoms

enjoyed by them in terms of access to education, political representation, voting rights, and

property inheritance while remaining vulnerable to gender disparities and oppression (Nath,

2000). One reason for the increase of women in the Indian labor force includes rising costs of

living, necessitating a second income (Nath, 2000). Contemporary trends also indicated that

Indian women are deferring marriage and starting a family in favor of career advancement. The

changing roles of Indian women can partially be attributed to westernization in the wake of

globalization and technological advances enabling them to be on the privileged side of the digital

divide (Patel & Parmentier, 2005).

Patel and Parmentier (2005) acknowledged that financial affordability and familial

support privileged women to access premier educational institutions in order to achieve career

success. Women in the IT industry in India are pushing themselves to achieve success because it

affords them financial stability, parity with male colleagues, global mobility, and enhanced status

as executives (Srinivasan et al., 2013). Srinivasan et al. (2013) raised important questions about

contradictory messages Indian women receive to seek educational goals and careers for personal

achievement as well as for family financial contribution, and also negotiate societal gender

disparities. Nath (2000) suggested that Indian women in contemporary times from the urban

middle class are enjoying emancipation, making independent decisions related to career and

marriage, having more financial security through employment but still expected to fulfill

traditional gender roles by making compromises for familial and societal norms at their personal

expense. In contemporary times, while Indian women professionals are responding to the call

for dual careers to supplement family income, they are also charged with maintaining their

traditional roles of family caregiving, which requires work-life balance (Dhawan, 2005; Nath,

2000).

Valk and Srinivasan (2011) found that women were increasingly supported by spouses

not only to enter the workforce, but by sharing in household duties and parenting in addition to

encouraging the pursuit of higher education. Valk and Srinivasan (2011) also found it common

for women to have the nurturance of maternal figures who did not get a chance to fulfill their

own aspirational goals. Additionally, support was also found from extended family members

who lived together or from domestic help in the form of nannies, cooks, drivers, and cleaners

(Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).

Contemporary Attitudes and Expectations Related to Gender and Ethnic Identification

Not only are Indian women subjected to cultural constraints in fulfilling their gender role

obligations, they are perceived as keepers of cultural values by conforming to group norms and

ensuring their perpetuation (Dasgupta, 1998). The behavior expected of women is one of

compliance and submission or deference (Kallivayalil, 2004). Associated with this expectation

is that of Indian women being subjected to higher moral standards especially in terms of

moderation in sexual behavior and social conduct (Manohar, 2008; Patel, 2007). Research

indicated that Indian women are held responsible for preserving family honor by refraining from

premarital sex, marrying within their religious community, and having arranged marriages (Kay,

2012).

Indian youth were described as carrying the "double helix of modernity and traditions"

when compared with youth in developed countries and older generations of Indians

(Harikrishnan, 2017). This is explained as the dialectic of de-individuation where youth hold

values of their family and community but also aspirations for their future based on changing

times. A collaborative longitudinal study of attitudes and preferences among Indian youth was

conducted by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and the Konrad Adenauer

Stiftung (KAS) in 2007 and repeated in 2016. The report titled Attitudes, Anxieties and

Aspirations of India's Youth: Changing Patterns reported many relevant facts based on a study of

6,122 respondents between the ages of 15-34 across 19 Indian states (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2019). The findings of this report pertinent to my study refer to attitudes towards women, education, employment, marriage, and lifestyle choices (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). The CSDS-KAS Joint Youth Study reported conservative attitudes among respondents with respect to gender role expectations for women, maintaining a patriarchal mindset, a preference for arranged intra-caste and intra-religious marriages, and a low acceptance of homosexuality (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). About 75%-77% reported that they had never smoked or consumed alcohol, and roughly a third of the respondents between the ages of 30-34, whether single or married, lived with their parents. With regard to ethnic identification, it was interesting to note that while 51% reported pride in identifying as Indians, almost an equal number referred to their identity on the basis of religion (14%), caste (13%), and regionality (11%).

Further, parental involvement in the lives of youth was indicated by the fact that 65% of respondents reported that they lived with their parents, about 31% were married and living with their spouses and only 4% were living independently (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). While it can be the norm for younger children to be living with their parents, about 33% of the respondents between 30-34 years, and about the same percentage of married youth were living with their parents (Madan & Friedrich, 2017).

The CSDS-KAS report captured youth attitudes towards sexual orientation, marriage, religion, and living conditions (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). It was found that only 13% fully approved of homosexual relationships, with acceptance being more in rural than urban areas. With regard to marriage, a comparison of statistics on the salience of marriage had dropped significantly, from 80% in 2007 to 52% in 2016. Of the respondents, the status of married

people had dropped from 54% to 46%, with married men dropping from 48% to 39%, and women from 61% to 59% (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). This study was valuable in assessing the attitudes of Indian youth in contemporary times and suggests overall that they are selectively traditional and modern in their ideology towards important life choices. Some of these attitudes contribute towards general mindset regarding the status of women and the importance of their career aspirations.

Gender-centric Cultural and Organizational Values Impacting Women's Careers

Barriers for women in achieving international management roles included patriarchal societies such as India privileging men, and collectivistic practices where group goals are favored over individual goals (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Varma, Toh, & Budhwar, 2006). Identities are likely to be less differentiated especially for women in androcentric societies (Brown, 2015). Indian culture also practices within an in-group society as seen in the association of managerial positions stereotypically with men as being in the in-group (Fischlmayr, 2002). Gender, ethnicity, and social class could be specific barriers in cultures that are hierarchical, patriarchal, and androcentric, such as in India (Ibrahim et al., 1997). Research in the Indian context has reported on gender based socialization practices that contribute to the workplace favoring men more and women taking on family responsibilities to a larger extent (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). According to Chawla and Sondhi (2011), perceived role overload of women is related to reduced work-life balance. Flexibility and autonomy in the job role and organizational support were mitigating factors in maintaining work-life balance (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). Studies demonstrated that in more economically developed regions within India, work culture reflected less hierarchy, more caring work climates, and individualistic trends towards relationships rather than being task-oriented (Panda & Gupta, 2004).

This finding was corroborated by Buddhapriya's (2009) study, in which women professionals reported that their career advancement was hindered by gender-centric organizational policies as well as family commitment, requiring job roles with flexibility. Women in senior levels often practiced career trade-offs in response to societal disapproval (Buddhapriya, 2009). According to Buddhapriya's research (2009), the increase in dual career families in contemporary Indian society meant that families need to cope not only with maintaining work-life balance, but with difficulties such as poor infrastructure. Some common problems experienced were reported as lack of reliable electricity, water, modern kitchen equipment, absence of childcare facilities, and lack of spousal support since Indian men, although supportive of their wives' careers, do not assume responsibility for household chores (Buddhapriya, 2009). Buddhapriya (2009) also referred to gender role delineations based on societal expectations, on account of which women prioritized family roles while men prioritized career over family. Another important finding of Buddhapriya's (2009) work is the influence of demographic factors (e.g., marital status, family responsibilities, management level, nuclear or joint-family systems) in seeking organizational support in career decision-making and advancement.

Indian Women in the IT Industry

Since the turn of the century, India has seen a steady increase in the number of women entering the labor force, with a significant number being represented in the IT industry (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Reporting on the status of women in the IT industry, Ahuja (2002) found that acute shortage in personnel in this industry paved the way for increased representation of women. This phenomenon has enabled great labor participation of women in India, with associated opportunities for economic and social mobility (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012).

More importantly, increased labor participation of Indian women has facilitated their economic and social empowerment education and financial independence (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). Bhattacharyya and Ghosh (2012) observed that empowerment has also enabled these women to become more self-differentiated to seek parity in family decision-making, while also leading to relational conflicts and risks of family destabilization.

Distribution of Women in the IT industry in India

A recent survey authorized by the National Association of Software Services Company [NASSCOM], generated a scorecard of gender statistics portraying a rising trend of about 27% Indian women employed in the IT and Telecommunications sector among 55 surveyed companies (Raghuram, Herman, Ruiz-Ben, & Sondhi, 2017). Additionally, it was reported that between 42%-47% of Indian women were enrolled in IT programs in higher education institutions, were typically under 30 years in age, and single (Raghuram et al., 2017). However, the survey found that they are concentrated at lower career levels and their labor participation dropped to 30% owing to primary caregiver responsibilities and other structural barriers including governmental regulations for working hours and leave (Raghuram et al., 2017).

Raghuram (2008) reiterated that there was greater influx of women in the information and communications technology industry than in traditional engineering. While this acknowledges the increasing presence of women in male-dominated industries, other gender-specific barriers are still faced by these women. Ahuja (2002) reported that globally, advancement and retention of women in the IT industry was challenged by social and institutional factors. The NASSCOM scorecard (Raghuram et al., 2017) also reported that many of the women in the IT industry did not return to work following motherhood, their career progression tracked stagnation when compared to men of similar age and career start, and not

surprisingly, women were poorly represented in leadership roles (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012).

Advantages for women working in the IT industry. According to Bhattacharyya and Ghosh (2012), Indian women chose jobs in the technology industry for the following reasons: competitive salary, comfortable office work environment, global mobility for work, flexible work routines, gender-friendly organizational policies based on meritocracy, and personal agency from the ability to make independent decisions related to work and personal life, boosting their autonomy and individuation from gendered norms. However, the representation of Indian women in IT is concentrated at the entry and middle management levels, thus perpetuating the proverbial glass ceiling (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012).

Work identity was a significant part of women's self-identity because participating in the workforce gave them financial independence, but more importantly, psychological independence because they had education, autonomy, self-confidence, and self-esteem as part of their personal identity (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Bhattacharya and Basu (2007) found that Indian women in the IT industry enjoyed better subjective wellness, described as being in a positive mental state, than men. Their study attributed this general wellness to better emotional and behavioral coping strategies (Bhattacharya & Basu, 2007).

Challenges for women in IT industry jobs. The nature of technology work in India is characterized by its fast pace, long hours servicing a global clientele, unpredictability, global travel, need to constantly update technological knowledge and skills, and to be available physically and virtually (Ahuja, 2002; Biao, 2005; Raghuram, 2004; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). These systemic requirements are less suitable for women in the process of building their careers in such a competitive environment that stresses work-life balance. Women are oriented towards

family obligations and often self-select into professions that allow them that flexibility (Ahuja, 2002).

Further, masculinized organizational structure with top down leadership, high pressure to deliver against stringent deadlines, and lack of participation in informal networking opportunities, were some of the barriers restricting women from achieving parity with males in the global IT sector (D'Mello, 2006). Indian women were also overlooked for leadership roles on account of perceived lack of sociability (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012). Incidentally, age was found to be another factor determining levels of stress among IT professionals with older professionals lesser able to cope with constant updating of technical skills and meeting deadlines (Bhattacharya & Basu, 2007). It was also reported that Indian women in IT are chosen for mundane, repetitive work and their collaborative skills, which restricted their upward mobility in the workplace (Bhattacharyya & Ghosh, 2012).

Research indicated that the status of women in the paid labor force in India lacked visibility and primacy, their gender role being associated with "reproductive roles" first (Patel & Parmentier, 2005, p. 42). Patel and Parmentier (2005) studied gender relations in the context of privileged women in the Information Technology (IT) industry particularly in terms of their empowerment and agency. The authors reported challenges faced by women based on: 1) the gender gap in educational opportunities for engineering degrees; 2) denial of projects by professors; 3) compromised job placement due to exclusion from campus interviews; 4) restricted to tedious desk jobs rather than site visits; and 5) a tendency for women to work on production floors on account of masculinity of the engineering industry, as well as concerns for women's safety (Patel & Parmentier, 2005). However, while Indian women have to work harder than men to advance in their career, they are respected for their superior educational

achievements that are effective in overcoming male egotistical attitudes towards women in leadership positions (Patel & Parmentier, 2005).

Valk and Srinivasan (2011) reported that in recent years gender friendly policies had been initiated in most IT organizations, allowing women to focus on family life and other personal goals such as leisure activities or pursuit of education. However, in some cases, these policies have not been effectively implemented or are ineffectual because of work roles that require women to be present in meetings even if they are allowed flextime or work from home options (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Compared with western countries, many Indian companies do not provide daycare facilities, extended paternal leave, and return to work opportunities to the extent that their western counterparts do (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).

Dialectic aspects of working in the IT industry. Based on an ethnographic study of nineteen IT professionals working in two Indian cities, Fuller and Narasimhan (2007) provided in-depth information on the demographic characteristics of employees. Typically, these professionals held advanced degrees in software engineering with specialization, hailed from privileged social classes such as Brahmins, a fifth of the new recruits were women, and generally reported gender equality in companies (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007). Fuller and Narasimhan (2013) further found that these jobs had high earning potential, work pace was challenging though five-day weeks were usually the norm, and interactions between men and women in modern offices was unrestricted.

Working in the IT industry allowed Indian women frequent opportunities for global mobility since these companies are multinational (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). More significantly, interviewees felt that the IT industry had helped empower women (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). However, among the participants there were other women who felt the

burden of managing the home, children, and work as well as the guilt of spending less time with children for which they compromised their career (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). What was also striking from this research (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013) was that some women also attributed their empowerment to maternal figures who were their role models. In spite of this empowerment, these women were open to having arranged marriages but were clear that they wanted to continue working after marriage.

Both married and single women prioritized their families before their work (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). Moreover, working in this industry that treated them equally gave them a sense of empowerment to achieve parity in the workplace and on account of their earning power, they maintained decision-making power in the families as well so they were less likely to be exploited (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). This study by Fuller and Narasimhan (2007) provided some great insights specifically into Indian women IT professionals. Interviews of women participants revealed that overall women preferred to settle down in India after having global work experiences because they felt close to family, they had good work environments, and they had the support of extended family for childcare (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013).

Work Stress Related to Job Characteristics

The nature of work in the IT industry is such that it requires availability of personnel at all times since work is globalized and customer service is available 24/7, thus IT professionals must cater to everyone in spite of time differences (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Work is also project-oriented which means that workloads vary and deliverables are expected with expediency and currency (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Darshan et al. (2013) studied the association of psychological stress, depression, and harmful alcohol use among IT professionals in India. In their screening of a sample of 129 men and women, they found 51.2% were psychologically

stressed, and of these, 68.2% were also found to be at risk for depression. Overall, 43.4% were at risk for depression and were four times more likely to indulge in harmful alcohol consumption. Of those stressed, misuse of alcohol was found to be almost six times higher. This study underscored the chronic exposure to stress for individuals working in the fast-paced and constantly evolving IT industry (Darshan et al., 2013).

A study by Kavitha et al. (2012) focused on observing organizational role stress among Indian women IT professionals working in India. According to their findings, stress could be experienced in the form of somatic and psychological symptoms such as disrupted sleep patterns, behavioral reactions such as anger and irritability, and can spill over into interpersonal relationships (Kavitha et al., 2012). The study reported that stress related to their work role was associated with role overload where they had to grapple with technological complexity, inadequate training and resources, job insecurity, and unrealistic expectations (Kavitha et al. (2012). For married women, added stressors related to achievement of work-life balance since they also had to manage their roles as wives and mothers (Kavitha et al., 2012).

Global Mobility in the IT Industry

Biao (2005) made some keen observations based upon research on Indian women in the IT industry engaged in global mobility for work. Biao (2005) clarified the differences between professionals who were contracted through "body shopping" (p. 362) agents that recruited Indian IT professionals and sent them abroad to work through other agents, and the more direct recruitment of professionals by larger companies engaged in providing software services. Women were less likely to be recruited through body shopping practices owing to the benching process (Biao, 2005). Being "on the bench" (p. 364) meant not being contracted out to work and therefore paid only a nominal amount for subsistence, which often required compromised and

unsafe living conditions (Biao, 2005). Biao (2005) reported that companies found it easier to recruit professionals from graduating pools of students overseas because the visa process was simpler. However, women preferred to decline participating in body shop placements.

According to Biao's (2005) research, it was a common practice for Indian women to go back to India, marry an Indian, and then return to the U.S. on dependent visas rather than independently for work. Indian women IT professionals on H-4 (dependent) visas were educated and capable but not allowed to work in the U.S., a practice amended during the previous political administration that allowed eligible spouses to work (United States Citizenship & Immigration Services [USCIS], 2015). However, the current political administration is in the process of rescinding this authorization (U.S. Office of Information & Regulatory Affairs, 2019). According to Biao (2005), wives supported their husbands in the management of the home, but their work identity was subsumed by their inability to work independently. Biao (2005) referred to a number of such Indian women being victims of domestic violence at the hands of their stressed husbands, and vulnerability to being deported should they be divorced. Related to this is the fact that women on H-4 visas have to return to school to validate their educational credentials since their foreign transcripts are not valued in the U.S. (Purkayastha, 2005). Returning to school for these women is not always possible owing to financial restrictions and access (Purkayastha, 2005). Making keen observations, Purkayastha (2005) highlighted that immigrant women were subject to disadvantaged intersectionality of gender and race that deprived them of educational and professional opportunities because of institutional discriminatory practices.

Raghuram (2004) conducted a study on professionals in the IT industry who were involved in global mobility for work. This study highlighted the environment of IT industry jobs that require flexibility and the ability to be globally mobile. The demographic description of the

participants in this qualitative study reflected women between the ages of 26-35, some were married, some came on work permits and one came as a dependent spouse. Some of the lived experiences Raghuram (2004) quoted from her participants' narratives included safety concerns associated with global travel and accommodation, compromising their career advancement for that of their spouses, declining job mobility and accepting lesser jobs on account of dual career concerns. Raghuram (2004) made a salient point in her study that organizational practices to offer flexibility to women were effective only up to a point and that societal and cultural change needed to happen in order to address these disparities.

Raghuram (2008) raised some very valid questions about the role of intersectionality in global mobility for work. For instance, how does social class intersect with gender, how do women leverage personality traits of femininity-masculinity in the IT industry, and what are some reasons for women to engage in work mobility other than for career prospects? What was very relevant was Raghuram's (2008) observation that Indian women in IT relocated more for economic reasons associated with familial goals rather than independent aspirations for their career or personal growth. It was reported that Indian women may also choose to move to avoid stifling work environments or exploitative family relationships, although inflexibility and lack of global experience limited their career advancement (Raghuram, 2008).

Fuller and Narasimhan (2013) highlighted perceptions that the IT industry was a place where employees indulged in sexually inappropriate behavior on account of working long hours in close quarters and distancing from home when on global assignments. For single women, especially, this was a matter of concern for parents who worried about their daughters' reputation and marriageability (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013).

Fuller and Narasimhan (2013) commented that jobs in the IT industry allowed people to choose between places of domicile unlike other engineering professions. Due to the nature of the work, employees could work in India or overseas and keep open the option of returning to home country after making money abroad. In their research, Fuller and Narasimhan (2013) found that the most common reasons for choosing to return was for eldercare and children's education. Moreover, living conditions, greater earning power, and better job prospects were strong motivations for people working in the IT industry to choose to live in India rather than abroad. Not only is the attraction of living abroad, especially in the U.S., waning due to these reasons, current immigration policies are impacting these decisions. In fact, Fuller and Narasimhan (2007) pointed out that this class of professionals is uniquely poised to choose where and how they want to live because they have made a place for themselves in the global workplace. In the interviews, participants shared that opportunities to work abroad gave them global exposure, but many of them returned to India because they wanted to remain close to family members in India (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2013). They also did not want to live abroad because they felt that work was more motivating with better prospects for the IT industry's growth in India (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007).

This section of the chapter has detailed the profile of Indian women in contemporary times in connection with their career development in the IT industry. It has been an exploration of cultural socialization practices and its impact on gendered identity development. An understanding of the nature of relocation for work and the role of organizational culture is relevant. The following sections will provide a brief explanation of expatriation, the role of family and social support in expatriation, and relate it to the Indian context in terms of current immigration policies.

Expatriation: Global Mobility for Work

Research literature indicated that individuals typically undertake international assignments for their contribution to career advancement and leadership development opportunities, while companies invest in them to improve their marketability and competitiveness (Harris, 2006). Global mobility research indicated increased trends for short-term (lasting a few months to a year) and long-term global assignments (from 2-5 years) for knowledge transfer, project completion, and career development (Brookfield Global Relocation Services [Brookfield GRS], 2015).

Trends in Expatriation

Information relating to female experiences in expatriation is limited and compounded by the gender gap that exists in this activity. The overall representation of women relocating for international assignments is between 15%-19% (Hartl, 2004; Linehan & Scullion, 2008), with some recent estimates reported between 16%-24% (Shortland, 2014). The gender gap in expatriation activity can be attributed to several well-researched causes: biased selection procedures (Adler, 1984), prejudice by host-country representatives (Adler, 1985; Caligiuri & Tung, 1999; Varma et al., 2006), lack of mentoring and networking opportunities (Linehan & Scullion, 2008), gender role expectations and negative gender stereotyping of women (Forster, 1999, Vance, Paik, & White, 2006), challenges with managing work-life balance (Harris, 2004), gender-centric organizational policies (Linehan et al., 2001), and socio-political factors making the activity more conducive to men (Altman & Shortland, 2008). Additionally, women expatriates do not assume roles of leadership in international management to the extent their male counterparts do, despite having equal or better education and qualifications (Berry & Bell, 2012).

Although gender discrepancies in international assignments are well documented, there is a lack of research focused on gendered experiences of specific ethnic groups such as Indians, who reportedly only claimed 4% of global expatriation activity, according to a survey conducted in 2001 (Hartl, 2003). Moreover, the results of evaluations from organizations focused on global mobility activity and relocation typically report quantitative figures based on surveys (e.g., Brookfield GRS, 2015; KPMG, 2015; PwC, 2015), rather than personalized, qualitative data such as the seminal work of Adler in the 1980s (Adler, 1984, 1985). There is scant information in the research literature detailing the work and non-work experiences of professional Indian women in international work-induced relocation. The relative invisibility of the identified population makes it harder to discern their adaptive responses to acculturative experiences as also the cumulative influence of global relocation on their cultural identity.

Role of Family and Social Support in Expatriation

Family adjustment, particularly that of the spouse (irrespective of gender), is vital to the success of the expatriate and often overlooked in expatriation research (Andreason, 2008). Mathur-Helm (2002) reported that the successful adjustment of female expatriates depended to some degree on the support and adjustment of their accompanying families. Women from traditionally socialized countries reported receiving little or no support from spouses and families, which negatively affected their work-life adjustment (Mathur-Helm, 2002). In collectivist cultures such as seen in Indian families, members interact in interdependent roles, often relying on the support of extended families or hired staff to manage household and caregiving responsibilities, minimizing acculturative stress (Buddhapriya, 2009).

Contextual factors such as the strength of the expatriate population and the demographic distribution of expatriates contribute to familial adjustment since it impacts social lifestyles

(Schoepp & Forstenlechner, 2010). In terms of demographic distribution, Fischlmayr and

Kollinger (2010) reported that female expatriates are fewer in number, and being single, more

likely to be socially isolated in foreign locations especially those perceiving female expatriates in

a less friendly manner, and are often subjected to loneliness. On the other hand, childcare and

educational needs could be important stressors for women with children who need to acculturate

to new cultural environments while the female parent adjusts to her new work role and new

organizational norms (Fischmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Harris, 2004). Kollinger-Santer and

Fischlmayr (2013) reported that women struggled more due to expected involvement in

household responsibilities, as well as gender specific roles in the workplace both in home

country and expatriate location. This phenomenon is particularly applicable to professional

women from India as research suggested (Buddhapriya, 2009; Gupta et al., 2012a; Nath, 2000),

since Indian communities are socialized within gender-specific roles and lifestyles, irrespective

of being professionally qualified and generating sizeable income.

Yang (2007) brought attention to an important aspect of expatriates' general preference to

socialize with other expatriates rather than host nationals. Suggestions to enable increased

interaction with host nationals were for the organization to provide sponsors or mentors who are

locals, and encouraging expatriates to live in local communities rather than expatriate

communities and making the job design include interaction with host nationals (Yang, 2007). It

is possible that individuals are better prepared in contemporary times since we live in an

informational age that is facilitated by technology that links people across borders more easily

(Şahin & Çoklar, 2009; Wang, Shu, & Tu, 2008).

Srivastava and Panday (2012) conducted research to establish the reliability and validity

of the expatriate adjustment instrument developed by Black (1988, as cited in Srivastava &

Panday, 2012) for the Indian population. The study involved survey responses from 48 Indian

expatriates working in California in the IT industry, of which 90% were male and 80% were

married. Results indicated that the ability to negotiate general or social adjustment led to work

adjustment (Srivastava & Panday, 2012). Srivastava and Panday (2012) also found that Indian

expatriates who were able to speak English and were supported by the large Indian diaspora in

the U.S. were better adjusted because of their socialization to the host country, which reduced the

need for interactional adjustment.

Female Expatriation among Indians

Judging by the underrepresentation of women in general, and Indian women in particular

in traditional expatriation for work, it is not surprising that there are only a handful of studies on

female Indian expatriates. Valk, van der Velde, van Engen, and Szkudlarek (2012) studied

cultural identity changes based upon the reports of 30 Indian expatriates (including six women)

in the context of expatriation and repatriation in India and the Netherlands. The study explored

the role of cultural disparities, organizational support, and social support in expatriates'

development of career capital (Valk et al., 2012). With respect to cultural identity changes,

respondents reported greater self-awareness, enhanced global outlook, displaying an inclination

to integrate into Dutch culture but also sought Indian enclaves because they remained Indians at

heart (Valk et al., 2012). Respondents reported that they relied more on family and informal

supports rather than organizational support upon return to reintegrate into the Indian society

(Valk et al., 2012). Valk et al.'s (2012) study is framed on lived experiences of Indian

expatriates in Europe and is particularly relevant to this study because it is one of few using a

cultural identity model similar to the framework of the Acculturation model (Berry, 2008).

In another study, Valk et al. (2014) explored Indian self-initiated women expatriates in academe to understand the relationship between their career success and accumulated career and organizational capital. Valk et al. (2014) identified the influence of family adjustment, work-life balance issues, and organizational policies on international career-pathing while acknowledging the role of intellectual, social, and human capital in career development. Valk et al. (2014) highlighted that the population of highly-educated, socioeconomically stable, middle-class Indian women were often supported by their families in pursuing education and career choices that allowed them international careers (Valk et al., 2014). Respondents in Valk et al.'s (2014) study were women accompanied by their spouses who made accommodations to their own careers to support their wives, or stayed behind and took care of children and extended families. For some women, the traditional role of family nurturer was switched, while for others, this gender role expectation hindered their international career prospects (Valk et al., 2014). This study is one of few that report on a class of more privileged Indian women, supported by families in their pursuit of careers.

Gupta et al.'s study (2012a) involved interviews with spouses of Indian expatriates and explored the influence of spousal adjustment on expatriate performance. Of the sample of 26 spouses, only two were male, both of whom did not stay with their expatriate spouses until the completion of the assignment. Following the argument of inequality in spousal relationships in Indian families, Gupta et al. (2012a, 2012b) reported that women decided to accompany expatriate spouses to preserve marital harmony, which often came at the expense of their own careers. However, this decision varied with respect to personality characteristics, length of assignment, and other familial responsibilities related to children's education and eldercare (Gupta et al., 2012a, 2012b). Although this research was primarily based on experiences of

women expatriate spouses, it is noteworthy that two of the spouses were male, and they did not

stay with their expatriate spouses until the end of the assignment. This is noteworthy since the

participants in my study are Indian women as well who may be impacted by their expatriate

spouses.

Role of Organizational Culture in Global Workplaces

Organizational culture refers to the shared philosophy, values and behaviors practiced by

people working in an organization in their relations to one another and to their work (Hofstede,

2016). In his seminal work on organizational culture, Geert Hofstede (2011) described aspects

of national culture described as dimensional measures that were observed in organizational

culture. Some aspects of individual and group culture can be differentiated such as national,

gender-centric or generational, and can impact the way international business is conducted

(Hofstede, 2011). The dimensional approach describing organizational culture is relevant to

ideologies of intersectionality as it pertains to power differentials between individuals and groups

based on position on the dimension. Organizational culture can also have a direct impact on

employee engagement and is relevant to expatriate experiences as they negotiate different work

cultures. Relatedly, organizational culture in this context also pertains to the IT industry, which

is traditionally a male-dominated, fast-paced, stressful environment and these characteristics

impact the participation of women in this industry (Ahuja, 2002; Biao, 2005; Raghuram, 2004;

Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).

Stressors Related to Work and Non-Work Discriminatory Practices: Microaggressions in the Workplace

This study was designed to explore the experiences of a sample that represented a gender

and ethnic minority in the technology industry. As such, their gendered and racial experiences

associated with this relocation could encounter challenges. Racism and sexism have become less overt and are practiced covertly, mostly as subtle incivility related to references to gender, race, and other social categories (Deitch et al., 2003; Rowe, 2008; Sue et al., 2007). These social identities represent differing status or power and privilege and its intersection can have meaningful implications for people (Kabat-Barr & Cortina, 2012). In the workplace, these 'isms' occur implicitly but can have detrimental results in the form of negative physical and emotional health outcomes. Covert forms of sexism can create uncertainty regarding the accuracy of perceptions of prejudice, which can cause anxiety and depression (Deitch et al., 2003). Sue et al. (2007) described microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily, verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (p. 271). Experiencing microaggressions socially and in the global workplace could induce stress for women expatriates.

Gender discrimination in the workplace is often associated with the practice of negative stereotypes and perceptions, and results in such discrepant behaviors as limited mentoring and networking options and funding availability for women (Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014). This discriminatory practice can have direct implications for women seeking international assignments. Intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and gender and the multifaceted dimensions of various social statuses contribute to inequality in the distribution of power and privilege.

Researching group behavior in acculturation experiences, Imam (2013) found that social categorization based upon language affinity resulted in employees being subjected to in-group/out-group status. Categorization by the self or others could lead to comparison, often motivating individuals to make positive identification with people who belong to the in-group

(Imam, 2013). Intergroup bias, on the other hand, can lead to rivalry, out-group derogation, discrimination, negative stereotypes, and distrust of those perceived to belong to an out-group (Podsiadlowski & Ward, 2010). In this context, the intersection of gender and ethnicity is a relevant discussion.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender and its Implication in the Global Workplace

According to Ludvig (2006), intersectionality was a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in reference to intersections within and between dimensions of diversity (e.g., gender, age, color, race, ethnicity, religion, and social status), also considered the "diversity approach in feminist theory" (p. 246). This approach is founded on principles of heterogeneity, suggesting pluralistic and dynamic social identities within gender, rather than fixed notions of gendered experiences across diverse groups of women (Ludvig, 2006). Intersectionality refers to discourse around social inequality, power differentials, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice issues (Collins & Bilge, 2016). While acknowledging the layers of dissimilarities as its strength, intersectionality is constricted by its inherent complexity owing to the fact that differences within groups can be multifaceted and difficult to empirically research because of its subjectivity (Ludvig, 2006). Nevertheless, the fact that challenges of intersecting social identities can grow exponentially for people underprivileged in several dimensions is a factor that cannot be ignored. In order to incorporate intersectionality into qualitative research, a categorical approach can be utilized, which makes an intentional effort to focus on predetermined categories (Ludvig, 2006). Personal interviews of lived experiences could tap into subjective narratives that could uncover the complexities of intersectionality within the group, since "intercategorical and intracategorical complexities" can be better accounted for (McCall, 2005, p. 1773).

The intersection of class, region, and gender plays a significant role in the dynamics of female work experiences as a function of inherent power structures (Pande, 2005). Gendered ideologies influence practices and policies in the workplace that contribute to gender disparities that are further complicated by disparities related to class and regionality (Pande, 2005). Tung and Haq's (2012) study examined the role of race and gender as an intervening factor, as opposed to meritocracy alone, in decision-making regarding recruitment procedures.

Brown and Misra (2003) referred to the intersection of race, class and gender as a hot topic for discussion among feminist theorists in sociological studies. Further, Browne and Misra (2003) succinctly presented the idea that "race is gendered and gender is racialized," creating nuanced experiences through the combination of the two attributes (p. 488). Brown and Misra's (2003) research was particularly relevant to this study because of the significance of Indian women being an ethnic minority in the U.S., as well as a gender minority in the technology industry, representing about 27% of employees (Raghuram et al., 2017). Further, Indian women experience income inequality and disparate labor market participation in India (U.N. Development Programme [UNDP], 2015), and are subjected to discrimination and stereotyping in some Indian workplaces (Budhwar et al., 2005).

Additional studies focused on the role of gender in international career development, examining the role of social positioning and gender in expatriate experiences (Hartl, 2004; Janssens, Cappellen, & Zanoni, 2006). Using person-centered and organization-centered perspectives to understand the unique experiences of women expatriates related to gender and culture, Hartl (2004) made a case for the study of women expatriates in the context of their self-identity and social construction of their careers. Hartl (2004) found that women reconstructed their career self-concept in relation to changed organizational, social, and personal experiences

during expatriation. Additionally, perception of their gendered self was subject to a reciprocal

exchange between their self-image and external experiences both in a corporate environment as

well as the larger socio-economic and cultural context of expatriation (Hartl, 2004). The author

also reiterated that expatriate women belonged to a more privileged pool of successful executives

for whom gender was experienced as flexible depending on how the organization allowed them

liberties or placed restrictions (Hartl, 2004).

Janssens et al. (2006) designed their study to understand how women interpreted their

environments and positioned themselves in expatriate experiences. The researchers looked at

three axes along which women positioned themselves: gender stereotypes, organizational

hierarchy, and cultural socialization (Janssens et al., 2006). The authors reported that women

effectively used the position that was more privileged in order to effectively manage interactions

(Janssens et al., 2006). The authors presented women expatriates as active agents, using gender,

organizational hierarchy and cultural identity to negotiate their position in international

assignments (Janssens et al., 2006).

Bodenhausen and Peery (2009) studied the effect of social categorization on perception,

judgment, and behavior in cross-cultural exchange. Their research (Bodenhausen & Peery,

2009) focused attention on the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of social

perceptions that determine social categorization, resulting in social group membership patterns.

The acronym VUCA was interpreted for their research as volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and

ambiguity (Bodenhausen & Peery, 2009). In the context of my study, the attributes of the

acronym were particularly relevant. Volatility in this research study was indicated in the

intercultural and intra-cultural between Indian and western cultural socialization practices.

Uncertainty pertained to the lack of information on female expatriation experiences of Indians.

Complexity in the study came from the many questions pertaining to the experience of work-related relocation. Lastly, ambiguity stemmed from the subjective nature of the study revealing individualized experiences.

Intersectionality theory is based on social identities that are related in complex ways that represent power differentials associated with axes of societal division (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Indian culture is particularly complex owing to diversity in class, caste, religion, and regionality besides gender and intersectionality theory is applicable to unearth these intricacies (Dey & Orton, 2016). According to Haq (2013), Indian women are compromised on account of gender equality issues further complicated by the intersectionality of social class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and marital status that disadvantage their access to education and healthcare. In my study, however, this approach was less appropriate since the participants were educated, professional women of a fairly high socioeconomic class who were able to override familial and societal power differentials to seek their professional aspirations. Since this study is an exploration of women's experiences while on a temporary work visa, current immigration policies impacting their sojourn is indicated to provide context to their choices and decisions during this relocation.

Implications of Immigration Policies on IT Professionals

Global mobility for work in the IT industry has been compromised lately in the U.S. with the governmental crackdown on H-1B visas. Since January 2017, there has been talk of restriction of temporary work visas (Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2018; Jordan, 2018; Pierce & Gelatt, 2018; USCIS, 2019). The Presidential Executive Order, Buy American and Hire American, was issued on April 18, 2017 to protect the interests of American workers and combat the alleged abuse of H-1B visas.

The End Outsourcing Act introduced on January 24, 2017 in Congress aims to disallow U.S. companies to engage in business that requires outsourcing of foreign employees to be subsidized by U.S. taxpayers as well as conducting business with the U.S. government (U. S. Congress, 2017b). The Highly-Skilled Fairness and Integrity Act of 2017 introduced in the House of Representatives (U.S. Congress, 2017c), proposed reforms to address discriminatory hiring practices by removing caps on countries for employment based immigrant visas; hence, employers with more than 15% of their workforce on H-1B visa status pay those employees a salary upwards of $130,000 to justify their recruitment and sponsorship for immigration.

Similarly, with the H-1B and L1 Visa Reform Act of 2017 (U.S. Congress, 2017a), there is increased scrutiny and tightening of legislation regarding employer practices related to foreign employees on H-1B and L1 work visas. Media coverage has provided first-hand reports of the impact of these impending reforms on the lives of Indians in the IT industry (Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2018; Jordan, 2018). Respondents shared common experiences of coming to the U.S. for education and work, and being employed in the IT industry on H-1B visas of indefinite tenure (Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2017). Indian nationals on H-1B visas were sponsored for green cards by companies looking to fill their need for specialized workers. Since this group has a higher representation for immigration, they experienced backlog in the processing of green cards (Pierce & Gelatt, 2018). Consequentially, their dependent spouses (mostly women) on H-4 visas were authorized to work under the previous administration's implementation of the H-4 EAD (Pierce & Gelatt, 2018). Currently there are over 71,000 H-4 holders who are in jeopardy of their work authorization being revoked (Pierce & Gelatt, 2018).

For Indians who emigrated in their youth to study in the U.S., their adult lives have been spent outside their country-of-origin and they now perceive the U.S. as their home (Fitzmaurice

& Benner, 2018). Job insecurity is a factor that goes with the territory of the IT industry as businesses are subject to the volatility of financial markets, and this in turn affects retention of employees. As such, H-1B holders are vulnerable not only to stress from the nature of their work, but also to market fluctuations and business trends, as well as changing immigration policies (Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2018). H-1B holders are also denied promotions and experience restricted job mobility on account of their visa status (Jordan, 2018). For educated women who moved to the U.S. with their spouses, being unable to work meant living dependent lives as homemakers in the U.S., or living in India in a split household (Purkayastha, 2005). Some spouses put themselves through graduate school to achieve their independent jobs and others took advantage of the H-4 EAD that authorized them to work and gave them a valid identity without which they could not even open a bank account (Jordan, 2018).

According to Bhattacharya (2018), the return of H-1B holders to India has hailed it as the new land of rising opportunity. Having faced uncertainty related to visa sponsorship and difficulties landing jobs in the U.S. because of it, many Indians have returned to India to set up entrepreneurial ventures. These individuals are increasingly looking to their country-of-origin to invest their education and creative energy because it is more conducive as a developing nation to make use of their talent (Bhattacharya, 2018). In the IT world, venture capitalism and startups drive the creative force and with the U.S. administration planning to restrict foreign nationals from building U.S. based businesses, the future is somewhat bleak for prospective entrepreneurs and innovators globally (Bhattacharya, 2018). At present, there are no significant changes on proposed immigration policy changes and people on H-1B and H-4 visas remain in limbo (Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2018; Mohan, 2018).

This chapter explored cultural socialization and gender role expectations impacting contemporary professional women in India were discussed at length to provide context. The review of literature on the global technology industry and the forces involved in international relocation provided contextual information and helped identify gaps in knowledge regarding the expatriation experiences of Indian women. The role of organizational culture in facilitating individual career development and advancements is apparent from the section elaborating experiences of Indian women in the workplace. Contextual reference to current U.S. immigration policies impacting technology professionals was also discussed.

The next section is a review of the theoretical underpinnings of this study. It is traditional to identify a theoretical approach upon which the study is designed. Being qualitative in nature, and an inductive exploration of lived experiences, I avoided *a priori* application of theory. Nevertheless, the Acculturation model was chosen for the discussion of my findings as it was the most appropriate to the study of expatriation experiences. In the development of themes to discuss my findings, however, Relational-Cultural Theory (Jordan et al., 2004) and Third Space theory (Bhabha, 2004) were found to positively increase the weight of my interpretations. All three theoretical approaches are discussed in the next section in this chapter.

Acculturation Model

The conceptual framework for the study drew from theories of acculturation and its impact on gendered and ethnic identity. Ethnic identity, as well as other intersecting social identities, can be impacted by acculturation experiences as a function of globalization (Berry, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003; Wang, 2007b). Globalization, as a process, has resulted in the increase of cultural homogeneity, with the dominant influence coming from the West; a phenomenon referred to in the 1960s by R.L. Lambert as "cocacolonisation" (Bochner, 2006, p. 193).

Globalization, in the context of culture, is often viewed as a contributor to homogenization and acquisition of other cultures, and negatively associated with retention of heritage cultures (Tomlinson, 2003). However, research also pointed out that globalization sharpens the sense of self in the local, as well as global cultural context (Wang, 2007b). Cultural homogenization occurs more at the superficial level, in the consumption of material goods and lifestyle (Wang, 2007b). Globalization enhances self-exploration of cultural identity through a contextual process of interaction between the uniqueness of one's identity and cultural homogenization through globalization (Wang, 2007b).

Globalization is seen as the vehicle for bringing people representing diverse groups in closer contact with each other in pursuit of improved opportunities for livelihood (Sam & Berry, 2006). This increased contact could necessitate acculturation, which is the process of cultural and psychological change that occurs in societies that are culturally, linguistically, and religiously plural (Sam & Berry, 2010). Plural societies could reflect two ideologies of a) mainstream culture and minority cultures; or b) multicultural society represented as a bricolage of ethnocultural groups (Berry, 2006a). Research suggested that globalization offers individuals a more clarified sense of self with exposure to other cultures through processes of acculturation, whether it resulted in cultural homogenization or retention of heritage cultures (Tomlinson, 2003; Wang, 2007b).

Acculturation is seen in the form of psychological changes in a person's attitudes towards the socialization process itself, as well as its effect on cultural identity (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). According to Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001), retention and adaptation of ethnic and national identity is a function of the interaction between attitudes, characteristics, and circumstances of immigrants and the responses of the receiving society.

Acculturation and ethnic identity constructs are closely interlinked and while the former is more

comprehensive (e.g., attitudes, values, behaviors), the latter refers primarily to an individual or a

group's sense of belonging to a particular cultural group (Phinney et al., 2001). Ethnic identity

refers to a person's self-identification with a racioethnic group and this identity is not static but

rather dynamic, and socially constructed (Pio, 2005). Decision-making regarding relationships,

religion, career, and attitude towards relocation are based upon personal choices in lifestyle and

ideological preferences developed according to one's socialization. Arguably then, global

mobility could necessitate change to these ideologies and choices, all of which require

acculturation.

Berry (2008) emphasized that the intertwining of cultures through globalization can lead

to an increased focus on distinction of local cultures, fragmentation of nation-states to preserve

heritage, and increased identification with heritage culture in the face of discrimination or

oppression. This process of localization, fragmentation, and identification can influence cultural

identity development requiring acculturation and adaptation strategies for bicultural exchange

(Berry, 2008). In this context, research on Bicultural Identity Interaction (BII) pertains to the

concept that people who have the ability to function effectively in two cultures are considered

bicultural and able to "perceive their mainstream and ethnic cultural identities as compatible and

integrated versus oppositional" (van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015, p. 49).

When people of different cultural backgrounds interact, new cultural patterns are

experienced in the process of acculturation (Berry, 1997). The work of Berry in the

Acculturation model is significant for the processes involved in acculturation, termed as

assimilation, separation, marginalization, and *integration* (Berry, 1997, 2005, 2008, 2013; Sam

& Berry, 2010). These processes are not presented as linear or static but fluid in response to

contextual factors, often mediated and moderated by factors including age, gender, personality, cultural distance, motivation to migrate, attitudes and behaviors, social support, experiences of discrimination, and coping strategies (Berry, 1997). *Assimilation* is the process of adapting to a new culture while letting go of one's own cultural identity (Berry, 1997, 2005). Assimilation involves incorporating new learning and experience into existing cognitive schemas, while accommodation is revising existing cognitive schemas to allow new information to fit into it (McAuliffe, 2008). When an individual holds onto his/her own cultural identity and resists adapting to a new culture, it entails *separation* (Berry, 1997, 2005). The process of practicing from an inherent cultural identity but also successfully shifting in response to a new culture is termed as *integration* (Berry, 1997, 2005). *Marginalization* occurs when individuals are unable to maintain their cultural identity or are disinterested in doing so, resulting in cultural exclusion (Berry, 1997, 2005).

The terms assimilation, accommodation, and change are often used in the context of explaining the essence of acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturative change has been described as both a dynamic process involving reciprocity through bicultural exchange, as well as a more static outcome of cultural homogenization (Berry, 2008; Sam & Berry, 2010). Sam and Berry (2010) highlighted that the concept of acculturation was reciprocal between interacting cultural groups and involving adaptation activities of individuals as well as groups. Sam and Berry (2010) presented a model of group and individual adaptation determined by compatibility and incompatibility between interacting cultures in terms of cultural norms, values, and identities.

These acculturation processes are salient when considering expatriation experiences since acculturation related to it is dynamic, involving not only expatriation but repatriation as well.

Similarly, the circumstances for migration are different in temporary relocation for work and could influence motivation, coping strategies, response to discrimination, and attitudes to seek support. In the context of expatriation, acculturation strategies related to cultural learning, stress and coping, and social identity models (Sussman, 2011). Further, acculturation occurs subjectively and contextually across individuals and groups, including permanent residents who emigrate (e.g., immigrants) and temporary residents (e.g., sojourners or expatriates), who might be students or organizational employees (Sam & Berry, 2006).

A review of the research literature suggested that individuals who had more intercultural contact with locals and for longer periods of time acculturated well; however, sojourners were less invested in developing relationships and intercultural exchange on a consistent basis with locals (Sam & Berry, 2006). It could be assumed that the level of acculturation of expatriates could be complicated by knowing that their time in a foreign country is limited and knowing they will return to their home country shortly or be relocated to another foreign location. The investment in close relationships and identification with a new culture is likely to be different for expatriates (Berry, 2006a).

Concepts of acculturation are applied more traditionally to long-term immigrants but have also been applied to sojourners (e.g., international students, executives on international assignments, tourists, people working for not-for-profit organizations, seasonal workers, refugees and asylum-seekers, and military personnel; Bochner, 2006). In the context of gendered experiences of expatriation, Tung (2004) found that men and women both used integration as the most common method of adaptation, followed by assimilation. However, men tended to choose separation as a strategy more than women, who used integration and assimilation as a survival strategy, often reinforced through use even in home-countries (Tung, 2004).

The psychological adaptation of expatriates is impacted by other endogenous and exogenous factors such as spousal and familial adjustment (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003), negative self-perception, familial concerns (Bastida & Moscoso, 2015), and attitudes and receptivity of host-country nationals (Adler, 1987; Varma et al., 2006). In the context of female expatriates, gender-centric organizational policies and practices (Linehan, Scullion, & Walsh, 2001) as well as gender-centric sociopolitical characteristics of the host country (Altman & Shortland, 2008; Tung, 2004) were seen to influence psychological adjustment of expatriates. Recommended ways to facilitate psychological and emotional adjustment of expatriates included pre-departure training, training specific to host-culture, and support during transition for expatriates and their accompanying families (Ward et al., 2001). Research is lacking on populations that are under-represented in expatriation activity such as women from India (Hartl, 2004).

Acculturative Stress

According to Berry (2005), psychological and sociocultural adaptation to new cultural environments can be reflected as self-esteem and competence, which are required for intercultural contact on a daily basis. Adaptation could reflect the level of psychological wellbeing or alternatively, acculturative stress experienced, owing to the inability to come to terms with the incompatibility (Sam & Berry, 2010). Individuals engaged in psychological and behavioral shifts in personality and cultural values are likely to experience stress in the form of uncertainty, anxiety, and depression during the process of adaptation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturative stress could result in inadequate coping responses to perceived challenges in the acculturation process (Sam & Berry, 2010). These challenges could be affective (i.e., emotional responses of inability to cope and adapt to cultural change), behavioral (i.e., negotiating cultural

differences in terms of communication, cultural conventions); cognitive (i.e., based on social

identity relative to others), and developmental perspectives (i.e., self-identity and family

relationships; Sam & Berry, 2010).

Research on acculturation referred to the practice of biculturalism, where both heritage

and receiving cultures are practiced separately, especially when there is cultural distance or

conflict, or alternately, as a "blended biculturalism" described as a synthesis of cultures

(Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010, p. 247). The practice of blended

biculturalism allowed individuals to overcome acculturative stress because they successfully

integrated aspects of heritage and receiving or host country cultures (Schwartz et al., 2010, p.

247). Such individuals experience fewer negative psychological outcomes and increased self-

esteem because they could access and practice the cultural values appropriate to the context.

While a hostile receiving culture can increase acculturative stress, when there is a "goodness of

fit" in the process of relocation either through cultural alignment or access to resources,

acculturation is a positive experience (Schwartz et al., 2010, p.247).

Self-esteem and optimism were found to be associated with a person's resiliency to

stress, a factor to be considered in examining stress-related adjustments of immigrants (Lee,

Brown, Mitchell, & Schiraldi, 2008). Personality characteristics such as self-efficacy and locus

of control, as well as the Big Five personality characteristics (openness to experiences,

conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) have been studied in

association with acculturation (Demes & Geeraert, 2015). Interestingly, the results of this

comprehensive longitudinal study indicated that personality traits were indeed indicative of

acculturative adjustment, and were consistent with general research on acculturative stress and

adaptation patterns, with approach-oriented coping strategies more effective than avoidance ones (Demes & Geeraert, 2015).

Acculturative stress refers to maladaptive behaviors being practiced during acculturation that include diminished mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression, identity confusion), psychosomatic symptoms (e.g., high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease), and feelings of social isolation and marginalization (Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). Acculturative stress occurs when the individual is trying to resolve the cultural conflict during the process of acculturation using stress-coping mechanisms (Berry, 1997; 2005). Stress can be a positive or negative affective experience depending on whether the individual sees it as a positive opportunity or as a challenge (Berry, 2005; Berry, 2006b). Coping mechanisms could be active and support-seeking, yielding better adjustment, or problem-focused and emotion-focused, leading to psycho-emotional withdrawal (Aycan, 1997).

Berry (2006b) referred to acculturative stress as mental and emotional strain associated with adjustment to new and unfamiliar surroundings. Adjustment and adaptation also involved cultural conflict, culture shedding (or letting go of heritage culture practices), and cultural learning (acquiring practices of another culture one is exposed to), and often required coping strategies and help-seeking behaviors (Berry, 2006b). Culture shedding and culture learning often lead to generational conflict within families, which can be expected to impact gender-role expectations as well as adjusting with acculturation (Samuel, 2009; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008). Being isolated in a new country, with few social supports, the loss of established networks, the possibility of facing prejudice, and the stressors of balancing work and family, could all contribute to acculturative stress (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002).

Another consideration is the experience of culture shock, both from expatriation to a new country, and reverse culture shock experienced upon repatriation to one's country-of-origin (Ross, 2017). Building from the seminal work of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) on culture shock, Ross (2017) interpreted eight phases of transformative and integrative development in the relocation experience of international student sojourners. These stages were described as displacement, grief and denial, disorientation, dismemberment, surrender and healing, birth, abundance and creativity, power, and integration (Ross, 2017). In this connection, Kathirvel and Febiula (2016) developed a model for alleviating culture shock through pre-departure training and culture learning.

Acculturation has been described as a developmental process, wherein affective, behavioral and cognitive processes were perceived as essential to reduce acculturative stress and to facilitate psychological wellbeing (Ward, 2004; Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010). Incorporating three theoretical approaches for their model, Ward et al. (2001) identified that affective aspects of acculturation can be explained using the stress and coping approach (Berry, 1997), the behavioral aspects using the culture learning approach (Ward et al., 2001), and the cognitive elements through the social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The culture learning approach is concerned with the cultural exchange between members of diverse cultures and focuses on processes through which culturally relevant skills are acquired by newcomers to achieve effective intercultural interaction (Ward, 2004). Culture learning includes acquisition of social skills and practice of culture-specific verbal and nonverbal communication, gestures, norms, and conventions, which facilitate effective adaptation to new environments (Ward, 2004). Stress and coping approaches represent the affective aspect of acculturation and address stress associated with life transitions during acculturation, cognitive

appraisal of stress, coping styles, and personality (Ward, 2004). Coping approaches are moderated by strategies such as approach, avoidance, acceptance, and seeking social support (Ward, 2004).

The effectiveness of expatriates and their overall successful adjustment depends on personality traits that include analytical skills (e.g., transforming complex information), interpersonal skills (e.g., relationship building, valuing others, communicating), information skills (e.g., coping with ambiguity) and action skills (e.g., taking initiatives, managing others; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Adaptability and flexibility enable individuals to manage stress related to adjustment that is required for expatriate effectiveness (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991).

Social identity approaches are concerned with aspects of identity and its salience for intergroup perceptions and intercultural exchange (Ward, 2004). In other words, social identity theory emphasizes the role of group membership in individual identity and the influence of social categorization and its impact on identity development (Turner, 1982). According to the social identification theory, individuals develop perceptions of self and others based on abstract social categories, incorporating them into self-concepts that manifest as group behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the domain of this approach, acculturation involves identity formation, maintenance, and social perceptions, including stereotypes, attitudes, prejudice, and discrimination (Ward, 2004). Incorporating all three approaches (culture learning, stress and coping, and social identity), Ward et al. (2001) developed a model that addresses affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of the acculturation process. Successful adaptation and the ability to effectively negotiate new cultural spaces can lead to psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Ward, 2004). Such adjustment is vital for individuals who are expatriates or

sojourners in order to fit into the new culture (Berry, 2003). Contextually, intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016) refers to the complex interaction of social identities or axes such as gender, ethnicity, and social class, which represent interpersonal and intrapersonal power differentials among individuals and groups. Intersectionality of social identities is particularly relevant in the context of acculturation given that societies and cultures have power differentials associated with social categorization.

This section has so far explored relevant concepts of the Acculturation model (Berry, 1997) and its association with cultural identity. Identity research in this context is worthy of consideration because it is important to know how individual identity engages with and develops through relational and cultural connections. The next section will present two theories based in identity research that were found to be insightful to the interpretation of the findings.

Identity Research Theories Pertinent to the Interpretation of Cultural Identity

There are many theoretical approaches to understand identity and much research literature has been generated based on these approaches. A few that are relevant to this study of Indian women include Dialogical Self Theory, Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT), and Third Space Theory (Bell & Das, 2011; Miller, 1991; Bhabha, 2004). Dialogical Self Theory posited that people dialogue with themselves on an ongoing basis, using I-positions that shift in response to the context (Bell & Das, 2011). Although individuals experience identity as whole and continuous despite contextual changes, identities adopt positions in response to circumstances and are viewed as "discursively constructed, fragmented, and fluid" (Bell & Das, 2011, p. 243). According to the Dialogical Self Theory then, identity emerges through many dialogical negotiations, contradictions, and integrations with the self (Bell & Das, 2011). Narrative research by Bell and Das (2011) explored the changes in self-identity from the position of

singularity to duality (from I-as Indian/American to I-as both). In other words, an individual can express their identity in terms of Indian-ness or American-ness, and also as bicultural (Indo-American).

In this conversation on identity development, the role of cultural socialization cannot be ignored. There are several factors unique to Indian culture such as the social caste system, patriarchal society, endogamy, gender gap and gender disparities in income, and rapid economic growth (Srinivasan et al., 2013). These factors impact the social realities for Indian women, sometimes bringing about an "identity crisis" (Srinivasan et al., 2013, p. 221). On one hand, pursuit of education and career exposed Indian women to new ideas enabling their challenge of existing societal norms, particularly gender roles (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). When not constrained by familial restrictions to conform, women developed verbal assertiveness and independence of thought, both of which allowed them to differentiate from family structures (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). Conversely, Maslak and Singhal (2008) found that even educated Indian women are traditionally socialized to express themselves with modesty and self-denial, accepting marriage as a goal requiring self-sacrifice in terms of personal aspirations.

Additionally, Maslak and Singhal (2008) found that single women expressed the need for individuation more than married ones because the sense of identity of the latter was more relational to their family roles; sometimes the individual was subsumed by the title to which they belonged (e.g., wife, daughter-in-law or mother). A concept referred to in this research was that of "circumstantial identity" and "chameleon identity" (Maslak & Singhal, 2008, pp. 488-489), meaning that identity is molded to the circumstances using a behavioral technique that can help individuals negotiate situational challenges to their roles.

In this context, Inman (2006) explored how South Asian women negotiated their ethnic and gendered identities while living in the U.S. Although this research refers to long-term immigrants, it is still significant for highlighting the influence of socialization practices on acculturation. Since South Asians are socialized bi-culturally as a function of living in the U.S., they are defined by different social identities (Inman, 2006). Inman (2006) found that South Asians living in the U.S. tended to maintain their national, religious, linguistic and communal identities and socialization practices that perpetuate their heritage country values for social class distinction and gendered hierarchical structure. South Asian women must thus negotiate racial and ethnic issues in the mainstream society, as well as ethnic, generational, and gender-related issues within their ethnic groups (Inman, 2006). According to Inman (2006), balancing ethnically appropriate gendered behaviors in public spaces (e.g., clothes, demeanor, interpersonal interaction) while exposed to socialization in western culture, Indian women "may encounter personally meaningful racial events that create dissention concerning their gendered behaviors within a majority-minority context" (p. 316).

While Dialogical Self Theory is significant for enunciating that the development of identity is an internal process, shifting to adjust to the context, the other two theoretical approaches, RCT and Third Space Theory, are particularly salient to the context of gendered socialization and acculturative experiences (Bell & Das, 2011; Miller, 1991; Bhabha, 2004).

Relational-Cultural Theory

In the context of Relational-Cultural Theory (Miller, 1991) the development of the self is perceived not as a discrete unit, but rather as an entity whose growth is through their relationship with others. The self is contextualized to its relationship with the other and develops in relation to the other and so this relationship must be fostered in order for the self to grow. Instead of

separating, the self embraces relationship as a way of growing. According to this theory, the sense of self is developed in relation to others, from the need of "being-in-relationship" (Miller, 1991, p.13), meaning that from infancy, humans, and especially girls, are attuned to intuitively respond to the emotional needs of the other person with whom they are interacting. This sensitivity allows women to foster mutual balance and growth in their relationships, suggesting that rather than conceptualizing women as dependent or independent based on their focus on relationships, we can think of them as "wanting to be in relationship with others" (Miller, 1991, p.22).

According to RCT, when there is "relational competence" (Jordan et al., 2004, p.15), individuals are able to make changes while remaining in connection with others who are receptive to their needs. When a person achieves relational competence other parts of the self thrive. These include the ability to be creative, assertive, and autonomous (Jordan et al., 1991; Jordan et al., 2004). RCT acknowledges the importance of culture in the development of the self; since cultural norms determine socialization practices, culture is represented in relationships (Jordan et al., 2004). RCT brings cultural context into the discussion of connection and separation in the development of the self. In cultures that value separation and autonomy as a mark of wellness, privilege goes to those demonstrating those attributes.

In RCT ideology, relationships are vulnerable to conflict, "the path to connection is filled with disconnections...But when we can renegotiate these disconnections, the relationship is enhanced and personal feelings of well-being, creativity, and clarity increase" (Jordan et al., 2004, p.6). This is especially applicable to individuals who struggle with conflicts and power differentials in relationships. But it is in the resolution of conflicts through negotiations, compromise and prioritization that connections are maintained (Jordan et al., 2004). When there

is a disconnection or "central relational paradox" (p. 2), between an individual's needs and relational supports, individuals could subsume their own needs in order to maintain relationships, which is a maladaptive approach (JBMTI, 2018).

Based on the relational model, RCT has been used in clinical practice to conceptualize and treat clients coping with traumatic stress disorders (Kress, Haiyasoso, Zoldan, Headley, & Trepal, 2018). Crumb and Haskins (2017) recommended the combined use of RCT ideology and Cognitive Behavior Therapy for college counseling in order to provide culturally sensitive counseling services to diverse student populations. Similar suggestions were made to integrate RCT with Reality Therapy for the same purpose of providing culturally responsive services (Haskins & Appling, 2017). In a systematic review of literature, Lenz (2016) established the growing prevalence of RCT in the treatment for "eating disorders, depression, substance abuse, criminal behavior, and borderline personality disorder" (p. 415). This review was particularly relevant to my choice to draw from RCT as it validated the theoretical paradigm for the study of relational experiences (Lenz, 2016).

According to Lenz (2016), there was much support to be found that establishes the empirical validity of RCT constructs measured using many assessment scales. Finally, the review also found research to endorse the use of RCT for treatment interventions (Lenz, 2016). There is an abundance of literature on studies using RCT for various purposes including clinical supervision, academic mentoring, development of cultural competence in counselors, intimate partner violence, enabling therapeutic alliance, working with LGBTQQ populations, and doctoral student advising in counselor education (Brown, McGriff, & Speedlin, 2018; Dietz et al., 2017; Duffey, Haberstroh, Ciepcielinski, & Gonzales, 2016; Hall, Barden, & Conley, 2014;

Hall, Garland, Charlton, & Johnson, 2018; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Purgason, Avent,

Cashwell, Jordan, & Reese, 2016; Singh & Moss, 2016).

Besides the Acculturation model (Berry, 1997) and RCT (Jordan et al., 2004), this study

also found value in Third Space Theory (Bhabha, 2004) as a lens to strengthen the discussion of

the findings. The concept of third space stems from post-colonial research and is ascribed to

cultural identity changes.

Third Space Theory

Identity, both at the individual or personal level, and in terms of cultural affiliation,

undergoes changes as a result of intercultural exposure (Kim, 2015). In a rapidly globalizing

world, cultures are colliding in many ways and resulting in people interpreting their cultural

identity increasingly as bicultural or multicultural rather than monocultural (Kim, 2015). This

concept is similar to Bhabha's (2004) idea of "cultural hybridity" (p. 5) based on the Third Space

Theory. In the context of my study, the use of Third Space Theory was to conceptualize cultural

identity as a gestalt of more than the sum of different cultures, rather a space where identity is a

whole new interpretation based upon ethnic values as well as global exposure. To explain this

concept further, "the Third Space is transformative...It is a space peculiar to itself, that is not

simply the space between or the sum of different cultures, but a space where the enunciation of

cultures is a transformative, emancipatory act" (Waterhouse, McLaughlin, McLellan, Morgan,

2009, p. 3). It was appropriate to relate this concept to the context of my study because the

Indian women technology professionals who relocated to the U.S. for work were exposed to two

cultures, Indian and U.S./western, and it was their interpretation of the antithesis and synthesis of

both cultures that was of research interest to me.

The concept of hybridity in the context of ethnicity is a complex one. It does not simply suggest that individuals socialized in more than one culture carry and practice cultural values of both. Rather, hybridity can be interpreted as the product of cultural collision and it resides in the "in-between" spaces (Bhabha, 2004, p. 10) where something new is created through transformation. In other words, Bhabha, 2004) emphasized the subtle transformations experienced that move us away from polarities to create "a sense of new as an insurgent act of cultural translation" (p. 10). Wang (2007a) described Third Space in the context of globalization and indigenization or localization of cultures. More relevantly, Wang (2007a) used the concept of Third Space to interpret self-identity as dynamic and complex, in constant churn. Wang's (2007a) interpretation of "a third space" instead of "the third space" was very intriguing because it

> ...does not reach consensus or synthesis but moves *between, beyond*, and *with* the
>
> dual forces simultaneously. It indicates the continual birth of a certain newness along the
>
> way in a never-ending process which is circular rather than linear... a third space is
>
> unsettling and never settles down. The third is not another version of the unified one but
>
> holds both unity and multiplicity (emphasis in original, p. 390).

Bhabha (2004) visualized the idea of hybridity in the context of post-colonial discourse and it has been applied to the context of the colonizer and the colonized. The concept of cultural hybridity was discussed in the context of post-colonial research on power differentials between the colonizer and the colonized. In this context, "hybridity... combines elements of diverse cultures and uses these combinations to question power relations based on cultural purity and distinct identities" (Bauhn & Tepe, 2016, p. 351). Hybridity thus blurs distinct boundaries, becoming an asset when identities represent privilege (Bauhn & Tepe, 2016). Critics of

Bhabha's concept of hybridity argued that ethnicity, similar to the argument of racial purity, does

not have clear boundaries (Easthope, 1998). Separating spaces is thus a nebulous act. Unlike

biological hybridity, cultural hybridity is based on socially constructed social categories, which

does not establish its validity, but gives us pause to reflect. Thus, third space enables the

integration of disparate beliefs and values, where conflicting ideas and experiences merge and

new knowledge emerges (Saudelli, 2012).

Third Space Theory has been associated mostly in the field of anthropological research

pertaining to colonial history (Bhabha, 2004), and a handful can be found among educational and

cultural research (Rovito & Giles, 2016; Saudelli, 2012). The relevance of Third Space Theory

in this review of literature relates to the cultural underpinnings of the study and particularly to

the cultural exchange embedded in the rationale of the study.

Chapter Summary

The intent of this literature review was to understand the background of the research

topic, the various subject areas included, and gaps in the research underpinning the rationale for

this study. The chapter described the ethnocultural profile of Indian community with reference

to gendered and culture-specific socialization of women. The chapter also provided relevant

information on the status of Indian women in the IT industry in India. This chapter covered the

relevant trends in expatriation, the role of family in relocation, and the influence of

organizational culture with reference to Indian women's experiences in the IT industry.

Additionally, it was relevant to provide important updates on current U.S. immigration policies

and their implications on IT professionals. In order to establish the theoretical underpinnings of

this study, the last section in this chapter elaborated on the Acculturation model (Berry, 1997).

Acculturation and processes of cultural adaptation in relation to identity were discussed in the

context of international relocation for work (Berry, 2005). Some significant theories related to

identity research were also presented in the context of acculturative experiences and cultural

socialization practices, such as Relational-Cultural Theory (Miller, 1991; Jordan et al., 2004) and

Third Space Theory (Bhabha, 2004).

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This research study is identified as basic qualitative research, designed with the purpose of deepening the scholarly base of an identified phenomenon through description and interpretation (Merriam, 2002, 2009). In this case, the identified phenomenon is the lived experiences of professional Indian women during temporary relocation to the U.S. for purposes of work. According to Ponterotto (2005), "lived experience" (p.131) is a term used in qualitative research to refer to the day-to-day experiences of individuals (situated in a historical-social context) that occur at the conscious level, as well as experiences that are hidden from the individual's awareness, but which can be uncovered through research. Basic qualitative research is primarily intended to extend knowledge about the phenomenon under study, rather than used in an applied sense, although the information can be used to fill the gap between theory and practice (Merriam, 2009). My study explored the gendered and ethnic experiences of professional Indian women in the context of career-motivated relocation to the U.S.

Description of Research Study

This study used a constructivist theoretical paradigm for its design and interpretation. This approach lent itself well to responding to collective as well as subjective lived experiences of the participants. The logic for the choice of research design and methodology is explained in the next two sections.

Rationale for Research Methodology

The choice of a basic qualitative design was based on the purpose, characteristics, philosophical orientation, and analytic approach of the research study, which is often used to establish methodological rigor and credibility of the design (Woo & Heo, 2013). The main objective of the study was to get a fuller picture of gendered and ethnic experiences of Indian

women technology professionals working temporarily in the U.S. The rationale of this study

related to exploring connections between acculturative experiences associated with short-term

relocation and cultural identity. Since existing information on this subject in the research

literature is minimal, a qualitative study designed to explore details of lived experiences seemed

appropriate. Semi-structured interview was chosen as the most appropriate research method to

engage in dialogue with participants in order to gather data on a topic less represented in

counseling research.

The study was qualitative based on the following observations: 1) it was conducted in a

natural setting, meaning that the researcher did not manipulate any of the conditions; 2) the

researcher was perceived as a participant since the interviews were collaborative; 3) the nature of

the interview was semi-structured, allowing participants to address interview questions or topics

introduced, but not be restricted by them; 4) the researcher adhered to the intention of the

participants in interpreting the narratives and symbols used by participants; and 5) the findings

provided insight into social processes and have practical use in contemporary times rather than

intended to generate theory (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007).

Nestled in naturalistic inquiry, qualitative research is focused on knowledge production

or generation, and less is known *a priori* about the phenomenon being studied (Levers et al.,

2008). Qualitative research is particularly suited for studies of the human condition related to

diversity and intersectionality of social identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and

disability because it can gather information about complex phenomena in depth (Levers et al.,

2008). The study of lived experiences of professional Indian women in the context of short-term

international relocation to a different cultural environment is particularly suited for such an

approach because it is a complex subject about which there is negligible existing research. Using

an interpretive or constructivist paradigm is indicated when the phenomenon to be studied includes multiple social realities and is based upon interaction with participants where knowledge is co-constructed (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Such an approach acknowledges the researcher's values and biases which could influence the research process and the researcher is expected to reflect on those influences in the co-construction of meaning (Haverkamp & Young, 2007).

Constructivism is an approach that is useful for interpretations that are likely to be emergent and inductive rather than deterministic and generalizable (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007). This study used constructivism as the philosophical orientation for conceptualization and analyses because the exploration and interpretations of lived experiences of participants were plural, unique, and co-constructed through dialoging between participants and myself. The thematic interpretations drawn were based on my intuitive inferences and data analysis that were qualified with specific excerpted narratives from the interviews. The study focused on the gendered and ethnic experiences of Indian women technology professionals. In this context, constructivist orientation allowed me to uncover multiple experiential realities that are varied, dynamic, and complex (Creswell, 2003; Ponterotto, 2005).

It is important to understand the reason for a detailed description of research design and methodology in conducting qualitative research. If qualitative methodology is to stand up to the rigors of scientific research, it is imperative to identify the research in terms of design, theoretical approach, and methodology used for data collection and analyses. In a 15-year content analysis review of 68 qualitative research studies in the counseling discipline between 1999-2014, Hays, Wood, Dahl, and Kirk-Jenkin (2016) reported that 82.4% of the reviewed articles did not ascribe to a research paradigm, and 33.8% failed to identify a research tradition.

Similarly, 14% of qualitative studies in counseling research conducted between 2005-2010 did not clarify a research tradition, rather being described as exploratory or simply qualitative (Woo & Heo, 2013).

Duffy and Chenail (2009) reported trends for methodological pluralism in qualitative designs, and lack of correspondence between research methodology and research paradigms. Further, Ponterotto (2005) warned qualitative researchers regarding the use of diffuse research paradigms rather than clearly described and accepted epistemological and theoretical paradigms. To circumvent these credibility traps, this study is identified as a naturalistic inquiry using a constructivist paradigm. Qualitative research is conducted in the natural environment as it occurs, without the researcher controlling any conditions. The basic qualitative research design in my study used semi-structured interviews to gather information to explore lived experiences.

Narratives were interpreted using the framework of Gilligan's (1995, 2015) Listening Guide/Voice-Relational Listening Guide (VRLG). Gilligan's (1995, 2015) approach was developed to pay attention to individual voices expressing unique experiences that are interpreted based upon the relationship of the people in dialogue (researcher and participant). The objective of such an approach is not to represent collective experiences as normative or ideal, but rather to recount the researcher's learning about the participants and the phenomenon being explored (Gilligan et al., 2006). The detailed plans for data analysis using this approach are discussed further in this chapter. Interpretations of the narratives were co-constructed with participants in keeping with a constructivist theoretical approach.

Research Question

This study was designed to explore the lived experiences of Indian women technology professionals working temporarily in the U.S. Interview topics included work and non-work daily experiences related to being a female non-immigrant professional from India, with particular attention to gendered and ethnic experiences during acculturation.

The research question was: What are the lived experiences of Indian women technology professionals in the context of temporary career-related relocation to the U.S.?

Research Design

The study was designed as basic qualitative research using two semi-structured personal interviews of ten participants fulfilling the self-reported criteria of gender (as female), ethnicity (as Indian), and work status (non-immigrant visa for work in U.S.). The philosophical perspective of my research design was constructivist, meaning that multiple experiential realities of the participants was expected, meanings were drawn through reflection as well as co-constructed with the participants (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). My researcher lens was feminine since I was a feminine researcher interviewing women, and it was also *emic*, since I was an insider to the population of Indian women.

Research Sample: Setting and Background

The participants were accessed from the corporate world, representing companies that typically send employees on international assignments to support the telecommunications and Information Technology (IT) industries. Given that between 2001-2015, 1.8 million H-1B visas were issued to foreign workers, and 50.5% of this population was from India, there was a good chance that women drawn from this population would fulfill the criteria of my research design (Ruiz, 2017). The reason for focusing on the technology industry was because it is a good

representation of non-immigrant global relocations for work (Ruiz, 2017). Participants were women from India on non-immigrant work visas allowing them to work in the U.S. Participants were drawn from various states in the continental U.S. and participated in the interviews telephonically.

Inclusion Criteria

The search for participants was restricted to women of Indian origin, who had relocated to the U.S. within the past decade for purposes of career development in the technology industry. The study was originally designed with more stringent inclusion criteria stipulating a work-related relocation lasting between one and three years. In practicality, it was found that such a group of short-term assignees in the technology industry were no longer the norm. Therefore, I modified the criteria to include women who had relocated for graduate studies, and had then been locally recruited for work in the IT and telecommunications industry. The justification for this modification was presented to my dissertation committee and the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). It was approved by the IRB based upon my recruitment efforts in the field, and backed by literature on recent calls for legislative reform pertaining to immigration and business trends (Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2018; Jordan, 2018; Pierce & Gelatt, 2018; USCIS, 2019; U.S. Congress, 2017a, 2017b). Modifying the inclusion criteria allowed me to retain the rationale of the research inquiry without compromising the original design.

As is typical of qualitative research, and based on the purposive sampling method, sample size was determined by projected adequacy of numbers (Merriam, 2009). The sample of ten participants yielded adequate information related to the research question, and saturation, referring to the establishment of credibility of reported information (Bowen, 2008), was achieved within that sample. Ten participants proved to be a sufficient number for this study on account

of the detailed nature of the interviews. Exploration of lived experiences revealed patterns

common among the participants as well as individual differences. However, lived experiences

can be expansive and as a researcher, I felt that data saturation had been reached for my research

study from the ten interviews.

Sampling and Recruitment Strategies

The participants self-reported fulfillment of inclusion criteria, and were invited but self-

selected to participate. The research sample was purposive using criterion sampling. Using

personal and professional contacts in the technology industry, I approached people with access to

potential participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Additionally, I approached recruitment

professionals of multinational companies (MNCs) to forward letters of interest to prospective

participants, contacted resources in Indian companies to seek candidates, submitted flyers to

interested local businesses with access to the Indian diaspora, and appealed to the participants to

make chain referrals if possible.

Demographic Description of Participants

The final sample included ten women of Indian origin who had moved from India to the

U.S. to pursue career goals in the technology field. The participants ranged in age between 25-

38 years, five of them were single, and the other five were married, and two of the married

women were mothers. With regard to visa status, three of the participants were deputed by

Indian companies as intracompany transferees, and the other seven came to the U.S. for graduate

studies and upon graduation were locally recruited for technology-related work in MNC's and

consultancies. Of the three who were on intracompany transfers, two were on H-1B visas and

one was on L1 visa. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant work visa for people in specialized

industries, and the L1 visa is typically for intracompany transferees. Of the remaining seven

participants who were also on H-1B visas, one was still on her Optional Practical Training (OPT), which is an extension of a student visa (F1) allowing students from the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) category to work in the U.S. for an additional 24 months.

Nine of the interviewees worked for technology-affiliated companies, consultancies, and multinational companies. One of the candidates completed advanced studies in a specialized technology discipline and was employed by a not-for-profit company in the U.S. The participants were dispersed within the continental U.S. states, two-thirds were from the U.S. east coast and the rest from mid-west and west coast. A detailed table (Table 2) explaining visa status retrieved from the website of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, 2018) is included in Appendix C . Participant demographics are represented in Table 1 below .

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital Status	Visa status	Reason for relocation	Tenure (years)	Type of company
Arti	25	Single	OPT	Graduate study	4	Consultancy
Pooja	31	Married	H-1B	Graduate study	10	Technology
Deepika	31	Single	H-1B	Intracompany transfer	2	Consultancy
Sonam	25	Single	H-1B	Intracompany transfer	1	Consultancy
Priya	26	Married	H-1B	Graduate study	5	Technology
Nafisa	33	Single	L-1	Intracompany transfer	2	Consultancy
Sandhya	38	Married	H-1B	Graduate study	7	Technology
Mitali	31	Married	H-1B	Graduate study	3	Technology
Neha	27	Single	H-1B	Graduate study	6	Nonprofit
Jyoti	31	Married	H-1B	Graduate study	8	Technology

Research Procedures

Potential participants were contacted via email and phone and asked to respond voluntarily to participate. Upon screening participants successfully in accordance with the inclusion criteria, I communicated with participants to schedule a convenient time for the interview. Of the total 20 interviews conducted, in one first interview Face Time was used and for the second interview of another participant, an in-person interview was conducted. However, based on the dispersion of participants across the U.S., in order to practice consistency across the participants, the rest of the interviews were conducted over the telephone.

The participants were asked to read the consent form thoroughly before giving consent. Before each initial interview, I reiterated the objective of my study verbally and encouraged them to seek explanations regarding their participation. Discussions for clarification and understanding of expectations provided additional information regarding their voluntariness to participate as well as their understanding of the use of their narratives. They were also verbally informed of the limitations of confidentiality, potential risks and rights to withdraw from the study without penalty. Participants were informed about interview format and the nature of a follow-up interview.

Interviews were recorded on personal digital recording devices kept in locked storage as well as during transportation. Interviewees were assigned alphanumeric codes as identifiers for storage purposes. Pseudonyms were used to report findings during analysis. No personal information of interviewees or organizations was shared by the researcher publicly in the reportage. Digital files of the recordings were coded and stored on the researcher's password-protected computer. These files were removed from the computer after transcription was completed but saved on an encrypted hard drive as a backup until the completion of the dissertation. A file containing identifying information and codes was stored on the researcher's password-protected computer. Paper copies of research materials and signed consent forms were kept in secure, locked file cabinets at the researcher's residence. No one had access to transcriptions although members of the dissertation committee and critical friends read excerpts of the interviews as presented in the findings. After completion of the study, all materials will be kept securely for three years, as per research protocol.

Interview Format and Protocol

The format of the study was to conduct two interviews with each candidate, the first to gather information in response to prompting queries and the second as a follow-up to establish accuracy of understanding and interpretation, elaboration of ideas, and clarifications for purposes of member-checking. Each initial interview varied in duration between 60 and 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews typically lasted between 45-60 minutes. Although I conducted one (second) interview in person and another (first interview) using FaceTime, the remaining interviews were conducted over the telephone for practicality, uniformity, expediency, and cost-containment. I also felt that conducting in-person interviews with some local participants could blur some boundaries and be unfair to others with whom I had a more remote contact, both of which could impede the integrity of the research.

The interviews unfolded in a style that incorporated the use of a general interview guide whereby I gave the participants an idea of what the interview was intended for and what I hoped to hear from their perspectives. In essence though, the interviews developed as more informal conversations (Patton, 2002), which allowed the participants to be more spontaneous and less guarded. An open conversational approach also facilitated follow-up in subsequent interviews to member-check and deepen my understanding. Although I had developed an interview guide to probe topics based upon sensitizing concepts related to the research purpose, I intentionally allowed the participants to begin their narratives from their motivation to relocate to the U.S. and go on to describe their subsequent experiences in their personal, social, and work contexts. The interview questions were formulated through an iterative process. Whenever possible, I used open-ended questions and kept the wording simple, which helped to reduce ambiguity. Sometimes I used some probing questions to amplify what I was hearing, typically asking them

to elaborate, or give me an example, or used a hypothetical question to explore their responses. I also encouraged them to reflect on the discussion for follow-up in the second interview where I checked in with them about it. The guide for the semi-structured interview can be accessed in Appendix A (see Appendix A on p. 224).

The candidates were all instructed to ensure their privacy while being interviewed and likewise, I ensured that I was in a room in my home that offered privacy while conducting and recording the interview. The interviews were conducted using a speaker phone placed in close proximity to my laptop which I used for recording using QuickTime. As a back-up, I also used a digital voice recorder. The recordings were saved using alphanumeric identifiers on my personal laptop that was password-protected. I personally transcribed all of the interviews, which helped me engage more closely with the narratives of the participants, allowing me to reflect on content and tonality for analysis and interpretation. In the presentation of the findings I used pseudonyms to humanize the participants and mindfully omitted the use of any identifiers such as the name of the organization where they worked or any contextual information that could compromise their identity. Since the nature of my research was such that it did not induce any emotional or psychological disturbance for the interviewee, no professional referrals were necessary.

Analytic Method: Using the Voice-Relational Listening Guide

This was a study designed to hear gynocentric and ethnocentric experiences related to international relocation for work. It was well suited for interpretation using the VRLG (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, et al., 2006; Gilligan, 2015) because it is a "qualitative, relational, voice-centered, feminist methodology" (Woodcock, 2016, p.9). Lived experiences are effectively accessed through qualitative approaches, and the semi-structured interview format

was ideal to tap into relational aspects between the researcher and participant as well as pay

attention to how the participant related to herself and others. Since it is centered on voice, it is a

useful method to tease out different voices and the dialectics between them. Lastly, this method

is identified as a feminist methodology inasmuch as it takes a gendered view of lived experiences

pertaining to international relocation.

VRLG (Gilligan et al., 2006) was intended as an analytic tool when working with

transcribed interviews by: 1) listening for themes, images, and metaphors while being sensitive

to cultural and relational dynamics between researcher and participant; 2) listening for the

manner in which the participant speaks using the term "I" as in first-person; and 3) contrapuntal

voices of the participant referring to the different needs represented in the voices of the person as

they respond to the research questions. It is an ideal tool to listen for the complexities in human

relationships and to listen for voices that have been silenced (Woodcock, 2016).

While Gilligan and her associates developed the Listening Guide during their

longitudinal study of adolescent girls, increasingly, researchers have customized it for their own

use (Jack, 1999; Petrovic, Lordly, Brigham, & Delaney, 2015; Woodcock, 2016). I found the

Listening Guide to be very useful in organizing the volume of data that I had collected from the

interviews. In the following paragraphs I will explain how I customized the framework of the

guide for interpreting the data.

I used the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan et al.,

2006) as a framework for locating the gendered first-person and contrapuntal voices of the

participants. My interactions with the data were numerous and repetitive as I listened to the

narratives while personally transcribing them and reading the transcripts repeatedly. The initial

reading included listening for the plot, and focused on the 'protagonists' and their stories in the

context of relationships, cultural socialization, and relocation experiences. In this process I also used analytic memos to capture the essence of the content and to reflect on my perceptions and reactions. I found it useful to write up synopses for each participant so that I could easily refer to the main topics of discussion. It also informed me of possible themes to explore. For instance, I was hearing phrases such as "my dad was kind of hesitant;" "Indian mom's for their daughter they are very caring and without any confirmation of being how good life there they won't send you here;" "there was inhibition from their side for sending which I had to fight a little to bring them on same page;" and "it was actually a big decision for me as well as my family that whether we want to pursue this or not." These excerpts show the reluctance of parents to agree to their daughters going abroad alone. There were other challenges for these women as well relating to deferment of marriage for their career, and the restrictions of their H-1B visa status. These required the women to come to an understanding about their choices and decisions and these were explored in the first theme that I called *Negotiated Compromises*.

The use of the VRLG (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 2006) proved to be an appropriate framework for this study because it helped me isolate individual voices, as well as filter the dialectics within those narratives revealing relational connections. This analysis would be less meaningful if I didn't interpret the collective voices that helped me thread the themes into a coherent expression of gendered and ethnic experiences of the women that I interviewed. It is, however, important to remember that data collected from interviews is subject to individual differences as well as the judgment of the interviewer to manage the conversation, often involving reconstructions of past memories (Polkinghorne, 2005).

The specific purpose of VRLG is to identify the first-person voice of the participant as well as contrapuntal voices that indicate contradictions and conflicts. Also, significant to my

study, the Listening Gide is very appropriate to extract gendered expressions. In my study, it

helped me center the lens on female voices and their relational-cultural connections. I was

intentional in listening for first-person voices and to this purpose I derived "I" poems that were

powerful self-expressions. The development of "I" poems is unique to the VRLG. It directs the

researcher to focus on excerpts in the transcripts to generate a chain of "I" statements to build a

poem with sequential phrasing as it appears in the narrative. The purpose of this exercise is to

make sure that as a researcher, I authorize the participant to speak of her own self-perception as I

begin to conceptualize her in my mind. This task helped me identify the personalized voice of

the participant that expressed achievement, independence, and self-confidence, as well as self-

doubt and compromises made for competing needs. I identified voices representing individuality

and voices expressing connections between the speaking voice and the voice of others in the

background. An example of an I poem expressing the competing needs of marriage and career

can be read through the voice of Pooja:

I don't want to get married

I want to explore on my own

I feel that I should gain confidence and individuality

I should have something of my own

I don't want to depend on my husband for finding a job.

Another facet of the VRLG involved listening for contrapuntal voices representing

contradictions in the narratives, which, in this study related to competing choices and decisions

and cultural dialectics. By attending to "singular" and "connected" voices, I was able to identify

the personal choices and collaborative decisions made by these women. The last step in this

process was to compose an analysis presenting my interpretation of the findings in relation to the

research question - what do the results indicate in response to the research question, and what did I use as evidence to prove this interpretation? In Chapter Four, I present this analysis in the form of two main themes, *Negotiated Compromises* and *Cultural Plasticity*.

In Chapter Five, the findings will be related to three approaches identified as relevant to the discussion of these themes and sub-themes. These are the Acculturation model (Berry, 1997), Relational-Cultural Theory (Miller, 1991), and Third Space theory (Bhabha, 2004). The discussion of findings is connected to existing literature in the field of acculturation, expatriation, identity, and Indian culture to establish its significance. Chapter Five also included the implications of this study to the counseling discipline, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Researcher Positionality

My approach to this research is based on constructivist principles because I believe that there can be multiple truths emanating from experiences of individuals that are best interpreted contextually. The design of my research is also informed by some elements of feminist interviewing because the knowledge generated is likely to be shared and interpreted collaboratively. According to Oakley (2003), "a feminist interviewing women is by definition both 'inside the culture' and participating in that which she is observing" (p. 259). This intimacy brings up the importance of observing appropriate boundaries during interaction with interviewees for me as a gendered and ethnic group member of the research population (Richards & Schwartz, 2002).

As a woman interviewing another woman meant that I was an insider not only because I belonged to the same cultural background, not only on account of gender but also ethnicity. I was acutely aware of the nuances of sub-cultures within Indian communities in terms of

regionality, languages spoken, religion, education, and social class. This awareness did not impede the researcher-researched relationship because I was mindful to use my cultural knowledge to better understand the experiences of the participants rather than imposing my own experiences in the equation. I found that appropriate self-disclosure was useful in establishing rapport with the interviewees. This mostly referred to my tenure in India and in the U.S., my rationale for conducting the study, and when appropriate, sub-cultures to which I belonged. In the case of one participant, I shared elements of a personal life transition in the context of discussing personal and social lives of Indians. This allowed the narrative to deepen the discussion on the silencing of women's suffering.

I acknowledge that I was the privileged member in the researcher-researched relationship with the power to orchestrate the narrative, to have access to all the participants' expressed experiences, and also the one to interpret the findings. However, I intentionally asked more open-ended questions, and asked them to freely express anything relevant that I might have not prompted them to speak about or that I might have overlooked. Since I participated in, listened to, and read all the interviews and transcripts, I had the privilege of access to the whole. Although I as the researcher, had the power to interpret the findings, in the next section, I describe the measures I took to ensure researcher trustworthiness in the previous section.

Establishing Credibility

Creswell and Miller (2000) emphasized that establishing credibility in qualitative research is complex, and refers not to the collected data itself as much as it refers to its interpretation, to what is inferred from it. When using a constructivist approach, understanding participants' meanings would require rapport building, as well as accurately interpreting the context and culture (Morrow, 2005; Patton, 2002). Important trustworthiness principles include:

1) sufficiency of data, including the quality and evidence of supporting interpretations (Morrow, 2005); 2) coherence of research design demonstrated by clarity, appropriateness, rationale, and methodology (Haverkamp & Young, 2007); and 3) defensible interpretations evidenced by analytic sense-making that include assumptions of the researcher (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003).

Rigor in qualitative research refers to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which are addressed in terms of the truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality, respectively (Cope, 2014; Krefting, 1991). Truth value is typically obtained from accuracy in reporting lived experiences of participants with authenticity; applicability is the extent to which findings can be extended to other contexts, settings, or groups; consistency refers to obtaining similar findings upon replication; and neutrality refers to research being bias-free (Krefting, 1991).

The research design elaborated in this chapter clarified the purpose, rationale for qualitative interviews, and methodology used for data collection and analysis. Research findings are less meaningful if it cannot be established that the data collection and interpretation was trustworthy. In order to maximize trustworthiness and authenticity for my research, I undertook certain practices such as using thick description, prolonged engagement with participants, member-checking, reflexive journaling, using critical friends to reflect on ideas, and peer reviews of my working drafts, consulting with members of my dissertation committee, and keeping a detailed account of procedures to submit a clear audit trail (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Thick Description and Member Checking

The criteria for establishing validity using rich, thick description are to include data that incorporate detail instead of just reporting facts (Denzin, 2001). I used thick, rich description in

terms of actual narratives and direct quotes to detail my findings and connect them to my interpretations. I intentionally focused on building rapport with the participants, assuring them about the anonymity of the reportage of findings, of the voluntariness of participation, of the conversational style of the interview, and by using open-ended questions and paraphrasing for accuracy of understanding and interpretation. Member checking with participants was another way I shared my understanding and interpretation with the participants. This helped me clarify the concepts discussed, and equalized the power in the researcher-researched relationship. Typically, I followed up on aspects of the conversation that I wanted to verify and I intentionally used the second follow-up interviews to achieve this, where I expounded on what I had previously heard as well as related it to other participants' narratives to check for consistencies or accuracy and discrepancies or misinformation.

Prolonged Engagement with Participants

The design of the study was built to include two personal interviews of each participant each lasting approximately between 60-90 minutes. This timeframe was decided to provide opportunities for prolonged engagement with participants and achieve sufficiency of data. Towards the end of each follow-up interview, I gave the participants opportunities to freely express any relevant experiences that were not prompted by me from the interview guide script. I encouraged the participants to reflect on the conversation we had in the first interview so that when we had the second one I could explore any thoughts they might have had in the interim to embellish the narrative. Occasionally they also added some detail or new thought that came to mind. Typically though, their responses were that they had shared the relevant experiences and did not have more to add. This to me was an indication that data collection was adequate.

Critical Friends

Dialoging with critical friends is useful to the process of examining researcher bias (Creswell, 2007). Without compromising the confidentiality of the participants or the integrity of the research, I held informal discussions with critical friends who had close association to qualitative research in their capacity as researchers, doctoral peers, academic supervisors, and journalists familiar with interview research and reportage. Their critical feedback was helpful to me in helping me clarify my understanding and presentation of findings and build cohesive interpretations. Due to the complexity of this study, several iterations of my analysis were prepared by me and these helped me filter out and solidify the most salient findings as it pertained to my research question.

Reflexive Journaling

The use of reflexive journaling is useful to attend to issues of researcher positionality and reactivity of participants (Ortlipp, 2008). Some relevant reflexive exercises included answering such questions as: Am I incorporating an emic view of the narrative? In other words, can I be confident that my interpretation is accurate based on participant narratives rather than my own experiences as an insider? How am I connecting with the participants in the researcher-researched relationship? How did I listen to their voices? What assumptions do I own? To answer these and other questions and to help me reflect on my decisions and interpretations, I used journaling exercises and memo-ing.

Peer Review and Clear Audit Trail

The working drafts of my interpretation were reviewed by members of my dissertation committee, doctoral peers, and some critical friends. I am very grateful for the many reads of the iterations that helped me wean out redundancies while helping me hone in on my interpretations.

Lastly, I maintained a spreadsheet to document research procedures and timelines throughout the research process in order to provide a clear audit trail.

Chapter Summary

This chapter identified the design as a qualitative research study and provided the rationale for choosing such a design. I have described the research in terms of the research question, philosophical perspective, methodology, derivation of themes and sub-themes, details about the sample characteristics in terms of inclusion criteria for participants, sampling and recruitment strategies, research protocol and procedures, data analysis methodology, ways of establishing credibility, and researcher positionality. Appendix A includes the Interview Guide and Appendix B refers to the Participant Recruitment Letter. Appendix C is a Description of Visa Status.

Chapter Four: Findings

Research emanates from a need to know about a phenomenon, and typically it is connected with the researcher's curiosity and deep interest in the topic. This study focused on the lived experiences of *non-immigrants*, who are described as individuals who permanently reside in another country but are living in the U.S. for specific purposes such as education, work, business, or seeking medical treatment (USCIS, 2018). This characteristic of the research sample allowed for the possibility of exploring relocation experiences of a more temporary and open-ended nature. My study was undertaken to learn about the experiences of contemporary Indian women whose career goals brought them to the U.S. for work. I was particularly keen to understand their personal adjustments, resources, and challenges in following their professional dreams. This focus identifies my perspective of giving prominence to the individual women in my study rather than the family unit as a whole. These individuals were nevertheless closely attached to and drew strength from their connections to their families and culture, so this context will be explored in the analysis of the findings.

The study was an important query from a sociocultural perspective because it was conceptualized as a cultural study narrated from a feminine perspective. The significance of this study is underscored by its originality since a review of the counseling literature did not yield much information on the subject of Indian women technology professionals engaged in a work-related relocation. Not only is this inquiry original to the counseling discipline, it is also very topical since many Information Technology (IT) professionals on H-1B visas in the U.S. are currently vulnerable to premature repatriation on account of tightened immigration policies (Pierce & Gelatt, 2018, [Migration Policy Institute Report]; Fitzmaurice & Benner, 2018; Jordan, 2018; USCIS, 2019). Acculturative experiences of young Indian women, many of whom were

relocating abroad for the first time and alone, could be vulnerable to the stressors of adaptation to

a new sociocultural and work environment, without the social support of their families. These

factors underscore the relevance of this study to the counseling discipline.

The participants were ten Indian women technology professionals working in the

technology industry with highly specialized skills that qualified them for sponsorship for H-1B

visas. In 2017, at the time I conducted the interviews, the ten women included in my study

ranged in age between 25 and 38, five were single and the other five married. All of them were

employed in the technology industry in companies and consultancies although one participant

worked for a non-profit company in the healthcare industry. At the time of the interviews, these

women had been in the U.S. from one to ten years, and all of them were non-immigrants working

on H-1B visas with the exception of one who was on an extension of her student visa (Optional

Practical Training, OPT), and another who was on an intra-company transfer, on an L-1 visa.

Demographically, the participants in my study were young, technically qualified, and came from

urban, middle-class backgrounds which privileged them to take job roles that required technical

expertise and leadership.

My curiosity about the experience of the participants related to their non-immigrant

experiences of which *they* were the experts. The research question was: What are the lived

experiences of Indian women technology professionals in the context of temporary career-related

relocation to the U.S.?

Development of Themes and Sub-themes

The derivation of the themes and sub-themes was based upon extracting the

commonalities in the lived experiences of the women in my study that followed a pattern of

decisions and actions taken to balance competing needs in the context of culture. The women in

my study relocated in response to their aspirations for professional advancement. This international move involved challenges that included seeking parental and familial approval and reassurance, balancing personal needs for marriage and professional needs for their career, and was complicated by the transience of their sojourn in the U.S. These challenges required negotiating compromises to respond to these competing needs. The first of two most salient ideas was that this experience required these women to accommodate their competing personal and professional needs to the gender role expectations of their cultural socialization. The second idea of significance was that these women needed to adapt their traditional ways of thinking and behaving by practicing cultural flexibility in response to global exposure during the process of relocation and acculturation. Therefore, these women practiced cultural flexibility. These two leading ideas were developed into two main themes in this study, named *Negotiated Compromises* and *Cultural Plasticity*.

The interviews yielded rich information on the lived experiences of these women pertaining to their motivation to relocate, the processes involved, the choices and conflicts in their decisions, the adjustments of settling down in a new country, and the personal changes observed through this acculturative experience. Since these were lived experiences, there was subjective experiencing as each participant's story was unique. For my analysis, I drew my themes and sub-themes from the commonalities in their narratives that addressed the dialectics of career and marriage options, the need to express their individuality, and also consider their gender role expectations, and the need to culturally conform to different sociocultural environments.

Listening to the first-person voices helped me identify individual needs of these women and focusing on contrapuntal voices helped me distinguish some internal dialectic pulls as well

as external voices of their families. The need to balance these competing needs led to the development of my first theme of *Negotiated Compromises,* as I explored ways by which these women and their families compromised in this transient experience of international relocation. Besides the women and their families, there were cultural factors that played a role in their negotiated compromises and these were discussed in the context of three sub-themes.

The first sub-theme focused on the gender role expectations of these women relative to their cultural socialization in India, which required compromises to be negotiated by the women and their families. In order to conform to these cultural expectations, these women needed to seek parental approval and respond to the concerns of their families to this international relocation, and these were discussed in the first sub-theme.

In the second sub-theme, the role of collectivistic practices of retaining emotional connectedness, group belonging, interdependence, collaborative decision-making, and the cultural practice of endogamy and patrilocality were discussed as they played a part in their negotiated compromises. And finally, in the third sub-theme, the implications of adapting to their changing sociocultural environment were discussed through the compromises these women made to find work-life balance, to work in a gender-imbalanced industry, and to cope with the volatility of their non-immigrant status.

In the process of making these compromises with themselves, their families, and their circumstances, these women adhered to the values and practices of their cultural socialization in India; but they also adapted themselves to their cultural exposure during their relocation. In this way, they practiced *Cultural Plasticity*, and this idea formed the basis for the second theme. This theme was also explored in the context of three sub-themes. The first sub-theme of gender role expectations associated with their cultural socialization in India explored the ways by which

these women practiced *Cultural Plasticity* in overcoming their gender role stereotypes, managing their multiple responsibilities to their career and family, adhering to cultural codes of conduct, and making ideological shifts in response to cultural exposure.

The second sub-theme explored the ways by which these women practiced *Cultural Plasticity* by adopting both individualistic and collectivistic values. The third sub-theme focused on the adaptations made by these women to a different work environment during their international relocation, as well as the behavioral and attitudinal adaptations resulting from their cultural exposure. This theme underscored the many ways in which these women practiced *Cultural Plasticity* through the retention of their heritage culture values and practices and adaptation to their acculturative experience. In this context, the idea of cultural hybridity was discussed as a product of synthesis of cultural experiencing.

To summarize, the two themes and sub-themes thoroughly examined the orientation of this cultural group of women towards collectivism that enabled the need for relational connection, the impact of their gendered socialization, and the need to practice cultural flexibility to balance both heritage and western cultural values. The motivation to relocate came from their professional aspirations, which involved some challenges. These challenges required these women to *negotiate compromises*. These compromises included the ways these women adapted themselves to their cultural contexts by practicing *cultural plasticity*.

It is important to establish the complex interactions between the two main themes in this study. For the Indian women in this lived experience of international relocation, the need to compromise arose from their cultural identification, which was expressed in the form of retention of heritage country values and practices associated with their gender role. However, their adherence to cultural values was complicated by their global exposure as well as the

impermanence of their relocation. These two factors required them to adopt cultural flexibility in order to function effectively in both cultures. In order to practice cultural plasticity, these women had to negotiate compromises with themselves and their families. While independently meaningful, when linked together, these themes underscore the process of acculturating to a new cultural environment while being loyal to ethnic values. In summary, these lived experiences of negotiated compromises and cultural flexibility signified psychological, emotional, and socio-cultural growth enabled by their familial and cultural relationships. These compromises and adaptations are discussed in the following themes in the dynamic context of Indian and western cultural influences in the voice of the participants.

The difference between the themes comes from the fact that while *Negotiated Compromises* was more interpersonal and external, requiring action, responding with *Cultural Plasticity* required behavioral adaptation as well as an internal, psychological process involving ideological shifts. Another way to distinguish the two themes is to conceptualize *Negotiated Compromises* as oriented towards an *either/or* approach of compromise and that of *Cultural Plasticity* as *both/and* approach towards incorporating change. There was nevertheless some overlap between the two themes because in order for these women to compromise, they needed to be plastic.

For a graphic representation of these two themes, please see *Figure 1* below on p. 100.

FINDINGS
Theme 1 and Theme 2

argue, explain,
convince, fight

marriage   cultural norms

big decision

**NEGOTIATED
COMPROMISES**

family comes first

support

H-1B

compromise

perception of
changing
gender roles

work-life balance

**CULTURAL
PLASTICITY**

work environment

ideological shifts
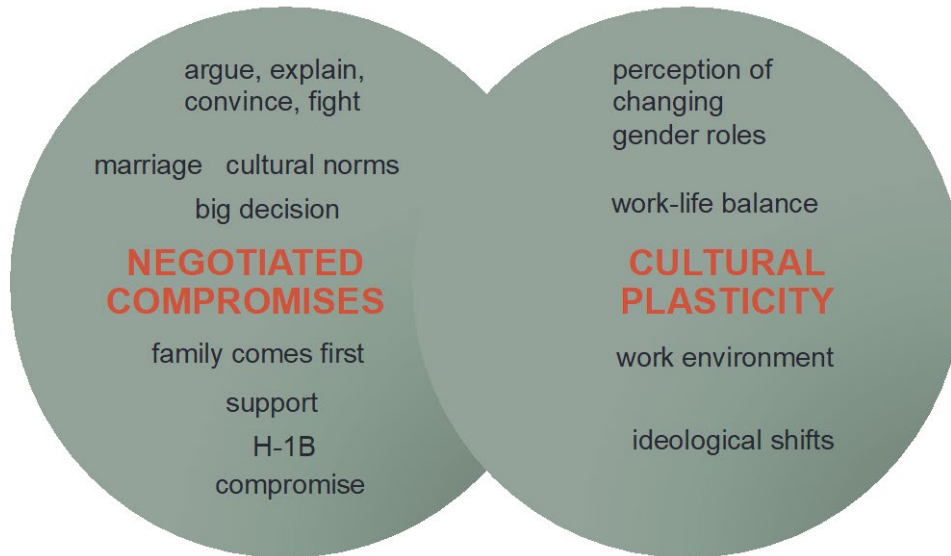
Figure 1. Theme 1 (Negotiated Compromises) and Theme 2 (Cultural Plasticity)

The first theme of *Negotiated Compromises* examined the ways by which these women accommodated their competing needs. These needs pertained to the dialectics of career development and marriage, of emotional connectedness and self-reliance, and managing without familial support in the U.S. The need to compromise stemmed from their cultural socialization in India and was closely associated with their gender role expectations, practice of collectivism, and the situational realities of adapting to their temporary relocation to the U.S. These aspects of negotiated compromises were synthesized in three sub-themes titled: 1) Gender Role Expectations associated with Cultural Socialization in India; 2) Individualism/Collectivism; and 3) Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments.

The second theme in this study was titled *Cultural Plasticity,* a term coined for this study

by me, and defined as the practice of attitudinal and behavioral flexibility in order to function

effectively in different cultural environments, that of their country-of-origin, as well as those

they were exposed to through their global mobility. Further, *cultural plasticity* in this context is

related to the concept of cultural hybridity, which allows individuals to integrate aspects of

different ethnic beliefs and practices into their unique worldview (Banks & Banks, 2013;

Bhabha, 2004). Cultural hybridity in this context represents the amalgam of different ethnic

identities and is prevalent in cultural and anthropological research (Martynuska, 2017).

Research literature on the concept of *cultural plasticity* as it is intended in this study is

negligible, absent in the counseling discipline, and has tangential reference in the field of

neuroscience (Breedlove, 2015; Kalat, 2014). However, the research in the field of neuroscience

focuses on biological plasticity (Breedlove, 2015; Kalat, 2014), whereas the term used in the

context of my study refers to behavioral plasticity, and attitudinal and ideological shifts

involving the ability to be mentally and behaviorally flexible in response to sociocultural

environments. The theme of *Cultural Plasticity* was explored using three sub-themes: 1) Gender

Role Expectations associated with Cultural Socialization in India; 2) Individualism/Collectivism;

and 3) Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments.

Negotiated Compromises

The lived experiences of the interviewed women reflected their decisions to relocate for

their career development. This focus on their careers required the consideration of career

opportunities in the light of cultural values for family closeness, practical realities of settling

down with a partner, and managing to live abroad without the support of their immediate

families. The women in my study pondered many life decisions in this context of short-term

relocation for work. Some decisions pertained to choice of domicile evidenced by Sonam's

words encapsulating her need to compromise between her career aspirations and her emotional

connectedness to her family and culture: "I respect my parents' wish that they want me to get

settled in India...I feel more comfortable settling in India than over here." Referring to her work

opportunities in the U.S. she also felt that it "adds much more value to my resume overall...that

will be obviously be a good factor in my career even if I go back." This clarified her motive for

overriding her choice to remain in India, so she compromised on personal relationships while she

was in the U.S. for the sake of her professional development.

Career was an important aspect of identity for these women and can be seen in the

expression of Nafisa, who said: "you've spent so many years in the industry improving yourself

to reach where you are." But she was also aware that she wanted to be married for which she

felt: "you need to strike a balance also." This represents the compromise of having to prioritize

one need over the other. In Nafisa's experience, career and marriage were double-edged

compromises. These women were closely connected to their family members and missed them

on important celebratory occasions and relied on them for emotional and social support. This is

apparent from Pooja's narratives as she explained:

> we always miss our families for any festival or anything because you know how it is in
>
> India for festivals, like all the family get together and sharing things and all...I feel so
>
> happy…but that's the only thing we miss about staying here sometimes we feel like
>
> going back to India.

Similarly, Sandhya keenly felt the absence of her parents-in-law because she had the

luxury of living in a joint-family with them. For Sandhya, living in India had meant better work-

life balance and shared responsibilities, both of which she compromised when she moved abroad alone with her son.

These life decisions regarding where to settle down, when to get married, and how to maintain responsibilities and relationships with family members while staying so far away were some of the negotiated compromises made by the women. These choices and decisions were influenced by values of collectivism practiced in Indian culture, and underwent some review through exposure, but also exposed to global belief systems and practices. Cultural exposure also colored their perceptions on account of changing values with regard to career prospects and lifestyle preferences. These women were cognizant of the gender role expectations associated with their cultural identification as Indians, regardless of their place of domicile. These cultural contexts played a role in this lived experience and were explored in three sub-themes titled: 1) Gender Role Expectations associated with Cultural Socialization in India;

2) Individualism/Collectivism; and 3) Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments. These sub-themes are represented graphically in *Figure 2* below on p.104.

THEME 1: NEGOTIATED COMPROMISES
and Sub-themes

retain values and norms
keeper of "sanskaar"

deferred marriage for
career

Gender Role
Expectations

Negotiated
Compromises

emotional
connectedness

work-life balance
and need
for social support

Collectivism

Adaptations

maintain trust
reflection on family

H-1B status
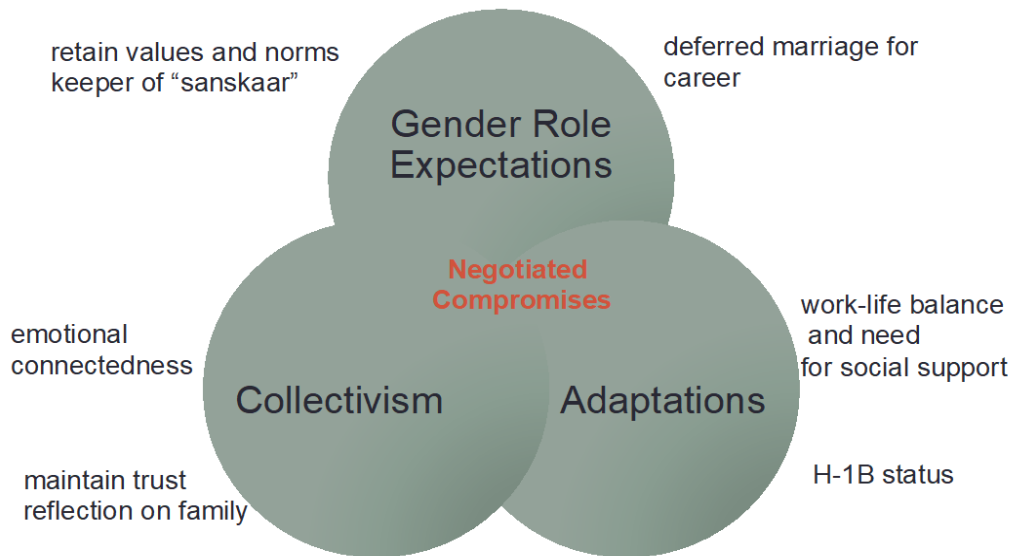
Figure 2. Sub-themes related to the Theme 1: Negotiated Compromises

The first subtheme of gender role expectations associated with socialization practices focused on the women's need for familial approval and concerns for conduct. This subtheme also examined how the women managed their competing needs for career development and their marriage options. The second subtheme of Individualism/Collectivism in Indian culture explores the relationship of the women with their family and community and the practice of endogamy and patrilocality in career decision-making. The third sub-theme of adaptation to changing sociocultural environments focuses on the women's need to adapt to their changing sociocultural environment by examining the role of family in providing support, and the impact of their non-immigrant status. Many aspects of the theme of *Negotiated Compromises* were inherent in the context of these sub-themes discussed in the following sections.

Gender Role Expectations Associated with Cultural Socialization in India

Indian women are held to expectations that they will maintain psychological connection with their family members, practice deference and be non-assertive, and de-prioritize their career aspirations for family nurturance (Budhwar et al., 2005; Haq, 2013; Srinivasan et al., 2013; Tummala-Nalla, 2013). For the educated women in my study, carrying these gender role expectations meant negotiating compromises in order to pursue their personal and professional goals. The ways in which they achieved these compromises is explored under the following sub-headings.

Compromises to meet the need for parental approval and concerns. The women in my study discussed ways in which they needed to adhere to their gender role expectations as Indian women, and yet negotiate with parents on the need to work abroad in the U.S. for their career development. For instance, some of the women in my study expressed being disadvantaged by their patriarchal and hierarchal Indian family structure. Their cultural orientation to family value and collective decision-making required these women to seek permission from authority figures, typically their fathers, to make personal decisions for their careers and marriage. These women also spoke of their family members emphasizing the salience of marriage especially due to their discomfort in allowing their unmarried daughters to live alone abroad. However, it is also important to note that the women in my study came from families that allowed them to pursue education and careers although these required negotiated compromises to be made in consideration of societal norms for marriage, of maintaining cultural integrity, and personal respectability still needed to be negotiated through compromise.

Hearing the narratives, I could see a pattern among many of the women's experiences that seeking parental/familial/societal approval for their proposed venture to go abroad was

important to them. This need for relational and cultural approval was echoed especially in the

narratives of Arti, Pooja, Sonam, and Sandhya, whose parents felt answerable to extended family

members and society. Some of these expressions were as Arti shared, "Many, many family

members who used to tell my [parents] that why are you sending a girl child to America." Arti

mentioned family members of an older generation disapproving of "educating a girl that much"

because she was inevitably going to "go to the other house" [referring to being married and

leaving the parental home]. Arti's father overrode familial disapproval by insisting that

educating his daughter was important to him and he hoped she would make his name proud by

studying and earning.

In the words of Pooja, "all our relatives, or his [her father's] friends...are like, I don't

think it's a good idea to send a girl all alone from here to U.S." Pooja spoke of her father being

skeptical about sending his daughter abroad alone because "from my family I am the first one to

come out of India...you know how it is in India all the relatives how they talk and all when a girl

alone without getting married when she goes abroad." In both these examples, the undertone of

disapproval is apparent from the emphasis on "why are you sending a girl child/I don't think it's

a good idea to send a girl all alone." Of particular significance was Arti's reference to the

distance "to America," and as Pooja stated, "from here to U.S." In yet another example,

Sandhya pondered, "a big decision whether I want to go there [to the U.S.] or not" because as

she added, "my extended family…in-laws…they were not happy with [me] taking my decision."

The tone of disapproval and concern relates to the consideration of both gender and distance in

this decision-making process, which was independently initiated, and collaboratively

implemented.

For Sonam, who had lived outside her home for seven or eight years for education and work, her parents were "fine with me outside [living in another city within India], they're fine with me working but then coming to the U.S. was a big step," amplifying the concern related to distance. In her interview, Sonam said that she had to argue with them to allow her to go abroad with the negotiated compromise that "when I go to U.S., I'll come home once a year." Sonam's parents also had apprehensions about opportunities for permanent settlement abroad, because she mentioned that a few relatives "say that they've gone to U.S. for few years but then they settle over there, they marry people from here so that is something a parent does not want from me, they want me to settle in India only."

In Sandhya's experience, "it was actually a big decision for me as well as my family that whether we want to pursue this or not. But due to my deep interest I came in U.S. and started my PhD." In her case, Sandhya only received grudging approval to pursue her dreams from her husband and only her mother supported her decision. Of her husband's adjustment she said, "my husband has also contributed a lot and sacrificing by sending me here because my son was very small when I brought my son here and obviously many of the husbands won't allow that but he did," meaning allowing her to go to the U.S. without him. So from these excerpts it is evident that approval to relocate was negotiated by these women and the act was undertaken with the knowledge that they bore the weight of that decision. This demonstrates the gender role expectations for Indian women that they need to consider their individual aspirations in the light of their family's concerns for their wellbeing and societal norms.

Compromises to address the need to retain cultural values and norms. The underlying family concern for sending a girl/woman alone extended to the expectation that these women would conduct themselves within Indian societal norms. That, for some women like

Sandhya, meant upholding the "sanskaar" or moral values that were imparted during her upbringing. As she said, "I never take alcohol in India and I also never take alcohol in U.S...I am not taking it because I know that that's not good for my family," "I respect all my relationships," and she disallowed her roommate from bringing boyfriends to her shared apartment because "I don't want to answer my family." Since her family decided to support her decision to go abroad at the cost of splitting the family and allowing her to take responsibility for bringing up their son alone in the more permissive culture in the U.S., she felt doubly pressured to uphold those values.

As the keeper and transmitter of cultural values, Sandhya held on to her "sanskaar" in order to perpetuate it for her son, saying "I used to learn most of the things from my home I mean in terms of values." Interestingly, she stated that "I am not actually imparting the same values [that she imbibed from her cultural socialization in India] to him" because she felt that current generations were increasingly exposed to global influences. Since she was a working mother she had limited control over her son's upbringing, and as she said, "when we are working, we are not able to actually devote all the time to our kids and probably they are also learning more of the things from the outside now as compared to what we used to do." My interpretation of this exchange with her is that her lifestyle practices of abstaining from alcohol, and disallowing her roommate to bring home her boyfriend were ways she demonstrated her values for her son indicated by her words that she didn't "want to answer my family."

While concern for a child leaving a parental home for the first time is global, what differentiates the experience of these women is the traditional upbringing and values for conduct that would not bring disrepute or shame to the women themselves or by extension, to their families. This is amplified by Arti's observation about Indian moms stating, "for their daughters

they are very caring and without any confirmation of being how good life [is] there, they won't send you here" [the U.S.]. Only after a maternal uncle reassured Arti's mother that "don't worry, I'm there...your daughter will be safe here" did Arti's parents relent to sending her. But not without the caution "never do... never get [into] such things which will spoil your career or your life along with ours...never cross your limits." The concern for safety and conformity was for their daughter and by extension to themselves. This is also an indication of relational strength and connection because what affected their daughter affected them too. Parental concerns for their safety and wellbeing extended to expectations that they would conduct themselves respectably, especially when they were living abroad. These gender role expectations meant that these women had to be mindful of their responsibility to themselves and their parents since their parents were compromising their family integrity by permitting them to live independently abroad. On the other hand, these women were compromising their autonomy by adhering to the wishes of their parents. That they were willing to do so is evidence of their value for family and the salience of their career.

This can also be seen in the way Pooja argued to convince her father of her need to establish her independence. This effort was necessary because she valued his approval. After getting admission into a university in the U.S., she had a long discussion with her father, who succumbing to familial and societal pressure, wanted her to get married before sending her abroad. Pooja said of his ambivalence, "my dad was kind of hesitant, he want[ed] to send me but at the same time he didn't want to send me." She voiced to him her strong desire to be independent. The following *I* poem reflects Pooja's sentiment:

I don't want to get married

I want to explore on my own

I feel that I should gain confidence and individuality

I should have something of my own

I don't want to depend on my husband for finding a job.

This was another example of a relational negotiation expressed in the narrative of Pooja. Referring to her motivational drive, Pooja expressed, "I pushed myself really hard." The reason for that was not only personal but to prove that she could be trusted by her father to achieve what she set out to do. Personal independence was important to her but so was the preservation of her relationship with her father, and this was achieved through winning his trust and approval. In Pooja's own words: "I know what I fought about with my dad so if I don't achieve what I want... it's waste of fighting with my dad and my dad would never trust me again." So not only did Pooja have the burden of proving her worth to herself, more importantly, she needed to retain her father's trust in sending her abroad while overlooking the advice of extended family members.

Compromises to respond to competing needs for career and marriage. Deferment of marriage for career was seen among the women in my study who entered marriage only when their careers were secure. Berg-Cross, Scholz, Long, Grzeszcyk, and Roy (2004) explored the global trend of professional women deferring marriage for career and economic empowerment. In the context of Indian women technology professionals on H-1B visas, an added complication was the element of uncertainty related to the need for global mobility. Since technology work is global, it requires travel and relocation for those who seek career advancement as these women experienced. The juggling of career and marriage was different for single and married women because it posed different challenges for each demographic.

Visa restrictions for dependent spouses also deterred these women from finding suitable partners from India because it would mean that their spouses would have to have their own work

sponsorship for employment in the U.S. Of the single women in my study, this aspect was of

particular relevance not only to Deepika, but to Nafisa also. Deepika and Nafisa were two

participants in their 30s with established careers and for them, finding a partner willing and able

to relocate for the sake of their wife's career was a challenge. As Deepika expressed, "I want to

stay here in U.S. at least for till the time my visa is valid." Knowing that she wanted to get

married, stating, "I'm 33 now so with my age I have gone beyond Indian norm." Deepika

pondered many concerns with regard to going back to India to get married when she asked

herself if it would be a worthy decision to make because she said:

its not just only I'm checking him as a person...I'll be leaving a good job here, a good culture

here, a good atmosphere here...going back would mean that looking for another job, then settling

into the job again, then of course adjusting with a new family... there could be lot of

compromises at the same time. Maybe I have to compromise with my salary if I have to go back

to India...

Although concerned with her advancing age, Deepika was unwilling to negotiate a

compromise with her career by returning to India for the sake of marrying. And yet, she shared,

"yes, marriage is definitely there," and to continue in an *I* poem:

 [if] I get somebody who is back in India

I don't know how it's going to work out

I am not willing to leave my career and drop it

I don't know what kind of decision

I'll take at that time but because its critical now that

I should get married and settle in life as well.

There was some ambivalence in this excerpt where Deepika expressed conflicting desires to be settled but was unwilling to compromise her career for marriage.

Living abroad indefinitely restricted these women from finding partners. Being unable to choose when to marry was thus a compromise these women made for their career prospects. Nafisa had an established career for which she frequently relocated globally. From her perspective, career was an important part of her life and she was unwilling to "drop the ball" for marriage because she said "I don't think so I'll be happy by doing that." As Nafisa mentioned further,

> You know Indian family girl who's like 35 years...and that too you're living all alone here and all that stuff…it's definitely a worry, as my mom, as my sisters, as my brother because they want me to settle down with a partner and have a personal life there's lot of pressure…[from] families.

But while she put up with the family pressure, Nafisa was not about to compromise on either her career or her choice of a partner because she wanted to marry someone who she felt, "he's the one for you." However, she also saw the practical side and wanted to balance her career with a partner. In her words, "I have been working...I have my own life...I have my own things to do as an individual." For her, the pressure to get married was personal as well as familial and social since she was "an Indian family girl...living all alone." This was another compromise negotiated to balance competing needs. Nafisa mentioned that she belonged to a religious community where "they get married at a very early age" and in her family her sisters had married early. However, she was able to rationalize her predicament, saying,

> why don't I take this time when I'm single to do things when I'm not able to do when I get married? Maybe it could be from what I want to achieve in my career? What I want

to do as a volunteer to the society or to my community? [for] which I may not find time when I have my own family.

These examples illustrate that living abroad indefinitely restricted these women from finding suitable partners. Being unable to choose when to marry was thus a compromise these women made for their career prospects.

For the married women in my study, the main challenge was how to manage dual careers with the move. Mitali's is a lived experience that illustrated this predicament. When she decided to get married, "settling down in my personal life with respect to my marriage was more important than, you know, focusing on my career at that moment." However, she disliked giving up her job and "being dependent on someone" which was "a drastic change" for her. Describing her compromised autonomy and empowerment Mitali said, "I was working in India for seven years, it wasn't easy for me to just make a decision to leave that job and the country and just come here [U.S.]...because when you are independent [single] you are working...it's not only about your mental independence but also financial independence." There was a balance of different needs, one of maintaining her professional identity and another of catering to her need for companionship. What made this more complicated was that on account of her marriage she relinquished her job in India because she accompanied her husband to the U.S. as a dependent spouse (H-4), which disallowed her to work.

Whether these women deferred marriage for their careers or de-prioritized their careers for that of their spouses, the fact remains that there was intersectionality between their many life roles and needs related to them. What this means is that these women had to consider their roles not only as daughters, wives and mothers, but also as technology professionals wanting to establish their personal independence. Each of these roles had relative significance as they

underwent their lived experience of relocation. The lived experiences narrated by the participants underscored their need to balance individual aspirations with their culturally-normed gender role expectations.

It is evident from the excerpts that career development and marriage were competing needs for these women. The choice to marry was associated with their personal needs for companionship but also consistent with their culturally expected gender role to prioritize family life over careers. Being educated and aspirational, these women also wanted to be independent and self-reliant and their professional growth enabled such empowerment. These dialectics associated with their gender role made it necessary for the women and their families to negotiate compromises. The role of individualistic and collectivistic values in the choices and decisions made by the women and their families will be discussed in the next sub-theme.

Individualism/Collectivism

The second sub-theme built upon values and practices associated with individualism and collectivism, which activated the need to negotiate compromises. In this study, many collectivistic principles were prevalent including the salience of family over the individual, group cohesion, interdependence, emotional connectedness, collective decision-making, parental concern for safety and conduct, paternalistic and hierarchical family structure, and practice of endogamy and patrilocality (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). In the following passages, the relevance of many of these practices and the role they played in the lived experiences of the women will be established.

Compromises required to maintain emotional connectedness. Indian culture practices mainly collectivistic values, although Indians can be selectively individualistic also (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Dupree et al., 2010; Sinha, 2014). This was certainly evident in the narratives of the

women in my study because their pursuit of career goals was individualistic but in consideration

of family approval and sensitive to their concerns. Reflecting on the narratives, it was apparent

that most of the negotiated compromises made by the participants were to preserve relational

connections with their families and their culture. That family played a salient role in their lives

is apparent from many examples from various participants in the narratives. As Pooja said, "we

are very bound to the family," and as Jyoti expressed, "because we don't have any family here it

may become lonely at some point is what I fear." Deepika was conflicted when she said, "I get it

professionally I have to be here but then family thing is more important." And Priya shared that

for her, "the moment you go back to India, I guess it becomes not just your parents, it's also your

aunts and uncles and your other extended relatives come into the picture."

All the women reported that they maintained regular close contact with their families in

India through frequent use of telephone calls. In Deepika's words it was expressed as, "I make

sure that I'm taking out time...I'm talking to them everyday." Similarly, Sonam said, "I call

them daily...my parents like when they knew that I can talk with them daily still then they were

concerned." This connection was apparent from the narratives referring to the exchange of

recipes for cooking. Sonam mentioned, "if I like any of my mom's recipes which I cannot find

in net then I call her and then I ask her how to make." Arti also said, "my mom helped me...she

used to call me two hours...she'll guide me on phone." The women in my study also shared daily

accounts of their wellbeing. To explain this, I quote Sonam, who said, "we do video chats

everyday…when I tell that everything is going fine...they are comfortable they know that I am

settling well and comfortable over here they are good with that." Maintaining connection also

meant following of religious traditions, as Arti said, "when I came here my mom gave

one...traveling temple...portable mandir that I keep in my room...I just pray and go." Similarly,

Pooja said, "tomorrow we are doing a traditional puja...housewarming" and Neha spoke about attending communal festivities, "in [U.S. city where she lives] they are culturally really active...we celebrate Ganesh festival...they celebrate Diwali...the Indian Association is really active."

That parents tended to worry for the wellbeing of their daughters and likewise, these women were concerned with the welfare of their parents in India was gathered from narrative references such as Deepika saying: "if something goes wrong its difficult...you can't pick up the phone and tell them that I'm in a problem because they would worry a lot sitting there and they can't do anything from there." When her father had a paralytic stroke, they kept that information from Deepika because they knew that "I love him so much that I will not care that much that I will leave the job and come...you always want to help your parents." Another example can be taken from Priya who said: "even if you're here, I know that your parents are two people you always worry about... they are the ones who matter to you." Arti mentioned that as a consequence of her move, since they wanted to retain closeness with her, her parents learned to navigate social media. She said,

> my mom got on Facebook, my dad got on Facebook, Whatsapp, they are on all social media...[they believed that] if they will be there we will be in touch with our child and it will not feel like we are lonely that we are not very away.

Similarly, Sonam stated that because she was brought up in a "very close family culture" she respects their opinions and tries not to "hurt their feelings." It was this relational pull that made their decision to relocate a hard choice. In that sense, personal relationships were compromised in terms of physical distance inhibiting active familial participation. Pursuing goals for independent living meant stretching the boundaries of their binding relationships and

that was the compromise necessary in order to achieve it. While these women reportedly

enjoyed the advantages of career development in the U.S., it took them away from their loved

ones. This was another compromise necessitated by their career goals. In order to develop their

careers these women were separated from their families in India, and this individualistic need

took precedence over their collectivistic needs to be close to their families, and they tried to

overcome that compromise through virtual connections.

  Compromises for maintaining familial/cultural codes of conduct. Cultural

socialization for these women favored collective decision-making and seeking approval from

family members. This was apparent from many excerpts in the narratives where women strived

to maintain their relationships. I have given examples of how these women (Arti, Pooja, Sonam,

Sandhya) needed to advocate for their independence to relocate for their careers, overriding

parental concerns. Often, this was interpreted by these women as coming with strings attached.

In other words, having fought to reach for their aspirations, these women needed to remain true

to their parental and self-expectations to achieve them and stay within cultural boundaries (as

was seen in the narrative from Sandhya wanting to maintain her "sanskaar"; and in Pooja's need

to retain her father's trust).

  In the section on gender role expectations it was established that parents expected their

daughters' conduct to be within accepted boundaries. The following excerpts from the narratives

indicates that these women conformed to those standards because they were raised to respect

them. As Pooja said of her father, "he always gave us that freedom, that space, he always

believed in us he knows we will never misuse that so he always believed us." Whether it was in

response to what Arti referred to as "never get [into] such things which will spoil your career or

your life along with ours," or as Sonam said, "we would not do anything that will harm us or

them in any way they trust us" or Sandhya's words, "I know what are the limitations that should

be taken care of," these women maintained relational connections through the exercise of

behavior that upheld these standards.

The safety and good conduct of their children might be the expectation of every

concerned parent, but this becomes heightened when the child, even though an adult, is not

within the purview of the parents. Based on anecdata, it can be stated that Indian parents

consider it their duty to be responsible for unmarried daughters and their deportment is a

reflection on the parents as well. There are references in anthropological research literature to

family honor being associated with female chastity, marriage, and sexuality in Indian culture

(Kay, 2012; Singhal, 2014). In light of hearing Sandhya speak strongly about her family

instilling good "sanskaar" (referring to moral values) or as in the case of Arti, Pooja, and Sonam

the need to not misuse the trust these parents had in their daughters, it becomes easier to

understand that the need for parental approval and expectations for conduct were associated with

their collectivistic values for group belonging.

Another instance of compromise was seen in Deepika's decision to fly back home to

attend her sister's wedding, risking the ability to return owing to immigration policy changes.

When she spoke about it, Deepika told me she clearly prioritized her personal relationship over

jeopardizing her career because as she worded it,

> professionally, I have to be here but then family thing is more important...I'm going to
>
> India and I'm so worried...if I would be able to make it back...In fact my boss was saying
>
> that how can you take such [a] big risk? So I was like, ok, family is priority too...if I don't
>
> go this time...I have just one sister...I'm going to regret it my whole life.

In this instance, Deepika was clear that she valued relational and cultural connection enough to jeopardize her career prospects. Unlike other scenarios, this decision related to a singular circumstance that had potential ramifications for her future career. But the fact that she jeopardized her career and perhaps her professional future for the maintenance of family connection indicates its prominence in her life. That she was willing to risk her career is evidence of her compromise for the maintenance of family relationship.

The majority of the women in my study echoed this sentiment of family prioritization. The salience of family goals over individual ones is a practice of collectivistic values for group cohesiveness, and this relates clearly to the need for negotiated compromise. It was best expressed by Pooja when she said, "being an Indian, I know, we value relationships a lot, like we are very bound to the family and whatever it is, family always comes first." Another example came from Sonam who said, "we are more close to our family than people I have seen. Our family plays a huge role in our decision making, they are more a part of our life...we care about their feelings." It is apparent from many of these examples that some compromises were negotiated for the preservation of relationships. Family did take precedence for most of these women, but it did not deter them from being physically distant from them. However, the maintenance of family relationships nurtured their personal growth because for these women, their sense of self was related to their closeness with their loved ones. This establishes collectivistic values of interdependence and group cohesion.

Compromises experienced in relation to the cultural practice of endogamy and patrilocality. Among collectivistic values practiced in Indian culture are two traditions of endogamy and patrilocality, which will be discussed in this subsection to establish the role they played in this theme of negotiated compromises. Adding another layer in this study was the

practice of endogamy in Indian culture, another expression of group belonging and identification. Endogamy refers to the practice of finding a partner from within one's community, and in the Indian context this includes limitations related to caste, religion, and socio-economic status (Goli, Singh, & Sekher, 2013). Further, Indian culture being highly diverse (Panda & Gupta, 2004) meant finding not only an Indian to marry but someone belonging to one's sub-culture(s). By sub-cultures, I refer to the region or state a person comes from because that defines their ethnicity, as also their religious affiliation, caste, socio-economic status, occupation, and such finer distinctions. Although India is rapidly developing and playing catch-up with the western world, it has a cultural history that is centuries old and traditions such as arranged marriages are still prevalent. While it can be argued that globally people are redefining social norms, traditionally socialized Indians still expect their children to make endogamous marriages (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). This practice is further complicated by the associated practice of patrilocality, a sociocultural norm where a female spouse moves into her husband's family home after marriage. For the single women in my study, juggling competing needs for career and plans for marriage included the added complexity of seeking a partner within their cultural community with limited social supports and time, something of a challenge for women on short-term international assignments.

This had the potential to impact some decisions regarding settlement and career prospects. For instance, if men were working in another state in India their wives would have to transfer regionally. A move abroad is typically more challenging due to work visa restrictions for dependent spouses, irrespective of gender. In my study, some participants were restricted by immigration policies regarding dependent spouses, some had to conform to religion and caste expectations, and others were confined by the realities of finding partners willing to relocate.

Arti shared that her parents were permissive enough to allow her to find her own partner and accept him if he was "suitable" and liked by her. In Sonam's experience, her sister had married for love, and in so choosing, she had stepped outside traditional restrictions of caste conformity, displeasing her parents. Priya, on the other hand, felt pressured to marry owing to her parents' concern and after some deliberations, married a classmate within her caste, significantly stating that "fortunately it was within the same caste...if it would have been a different caste it would have been a totally different story." The practice of endogamy and patrilocality affected this group of women in different ways, some more pronounced than others.

In the case of Deepika and Nafisa especially, the practice of endogamy and partilocality significantly impacted their predicament because they were single women in their 30s with established careers and this was the stumbling block for them. Deepika didn't have the cultural connections to find a partner in the U.S. who would satisfy the conditions of endogamy. Similarly, Nafisa was living alone in the U.S. without the social support to facilitate the process of introducing her to prospective partners from her community. The alternative was to return to India to increase their chances of marrying someone suitable or following the tradition of patrilocality. That could mean curtailing their promising career, a difficult compromise for women for whom their career was an important aspect of their identity.

In Indian culture, the hierarchical status of men often translates to compromised careers for women (Dupree et al., 2013; Purkayastha, 2005). This was the experience of two of the five married women in the study, who had to recreate their work identity upon moving to the U.S. after their marriage. These women were technology professionals working in India before their marriage. However, the interview revealed that their mode of entry was through their status of marriage as accompanying spouses. Their choices were to remain in India and stay employed or

move to the U.S. as dependent spouses. Neither being palatable to these women, they chose to further their education and enter the workplace independently. For Mitali, this meant that she wanted "to complete the degree and start a fulltime job as soon as possible...it was really a big, big, big relief when I got my job back." Considering the practice of patrilocality, had Mitali moved within India itself, it is more likely that she would not have had as difficult a time finding a job.

In Mitali and Jyoti's cases, spousal jobs brought them to the U.S. and they compromised their Indian careers in order to prioritize their marriage. This was referred to in the interview with Mitali when she stated: "it wasn't easy for me to leave the job and country...but settling down...to my marriage was more important than focusing on my career at that moment." Similarly, Jyoti said that had she been in India after her marriage she would have continued with her career but having moved to the U.S., "if I'm not willing to just sit at home I have to have some degree to be able to get a good job here...we decided that I'd like to go back to school and get a Master's degree." Deepika jeopardized her prospects by returning to attend a family event of importance. Sandhya referred to securing her son's educational future for which she was compromising with her family by staying alone in the U.S. Neha had discussed the possibility of a move related to her fiancé's career. In summary, it can be said that for these women, the management of their competing needs for career development and marriage was not only a function of the practice of endogamy and patrilocality, but also the preservation of relational connection.

Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments

In the previous sub-themes, gender role expectations of Indian culture and practice of collectivistic values were elaborated to observe the role they played in the theme of negotiated

compromises. Most of the women in my study initiated the relocation for their career advancement, with the exception of Mitali, and Jyoti, who relocated after their marriage and then reinstated their careers. Distancing themselves from their families was a compromise for that purpose. However, the focus on career building compromised the family and social support they needed to maintain work-life balance.

Compromises for seeking work-life balance and need for social support. For individuals working in the technology industry in general, taking up short-term assignments was a way of making money and returning to India because they considered that as the place of domicile. As Deepika stated, "lot of people come here to make money to have certain goals in their head when they come here...at least two years, three years." Sonam also spoke of the ability to save in the U.S. because of the income they generated. Acting upon the motivation for financial gain meant that some of the participants had to make compromises by deferring marriage and distancing themselves from their families. Some of the participants who had worked in India experienced ambivalence because they were cognizant of the differences between living and working in India and in the U.S. In this sub-theme, the lack of social and emotional support from families and practical implication of their visa restrictions describes some of the reasons for their negotiated compromises with their circumstances of expatriation.

Maintaining work-life balance is a globally prevalent phenomenon but especially relevant for contemporary Indian working women owing to traditional expectations for women to carry the caring responsibilities of the family in addition to their job-related mandates (Mani, 2013). For the women in my study, some of the repercussions of moving abroad included the loss of support from family members, established friends, and domestic help. This impacted the two women in my study who were mothers, Sandhya and Jyoti, more than others. In Sandhya's

words, "men, always go out for a career, men always go out...to achieve their goals...but for women still some families hesitate to do that [be globally mobile for their career]." However, exercising her will, Sandhya prioritized her career goals over her family and left her spouse behind in India when she relocated with her young son with grudging approval from her family. In her experience though, Sandhya found that the burden of caregiving for her son fell squarely on her and she missed the family support she had in India. Additionally, she cited her work schedule and family obligations as a reason for her lack of social support in the U.S. because she did not find the time to develop social connections. Relying on the support of her family and social circle in India was not only anchoring but also allowed her to maintain better work-life balance. In her words,

> I have to take leave here because I am alone on my own with my son...whatever requirement is there from my family side I'm the only one who has to complete that. But in India it was not the case...in India when you have your family, actually, they are your support system so you get a very good leisure time on Saturdays and Sundays.

For Sandhya, having acted upon her dream of further studies and a career in the U.S., her next priority was her son's education. Sandhya clarified,

> it all depends on what priority, what phases, what circumstances, what phase of life you're talking in because right now the first priority is my son's education. So I will sacrifice in whatever way I can but that is the first priority right now.

Sandhya's sacrifices for a rewarding career and her son's education related to family disruption because her husband lived in India and intermittently visited them in the U.S. Sandhya didn't have the support of her extended family, and she felt the burden of parenting and

managing a work-life balance on her own. As she said, "I really don't have much social circle here [U.S.]. I am actually with me and my family so I don't go out much."

It was not only Sandhya's experience as a single parent, rather, the lack of family support and closeness was also experienced by other participants. For Deepika, it was expressed as:

when you come here [U.S.] you pretty much do everything, right from the management of your money, right from getting up early, getting into the routine, going to the office, doing the office things and coming home doing the household things and on top of it... managing on your own. And struggling with your own...loneliness.

Arti and Sonam needed to reach out on a daily basis to their family for their reassurance and emotional connection, many of them expressed their inability to celebrate ethnic festivities with sadness. For example, Neha shared, "I'm like really sad on Diwali and Holi because specifically I want to be in India at that point of time." Arti also felt, "if I am in India this festival which I am celebrating here in United States will be more celebrated in India." In the U.S., they missed the camaraderie of their long-term friends. As Neha mentioned, "the equation never changes on them, like my closest friends are still my closest friends and it will never change." For Nafisa, the ability to bounce ideas with colleagues was important, and she said, "if there is anything that you would need, it's just a shout there [India]...I definitely miss the fun of going to office and meeting my colleagues, friends, and having that friends circle there."

In sum, they experienced some amount of culture shock from moving from what Nafisa described as a "culture-heavy" country like India, to a quieter environment where, as Neha said,

the first day that I woke up in [a small college town] it was *so* quiet outside like it was pin-drop silence and I was like, Oh, my God, what is this...where are the sounds of the honks of the cars that you get on the road when you wake up or sounds of the subzi-wale

bhaiyyas [vegetable sellers] that are coming to sell things and all...so it was very, like that quiet was very, very disconcerting...very disorienting initially...but then I got used to it.

Whether it was the physical characteristics of the new environment in the U.S. or sociocultural differences, these women experienced culture shock but learned to cope with it by maintaining relational and cultural connection as well as adapting to the new environment. Another challenge for these women was the fact that they were working in an industry that was gender-imbalanced and required some adjustments as well.

Compromises related to the impact of being a gender minority in the technology industry. Being in a new professional and sociocultural environment can translate to having fewer social and professional networks and mentorship. This was the experience of Deepika and Nafisa, who worked for their company in an independent capacity as consultant specialists and missed the mentorship and interaction with their colleagues that they had developed in India. For Priya, adjusting to a different work culture that expected her to play a more visible role took her out of her comfort zone. These women chose careers in an industry in which they are gender minorities (Raghuram et al., 2017). Although they did not report gender discrimination in the U.S. work environment, these women were typically the only woman in a team of ten or fifteen sometimes restricted gender-specific conversations and support. As Sandhya said, " you cannot talk to them [referring to the nine male members in her team] on the level that you can talk to a female" and as Mitali had experienced, "I'm the only girl in the group so sometimes I feel that there should have been more women for me so that at least I could talk to her freely even though I'm at work." Being few in representation, women like Mitali experienced out-group behavior at work in India:

even for going for lunch...I remember all these boys used to group together, and then go

for lunch, and then I…I used to be only girl...I used to think ok, whom should I go with

for lunch, nobody used to ask me for lunch.

That changed in the U.S. environment where Mitali found her colleagues more

"easygoing and talk freely." Gender imbalance in the technology industry also led Priya to feel

insecure and lack self-confidence because she said, "Men are always confident at what they

do...but women are not...not many women go into the field of Computer Science...so it's still an

industry that in terms of gender, it's heavily imbalanced." This minority status contributed to her

instinctive feeling that "if my manager is calling me to a meeting room, I immediately get this

instant fear that she's going to kick me out of the organization. That's the first feeling that I

have."

Overlooking the fact that they were compromised by being a minority, these women

employed in the technology industry were specialists in information and telecommunication

systems, bioinformatics, business strategists for technology, and business solution architects.

These professional identifications advantaged them in terms of their self-esteem and family pride

in their achievements. For example, when Mitali landed a job in the U.S. she felt relieved to be

able to introduce herself in her social circle saying, "I'm working with this company and

automatically that gives you a lot of confidence." Sandhya spoke of her family's pride in her

achievements when she said, "now they could also say in a very bold language to everyone…my

daughter-in-law is a doctor [PhD] there [in the U.S.]." A further example is that of Nafisa who

said, "I've been a Solution Architect in India...as a consultant you need to be heard...because I

carry that responsibility...because I drive that account." These were some of the positives for

which these women were willing to make personal compromises by adapting to new work cultures and responsibilities with reduced social support.

Compromises related to H-1B status. Work-related relocations of the kind these women undertook require work permits from sponsoring companies. The plight of technology professionals on H-1B visas is such that employees are bound to the company sponsoring their visa and since these are not transferable, they cannot be professionally mobile. This compromised the mobility of these women because they didn't have the flexibility of choice of employer or location. Neha explained the visa status of H1-B employees with great clarity in her interview where she said that for those working in for-profit companies the process involved an application and trying their luck through a lottery system. Since Neha was working in the not-for-profit sector, she said,

> I'm kind of shielded and I'm not worried about that if I choose to stay here [in her
>
> company]... if I want to look for jobs in for-profit companies, I'll have to go through that
>
> lottery system... that would be very complicated because you have to time it very
>
> correctly that your application has been sent at one point of time.

Neha would have liked to move to another location to be closer to her fiancé as well as find more lucrative work in the for-profit sector but was unable to do so because it would require a whole new process of work authorization, setting her back in the process. Neha's own words in this predicament were,

> if I move to a non-profit company it will be the same but I wouldn't struggle for my visa
>
> but…if I find a for-profit company and if we somehow figure out a way to work out all
>
> the visa issues [for her and her fiancé working in the for-profit IT sector], then yes, I'll
>
> have to go through that visa process.

An additional factor for consideration was that switching jobs in the US was subject to availability and sponsorship and in a competitive industry; starting a new H-1B visa application would be time-consuming, as was explained in Neha's narrative. This being a tedious process, most people stay with the sponsoring organization and extend their work authorization periodically, typically every three years. In the context of my study, this was a deterrent for Deepika, who wanted to get married, but could not because that required an independent spousal work authorization if she married someone in India. Additionally, moving abroad as a dependent spouse and then looking for a job is a competitive proposition, further complicated by immigration policy restrictions. This was the experience of both Mitali and Jyoti, who came to the country on H-4 (dependent) visas and converted it to a student visa (F-1) and only after finding employment were they sponsored for their own H-1B visas.

Most of the compromises made by these women related to the dialectics of pursuing a global career and adapting to the expectations of their gender role in response to their circumstances. In addition, pursuit of their career required physically distancing themselves from family. In order to maintain their cultural connections, they practiced within gender role expectations by seeking approval from families to move abroad, by subsuming their careers to follow their partners abroad, and for some, by deferring plans for marriage in favor of career goals.

The discussion so far has focused on personal, relational, and circumstantial compromises negotiated by the women in my study for career advancement. All of these negotiated compromises were in consideration of their gender role expectations, to maintain collectivistic values, and in response to the need for circumstantial adaptation. An important aspect of this lived experience was the transience of their stay in the U.S. Considering that they

had indefinite plans to stay and entertained the idea of returning to India by choice or

circumstance, there was a need for these women to straddle both cultures in order to effectively

function in both. Naturally, in order to function effectively in both cultures, these women needed

to practice cultural flexibility by making behavioral adjustments and attitudinal shifts. These

psychological and behavioral shifts were explored in the following theme of *Cultural Plasticity*,

which captures their ability to adjust their values and practices to their sociocultural

surroundings.

Cultural Plasticity

For the women in my study, the transience of their relocation meant that they were

physically and ideologically located in between two cultures. Straddling both cultures required

these women to be culturally flexible. This aspect of my interpretation helped me develop the

related theme of *cultural plasticity* that undergirded their lived experience. To reiterate, the term

cultural plasticity represents their shifting values and practices associated with the sociocultural

environments of their country-of origin and the host country of their expatriation. *Cultural*

plasticity refers to the behavioral adaptations and attitudinal shifts made by these women in

response to changing cultural environments. These adaptations were explored in the following

contextual sub-themes: 1) Gender role expectations associated with cultural socialization in

India, 2) Individualism/Collectivism, and 3) Adaptation to changing sociocultural environments.

For a graphic representation of these sub-themes and their connection to the theme of Cultural

Plasticity, see *Figure 3* below on p.131.

THEME 2: CULTURAL PLASTICITY
and sub-themes

overcoming negative
stereotypes and
awareness of self-efficacy

choosing to
adhere to cultural
codes of conduct

Gender Role Expectations

Cultural Plasticity

adapting individual
voice
to group "noise"

different
work culture

Collectivism

Adaptations

overcoming loss
of support
by making
new connections

adapting lifestyle
through
behavioral practices

Figure 3. Sub-themes associated with Theme 2: Cultural Plasticity

Gender Role Expectations associated with Cultural Socialization in India

The first sub-theme explored ways in which the women managed their families' gender role expectations associated with cultural codes of conduct. In the context of my study, it can be said that all the women chose to function within the gender role expectations of their cultural heritage that were based on eastern philosophy and practice. On the other hand, when appropriate, they also adapted to the cultural norms of their current exposure to western thinking and behavior. Both these leanings were reflected in their day-to-day lifestyle and more concretely observable. However, their attitudinal shifts with regard to empowerment of women, personal freedom, acceptance of cohabitation, social drinking, and social interactions reflected the influence of their global exposure. The practice of *cultural plasticity* was thus a complex interplay of eastern and western norms that these women selectively practiced, in order to be

culturally congruent. Balancing these polarities was achieved through their adaptations in many ways as explored within the sub-headings below.

Plasticity of overcoming negative gender role stereotypes through awareness of self-efficacy. Women in the study spoke about being stereotyped in terms of their gender roles and responsibilities. Pooja experienced derision by some young men in her engineering college in India who: "used to make fun of us saying what's the need for you to study hard, anyway you'll get married to someone who is already working." Neha recounted an interesting experience she had at an engineering internship in Japan where, as the only girl, and the only Indian, she was patronized by another male intern who said to her, "Oh, you did a pretty good job coding and everything despite being a girl." Deepika spoke of how "mothers in India pamper their sons a lot" because they "don't have to do anything" and "some men don't want to come here [to the U.S.] because of this." Neha was vociferous in challenging her family members on the need to perceive men and women as equals and not get away with the saying that "ladkiyaan to aisa hi karengi or because you're a girl you have to do this...I'm very sure and very vocal to call them out for it."

These women expressed that they had to contend with the reality that as Indian women, they were subjected to differential treatment at home and in the educational and professional institutions in India. In India, Pooja said, "women cannot speak up loud, they cannot put their opinion on the table...when I came here I saw the gender equality there's nothing like a man's opinion matters and a women's opinion doesn't matter...now I have the confidence that my opinion can be considered." By stepping out to live independently, these women asserted their independence and this cultural exposure helped them overcome some of the gender role stereotypes they experienced in India. The exposure in the U.S. made them more sensitive to

perceive gender disparities among Indians and strengthened their advocacy for women. In this sense *cultural plasticity* refers to the ability to perceive and act upon their self-efficacy and empowerment.

Plasticity in balancing the demands of career and family life. There is research to validate the fact that more women in the U.S. experience career interruptions and bear the primary responsibility of managing the home and children (Parker, 2015). This discrepancy is more prevalent in cultures such as India that are inherently patriarchal (Shah & Shah, 2016), though there is an emerging trend for Indian husbands supporting their wives' career ambitions and helping with family responsibilities (Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). In the U.S., the married women in my study managed multiple roles as wives, mothers and professionals but although they didn't have the social support of parents and domestic staff in sharing household and childcare responsibilities, all of them had spousal support. To quote some of the women, Pooja said of her husband, "he'll let me do whatever I want to do and he trusts me very much." Another participant who drew strength from her relationship with her husband was Mitali, who remarked, "my relationship with my husband is really good...he takes care of everything in the house" and she added, "it's really a strong relationship because I'm living here may not have been the same case if I would have lived in India." There were also references in the narratives where women had experienced male colleagues returning to India because they could not manage work and household duties alone. The women in my study were successful professionals and enjoyed their "mental and financial independence," as Mitali named it, in the U.S. Returning to a more traditional culture, they could lose their spousal support and their personal freedom and therefore needed to learn to be culturally plastic in managing their changing gender roles.

Plasticity in choosing to adhere to cultural codes of conduct. Besides managing

multiple roles, these women also had to stay within expected gender codes for conduct, and these

women were well aware of these parameters. An example of this expectation of good conduct

can be seen in the narrative of Arti. Arti shared a parental message that metaphorically

expressed their expectations. In her narrative, she said,

my father used to...give me the example of (a) spring...that (if) you will press the spring that hard

it will bounce in the opposite direction but if you release that spring wherever it is, it will be with

you in a good state...and I will follow that.

In her experience, Arti had not faced any restrictions on account of her gender, however,

this underlying expectation to conform to cultural expectations stayed in her mind as a guide to

behavior. Whether the impetus for approved conduct was simply that of any parent or culture-

specific, there was an implicit expectation that these women would function within the gender

role expectations of their heritage culture. For Arti, this meant that she could explore new

environments but she must respect the freedom entrusted by her parents. And for this she needed

to be culturally malleable.

Among the narratives there were other expressions of family values that endorsed a

strong moral code with regard to socializing, maintaining sexual chastity, consumption of

alcohol, and co-habitation. These gender role expectations could be discerned from comments

such as Sonam's, who said, "they [parents] don't want us smoking or drinking" or Sandhya, who

said, "my parents have given me such good values...I know what are the limitations to be taken

care of." Most of these women left home with expectations to not do anything to bring shame to

the family. These women internalized parental messages such as, "never do anything which will

spoil your career or your life along with ours," and "[parents] trust us...that we will not do any

wrong thing...we would not do anything that will harm us or them [referring to smoking, drinking]." That they carried these values internally speaks to their identification with heritage cultural norms that were non-negotiable and for which they were less inclined to be flexible. In this sense, they chose not to be culturally plastic because they didn't extend their cultural boundaries.

  Plasticity practiced by making ideological shifts. For this group of women, upholding ethnic values of respect for elders, following cultural and religious rituals, making suitable marriages, and managing their family roles as daughters, daughters-in-law, wives, and mothers, were all ways of demonstrating cultural conformity. But while conforming to cultural values, they made ideological shifts in accepting other ways of living. For instance, for Mitali it was a "shock" to hear that "a girl and a boy are living together in one apartment" because in India it was likely to be disallowed and disapproved of. And she said, "and then slowly I got to know...it's fine...[if her younger brother moved in with a girlfriend]...I'll be fine with that...but that was not the case earlier." Mitali also slowly accepted the practice of social drinking with colleagues because while working in India, that wasn't a part of the work culture. When her husband stayed late to mingle with his work colleagues, she eventually accepted it as "part of the culture." What is significant in this is that she related, "...and then, slowly, I also became part of that culture and I didn't even realize that." This is another demonstration of her cultural plasticity where she shifted her values on cohabitation and social drinking as acceptable, socially appropriate behavior practiced in her current cultural environment.

  Cultural Plasticity in this context referred to the awareness that there were alternate ways of experiencing life and they chose to stay within the limits of their cultural socialization. For these independently thinking women exposed to alternate ways of being, this international

experience opened opportunities to make attitudinal shifts. Although their career aspirations allowed them global exposure, these women had to accommodate their personal choices within the sociocultural codes of conduct expected of them as Indian women. This required *cultural plasticity* as they learned to function effectively in both cultures.

Individualism/Collectivism

The sub-theme of Individualism/Collectivism examined the ways in which these women practiced within group culture but also stayed true to their individual needs. Through their first-person *desi* voices (the term *desi* refers to an identification with Indian ethnicity), these women articulated the impact of their ethnic identity on their shifting worldview. Coming from a culture that encourages collective decision-making and deference to authority, these women had to invoke their inner voices that represented their individuality to pave the way for their relocation. This required adapting to the expectations of contrapuntal voices representing their traditional upbringing and gender-role expectations. These women had chosen professions that offered global mobility for career advancement, so the very nature of the profession laid the groundwork for stepping around some cultural norms. These norms expected women to remain within proximity of their primary families, to develop marital relationships at the appropriate age, and to subsume their careers in the interest of the family unit. In collectivistic cultures, group goals are favored over individual ones, and there is a strong sense of group cohesion and interdependence, often expressed through collective decision-making (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman et al., 2002).

Plasticity in adapting individual voices to group "noise." In developed countries such as the U.S., the accent is on individualism, where the emphasis is on independence and self-reliance, as well as resisting influences from external sources such as families, society, and

institutions (Hofstede, 2011). Indian culture, representative of developing and eastern countries, adheres to values of collectivism, where relational connection is favored over individual priorities, and familial and cultural group cohesion is valued over the needs of the individual (Hofstede, 2011). Being collectivistic means that one's cognitive and emotional orientation is drawn from familial and societal relationships rather than an expression of individuality. In cultures that practice collectivistic values, seeking individuation becomes more challenging because of interdependence and group cohesion.

In Nafisa's experience, living alone abroad gave her the opportunity to make her own decisions and "own the responsibility" that came with it. It made her stronger, and she enjoyed the fact that she had independently made the decision, "whatever the consequence." Referring to the social support from her family and friends in India, Nafisa shared that she was "influenced by everything" in her "personal and professional life." This was a demonstration of *cultural plasticity* because although Nafisa enjoyed the social support of family, colleagues, and friends in India, she also welcomed the ability for independent decision-making without their influence.

Similarly, speaking about the difficulty of Indian women to break personal relationships Priya said,

> the moment you go back to India...you're trying to please everyone...you just don't want to create any noise in the family...you always want to have a good name for yourselves...because you always want to interact with these people...but here [U.S.]...you have your own life...your own peace and quiet.

This was a very pertinent example of collectivism where individual conduct was seen to reflect on the group. Hearing Priya speak about it helped me understand that she lost her sense of individuality in the Indian collectivistic environment because she said,

this is one thing that's always been with me between there [India] and here [U.S.]…lot of things that women want to think are just clouded, they can't even reach that part of the brain where there is a clear thought, because there's always this noise around you that just clouds these all clear thoughts in your head. But the moment you come out of it, you realize that you have all these clarified thoughts that you always had but probably realize it only after you come here.

However, it is clear that Priya also valued being part of the group and being accepted and respected by them. She played different roles in different environments. In India, she maintained cultural conformity by adhering to her expected role by "trying to please everyone" to avoid "noise in the family." Yet, it was not that Priya didn't value individual independence because that was her struggle in the Indian work environment where she didn't get creative freedom. In the U.S., she enjoyed that professional and personal freedom of being able to express herself without fear of censure, evidenced by: "compared to before, I feel that I'm more confident more...I speak up in certain things which I never would have done a year and half back." Interestingly, she responded to my question regarding how she would fare if she returned to the invalidating work environment she had experienced in India saying: "Oh, God, I would probably not survive... or I would be instantly be considered as a rebellious as opposed to gradually becoming rebellious from the start." In Priya's experience, she had learned to become more individuated in the professional space but was still very emotionally connected in her personal life. This was a way of practicing *cultural plasticity* by molding herself to her cultural surroundings. In this way, her persona sought approval and closeness from her relational connections but also strived for validation as a professional.

Plasticity by overcoming the loss of established social support by making new connections. An advantage of coming from collective family structures was that these women had close relationships with their immediate and extended family members, friends and colleagues, and even the Indian diaspora. This was beneficial for some of them when they were settling in a new country because they relied on them for practical and emotional support, as was experienced by Arti, Pooja, Sonam, Priya, Mitali, and Jyoti. However, moving abroad uprooted the existing social support system for some of the others (Sandhya, Deepika, Nafisa, and Neha) and they had to reach out to make new connections. This need to seek social support was observed in many narratives where these women sought new friendships, learned about new cultures, and adopted new lifestyles. Many of the women spoke of missing family members and friends and the practice of impromptu meetings with friends. They felt that western etiquette favored a more formal approach to meeting friends that was less spontaneous. One way for these women to keep relational contact was to connect regularly with family and friends on the telephone and via social media. Other ways to maintain cultural traditions were to seek opportunities to participate in ethnic celebrations and rituals. On the other hand, making friends with locals, celebrating mainstream holidays with them, and sharing their Indian traditions with people from other cultures and nationalities were ways for these women to demonstrate cultural plasticity.

Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments

Lastly, the sub-theme of adaptation to changing sociocultural environments focused on the behavioral and attitudinal flexibility practiced by these women in adjusting to a different work culture and lifestyle. Living in the U.S. allowed these women to make their own lifestyle choices regarding food, culture, and dress but more significant were the changes noted in

attitudinal and behavioral practices with specific relevance to gendered household

responsibilities and acceptance of social drinking and cohabitation.

       Plasticity required to adapt to a different work culture. Adapting to a differing work

culture also required these women to practice cultural plasticity. Nafisa mentioned that working

in an environment where there were colleagues to bounce ideas and social exchanges made the

workplace a pleasanter environment in India. On the other hand, working alone in the U.S. as an

intracompany transferee helped Nafisa become more organized and disciplined about her time

management. In this instance, Nafisa was able to mold herself to work practices in both

environments. Women who had worked in India were aware of the cultural differences in

workplaces. Deepika had some thoughts on this aspect when she said,

> I won't say that it's very easy for somebody to come from India and settle in here
>
> ...because when you work here and then you have to go back to India and start working
>
> there, it's altogether a different game again, because In India what happens is the
>
> appreciation is not to the level you expect to be...I feel that the recognition is much, much
>
> better here than in India.

> Other examples Deepika gave me of work style differences pertained to a lack of

flexibility to work from home, the expectation to work global hours, and micromanagement in

the Indian work environment.

       In Sonam's experience, employees in India, especially younger management, were

expected to work longer hours. As Sonam's expressed, "at our age, the work-life is much better

over here because at our age people expect us to work and have no personal life in India." In

comparison, while working in the U.S. these women experienced creative freedom, and as

Sonam added, "work-life balance is better over here [U.S.] than there [India]." In Pooja's

experience, by being able to work remotely in the U.S., "sometimes if you have issues in production I have to log in [after I come home] I have that flexibility." Another aspect shared by Priya was that she had increased opportunities to establish her visibility. In her words, "I'm being considered as one of the high performers in the team consistently and that's something that's hard for me to believe [compared to her invalidating work experience in India."

These differences would require individuals to adapt bilaterally to work structures in India that differed in terms of stifled creativity. Priya found that "there was not much room for creativity [in the Indian work environment]." Deepika mentioned titular hierarchy as "the position things, the title thing matters a lot in India." Sonam added that leadership styles were more authoritarian, there were restrictions..."in India vacations are very highly scrutinized." There were also stereotypical perceptions of competence that some of these women had to contend with, as Mitali had experienced, "they think that women are not really that great in terms of technology, they cannot become technical leader, but they can become a manager." Additionally, these women found it easier to talk to colleagues in the U.S. because some of them found that being:

the only woman [in her office]...other men in the team would come to me, they would

ask...do you want to join us for lunch or do you want to grab a coffee with me...I mean

they would themselves come to me and talk to me, introduce themselves, try to get to

know me but in India, it was completely different. It's like, you need to take all the

effort, you need to think of the ways to talk to other men in the team, but they would not

approach themselves to talk to you.

Working in these vastly different environment would require these women to strategically manage their own and their employers' expectations. This was another form of *cultural plasticity* required of these women to achieve professional growth.

Plasticity in adapting lifestyle through behavioral practices. Food culture defined cultural identity in some ways for these women but it also shaped their need for cultural plasticity. Although these women were open to explore global food culture, there was a strong preference for the known and familiar. Many of them felt comfortable continuing ethnic food culture, apparent from comments like: "whatever we used to have in India, in the same pattern I am making it here;" "I need to have at least one Indian meal in a day, I'm still very much Indian in that;" "being Indian, we always prefer Indian food;" and "I still love Indian food a lot, every day we eat Indian food at home." On the one hand, food was a way for these women to stay anchored to their heritage culture. Contrarily, they also made remarks such as "I like new places and new foods;" "there is an addition...kids like desserts, kids like pastas so started making more as compared to India." It was this practice of both/and in terms of daily living that speaks to their ability to be culturally flexible because they kept the old but explored the new as well.

Jyoti had made a conscious choice to raise her son in a culturally-congruent way because she wanted to return to India. As she expressed,

> even with respect to food habits I would probably not introduce him to everything that we are used to eating [in the U.S.] because I feel that we are going back to India and he should know this or at least get used to this.

This was an important aspect of cultural connection for Jyoti and she wanted to ensure that her son retained the basic ways of an Indian lifestyle through food and language acquisition. This is an example of Jyoti's choice to keep one foot firmly in India because they had made the

clear choice of returning and that meant retaining cultural connections. In some sense, this was an alternate way of living in the U.S. by perpetuating a traditional Indian environment, which required *cultural plasticity*.

Of relevance in this context is also the fact that gender roles were changing among Indian couples, especially those that lived abroad. An example is found in Mitali's narrative when she said that:

> even my husband, he does all the things at home whenever I'm not there he will take care of everything and sometimes even if I'm in office and I tell him I'm tired he will cook...So yeah, now things are changing a lot I would say.

Changes were so much so that she found it a reason that deterred her from returning to India where she would be subjected to gender role expectations of a woman managing the household even though she had a career. Besides expecting her husband to share in household duties, she found that being mindful of how she dressed in front of her elders would also restrict her personal development in India. Mitali was apprehensive that her parents and her in-laws would say, "don't wear that, wear something else, because we are going to a relative's place and then you know what they will say?" She found that if she felt restricted in her day-to-day life it was a "kind of a hurdle in terms of your personal development."

Similarly, in terms of clothing choices, some of the relevant comments came from Sandhya who remarked, "I wear saris also, and when required I wear single dresses also...That is the only small or minute difference I don't think so it impacts much on my character," "here we can easily wear short skirts but then in India you cannot go anywhere in short skirts." This suggests that these women were modern and wanted to experiment with trendy clothing. What I found interesting was Sandhya's association of clothing to a reflection on her character. Her

vehement dismissal of the same suggests that somewhere in the back of her mind is ingrained her

cultural sense of propriety as expressed in western clothes. Most of the women in my study

shared that even in India they wore modest western clothes like jeans and capris besides ethnic

wear. In the U.S., these women had the opportunity to enjoy trendier western clothes without the

added scrutiny of familial and societal eyes.

It may seem like a superficial thing but restrictions in daily living, whether it was

clothing or in losing the sharing of household chores with spouses, felt like incursions to

personal freedom for some like Mitali and reason for her reluctance to return to India. These

behavioral changes represent cultural plasticity in that these women blended a form of

biculturalism so that they adapted themselves to be conventional as well as progressive. By

being simultaneously traditional and modern, these women practiced cultural hybridity, which is

described as the old becoming a transformed new (Bhabha, 2004). In this context, cultural

hybridity represents something more than the process of assimilating to U.S. cultural mores.

Rather, it is perceived as an identity that blends eastern and western ideology in a process of

constant updating in relation to the environment.

Plasticity in making attitudinal and ideological shifts. Besides the more practical

adaptations to food and dressing, these women also experienced some attitudinal changes that

occurred at a deeper level. What facilitated these cognitive shifts was their openness to new

experiences and their global exposure. Many of the women spoke of their reticent nature fading

to accommodate a more confident one that engaged more with people across cultures, socially

and professionally. In the voice of Arti it was expressed as:

in India I was only having people who were from the same state but after coming to U.S.

my group...includes even not from India but from the whole world...the best part I liked is

that I got to know many new people and their culture.

Another representative excerpt from Pooja in this regard refers to the impact of global

exposure on personal confidence:

I used to stay with five Indian girls...but they are again from different parts of India like

north-south…and also in college I had to interact with different people like Chinese,

Americans, Russians...and I felt so confident after I came here and started studying

because now, I am able to talk to everyone.

There was a curiosity to learn about other people and cultures, and acceptance of

different worldviews among their voices. Most of these women lived in mainstream society

rather than in ethnic enclaves as typical expatriates do. This allowed them to interact with

people from many different countries and they welcomed the exchange. This global exposure

allowed these women to become aware of their own attitudes relating to gender roles, the status

of women in the male-dominated IT industry, and it allowed them to question their values

regarding cohabitation and sexual orientation. While practicing within the norms endorsed by

their parents, the participants were also aware of the broadening of their own attitudes towards

people who didn't fit the parameters of their cultural heritage. Referring to cultural differences

in social behavior, Mitali said that:

in India people don't even do a handshake...when I came here [a friend] gave me a small

hug it felt very weird for me...in India even for team lunches people don't do social

drinking, because that's not part of our culture.

Mitali eventually became part of the culture in the US because she found that work colleagues stayed out late on week nights and she accepted that "it's part of the culture, and then, slowly, I also became part of that culture and I didn't even realize that." This excerpt illustrates her ideological shift that occurred at a sub-conscious level where she accepted social mores and began practicing them herself. In this manner also, these women practiced *cultural plasticity* because they adhered to cultural norms prescribed for them but developed more tolerance for other lifestyles. These attitudinal and behavioral shifts helped sharpen their sense of self.

This sense of self or cultural identity as it pertained to ethnicity was a complex state of existence. These women had clear ideas of which part of India they traced their family lineage to. An example to explain this is found in the words of Deepika who said, "I am from a Punjabi family...we are very outspoken...Punjabis are very jolly, fun-loving." Deepika spoke about difficulties in her interactions with Indians from other regions who she found to be reserved and she had also experienced nepotism among some sub-cultural groups from India in the U.S. Such groupism is likely to have sharpened her own identity as an Indian from a sub-culture of Punjabis. In responding to the intrapsychic question of 'Who am I?' these women were able to express that they were Indian, from specific regions and sub-cultures and even though stereotyped, it gave them a sense of identity. And it was the enhanced opportunity to mingle with the *desi* diaspora as well as global cultures that allowed them to build on their cultural capital.

Many of the women expressed a sense of pride in their heritage culture that stemmed from an identification with family values, religion, practice of rituals and cultural activities, food culture and language ability. Whether they identified as an outspoken, fun-loving Punjabi (Deepika), a traditionally-raised Delhite (Sandhya), or a reserved Tamilian (Priya), these women

learned to appreciate all the overt and subtle cultural differences. Their cultural self-identification evolved to become more national and less regional through this lived experience because while they were sensitive to intracultural variations (between sub-cultures within India), they were also aware of intercultural differences (between Indian culture and other cultures).

Arti spoke about the western practice of dating that she was exposed to after moving to the US but her cultural socialization endorsed the view that relationships were not to be entered with frivolity but rather as a serious commitment. Arti mentioned that as a student she had experienced situations where she was expected to have a boyfriend by her peers. Although her parents had not restricted her from choosing a life partner she knew that being in a relationship before marriage was not the norm in her heritage culture. Arti enjoyed the new experiences of her global exposure, improving her ability to interact in English, engaging in bilateral cultural exchanges, and increasing her intracultural knowledge through her interactions with other Indians. However, she practiced *cultural plasticity* by learning to adapt and change but also remaining steadfast to her cultural values.

An *I* poem succinctly explains her worldview:

I will know about the other culture

I will adjust in the other culture but

I will never follow the other culture and change myself completely

I'll always…because my roots are always from India.

International relocation is inherently a learning experience that offers the potential of change associated with cognitive and attitudinal shifts and acquisition of cultural capital. For this group of Indian women belonging to a privileged section of global professionals, career advancement was the motive for relocation and this endeavor enhanced their holistic

development. Undertaking this relocation allowed these women to experience transitions that

sometimes took them out of their comfort zone, spurring positive change. These transitions

required these women to compromise with their competing needs and with their gender role

expectations, as they exercised their choices. The role of *cultural plasticity* was a relevant aspect

of this lived experience of international relocation for work because it signified transience. The

whole experience of initiating the relocation, acculturating to new sociocultural, and professional

environments gave these women the chance to grow as individuals and globally literate career

women.

Chapter Summary

This was a complex study that captured the significance of non-immigrant lived

experiences of ten Indian women technology professionals. The impermanence embedded in

non-immigration experiences and the role of immigration policies served as a rich context in

interpreting these experiences. The leading themes of *Negotiated Compromises* and *Cultural*

Plasticity explored many ways through which these women retained relational and cultural

connections while adapting to a new sociocultural environment. The theme of *Negotiated*

Compromises involved many aspects that included parental/familial approval and concerns, need

to preserve relational connection, and the challenge of balance competing needs for career and

marriage, complicated by the cultural practice of endogamy and patrilocality and the impact of

their non-immigrant status. The theme of *Cultural Plasticity* explored personal and work culture

adaptations, attitudinal and cognitive shifts, and the maintenance of cultural codes of conduct.

The gist of the responses to the research question regarding this lived experience of work-related

relocation is that it required personal compromise and cultural flexibility.

In Chapter Five, I will discuss some of the ways in which the experiences of these women relate to existing research literature in the field of acculturation and expatriation. Since this study also incorporated tenets of Relational-Cultural Theory and Third Space theory in addition to the Acculturation model, some of the connections to these approaches will be included as appropriate. In summary, this lived experience of initiating the relocation, and acculturating to new sociocultural, academic, and professional environments gave these women the chance to grow as globally literate career women as well as culturally hybrid global *desis*.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

My broad research interest is in exploring cultural identity in the context of global mobility. Based upon this interest, I designed my study to explore the lived experiences of ten non-immigrant Indian women technology professionals who relocated to the U.S. for career purposes. My research question was: What are the lived experiences of Indian women technology professionals in the context of temporary career-related relocation to the U.S.? In this chapter, the findings of the study will be related to existing contextual literature associated with the sub-themes of gendered socialization practices in Indian culture, practice of individualism-collectivism, and adaptation to changing sociocultural environments in the context of the two main themes of *negotiated compromises* and *cultural plasticity*. The use of theory in this study will be discussed next to clarify how it related to the discussion of findings.

Theoretical Approaches Related to Findings

This study was designed to use the Acculturation model as a lens to interpret the findings because the study explored acculturative experiences associated with work-related expatriation (Berry, 1997, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturation is defined as the psychological and sociocultural changes that an individual experiences in the process of adjusting to a new environment (Berry, 1997). Using this approach, the focus is on examining the intrapersonal and interpersonal changes in people and the influence of cultural exposure resulting in adaptation to lifestyles and attitudes. Concepts of acculturation that related to my findings included acculturation strategies, acculturative stress, culture shock, culture learning and culture shedding, biculturalism, and the impact of acculturative experiences in cultural identity changes (Berry, 1997, 2005; Chadda & Deb, 2013; Oysermann et al., 2002; Phinney et al., 2001; Sam & Berry, 2010; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010; Sussman, 2011; Ward, 2004; Ward &

Kagitcibasi, 2010; Ward et al., 2001). The constructs associated with the Acculturation model

are particularly relevant to the findings described in the third sub-theme of adaptation to

changing sociocultural environments.

The findings described in the theme of *Negotiated Compromises* went beyond the focus

on internal psychological changes, as it indicated the role of participants' families and cultural

context in this lived experience of acculturation. Therefore, in order to deepen the discussion of

my findings, I drew from some of the basic principles of Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT)

because it allowed me to explore the compromises of the individual and their families in cultural

context more appropriately (Jordan et al., 2004). RCT was developed around discourses of

women's growth and the ways in which they connect to significant others in their family,

emphasizing that relationships nurture growth (Miller, 1991). This foundational principle of

RCT was optimal to the discussion of my findings of women negotiating compromises with their

family members for their aspirational needs.

Likewise, while inductively interpreting the theme of *Cultural Plasticity*, I found that

using the Acculturation model alone restricted me to discuss *cultural plasticity* as a form of

integration or biculturalism, meaning that an individual functions effectively in more than one

cultural context (Berry, 1997). Although Berry's model of acculturation has been expanded to

include the concept of "blended biculturalism" (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 14), which represents

the synthesis of different cultures, I found it relevant to explore my findings in the context of the

concept of 'third space' (Bhabha, 2004, p. 53). Third Space theory goes a little further in

positing that cultural identity of individuals exposed to two cultures constantly evolves and

becomes transformed as a culturally hybrid identity (Bhabha, 2004). In the context of my theme

of *cultural plasticity*, the cultural identity of the women was hybrid because it represented the

simultaneous presence of elements of both heritage and global culture in a transformed and

dynamic identity, that of being global *desis*.

Even though the Acculturation model was initially identified as the approach most

suitable for discussing acculturative experiences, I avoided *a priori* theorization in order to

conform to the inductive nature of qualitative research. This study was not meant to be

verificational, and therefore, theory was used *a posteriori,* as a lens to discuss its relevance to the

findings. In this chapter, I use the three aforementioned approaches to enhance the discussion of

my findings by weaving in concepts of each as appropriate to the interpretation. Not all

approaches were applicable to all the themes and sub-themes completely, but together they made

a gestalt that was more than the sum of its parts. Thus, each approach helped to deepen the

discussion of my findings that would not be possible had I used only one of these approaches. In

keeping with the recommendations of Cohen and Crabtree (2006), the use of these three

perspectives allowed the interpretation to be "rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed,"

demonstrating deeper understanding (Triangulation definition, para. 3). Therefore, in this

chapter, the contributions of this study will be presented as a rich discussion of the themes

blending each of the three approaches appropriately in the context of existing literature in the

field of acculturation, expatriation, culture and identity.

The next sections of this chapter will discuss the study's findings in relation to the

existing literature, the three aforementioned approaches, and provide implications for the

counseling discipline, followed by the study's limitations, and conclude with suggestions for

future research.

Negotiated Compromises

In the first theme in my study, I discussed the findings in the context of *negotiated compromises* made by the women to accommodate varying needs in their decision to move to the U.S. for their professional development. This theme related to three sub-themes pertaining to: 1) Gender Role Expectations associated with Cultural Socialization in India, 2) The Role of Individualism and Collectivism, and 3) Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments. The findings featured in these sub-themes are discussed in the context of existing literature and theory as appropriate.

Gender Role Expectations Associated with Cultural Socialization in India

Indian women are socialized to value strong family ties, follow prescribed and restrictive gender roles, and are therefore conflicted by their needs to fulfill family obligations rather than a an independent career (Haq, 2013; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008). Although Indian women are increasingly represented in the Indian workforce, these women must meet the culturally normed gender role expectations (Bhandari & Titzmann, 2017). Though the women in my study exercised their individual aspirations for professional development, they were expected to abide by familial and societal expectations to maintain respectability, commonly practiced in contemporary Indian middle-class society (Belliappa, 2013). Consistent with this literature, the women in my study needed to abide by their familial expectations to adhere to culturally normative behavior while exposed to global influences, a compromise negotiated for their career development.

Research literature suggested that women of Indian origin in contemporary times are increasingly educated, entering male-dominated professions, and yet, contending with workplace discrimination, wage disparity in the Indian workplace (Gupta et al., 2012b; Haq, 2013; Kelkar,

Shreshta, & Veena, 2002; Mani, 2013; Nath, 2000). The narratives of the women in my study are consistent with this research because these were educated women in highly specialized professions working in the gender-imbalanced technology industry. Among the women with work experience in India prior to their expatriation, there were some references to restrictive work culture, however, they did not speak about workplace discrimination in the U.S.

The findings of my study are consistent with the literature relating to parental concerns for safety and conduct and maintaining familial connections (Batra & Relo, 2016; Tummala-Narra, 2013). Parental concerns for their daughters related not only to their responsibility for them, but also worry for their daughters' wellbeing, especially considering distances between India and the U.S. These women therefore maintained close connections with their families on a regular basis and their references to family values to refrain from misconduct are evidence of their negotiated compromises.

Gendered socialization practices in Indian culture encourage women to be non-assertive and submissive, nurturing marital and family obligations as caregivers, and de-prioritizing career aspirations (Budhwar et al., 2005; Haq, 2013; Srinivasan et al., 2013). It is valid to state that these women came from a culture described as androcentric and hierarchical, but contrary to theoretical literature describing disempowerment of women in such cultures, the women in my study learned to assert themselves to act upon their aspirations (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Gilligan, 1982). The women in my study had to manage their roles as daughters and wives as well as pursue their roles as educated technology professionals. This required them to be assertive with their families about their career needs requiring them to relocate. Among those women in my study who were married, there were some challenges to balance their career and family life. The single women prioritized their careers over the option to marry, which was also a compromise in

some ways because women with established careers found it hard to exercise the option to get

married while living temporarily in the U.S.

In Indian culture, gender roles are clearly delineated and are socially constructed,

contributing to gender inequalities (Batra & Relo, 2016). This subtheme of gender role

expectations discussed the need for women, acting upon their choices for career advancement, to

justify these needs to their families. The transience associated with this career-related move

further complicated their choices related to both career and marriage. It is an increasing global

trend for professional women to defer marriage and family life for the development of their

careers and financial independence (Berg-Cross, Scholz, Long, Grzeszcyk, & Roy, 2004).

Consistent with this literature, in the narratives, many of the single women expressed the

prioritization of their careers over marriage at least until they felt professionally and

economically independent.

Individualism/Collectivism

Considering that the women in my study were socialized in a culture that is described as

collectivistic, hierarchal, androcentric, and paternalistic (Chadda & Deb, 2013), it is easy to

relate to their need to *negotiate compromise* to attain their individual goals for professional

development. Research affirmed that Indians are both collectivistic in their prioritization of

family and value group cohesion, emotional linkages and mutual support, as well as

individualistic when it comes to pursuing aspirations for self-realization or individual growth

(Sinha, 2014). Sinha (2014) also stated that Indians feel the need to be self-reliant and achieve

their educational and professional goals because they do not want to be a burden to the family, an

"individualistic orientation driven by a collectivistic concern for the interests of the family"

(p.41). This was certainly true of several of the participants who received scholarships and took

graduate assistantships and jobs to pay their student loans rather than burden their parents and spouses with financial commitments.

The sense of self-reliance represents individualism, as expressed in a few of the women's narratives wanting to be independently employed before getting married, and being very uncomfortable with "being dependent on someone was a drastic change." These were professional women capable of being independent and this sense of self-worth was incompatible with dependency. This was coupled with their need to prove their self-worth and trust invested in them because their families expected them to keep their end of the compromise maintaining respectability and culturally congruent family values.

Indian women are socialized to be oriented towards the family unit with expectations that they will maintain psychological and emotional connections with family members despite distance (Tummala-Narra, 2013). The need for maintaining psycho-emotional connection is apparent in the efforts of the women to seek parental approval for their career decisions and respect for family values. These women *negotiated* this *compromise* of physical distance by maintaining regular connection with their family members as well as members of the *desi* community in the U.S. through the use of technology and social media.

Further, Indians practice from both individualistic and collectivistic orientations selectively in expressing the needs of their "private self" and "family self," the latter referring to the tendency of Indians to act upon their connections to their family (Desai, 1999, p.2; Roland, 1988). According to Roland (1988), the familial self in Indian women is very powerful and overrides the individual self because of internalized values of being keepers of tradition. This was demonstrated clearly in the narrative of Sandhya when she discussed her self-imposed restrictions to upkeep her "sanskaar." This was demonstrated in other narratives that described

how these women chose to keep their end of the negotiated compromise by following family

rules for conduct and tradition (Arti, Pooja, Sonam, Priya, Jyoti).

Family interdependence and perceived family obligations had impactful influences on

academic performance (Tseng, 2004). Family interdependence relates to the acceptance of

parental authority and respect, maintenance of family relationships, collective decision-making

and expectations for academic success because poor performance was a reflection on individuals

and their families (Tseng, 2004). This was certainly observed in my study because the

achievements of these women were not only their own goals, but also to live up to

parental/familial expectations and trust. The findings were consistent with the research literature

regarding the selective practice of both individualistic and collectivistic values as evidenced by

the efforts of the women to find the delicate balance between competing needs for career and

family, and find ways to justify parental/familial trust through their professional achievements

(Sinha, 2014; Tseng, 2004).

Research literature pointed to the fact that despite achieving educational and financial

parity, Indian women had to find ways to cope with the stress of working in a fast-paced

technology industry as well as attending to their families, and many still opted to prioritize

family over work (Darshan et al., 2013; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Kavitha et al., 2012; Valk &

Srinivasan, 2011). This is a classic example of the conflict between individualistic needs and

collectivistic expectations. This was not specifically indicated in the findings of my study

because not all of the participants had families with them, but among those that did, there were

references to the stress of managing familial responsibilities without the support of extended

family.

Endogamy is a practice of finding a life partner from within one's community and based on the internal diversity of Indian society, it extends to caste, religion, socio-economic status, and various sub-cultures relating to regionality and language (Goli, Singh, & Sekher, 2013; Panda & Gupta, 2004). Among the women in my study, whether arranged by their families or for love, their marriages were with endogamous partners. Caste and religion play an important role in Indian culture, especially when it relates to choosing marriage partners (Madan & Friedrich, 2017). According to a longitudinal survey conducted in India, 92% of the respondents had married within their caste, 36% disapproved of inter-caste marriages, 45% disapproved of inter-religion marriages, and 84% had arranged marriages, and 97% of the respondents reported endogamous marriages (Madan & Friedrich, 2017).

Indian youth were described as caught between tradition and modernity as they grappled with values of cultural conservatism and global liberalism (Harikrishnan, 2017). They were different from global youth in that they had strong family and cultural ties that inhibited their self-differentiation, yet they were unlike the older generations on account of their aspirations and consumerism (Harikrishnan, 2017). In the context of my study, it can be stated that the women felt the dialectical pull of embracing individuality and following their aspirations but they also practiced conservatism in their attitudes towards marriage, family involvement, and deference to hierarchical figures. These choices required compromises to be made to balance conflicting values. Though the practice of endogamy was evident among the women in my study, contrary to the literature, the women in my study contradicted the literature by prioritizing their career over marriage (Darshan et al., 2013; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Kavitha et al., 2012; Madan & Friedrich, 2017; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011).

Patrilocality is a term that refers to the practice of a woman entering the family home of her husband after marriage and members of the husband's family reside with the married couple (Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019). In Indian culture, this practice is prevalent across the country and studies have examined its detrimental impact on women's autonomy, freedom of movement, and access to healthcare (Khalil & Mookerjee, 2019). The findings of my study support this research regarding the prevalence of the practice of patrilocality as seen in the experience of two women in my study who moved to the U.S. after marriage, giving up their jobs in India for the purpose. For them, the move meant recreating their work identity because they had to further their education before becoming employed, both as a function of job requirements as well as visa status, a compromise to be negotiated with their circumstances. This cultural practice also had some advantages as was seen in the experience of two of the women who were mothers. For them, living in a joint family meant having family support and companionship, these women welcomed the role of grandparents in the lives of their children. In this instance, patrilocality brought these women abroad with their spouses but took them away from extended family support and closeness, evidence of compromises made by the women and their families.

Collectivistic cultures practice interdependence, often with extended family members stepping in to share in household duties and caregiving responsibilities (Buddhapriya, 2009). The women in my study did not have family members or hired staff to rely on for caregiving and support on a daily basis, though some had extended family members who eased their acculturative experience initially. Mathur-Helm (2002) reported that women expatriates from traditionally socialized countries typically received little or no support from accompanying family members. This was not the experience of the married women in my study because their spouses supported their educational and career objectives and shared household duties.

Moreover, since Mathur-Helm's study, conducted in 2002, the increased use of the internet and digital forums such as Skype, WhatsApp, and FaceTime have improved connectivity and reduced social isolation as evidenced in the narratives of the women in my study.

Adapting to Changing Sociocultural Environments

The women in my study faced several challenges in this lived experience of relocation: 1) convincing their parents to allow them to go abroad alone; 2) settling down independently; 3) making new social connections; 4) learning ways of functioning in a new cultural environment; and 5) becoming flexible in their attitudes while maintaining connection with their heritage culture. These were challenges that required negotiating compromises with themselves, and their families. Relocating to a new country independently was a personal compromise for most of the women in my study because they were alone and had to learn to negotiate the new sociocultural environment without the physical support of their family members or friends.

While adapting to new sociocultural and work environments is facilitated by social and organizational support, most of these women also learned to assimilate and adjust to their new lifestyle through their own self-efficacy and by being open to new experiences. Some of the women spoke of the positive influence of fellow international students and university resources in acculturation, while others who had extended family members within U.S. and spouses living with them found it easier to adapt. In spite of these resources, the compromise for these women in being uprooted from their social circle in India was experienced through the loss of their family members and friends and the cultural environment they were socialized in, especially acute for some of the women without cultural social supports.

The process of acculturating to new sociocultural environments can be stressful, however, it did not come across that the women in my study experienced undue hardship in

adjustment to a new cultural environment, usually referred to as acculturative stress (Sam &

Berry, 2010; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). Rather, consistent with research (Aycan,

1997; Berry, 2005; Berry, 2006b), these women perceived acculturative challenges as a positive

stress, as impetus to use their resources for social outreach to cope and thrive. To a significant

extent, cultural homogenization enabled acculturation and it is likely that the participants in my

study mostly used a culture learning approach, which refers to the acquisition of new cultural

knowledge to integrate to their new environment (Ward, 2004). Moreover, in keeping with

research literature, acculturative stress enabled transformative growth for these women as they

engaged in culture learning, utilized resources and learned independent living skills (Kim &

Kim, 2013; Meza & Gazzoli, 2011; Yakunina, Weigold, & Weigold, 2013).

Coping strategies practiced by the women in my study were often approach-oriented, be

it meeting new people, trying new food, visiting new places and seeking adventures. Participants

in my study had access to increased social supports including forums such as Expat Indian

groups (Meetup, 2016) and local Indian community groups. Schoepp and Forstenlechner (2010)

highlighted the demographic distribution as a factor in expatriate and family adjustment. In the

context of my study, most of the participants were within access to the large Indian diaspora in

the US, and the organizations they worked for were mostly ethnically diverse. It is important to

highlight that the women in my study were from a more privileged social class, with access to

education and social connections. Moreover, consistent with research, their English language

proficiency, and the fact that they relocated to an English-speaking country with a large diasporic

population of Indians who also spoke regional languages made it easier for them to adjust

(Schwartz et al., 2010; Srivastava & Panday, 2012).

The theme of *Negotiated Compromises* was an exploration of the many ways in which the women in my study managed to balance competing needs for career advancement and marriage, of independence and interdependence, and of their dynamic attitudinal and behavioral adjustments to their sociocultural environment. Overall, the findings of my study discussed in the theme of negotiated compromises could be related to research literature and while they were consistent with some of the literature, they differed from or partially supported others.

Cultural Plasticity

Cultural Plasticity in this study was defined as the ability to practice attitudinal and behavioral flexibility in response to changing sociocultural environments. This concept is differentiated from neuroplasticity, which is associated with neurogenesis and neuronal change in structure and function of the brain as a result of new experiences, from the field of neuroscience (Breedlove, 2015; Fuchs & Flügge, 2014; Kalat, 2014). Cultural neuroscience is a relatively new field of inquiry related to understanding cultural variation and the role of sociocultural experiences in brain functioning and culture acquisition (Losin, 2017; Losin, Cross, Iacoboni, & Dapretto, 2013).

Gender Role Expectations associated with Cultural Socialization in India

The sub-theme of gender role expectations of Indian women examined the many ways in which these women balanced their competing needs for family and career, of individuality and the need for parental approval, of family values for cultural conformity. Gendered identity, referring contextually to the social status of women, is dynamically experienced in societies that are undergoing social change, such as in India (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). Specifically, as a result of urbanization, migration, education and commerce, women in India are increasingly independent and perceived as individuals who have high societal expectations for being viewed

as such (Dhawan, 2005; Maslak & Singhal, 2008). This shift also causes societal conflicts owing

to the complexity of balancing culturally normed gender roles with aspirational roles for

autonomy (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). Further, the pursuit of education and careers enabled

Indian women to explore new ideas and challenge some Indian cultural norms related to gender

roles (Maslak & Singhal, 2008). Consistent with this research, the women in my study practiced

cultural plasticity by overcoming the gender role expectations of their culture that clashed with

their career goals. These women demonstrated that they valued their careers enough that some

of them deferred marriage and relocated abroad alone for the purpose, but with familial approval

because that was important to them.

The findings of my study agree with the contention that Indian women are traditionally

socialized to demonstrate respect for elders, maintain heritage cultural practices, prioritize and

value relationships and caregiving (Budhwar et al., 2005; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008). On the

other hand, they perceived western influences (e.g., cohabitation, social drinking, smoking) as

dilution of their cultural socialization, and therefore, to be avoided. South Asian women are

especially held to higher moral standards as keepers of cultural heritage and prevention of

cultural dilution (Dasgupta, 1998; Kallivayalil, 2004). It is expected that Indian women, more

than men, will observe moderation in sexual and social behavior (Patel, 2007). By practicing

within traditional boundaries these women retained their heritage culture values, yet they shifted

their attitudes to accept western cultural practices even if they didn't follow it themselves.

Narrative excerpts in the study refer to the choices made by these women to practice

within moral codes of their culture, not only because it was a reflection on their families, but also

to perpetuate those values for their children. In Indian culture, consideration of family honor

relates to abstinence from premarital sex, making intra-religious marriages preferably arranged

by family members (Kay, 2012). All the married women in the study had made endogamous and heterosexual alliances with the approval of their family. Some culturally endorsed values expressed by the women included long-term commitment to relationships. This relates to their *negotiated compromises* to be culturally conforming. On the other hand, increased exposure to homosexuality and co-habitation in the U.S. allowed them to become more accepting of diverse social identities and alternate lifestyles than they were culturally socialized to be. This relates to their *cultural plasticity*, of abiding by cultural norms but also broadening their attitudes to accept global practices.

Individualism/Collectivism

Indian culture has been described as collectivist, valuing group cohesion and group belonging, interdependence, where family closeness and social values take precedence over individual needs, and individuals developing their sense of self based on their connections with their close relationships (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oyserman et al., 2002). Women in my study were culturally socialized in India to value interdependence and deference to elders, evident from their narratives describing family value and prioritization requiring mutual compromise (Dupree et al., 2013). Further, cultural socialization in India subscribes to expectations that adult children will continue to live with their parents (Kallivayalil, 2004).

In this context, some of the women in my study expressed their strong ties to family that was driving their decisions to return to India so as to maintain close proximity. These strong ties were also apparent from their practice of Indian cultural traditions and behavioral expectations. Research indicated that living in an informational age, with easy access to family and social circles through the use of technology, people connect more easily (Şahin & Çoklar, 2009;

Srivastava & Panday, 2012; Wang, Shu, & Tu, 2008). These women maintained family closeness and cohesion by including their families in their daily lives through phone calls and use of social media. By finding ways to remain close to their families while being physically apart, these women were able to mold themselves to their need to be independent and yet also demonstrate interdependence, another way of practicing cultural plasticity.

In the context on my study, the women were able to leverage their individual needs with familial expectations. Along the continuum of collectivism-individualism (Hofstede, 2011), these women incorporated the best of both worldviews, valuing the independent self as well as the sense of belonging to the cultural group. The women in my study nurtured individualistic professional aspirations and need for self-reliance, but they achieved this through negotiations with family members and collaborative decision-making. In this sense, these women also practiced cultural plasticity by incorporating both individualistic and collectivistic values as a fluid process rather than adhering to either one.

Connection to one's culture is a way of establishing cultural identity because it gives the individual a sense of belonging (Phinney et al., 2001). Individuals are typically socialized to retain their heritage culture by conforming to their group identity (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2003). The women in my study identified themselves clearly as Indian in terms of their ethnic lifestyle preferences. Cultural identity was expressed in terms of their ethnic pride, and associated with values for family prioritization and collaborative decision-making. When they related their gendered socialization experiences and described their lifestyle, they spoke in their *desi* voices, describing food preferences, practice of tradition, and consideration of family values in decision-making. Pio (2005) described ethnic identity as the "psychological identification as a member of a particular racioethnic group" (p.1280), that is formed loosely, constructed socially,

and retains fluidity. In my study, women identified more closely to their Indian identity in terms

of daily lifestyles and values for family cohesion and interdependence. This did not mean that

these women did not adapt to western ways in their social and professional lives but whether

they had been in the U.S. for less than a year or close to ten years, they had a clear sense of their

value system and lifestyle. In this way, by adapting their behavioral lifestyle and attitudes to

western mores and also psychologically identifying with ethnic values they practiced *cultural

plasticity*.

Despite coming from a society that is largely described as patriarchal and collectivist,

they differentiated from group culture and acted upon their individual aspirations typically

ascribed to more individualistic cultures which exemplifies the idea that Indians are largely

collectivistic, but also selectively individualistic (Sinha, 2014). Speaking in spiritualistic terms,

Indians were perceived as individualistic in their striving towards transcendence as well as

collectivistic in terms of seeing interconnections in the world as representations of divinity

(Sinha, 2014). This discourse is beyond the scope of my study but a good reference to how the

dimension of individualism-collectivism is associated among Indians currently. It can however

be accepted that Indians are more collectivistic than individualistic and this was apparent from

the narratives of the women describing family prioritization, family values, concern for societal

perception, indeed, "individualistic interests and goals have to be pursued keeping the family's

interests and concerns in mind" (Sinha, 2014, p. 45).

Adaptation to Changing Sociocultural Environments

In this study, the purpose of relocating internationally was primarily for career

advancement. This act of global mobility is associated with the concept of acculturation, which

refers to psychological adjustment and sociocultural adaptation (Berry, 1997). Various factors

associated with the Acculturation model were considered to interpret the lived experiences of these women including: 1) acculturation strategies and practice of biculturalism, 2) culture learning and culture shedding practices, and 3) acculturative stress and the use of community resources (Berry, 1997, 2005; Chadda & Deb, 2013; Oysermann et al., 2002; Sam & Berry, 2010; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010; Sussman, 2011; Ward, 2004; Ward & Kagitcibasi, 2010; Ward et al., 2001).

Acculturation strategies and the practice of biculturalism. The Acculturation model is based on the development of acculturation processes that include *assimilation, separation, integration* and *marginalization* (Berry, 1997, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010). The women in my study used integration as a preferred acculturation strategy because they incorporated their ethnic cultural practices but also adapted to their cross-cultural exposure in the U.S. In the interviews, many of the women talked about their ease with connecting with "others" as well as having access to Indian communities by way of direct interaction at work and in social spheres.

The narratives indicated that participants in my study mostly identified with a bicultural ethnic identity in practice, adjusting to western cultural mores while retaining heritage cultural values. This relates to the concept of Bicultural Identity Interaction (BII), which refers to the ability of people who are bicultural (or having the ability to effectively interact in two cultures) to balance and synthesize heritage and adopted cultures rather than polarize them (Schwartz et al., 2010; van Oudenhoven, & Benet-Martínez, 2015). My findings were also consistent with research that individuals high on BII are likely to make better interpersonal connections and demonstrate better psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Berry, Phinney, Sa, & Vedder, 2006).

Culture learning and culture shedding. Globalization brings individuals from diverse cultures together as they interact in different sociocultural environments, accountable for cultural homogenization (Tomlinson, 2003), as well as for sharpening one's sense of cultural identity (Wang, 2007b). A finding across the participants of my study was evidence of culture learning practices (Ward, 2004) that included adopting verbal and non-verbal communication skills, culturally-appropriate social skills including language proficiency, gestures, colloquialisms, and etiquette necessary for effective cross-cultural exchange. Another example of culture learning was the more liberated mindset of these women with regard to social drinking, cohabitation, and gender roles. This attitudinal shift is an indication of globalization and acculturation impacting retention of ethnic cultures as well as culture shedding as referred to by Tomlinson (2003). Culture shedding could lead to intergenerational conflict more evident in long-term immigrant culture (Samuel, 2009; Sandhu & Madathil, 2008). In the context of my study, however, this idea related to the hesitation of parents and families in approving this relocation because of apprehensions regarding the erosion of ethnic values regarding gender role expectations, and fears regarding cultural dilution through exogamy and emigration.

Acculturative stress and the use of community resources. To summarize the experiences of the participants in the context of the Acculturation model, it is evident that most of the women had developed a level of integration (Berry 2005, Sam & Berry 2010). This was demonstrated through the ease with which they were able to adapt to a new environment, whether with familial support and organizational resources or ascribed to personality and openness to experiences. The women demonstrated self-efficacy and resourcefulness that helped them independently manage their lives in the U.S. This group of educated women from a more privileged social class in India did not report facing difficulties beyond their capacity to manage.

Life in the U.S. also represented relative comfort in terms of living conditions, the use of English as the universal language, openness of local residents, inclusivity in workplaces, access to Indian communities, and the cultural homogeneity associated with globalization (Schwartz et al., 2010). Although the women strove to retain values and practices of their heritage culture, this need did not translate into either segregation or marginalization (Berry, 2005). That they assimilated some aspects of western culture is evident in their cultural learning of social mores. These processes of assimilation, accommodation, adaptation and integration practiced by the women in my study relate well to the Acculturation model (Berry, 2005).

Findings in the Context of Relational-Cultural Theory

Using a social-relational approach to understand identity development of women was recommended owing to the socio-culturally contextualized gender role of Indian women (Dhawan, 2005). In this context, I found that RCT was ideal to conceptualize the experiences of the women in my study in relational terms. In RCT, it is accepted that all growth is associated with one's nurturing connections, and that when there is such relational connection between individuals, there is mutual empathy and empowerment (Jordan et al., 2004). The basis for growth is thus nurturing relationships. Findings in my study indicated that the women were supported by their families in undertaking this relocation for purposes of their professional growth. Therefore, it is relevant to discuss this aspect in the context of RCT.

According to RCT, when people are in relationships, there is also the possibility of disconnection such as when there is a clash of ideas or values or there is a failure to understand one another (Jordan et al., 2004). In such situations, if the person in a more powerful position in the relationship is responsive to the other person's articulated needs, there is said to be "relational competence" (Jordan, 2004, p.15). This relational competence was evidently present

in the lived experiences of these women because in keeping with their collectivistic practices of interdependence and collective decision-making, these women sought and received their family's approval for their relocation.

The women in my study acted upon their choices to relocate for career development, deferring marriage in the process. However, this power to make choices was not wantonly exercised, rather it was *negotiated* with family members by making *compromises*. These women were able to relocate for work because their families were receptive to their needs for career advancement, signifying that there was "relational competence" (Jordan et al., 2004, p. 15). This international relocation was initiated by the women in my study for the purpose of professional development and was an opportunity for them to step out of sheltered parental/familial homes to live independently. However, this separation from family to achieve individual goals required the consent and support of their families. That they achieved this support from them is evidence of their personal agency and individuality, but it also demonstrates their need to include their families in this journey of growth. This is in keeping with the main tenet of RCT that women's growth is facilitated by their "growth-fostering connections" characterized by mutual empowerment to act (Jordan et al., 2004, p.2; Miller, 1986).

In RCT, when people are in a "growth-fostering relationship," both individuals in the relationship are energized and empowered to act, each person's self-image is congruent, each person feels a sense of worth, and each person feels connected to not only one another but wants to connect to others (Miller, 1986, p. 3). Contrarily, when the vulnerable person is unable to express themselves adequately or when they do not receive an empathic response from the other, this situation is referred to as the "central relational paradox" in RCT terminology (Jordan et al., 2004, p. 65). The women in my study also did not experience a "relational paradox" because

they were able to receive the nurturance of their families to achieve their individualistic goals (Jordan et al., 2004, p. 65). The findings of my study indicated that the needs of the women were heard by their families, they were not keeping parts of themselves out of their relationships, or compromising their professional aspirations for relational preservation (Fedele, 1994; Gilligan, 1982). Rather, their first-person voices rang clear in articulating their needs, although the contrapuntal voices of their family members were also heard in negotiating compromises with them.

Drawing from the main concept of RCT, it can be stated that the personal agency of the women in my study was anchored in their growth-fostering relational connections (Jordan et al., 1991; Jordan et al., 2004, Miller, 1986). In my study, for instance, physical and emotional family support enabled and empowered these women to act upon their career aspirations. Family retained its salience in the lives of all the women in my study, expressed through their collective decision-making regarding important life decisions such as career, marriage, and choice of domicile. The collectivistic value of interdependence represents relational competence because of its inherent mutuality (Jordan et al., 2004).

According to RCT, when people are in a mutually nurturing relationship, each individual experiences positive energy that is empowering, enables an authentic sense of self, and self-worth that leads to growth (Miller, 1986). In the context of my study, mutual growth among people in relationships also extended to family members in India who benefitted from their daughters' professional endeavors. For instance, family members learned to use social media in order to keep in touch with their daughter, which not only reassured them but also reinforced emotional and cultural ties.

RCT evolved from its original focus on establishing connections between the individual "self" and "others," to one that encompassed not only significant relational connections but also sociocultural values (Jordan et al., 2004). Relating it to the context of my study, this meant that women were connected not only with family members, but they also valued their cultural context while remaining open to their cultural exposure. Cultural exposure allowed these women to reinterpret their gendered and ethnic identity, further validating the ideology of RCT that an individual's personhood is in context with that of significant others as well as the cultural context (Jordan et al., 1991; Miller, 1991).

According to Kallivayalil (2004), Indian women often struggle with the dialectic of maintaining their individual identity or expressing their feminist desires in the backdrop of familial obligations and culture preservation. In the context of my study, such relational conflicts were typically between: a) decisions to prioritize career over personal relationships; b) the conflicting pull to explore new places and returning to the comfort of the familiar; c) negotiating the space between being independent and respecting family values for interdependence; d) attending to moral voices of cultural upbringing while exploring world culture; and e) establishing credibility in the workplace by overcoming self-doubts related to gender-centric perceptions of technological incompetence. These personal conflicts of the women in my study were resolved through *negotiated compromises* and *cultural plasticity*, which required relational competence between these women and their families.

Findings in the Context of Third Space Theory

The women in my study needed to adapt to their changing sociocultural environments, the one of their heritage that they were tethered to, and the other that they were physically in. This adaptation meant that these women physically and psychologically transitioned between these cultures, transforming themselves correspondingly. That they effectively managed to function in both is apparent from their narratives that reflect bilateral acculturation, which required them not only to straddle both cultures but also interpret themselves in the light of this transformative experience (Banks & Banks, 2013). They achieved this transformative state through retention of old ways of being and adapting to new customs so that the old became a transformed new, a "blended biculturalism" (Schwartz et al., 2010, p.14).

Contextually, I found this to be in keeping with Bhabha's (2004) very fitting explanation of the "Third Space" (p. 53). According to Bhabha (2004), multiculturalism or diversity does not merely mean the blending of different cultures. Rather, Bhabha's (2004) conceptualized idea of cultural *hybridity* does not denote "One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*" (emphasis in original, p.313) two cultures. In other words, "the Third Space is transformative...It is a space peculiar to itself, that is not simply the space between or the sum of different cultures, but a space where the enunciation of cultures is a transformative, emancipatory act" (Waterhouse, McLaughlin, McLellan, & Morgan, 2009, p. 3). The women in my study found that space while transitioning between cultures, where they were able to express their cultural identity as a globally-informed ethnic expression. To illustrate, these women not only molded their physical lifestyle to the environment, they grew in self-confidence and independence, they became cognizant of the similarities and differences between cultures and sub-cultures, and they owned their values and attitudes, whether it emanated from their cultural socialization or their

cultural exposure. In this way, these women practiced their unique worldviews as culturally

hybrid global *desis*.

During this lived experience, the women in my study sought to retain their ethnic heritage

values because it expressed their cultural identity. However, cultural exposure from their

relocation to the U.S. not only helped them develop their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, it

facilitated the critical evaluation and transformation of their preexisting attitudes and values.

These women adapted their behavioral lifestyles and made cognitive shifts in response to their

changing sociocultural environments, by choosing to practice *cultural plasticity*. The need to

compromise and practice cultural flexibility allowed these women to assume a culturally hybrid

identity (Bhabha, 2004).

In the context of individuals who straddle two or more ethnic identities simultaneously,

such as sojourners, it can be said that they embody the duality of cultures in terms of *both-and*

that goes beyond choosing *either-or* because the cultural learning process in acculturation

involves negotiating challenges that are transformative (Kim, 2015). For these women, their

transformation required self-determination that led to clarity of thought, independence, and self-

differentiation. It must also be acknowledged that transformation for these women was fostered

through their relational connections as well as their global exposure. This led me to believe that

they functioned as a hybridized identity (Banks & Banks, 2013; Bhabha, 2004), adapting to be

socially and professionally appropriate, and also being ethnically aligned within the family

structure and community.

In this context, cultural identity for these women was dynamic, because they blended

their traditional practices to the contemporary ones of the global world. However, it would be

simplistic to state that these women, functioning effectively in two cultures were bicultural,

because theirs was a more fluid cultural identity than a discrete representation of either culture.

It was an identity that aligned with both cultures effectively and went beyond, indeed, an

example of the "Third Space" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 53), where their identity was a transformed new

one that included *both/and* rather than an *either/or*. To quote Bhabha's (2004) words:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the

continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural

translation...it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates

and interrupts the performance of the present. (p.10)

In the context of my study it can be said that the participants did indeed reinterpret

themselves in the "in-between" space by selectively practicing their heritage values (of the past)

in the context of their (current or present) global experience and translating it into a new hybrid

identity. In other words, these women blended tradition with the adoption of new conventions.

But rather than adopting a "chameleon identity" (Maslak & Singhal, 2008, p. 489), that would

signify an *either/or* approach, they expressed themselves as culturally "hybrid," global *desi*

women.

The theme of *cultural plasticity* revealed that ethnic identification for these women,

consistent with Third Space theory ideology, was fluid and hybrid, as they responded to their

gender role expectations as Indian women as well as non-immigrants (Bhabha, 2004). As

discussed previously, biculturalism refers to effective functioning in different cultures whereas

Third Space theory, similar to the idea of blended biculturalism, refers to cultural hybridity as a

combination of identities that is constantly evolving (Berry, 1997; Bhabha, 2004, Schwartz et al.,

2010; Wang, 2007a).

In my study, the concept of cultural hybridity was used to describe the transformative attitudinal and behavioral changes experienced by the women in their lived experience of international relocation for work, which enabled these women to develop unique identities as global *desis* (Banks & Banks, 2013; Bhabha, 2004). As a consequence of relocation, these women were exposed to different lifestyles and practices, allowing them to critically evaluate their beliefs, and this was instrumental in their attitudinal shifts and behavioral changes. These shifts were the result of their *cultural plasticity* that allowed them to retain some core heritage values, but also acquire new perspectives and lifestyle practices. Holding both aspects of cultural exposure to the old as well as a dynamic new gave these women the ability to develop a transformed cultural identity that is hybrid and responsive to ongoing enunciation to become new, a third space that is "unsettling and never settles down" (Bhabha, 2004; Wang, 2007a, p.390).

Lastly, culture learning and cross-cultural adaptation improves an individual's ability to develop interpersonal and communication skills, demonstrating cultural intelligence (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013). Cultural growth can be equated to the concept of cultural intelligence, which refers to a person's ability to function effectively in diverse cultures drawing from social, emotional, and practical intelligence (Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2009). In the context of my study, the practice of *cultural plasticity* and development of cultural hybridity represents such cultural intelligence. This is consistent with literature describing hybrid identity as "celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweeness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference" (Hoogevelt, 1997, p.158, as cited in Meredith, 1998, p.2).

In this lived experience of career-related relocation, the role of *negotiated compromises* and *cultural plasticity* can be understood as ways of managing the needs of the individual in the context of a collectivistic culture. The women in my study anchored themselves to their heritage culture by maintaining relational and cultural connections and by making compromises to maintain cultural conformity. These women also adopted more globalized attitudes through their experiences. In balancing competing pulls of heritage culture and global culture, the women in my study shifted into their third space by assuming a hybridized cultural identity (Bhabha, 2004) as global *desis*.

Implications for the Counseling Discipline

The findings of this study have many implications for the counseling discipline as well as scope for future cultural, acculturation, identity, and gender study research. The relevance of the findings of my study in relation to counseling practice, technology industry organizations, counselor education, and counseling research will be discussed next.

Counseling Practice

The women in my study were exposed to many stressors associated with the nature of working in the technology industry, tensions of balancing cultural expectations as well as acculturating to a new sociocultural environment, without the active support of their families. As my findings indicated, some of the women in my study experienced loneliness while they were separated from their families in India and while they coped proactively with their stressors, they were required to make many adjustments during their sojourn. Over time, the lack of social support, demands of technology work, uncertainty related to immigration policies, and their inability to act upon other life decisions like marriage and starting a family could impact their psycho-emotional health. This study has focused interest on the need for counselors to better

understand the psychological health needs of working women (in India and globally) engaged in the fast-paced and gender-imbalanced global technology industry.

There is a need for western counselors to be aware that Indians are reluctant to seek professional help for mental health needs and prefer to seek alternative support including family, religious and spiritual sources to cope with their psychological issues. Research indicated that professional help-seeking behavior for mental and emotional health is limited in India because of stigma associated with mental illness, shame, lack of awareness, waiting until crisis, somatization, limited professional resources, restricted healthcare access and use of nonprofessional resources (Pawar, Peters, & Rathod, 2014; Srivastava, Chatterjee, & Bhat, 2016; Tavkar, Iyer, & Hansen, 2019). To work around this issue, counseling practitioners serving this population could initiate collaborative outreach to organizations in the technology industry, medical professionals, community members and social and religious institutions to develop a systemic approach to providing services.

Having a better understanding of non-immigrant experiences and the impact of being on an H-1B visa status would help counseling practitioners take an emic perspective to address the healthcare needs of this population. An understanding of intersecting social identities, the role of cultural socialization and gender role expectations, acculturation processes and the hybridization of cultural identities is essential for accurate assessment in counseling practice (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2001; Roysircar, 2013). This is in keeping with the cultural competencies and ethical obligations of the counseling profession (American Counseling Association, 2012, 2014; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016). Drawing from research that technology professionals in India are vulnerable to anxiety and depression as well as increased alcohol abuse (Darshan et al., 2013), counselors would be well

advised to interpret client needs from a culturally appropriate perspective, using when necessary, the cultural formulations pertaining to clients' culture-specific presentation of psychopathy described in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; *DSM–5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Technology Industry Organizations

The findings of this study could be used to inform technology companies to utilize their Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to extend support to non-immigrant technology professionals because such programs are an ideal way of identifying and supporting expatriates with fewer social supports in a host country. EAPs can provide dedicated service to expatriates by addressing problems arising from cultural adaptation as well as health issues that impede work performance (Chestnut Global Partners, 2019). Organizations could also use Diversity and Inclusion professionals as consultants to train employees, managers and supervisors to implement gendered and culturally relevant organizational support services. Typically relocation packages that include extensive healthcare services while on a short-term assignment may favor employees at a more senior level. For technology professionals in the entry level of their career such as the women in my study, an environment of managers and colleagues aware of cultural stressors would ensure their psychological and emotional wellbeing, further increasing their productivity.

Counselor Education

This study has underscored the role of cultural socialization in India and cultural exposure in feminine identity and adaptation. It has been informative for counselor educators to teach students about why Indian women may need support in handling the stressors related to their gender role expectations, values of collectivism, and individual needs. Moreover, this study

explored the development of hybridized cultural identities, which is another aspect of tension experienced by these women as they negotiated compromises with themselves in order to be culturally plastic. Counselor educators and clinical supervisors could emphasize the development of cultural hybridity as an effective acculturative resource in international relocation.

Based on the findings of this study, counselor educators could encourage students to undertake cultural immersion opportunities through study abroad programs that offer real life experiences to understand the role of cultural context in mental and emotional health. Study abroad programs could also be a way for counselors to seek internships as cultural specialists or develop unique skills to serve niche populations.

Many aspects of the Acculturation model pertaining to sojourners can be demonstrated to counselors-in-training in the context of this study. Some of these include the effective acculturation strategy of integration, biculturalism, the role of acculturative stress, culture learning and culture shedding (Berry, 1997; 2008; Berry et al., 2006; Sam & Berry, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2010; van Oudenhoven, & Benet-Martínez, 2015; Ward, 2004). Additionally, the connection between acculturative experiences and cultural identity development can be demonstrated, especially through the theme of *cultural plasticity* and the sub-theme of adaptation to changing sociocultural environments (Phinney et al., 2001). The findings of this study extend the discussion of biculturalism through the incorporation of concepts of Third Space theory such as third space and cultural hybridity. Counselor educators teaching multicultural counseling courses and counselors developing cultural competency training for professional development could well use the concept of cultural hybridity to the discussion of cultural identity.

The use of Third Space theory (Bhabha, 2004) is nascent in the counseling discipline and promises great potential as an approach to examine cultural identity. The ideology of the third space as *a* third space that is in constant motion (Wang, 2007a) was established through the theme of *cultural plasticity* that required the women in my study to adapt their gender roles to be culturally adaptive. This study has emphasized the potential for incorporating the concept of cultural hybridity in teaching and practice of multiculturalism and cultural identity in the counseling discipline. It has the scope of starting the movement of third spaces in our understanding of the role of culture in the lives of people involved in global experiences.

Counselor education is didactic and experiential, and the findings of my study are particularly suited to illustrate many theoretical tenets of RCT (JBMTI, 2018; Jordan et al., 2004). This study used some of the foundational concepts of RCT (Miller, 1991) to develop the theme of negotiated compromises in the context of gendered socialization and collectivism in Indian culture. The concepts of relational connection and disconnection, growth-fostering relationships, and mutuality in growth can be examined through the thematic interpretations in this study (JBMTI, 2018; Jordan, et al., 2004). RCT is well-endorsed for the establishing the therapeutic alliance, particularly suited for treatment of various stress related mental health conditions, clinical supervision, academic mentoring, development of cultural competence in counselors, and doctoral student advising in counselor education (Brown, McGriff, & Speedlin, 2018; Dietz et al., 2017; Duffey, Haberstroh, Ciepcielinski, & Gonzales, 2016; Hall, Barden, & Conley, 2014; Hall, Garland, Charlton, & Johnson, 2018; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Purgason, Avent, Cashwell, Jordan, & Reese, 2016; Singh & Moss, 2016). My study has added to the body of research using RCT by examining the role of relational competence in the realization of

individual aspirations. The focus of my study on cultural hybridity has further established the relational-cultural aspects involved in acculturative experiences.

Significantly, the use of three theoretical perspectives to unravel the complexities of qualitative research phenomena was a significant contribution of this study and validates the practice for future research designs. While the theories were not used for verificational purposes, they demonstrate that different approaches can be used for purposes of perspective triangulation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This study is an illustration of methodological complexity to elicit depth, comprehensiveness, and credibility in research design.

This study can also be used as an example to demonstrate the application of the VRLG (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982, 1995, 2015; Gilligan et al., 2006) to focus on women's individual and relational voices. This analytical method was used in this study to develop first-person voices and listen to the contrapuntal voices. The use of *I* poems representing significant passages in the narratives is a methodological tool to express individual perspectives. This approach is valuable for counseling practitioners, educators and researchers as a way of exploring dialectics.

Counseling Research

Counselor educators are tasked with expanding and promoting the research base of the counseling profession through quantitative and qualitative research (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011), which is endorsed by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Professions [CACREP] as standards for graduate and doctoral instruction (CACREP, 2016). This study has made an original contribution to qualitative and cross-cultural counseling research and identified an area of inquiry that has much scope for development. It can be used as a model for future

research designs using this methodology of using the VRLG for data collection and analysis, and use more than one theoretical perspective to enhance interpretation of findings.

Qualitative research allows the counseling researcher to focus on subjects of human interest and on phenomena that are inherently ambiguous, such as issues of diversity, intersecting social identities, and contextual cultural studies (Levers et al., 2008). This study was an exploration of lived experiences of Indian women in the context of international relocation for work, a very under-researched topic. The findings presented a first-person account of educated women of a privileged social class from India in contemporary times in the United States. That they were a gender minority not only in the technology industry but also in underrepresented in expatriation activity amplified the need to focus attention on their experiences so they do not remain invisible (Hartl, 2004; Patel & Parmentier, 2005; Valk & Srinivasan, 2011). Counselors need to become informed about ethnic populations projected to become part of the minority-majority in the U.S. by 2045 (Frey, 2018). Cultural research of this nature fits well within the commitment of the counseling discipline to foundationally infuse multiculturalism and social justice as core competencies in counseling, counselor education, and counseling research (Ratts et al., 2016).

This study has implications for the Acculturation model proposed by Berry (2010), which has traditionally focused on cultural evolution in response to the ecological and sociocultural environment. Berry (2010) highlighted the impact of globalization, making societies increasingly plural. To respond to the resulting cultural homogenization, Berry (2013) advocated for a global or universal approach to cross-cultural psychology where ethnocentric western worldviews are balanced with those of other indigenous cultures to identify "common shared psychological processes" (p.10). Such universality signals the ethnogenesis of racio-ethnic

ambiguity that not only challenges the argument of racial purity, but it validates the conversation about cultural hybridity as a constructivist perspective of multiple, subjective cultural realities. The findings of my study relate to this idea that cultural hybridity is the future framework for understanding acculturative processes.

Limitations of the Study

While qualitative designs are very appropriate for research of phenomena about which little is known, it also poses some restrictions. The sample that is typically used in the study depends on the research question, the data being collected, the purpose of research, and the time and resources required to conduct qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The sample is thus not only restricted in number of participants, it is also limited in terms of diversity. In other words, if this study could have been conducted with a larger number of women, there could have been a larger representation of social identities or categories. For instance, age, religion, or industry could have been varied. However, the essence of using a qualitative design is to gather information about a phenomenon that is novel or understudied and such a design is well suited for the study of lived experiences of a small number of people (Levers et al., 2008; Merriam, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005).

My study included Indian women from an educated, middle-class background and therefore the findings are limited to this population. In keeping with qualitative tradition, this study is not useful for generalizing but it is transferable to study other populations (Hays et al., 2016). Since a constructivist philosophical perspective was used for this study, it allowed me, as the researcher, to present my interpretations from a feminine and emic lens. The value of this study is in the fact that it was used to gather foundational information about a phenomenon that is new to counseling research.

The study was restricted by the strong sense of apprehension felt by members of the community as I experienced during the recruitment process. There were many women who refused to participate because they were advised by their companies to refrain from talking about their H-1B work status as this continues to be a contentious issue in the current sociopolitical climate in the U.S. I had expected to find a plethora of international assignees fitting the criteria of moving internationally for short periods of time for work in the technology field. That being a discontinued model proved to delay data collection, and therefore, lengthening the duration for completion. The uncertainty prevalent in the U.S. with respect to immigration of highly specialized technology professionals precluded many potential candidates from participation. If circumstances allowed it, I would like to hear more experiences of women and families affected by the volatility in the sociocultural environment because it has a ripple effect on both sides of the cultural divide.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several suggestions to be taken from this study. It can be broadened in terms of the sample size to include participants representing other social categories such as age or regionality or even focus on male participants to understand the impact of these identities on lived experiences. It would also be relevant to conduct a longitudinal study using a pre/post design to interview individuals before they undertake an international relocation (expatriation) and after they return (repatriation). That can presumably yield some very insightful narratives that would inform global mobility research to better serve the needs of women, as well as better understand its impact on cultural identity, since cultural research of this nature is missing from counseling literature.

Studying the experiences of repatriates could reveal important information on the acculturation process. Cultural homogenization might equalize lifestyles but reverse culture shock is a factor to be considered especially for individuals returning from a developed country to a developing one (Altweck & Marshall, 2015; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kathirvel & Febiula, 2016). There is a need to know about the psychological and emotional readjustment of individuals and families that return to their country-of-origin after their global exposure. This is relevant because short-term international relocations can have negative ripple effects on the wellbeing of individuals and their families associated with frequent uprooting (Andreason, 2008; Bastida & Moscoso, 2015; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Punnett, Crocker, & Stevens, 1992). It has already been established that the women in my study did not experience significant culture shock. However, reverse culture shock is operative when individuals re-enter their country-of-origin because it involves readjustments to lifestyle, standards of living, reestablishing social relationships and reinterpreting oneself in an environment once familiar and yet approached with new eyes (Ross, 2017). It would be revealing to examine whether repatriated women from studies like mine experience reverse culture shock when they return as 'culturally hybrid' global *desis*.

While interacting with the interviewees and interpreting their narratives, I thought that it would be worthwhile to administer assessments to better understand whether certain personality characteristics relate to acculturation strategies and cultural plasticity. Instruments that appear to be particularly suitable for this purpose are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI; The Myers-Briggs Foundation, 2017) which evaluates dominant personality indicators such as introversion/extraversion, sensing/intuition, thinking/feeling, judging/perceiving. Using an instrument such as MBTI could indicate connections of personality characteristics such as

openness to new experiences, emotional stability, outgoing or reserved attitude, cultural intelligence, as well as acculturation strategies (Ramdhonee & Bhowon, 2012).

It would also be relevant to focus attention on the lived experiences of these women in terms of growth. Coming from a collectivistic culture and living abroad independently allowed these women to develop self-reliance, experience new lifestyles, broaden their mindset, gain confidence in interpersonal communication, and benefit from professional advancement. Therefore, this study can focus on acculturative growth as an exploratory theme.

RCT (JMBTI, 2018) was well suited to explore the narratives of the women in my study, and also fits the frame of Gilligan's (1982) work on women's self-development. Similarly, there are other theoretical approaches that could be used to interpret the complexity of women's growth-in-connection. One such approach is the Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2001) because it posits that the self and cultural contexts are fluid and assume multiple positions that relate dialogically. This approach is aligned with the Rogerian (1975) understanding of self in context with others. Lastly, Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1993) is also likely to be an appropriate approach since this study highlighted the role of familial and cultural socialization on personal growth. The concept of self-differentiation, referring to the fusion and differentiation not only between thought and emotion, but also between the self and their family, is central to this theoretical approach (Bowen, 1993). Theoretical triangulation using some of these approaches could further the understanding of identity research focused on Indian women in contemporary India.

Conclusion

Drawing from gaps in literature about the lived experiences of Indian women in the technology industry who undertake temporary relocations to the U.S., this study focused on

exploring the circumstances and conditions of relocation, compromises and personal agency of

the women, and the cultural flexibility practiced by these women. Narrative interviews provided

detailed information with regard to the motivation to relocate, personal choices to return, and

acculturation processes involved. The main theme of *negotiated compromises* explored complex

dialectical needs of the participants and their families. The second main theme described their

cultural plasticity that allowed them to not only be culturally nimble, but also develop *hybridity*

as culturally intelligent global *desis*. The ability to compromise when required and be culturally

adaptable was instrumental in the transformative growth experienced by these women,

personally, professionally, and culturally. In order for individuals to function optimally it is

essential to express one's individuality, as well as relate to dynamics of relationships effectively.

We live not only through social connections, but in connection with ourselves too. The findings

of this study have implications for the counseling practice, counselor education, and counseling

research. In conclusion, this topical study of Indian women technology professionals brought

visibility to their personal and professional aspirations. It allowed for better understanding of the

role of cultural socialization practices in the lives of contemporary educated women from India.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Interview questions were drawn from the following guide as appropriate:

Question relating to previous experience:

1. Could you give me some information about your previous international work experiences?

Questions relating to motivation and decision-making for current assignment:

1. How did the current assignment come about?

2. What were your reasons to accept this assignment?

   a. What were some things you considered while accepting this assignment?

   b. Were there any competing concerns regarding the professional and personal implications of accepting the assignment?

Questions relating to preparation:

3. How did/were you prepare(d) for the assignment?

Questions relating to challenges and resources:

4. What are/were some challenges you face/faced during the current assignment?

5. What are/were some resources that are/were helpful?

Questions relating to intrapersonal changes: (will be drawn from as appropriate)

6. Would you say that this relocation has brought any changes to the way you think or behave?

7. Would you say that this experience has influenced the way you see yourself?

8. How would you say your job role has been influenced by this experience?

9. Overall, how would you describe this international experience?

10. What have you learned about yourself through this experience?

11. How have these experiences been shaped by the fact that you are a woman?

12. How would you say social media has contributed to your experience?

13. Do you think your experiences as a temporary resident might be different from those if you were a permanent resident?

14. Do any specific experiences stand out in your recollection either at work or in your personal life during this assignment?

Appendix B

Recruitment Letter

Date   _____

Hello,

My name is Sudha Nagarajan and I am a graduate student in the Counseling Department at Montclair State University. I would like to tell you about a research study I am conducting with Indian women working temporarily in the U.S.

The study will involve discussion of your international experience as it pertains to your work and personal life. There are no direct benefits to your participation in this study since this is primarily a research study.

If you should consider participating, you will be expected to meet with me in two personal interviews spread over the course of 3-6 months. Each interview is likely to last from 60-90 minutes and can be conducted at a place chosen for your convenience that allows for confidential discussions. It is possible that you might be invited for participation in a focus group discussion as well.

If you are 18 years or older, female, your country-of-origin is India, and you are temporarily employed in the U.S., you might be eligible to participate in the study.

Do you have any questions that I can answer or any further explanations I can give to clarify the process?

This study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board.

You are welcome to think it through and respond to me via email at nagarajans1@mail.montclair.edu or alternatively at snr313@gmail.com
I hope you can let me know about your interest in the next few days so that we can make arrangements to proceed.

Thank you so much for you interest in participation.
I hope we shall be in contact soon.

Sudha Nagarajan, Doctoral Student
Department of Counseling
Montclair State University

Appendix C

Description of Visa Structure

Table 2

Temporary (Nonimmigrant) Worker Classification

Temporary (Nonimmigrant) Worker Classification		
Nonimmigrant Classification for a Temporary Worker	Description	Nonimmigrant Classification for Dependent Spouses and Children of a Temporary Worker
H-1B	Workers in a specialty occupation and the following sub-classifications: H-1B1 - Free Trade Agreement workers in a specialty occupation from Chile and Singapore. H-1B2 - Specialty occupations related to Department of Defense Cooperative Research and Development projects or Co-production projects. H-1B3 - Fashion models of distinguished merit and ability.	H-4
L-1A	Intracompany transferees in managerial or executive positions.	L-2[3]
L-1B	Intracompany transferees in positions utilizing specialized knowledge.	L-2[3]
Students: Academic and Vocational (F and M visas)		
F-1	Academic students	
Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 Students STEM OPT Extension	Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Certain F-1 students who receive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees may apply for a 24-month extension of their post-completion optional practical training (OPT).	

(Retrieved from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2018)

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