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Second Generation Immigrant Adaptation: Construction of a Hybrid Cultural Identity

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SECOND GENERATION IMMIGRANT ADAPTATION: CONSTRUCTION OF A HYBRID
CULTURAL IDENTITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
The Department of Sociology

by

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a postcolonial perspective to examine the construction of cultural identities in second generation South Asian women. It critiques traditional strategies of immigrant incorporation, including assimilation and cultural pluralism, for their androcentric and essentialist tendencies. It was found that the women constructed a cultural hybrid identity, and using Homi Bhabha's notion of third space and Gloria Anzaldua's theory of cultural borderlands, I discuss the process of how this hybrid identity is constructed. A phenomenological approach, in which the subjective voices of the participants are privileged, was used to analyze nine interviews for themes relating to the construction of a hybrid identity.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the short history of the United States, immigrants from across the globe have contributed to its cultural landscape by developing, modifying, and transforming a country that reflects, both directly and indirectly, the worldviews of those who refer to the United States as their home. When asked to describe the cultural landscape of America, metaphors such as melting pot or salad bowl are commonly invoked to signify the mixing and blending of immigrants and citizens who reside in the U.S. from virtually every country in the world. Although describing different modes of immigrant incorporation, both terms are reflective of the complex process that immigrants confront when they decide to make the United States their place of residence.

The colonization of the United States in the 16th century resulted in the first wave of official immigrants to the country, violently displacing those native peoples who claimed ownership to the land. For the next several hundred years, America continued to witness immigrants arrive willingly at Ellis Island predominantly from European nations, while at the same time, slavery forced immigration of people from African nations. In the early 1920's, restrictive immigration laws resulted in a marked drop in immigration for the first half of the 20th century. However, changing immigration laws in the 1960's, specifically the 1965 Immigration Act, relaxed immigration laws, abolishing "national-origins quotas", which has resulted in another mass influx of immigrants to the United States (Rumbaut and Portes 2001).

Immigration and the process of immigrant adaptation has long been the subject of academic study, however, gender as a specific category of analysis has been left out of most immigration studies, typically equating women's experiences of migration with men's (Rayaprol 1997). In addition, the majority of immigration studies have been studied from perspectives that

do not take into account the transnational character of our modern world. Instead most immigration studies have located immigrant experience within the United States, ignoring the connections the immigrants may have with their host country. Further, little attention has been focused on the daughters of these immigrants, who are exposed not only to American culture, but also to the culture of their immigrant parents. Given these omissions in literature, I will study the adaptation experiences of second generation women, from a postcolonial perspective. I will argue that their experiences do not fit into the more traditional theories that explain immigrant adaptation, and instead contribute to a new postcolonial theory that emphasizes the transnational and gendered character of their lives. In sum, this phenomenological analysis will ascertain what it means to be a second generation woman, who is not only in the process of adapting to American culture, but also actively involved in the culture of her native country.

LITERATURE/ THEORETICAL REVIEW

Leading scholars contend that post-1965 immigrants are once again transforming American society (Portes 2001). It is estimated that between the years 1965 and 2000, more than 28 million immigrants entered the United States, with over 75% coming from non-European countries (Min 2002). Census data from 2003 breaks down this foreign born population, citing the majority (36.9%) of immigrants originating from Central America, while 25% hail from Asia, 13.7% from Europe, 10% from the Caribbean, 6.3% from South America, and 8% from other regions. Thus, immigrants from such varied countries as Cuba, the Philippines, Mexico, Germany, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Columbia, Vietnam, the United Kingdom, China, and India come to the United States with hopes of bettering their economic, political, and/or social opportunities¹.

These immigrants bring with them unique traditions and perspectives that contribute to

¹ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-551.pdf>

the refashioning of America. Among the many nationalities that constitute the post 1965 immigrants, South Asians, specifically those from the country of India, will be identified as distinct from the other ethnicities, and will thus be the focus of this study.

Data from 2000 indicate 11.9 million people in the United States identify as Asians. Following Chinese and Filipino ethnic groups, Asian-Indians are the third largest group of Asians, tallying 1.9 million people. Of the 1.9 million, 1.7 million identified as Asian-Indian only, indicating a lack of ethnic intermixing in the majority of respondents². Asian-Indians stand apart from other Asian immigrants for two key reasons. First, they are “the most rapidly expanding immigrant group with the highest number of the total H-1B visa petitions filed” (Das 2002). Second, many of the Indian immigrants who came to America shortly after 1965 have education and income levels higher than those of most of the other Asians in America. Due to the 1965 Immigration Act, which indicated a preference for educated immigrants, Indians were for the most part welcomed for their professional and technical skills and many quickly found themselves in the middle and upper classes of American society (Agarwal 1991). It has been cited that Asian Indians have the “highest median household income, family income, per capita income, and annual median income of any foreign-born group” (Das 2002). Specifically, according to 1990 census data, the Asian Indian households had a median income of \$44,700 as compared to \$31,200 for U.S. households (ibid).

While the first generation of immigrants is vital in the re-creation of the American landscape, it is their children who determine the long term effects of immigrant group experience and thus hold significant influence in the future of America (Rumbaut and Portes 2001). The second generation will be defined for the purposes of this study as those children born in the United States with parents of foreign origin. Unlike their parents, who immigrated to the States

² <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-16.pdf>

as adults, and thus may be more inclined to return to their home country, children born in America are, for the most part, here to stay and can be expected to become an integral part of American society (Portes 2001). Further, while first generation immigrants are more likely to stick with the traditional values of their home country, second generation immigrants seem to acculturate into the dominant culture of the larger society (Talbani and Hasanali 2000). The second generation has enormous transformative potential for the United States in the years to come. This group of children accounts for approximately 10% of the U.S. population, and is the fastest growing segment of the country's total population of children under 18 years of age, accounting for 1 out of every 5 children in 1997 (Portes 2001).

The second generation faces a unique situation as it straddles the world of their parents and corresponding cultural tradition, while at the same time attempting to become a part of the fabric that is American society. Many times these worlds produce conflicting messages and the second generation child must negotiate between the world views, often resulting in unique situations not found in those who identify predominantly with American culture. Such is the case for children of Indian immigrants, as they often find themselves living among the culture of their parents and the culture of America. Differing cultural practices found in each generation can result in confusing and unfamiliar situations for the second generation child. Although children of both sexes are confronted with inconsistent messages of their parents and society at large, some argue that women are disproportionately affected by the contradictory meanings (Gupta 1998). In part, this is due to embedded and often contradictory cultural traditions within Indian and American cultures that mandate certain aspects of behavior for the second generation Indian women.

As Indians have moved to the United States, they have brought with them many of the cultural prescriptions surrounding gender from their home country. These immigrants work hard to recreate a sense of Indian community in the United States, and often attempt to construct an Indian community based on their notions of what it means to be a good Indian (DasGupta and Das DasGupta 2000). Women are often thought of as ‘repositories of family honor’, and consequently play a large role in the construction of good Indian-ness in America. Scholar Anannya Bhattacharjee posits that “the Indian woman becomes a metaphor for the purity, the chastity, and the sanctity of the Ancient Spirit that is India” (1992). Due to these expectations, second generation Indian daughters often find themselves having to uphold traditional Indian cultural norms as prescribed by their parents while living in a country that has less restrictive norms. This is evidenced in parental treatment of daughters by elders. It is argued that South Asian females are “raised in far more protected, controlled and sheltered home settings when compared to the majority of adolescents in Western society (Vaidyanathan and Naidoo 1990/91). Further, many first generation parents raise their children based on the gendered cultural norms and values by which they were raised in India over a generation ago. These norms are more restrictive compared not only to American norms, but also to the norms found in India, with many parents “unaware of the increasing liberalization of social attitudes in India itself” (Agarwal 1991).

Second generation Indian-American females face different gender expectations at home than in the ‘outside’ world. The private world of the home represents a continuation of established Indian values whereas the public world introduces the second generation to an American world, with often differing cultural practices. As these women are born in America, and consequently inculcated into American society yet are raised by immigrant parents, the

second generation daughters are faced with different prescriptions not only their for cultural identity, but also for what it means to be a woman.

Differing Cultural Practices

This section will briefly outline some of the key gendered cultural practices commonly found within the Indian culture. It is not my intent to suggest that these differences are essential to the culture, rather my aim is to emphasize those aspects of a culture that constitute a given cultures repertoire (Bhabha 1994). Thus, the description of cultural practices serves to highlight those tendencies and moments within a social system that signify culture (Hall 1996).

The philosophy of patrifocality is a family system to which most people in India have been raised with. It emphasizes the “subordination of individual goals and interests to the welfare of the larger family and kin group” (Subrahmanyam 1998:61). This philosophy embodies several characteristics, including:

- “structural features (patrilineality, patrilocality) which reinforce the centrality of sons and the peripheral status of daughters; gender-differentiated family responsibilities; regulation of female sexuality to maintain the purity of the patriline and family honor through arranged marriages and restricted male-female interactions; and female behavior which emphasizes obedience, self-sacrifice, adaptability, nurturance, restraint, and traits conducive to family harmony” (Mukhopadhyay & Seymour 1994).

This family system brings with it clear prescriptions of womanly behavior within the Indian culture. For example, it leads to different educational goals. In post-independence India, pressures towards modernization and the association of education with prestige resulted in an emphasis on education for both men and women (Mukhopadhyay 1994). However, the reasons for encouraging education often differed. As is consistent with the patrifocal model, women’s education was encouraged so that she could better fulfill her roles as a mother and wife (ibid). For example, educated men desired educated women, and thus education was encouraged to the extent that it would give her greater appeal to potential husbands. Mukhopadhyay (1995)

succinctly summarizes the difference, stating that in traditional Indian culture, “a son’s education benefits his family, whereas a daughter’s education will primarily benefit her husband and his family.”

The patrifocal model also highlights key gendered differences with regard to womanly roles and behavior. Traditionally, the Indian woman is expected to be subservient and obedient throughout her life, subsuming her desires for those of her family. Often, notions of family extend beyond the nuclear model found in many Western countries, to include the entire kin system and also the community at large. Thus, it is often expected that women should make any decisions, especially those of education and marriage, with the collective goal of society in mind (Mukhopadhyay 1995).

As is consistent with the patrifocal model, marital decisions are commonly made with the best interests of the families of husband and wife in mind. The institution of arranged marriage is a cultural practice commonly found in Indian culture and although different in form from its historical inception, it still proscribes certain requirements for the Indian woman. For centuries, Indian families have selected marital partners according to the following criteria: “caste and social class compatibility, regional and religious similarities, family background, and more recently, educational background and grooms earning capacity” (Gupta 1998:120). It is a contractual agreement between two families, and in its traditional form, emphasizes the interests of the family and community (Zaidi and Shuraydi 2002). Modern versions of the arranged marriage include the ‘semi-arranged marriage in which the parents still pick the potential mate, however the daughter is free to agree or disagree with the proposed mate (ibid). These versions of marriage differ from the mainstream Western version, in which individuality is emphasized, encouraging each person to “find self-fulfillment by selecting a partner who satisfies his/her

specific needs” (Gupta 1998). In this ‘love marriage’ “an intimate personal relationship generally exists between a couple before they marry” (Ralson 1997).

The cultural practice of arranged marriage sets forth some specific requirements with respect to the appropriate behavior for the Indian woman. The patrifocal model functions to regulate the sexuality of Indian women (Mukhopadhyay & Seymour 1994). As Gupta (1998) notes, by “eliminating the self-selection process, traditional Asian-Indian culture is able to prohibit male-female interaction before marriage” (121). The purity of daughters is highly valued within the community, with the reputation of the family held in the daughter’s perceived celibacy (Rudrappa 2002). For this reason, traditional Indian culture strictly forbids dating. Parents control this aspect of their children’s lives tightly, for if it is discovered that the female adolescent has been ‘promiscuous’ before marriage, serious consequences may result, ranging from the family being looked down upon by the larger community, to the family disowning the ‘accused’ daughter.

In sum, key cultural practices can be distinguished within Indian culture as relate to expectations for appropriate gendered behavior. These practices are often contrary to those found in America, which can best be described as having an individualistic tendency. In other words, in America, the interests of the individual are generally privileged over those of the collective. Conflicts arise as the second generation child is presented with contradictory messages in the Indian and American cultures. How the first generation immigrant and subsequent generations adapt to the American culture and lifestyle is a topic that has captivated academic attention throughout the last 100 years. Several theories exist to explain the ways by which immigrants and their children incorporate into the dominant American society.

Theories of Immigrant Adaptation

The process by which immigrants and their children become a part of American society and culture has differed for each group of peoples that have arrived to the country. Within the discourse of immigration studies, assimilation is the predominant paradigm employed to describe the adaptation experience. One conceptualization of assimilation contends that immigrant incorporation into the host society is a linear, continuous process. This idea is exemplified by Milton Gordon's Assimilation Model (1964). The concept of assimilation first came into sociological vernacular in 1921, yet it was Gordon's work in 1964 that transformed the concept into a theory (Bash 1979). Traditional assimilation theory asserts that the newcomer's adaptation to the host society can be described as a "unidirectional process involving a change in their values, attitudes, and behaviors and a decrease in their identification with their groups of reference", with the result being a "situation in which the minority ethnic group becomes an indissoluble part of the mainstream culture" (Castro 2003:10). The first step of Gordon's theoretical model is the cultural assimilation of the immigrant, defined as the "gradual acquisition of cultural patterns of the host society" (ibid). Cultural assimilation occurs as a result of acculturation. Acculturation describes the alteration of one group's culture as a result of contact with that of another culture. The Social Sciences Research Council defines acculturation as "cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems" (Castro 2003:8). Through this process, "behavior appropriate to the new cultural context is learned" (Talbani and Hasanali 2000:616). Thus, this model argues that in the process of cultural assimilation, immigrants and their children absorb the cultural values and norms of the dominant group in the host society, with an eventual full incorporation (often several generations) into the dominant culture.

This pattern of assimilation has been used to explain the incorporation of early European immigrants into society, however, its theories were, and continue to be, challenged. Conflict theorists have critiqued the assimilation model on several grounds. It is argued that assimilation is not a seamless, common experience for all groups of people, instead successful adaptation to American culture is influenced by race and class. For example, it is observed that “well-to-do German immigrants who arrived in the United States in the 1840’s had an easier time assimilating than did poorer white immigrants, like the Italian-Americans or Polish-Americans” (Mann 2000). Further, the colonial labor system model (Blauner 1972, Barrera 1979) argues that certain racial and ethnic minorities were consciously prohibited from accessing the more lucrative aspects of the American economy, and were instead relegated to low-paying and/or subordinate labor markets (Mann 2000).

Recent theorists have continued the critique of the straight forward assimilation model. In particular, Alejandro Portes (2001) contends that the straight forward and uniform model of assimilation is insufficient for post-1965 immigrants. He argues for a model of segmented assimilation, characterized by various possible outcomes, not just a smooth, generally positive, linear progression of assimilation. This theory of segmented assimilation suggests three pathways of incorporation for current immigrants and their children (Levitt and Waters 2002). The immigrant may experience increasing acculturation and successive integration into middle class America, as classical assimilation theory suggests. Alternatively, a second outcome predicts downward mobility and incorporation into those classes marginalized on racial or ethnic grounds. The third outcome predicts immigrants will experience rapid advancement due to the preservation of their distinctive, traditional cultural values and ethnic traits (Zhou 1999).

The pluralist perspective stands as an alternative to the assimilation theories discussed above. This perspective views American society as a mosaic of different ethnic groups. From this perspective, cultural traits central to the immigrant's background are not necessarily incorporated into the larger society and its corresponding culture, rather the cultural attributes interact with the host society in mutually exclusive ways (Zhou 1999). In this view, immigrants may find that they agree with certain cultural values of the host society, yet feel uneasy with respect to all the required cultural norms. Thus, the pluralist perspective maintains that ethnic groups retain some cultural distinctiveness despite cultural intermingling with the dominant culture (Friedman 1998).

Postcolonial Critiques

Recent theoretical developments have critiqued the aforementioned strategies of assimilation and pluralism on several grounds. Das Gupta notes the androcentric nature of these theories in their assumption that ethnicity means the same thing for men and women (1997). Beyond androcentric concerns, she also critiques the ethnocentric nature of assimilation and pluralism. She argues that both theories position the United States as the "significant context of immigrant identity formation." In other words, both assimilation and pluralism presume that the "United States is isolated from current and historical links between receiving and sending countries" (ibid). This ignores the transnational and postcolonial nature of our world, particularly for post 1965 Indian immigrants. Das Gupta notes that America and India, as first and third world countries, respectively, have been in contact long before the post-1965 immigrant first set foot in the United States. First world resources, modes of technology, and knowledge systems are a "constant presence in the Third world, just as Third world labor and resources play a (mostly invisible) factor in the lives of the First World (1997:573).

Due to these concerns, I argue that assimilation and pluralism, because of their inability to account for immigrant adaptation that is gendered and transnational, fall short of accounting for the experiences of second generation Indian-American women. Instead, I turn to the work of Homi Bhabha and Gloria Anzaldua, who provide postcolonial accounts for the experiences of women of Indian background. Their recognition of the transnational nature of cultural formations allows, in both theories, the creation of a new, hybridized space, in which the cultures interact and are negotiated.

Homi Bhabha describes those living in the current world as living on the “borderlines of the present, for which there seems to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix ‘post’ (1994, 2). He asserts that society is in a “moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion”. He doubts the existence of fixed cultural borders in this era. He argues instead that people in multicultural societies create, live, and operate in the ‘third space’ – an in between hybridized space where identities, diversity, difference and boundaries of intersecting race, class, and gender, and nation are negotiated and redefined in every day life. (Bhabha 2004). He further postulates that these ‘in-between’ spaces are constructed by those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference.

Gloria Anzaldua postulates a hybridized ‘cultural borderlands’, in which transnational interactions creates a third country (1987). Anzaldua argues that “the coming together of “two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of references cause ‘un choque’, a cultural collision” (78). She describes the individual who is witness to the cultural collision as reflective of a “synergy of two cultures” and “can not hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries” (79).

Instead a new hybrid border culture is formed wherever two cultures ‘edge each other’. She further postulates that a new consciousness results from the individual who is constantly forced to reconcile her multiple cultures. This border consciousness is not hyphenated in the sense that the two components of one’s identity compose a self-consistent whole, erasing the internal and external conflicts (Das Gupta 1997). Rather, the creation of the border consciousness results from the often painful difficulties that occur when two incompatible frames of reference combine.

Research suggests that these formations of hybridity best conceptualize the experiences of second generation Indian-American women. In her study of how Indian-Americans react to the different cultural practices of their parents and American society, Shobha Srinivasan (2001) argues that:

Asian Indian women born in the United States are striving to claim a new composite identity for themselves, one that is both American and Indian. Asian Indian women are composing their own mix or creative blend of American and Indian, which is neither a simple acceptance of the one or denial of the other. (153).

Sangeeta Gupta reiterates this postulation in her study of second generation Indian-Asian women. She contends that in attempting to reconcile two divergent cultures, children of immigrants often feel like they are walking on the edge of several worlds, and in balancing both world views they create a space in which they attempt to construct a cultural identity (Gupta 1998:123).

The differences and potential conflicts found in the diverse cultural norms and practices concerning gender are embodied by the second generation Indian-American woman. It is this specific phenomenon, the process of negotiating among cultural practices that dictate gendered behavior that will be explored in this study. I agree with Qureshi and Moores (1999) who assert

that questions concerning a hybrid cultural identity are best answered in studies that ground “theoretical notions of hybrid cultures in concrete empirical work.” Thus, analyzing and understanding how women negotiate these moments of ‘in-between’ can provide empirical evidence to these hybrid theories.

As she negotiates both sets of cultural expectations, the second generation Indian-American woman will take part in a process of adaptation that results in hybridized moments of consciousness in which a blending and renegotiation of her cultural and gendered identity occur. As noted by Dhruvarajan and Vickers (2002) second generation women who have grown up in America, but have views shaped by their parent’s host culture and values, develop ideas “inspired by their experiences within these overlapping worlds.”

Second generation Indian-American women have, through the articulation of cultural difference, created a new hybrid consciousness. By discovering what it means to be a second generation Indian woman living in the United States, this phenomenological study will describe the process by which a hybrid consciousness is constructed that reflects the women’s involvement in both worlds. By doing this, I hope to contribute empirical evidence to hybrid theories that offer an alternative idea of immigrant adaptation experience.

METHODOLOGY

Research Strategy

A qualitative method will be used to examine how second generation Indian-American women construct meanings about their lives as they live in the United States. Qualitative research methods are typically employed when a detailed view, from the subject’s vantage point, of the topic is required. The aim of this analysis is to discover the intricate, variable ways these women formulate and construct their experiences living in the United States. Thus, a distant

examination of the experience held by these women is insufficient to answer the questions posed. Qualitative methods seek to discover the meanings constructed by humans as they “engage with the world they are interpreting” (Creswell 2003). By seeking individual meanings of the experiences of the women, a rich, detailed description of how this process occurs becomes available.

Within the qualitative tradition, several strategies of inquiry exist. For the purpose of this study, a phenomenological strategy of inquiry will be employed. John Creswell (1998) identifies as a key aspect of phenomenological investigation the detailed search and examination for the meanings attributed to a select phenomenon as experienced by the participant herself. Other phenomenological researchers reiterate this defining characteristic, explaining that phenomenology is dedicated to “capture as closely as possible the way in which the phenomenon is experienced” and has as its central goal the clarification of how people “make sense of their personal and social world” (Giorgi and Giorgi 2003, Smith and Osborn 2003).

Within the phenomenological tradition, it is generally believed that certain phenomena have at their core some similar ‘essential’ structure that constitutes its occurrence. This structure is described as a determination of those “constituents that are typically essential in order to account for the concrete experiences reported” (Giorgi and Giorgi 2003). Further, it is noted that these structures are not universal, but rather unique to the particular context being studied. Finally, it is recognized that although one aims for the discovery of one single structure to the phenomena, one should “not try to force the data to fit one structure, as the need for several structures to account for the data indicate a fairly high degree of variability in the phenomenon” (ibid). This explanation clarifies the postmodern problems surrounding the words ‘essential structure’. Phenomenology attempts to discern shared characteristics and meanings around a

given experience. In most cases, the phenomenon being studied is unique to the population in question, allowing for the discovery of a similar structure, not the classification of experiences in essentialist categories. The structure is sought from the subjective experiences of the participants and care is taken to ensure the recognition of their voices. In other words, the data elicit the structure and due to all participants experiencing the same phenomenon, common tendencies and similar essential components can often be discerned.

In an attempt to discern the subjective realities of the participants, it is vital to stay true to the personal accounts of those being studied. The analysis is “concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the event itself” (Smith and Osborn 2003). As Smith further emphasizes, a phenomenological account is concerned with eliciting the participant’s view of the experience rather than “testing preconceived hypothesis” (1999). In this way phenomenology follows in the inductive process of qualitative methodology.

Scholars posit several strategies to ensure that participant’s perception of the event is not confused with the researcher’s interpretations. The idea of epoche is one way in which researchers seek to glean the most accurate results from phenomenological data. Epoche is defined as the suspension of all judgments about what is real, until supported in a more absolute manner (Creswell 1998). The idea of epoche requires the researcher to “bracket her preconceived ideas about a phenomenon in order to understand it through the voice of the subjects” (ibid). Researchers are careful to note that bracketing thoughts will not eliminate them. Giorgi and Giorgi clarify that “to bracket does not mean to be unconscious of these other sources but rather not to engage them so that there can be no influence from them” (2003).

Other strands of phenomenology question the idea of epoche. Jonathan Smith, a proponent of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), maintains that the researcher “does not come to the project tabula rasa”, rather the “researcher is always present in the project” (Smith 1999). He believes that the researcher’s own conceptions are required “in order to make sense of that other personal world” (Smith and Osborn 2003). In other words, the researchers conceptions allow an “interpretative engagement with the text that is necessary to make sense of the verbal accounts being analyzed” (ibid). Thus as the researcher makes sense of the data, s/he can not help but engage with it based on past knowledge and personal experiences. I subscribe to this more postmodern approach, which doubts the full removal of authorial presence in sociological research. However, I do not think that this affects the analysis in a manner that is detrimental to the findings. It is my belief that qualitative methodology is a personal research strategy, engaging the researcher every step of the process, from developing a research question, to speaking with participants, to analyzing the data. The reflexive nature of this method can not allow for the full removal of the researcher.

While the removal of the author is questionable, phenomenological analysis takes specific measures to ensure that the participant’s voice is heard. It safeguards the participant’s subjectivity with an extensive use of verbatim quotes. In this manner, others can read the ‘evidence’ supplied to back up the conclusions, and determine for themselves whether or not research bias exists that results in faulty connections between the data and the analysis.

Having said all this, it is only fair that I allow my readers the opportunity to know me as the researcher, so that they can decide whether I allow my research bias to negatively affect my analysis. As such, I reveal my subjectivities and biases concerning this area of study. I am a second generation woman; my father was born in India and my mother was born in Austria. My

parents immigrated to America as adults, met each other in Michigan and married shortly thereafter. My father, throughout the duration of his life, distanced himself from the Indian culture and its corresponding ideologies. Thus, I knew nothing, and still know little concerning the Indian culture. Further, my parents divorced 16 years into their marriage, and I attribute this break up partly to their different in cultural ideologies. Thus, from an early age I was aware of the cultural differences between East and West. That these personal experiences have influenced my choice of research topics is no doubt an obvious conclusion. However, my situation does differ slightly from those I plan to study, as I have interviewed only women with two Indian parents.

Data Collection

Due to the intensive and detailed nature of phenomenological analysis, these studies are normally administered on small, homogeneous groups (Smith and Osborn 2003). While this can serve as a limitation in that the results can not be generalized, it is not the aim for phenomenological analysis to make general claims. Rather, phenomenology is an idiographic mode of inquiry with the aim of making statements and discovering structures about the participants who experience a specific phenomenon (ibid). The careful analysis at an individual level can create theories that can later be tested at a more general level.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed; specifically the strategy of criterion sampling was used to find second generation Indian-Americans with both parents originating from India. In addition, snowball sampling was used in order to further locate women who meet the criteria. Through these sampling strategies, nine Indian-Americans were identified and, more importantly, were willing to speak with me about their experiences growing up with two cultures.

Semi-structured interviews were employed to ascertain the meanings second generation Indian-American women attribute to the experiences they had growing up in the United States. Semi structured interviews are typically employed in phenomenological analysis to obtain the level of detail needed for discovering what the meaning behind the experience is for the participant. Questions are asked in such a way as to allow those meanings that are relevant for the participant to emerge, rather than the interviewer guide the discussion with a pre-established set of questions. In this way, one can better ensure that the accounts that the women told were truly the subjects own perception of them, in other words, truly originating from their consciousness. Due to the nature of the interview schedule, then, not all women brought up the same concerns and issues. Questions elicited different responses, with each response highlighting aspects of the experience that were most salient for the woman herself.

Interviews as a data collection method offer several advantages. They are useful when participants can not be observed directly. In addition, informants can provide historical information that may not be available from other methods of data collection. However, several limitations do exist concerning interviews. Interviews supply “indirect” information, filtered through the biases of the interviewees. Further, the presence of the researcher may bias the response of the participant. While these limitations do exist, I believe these can be overcome. For example, the phenomenological method of inquiry believes that the meaning given to a phenomenon is solely a result of the participant’s interpretation of it. Thus, any filtering of experiences is not of central concern, as any description of the experience is taken at face value. Concerning the second criticism, I believe that qualitative social scientists will always influence the research setting they are in, regardless of data collection method. Thus, a researcher can only be conscious in her role as a researcher, as discussed above.

Data Analysis

In the literature surrounding phenomenology, no clearly defined method of analysis is found that all researchers agree upon. However, phenomenological analysis is committed to the conscientious and painstaking analysis of interview transcripts and all suggestions of how this is accomplished are similar in that an extensive and thorough method of analysis is required. As Smith (2003) points out, phenomenology is not a regulatory methodology, but rather a method to be adapted by researchers, as each researcher brings personal processes to the analysis. I have based my analysis on the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (Creswell 1998) with modifications introduced by the theoretical assumptions of interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith and Osborn 2003).

The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method suggests that the first step in phenomenological analysis is for the researcher to begin with a full description of her own experience with the phenomenon as to suspend any judgments or preconceptions the researcher may have of the experience. As discussed above, I have epistemological concerns with the idea of removing total authorial presence from a sociological inquiry. Thus, while I have made the reader aware of my background, I fully accept that it has influenced my interpretation of the data (Smith and Osborn 2003). However, I believe the strategy of analysis, to be described below allows for the subjective voices of the women to come through in such a manner that supercedes any concerns about selective appropriation of the data.

In this phenomenological analysis, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then read several times to begin the formulation of important themes and /or meanings. According to the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (SCK) method the next steps involve the extraction of statements from the interview that relate to how the individual experiences the topic and then the grouping

of these statements into meaning / thematic units, in other words grouped according to some commonality (Creswell 1998). From these preliminary themes I outlined a detailed account of the women's experiences of what it meant to be a second generation Indian-American living in the United States. This is similar to the next step of textual description suggested by the SCK method. Using this textual description I was able to easily identify the themes common to all participants.

In sum, each interview was systematically and meticulously analyzed on a case by case basis, with the eventual recognition of themes that were applicable to all cases. The themes then aided in revealing essential components of the phenomenon, thus creating a structure that served to elucidate the experiences of the woman in question.

Verification Strategies

In qualitative research, validity refers to whether or not the findings actually describe what they are supposed to describe. In other words are the findings accurate? Do they, to the best of their ability, represent the material world? Creswell (1998) discusses the concept of validity, and advocates using the term verification instead of validity, arguing that by using the word verification, it “underscores qualitative research as a distinct approach.” In other words, verification is used to set apart qualitative methods from quantitative methods, which have criteria for validity, set in the “language of positivist research” that can not be applied to qualitative work. For these reasons, I will employ verification measures to ensure my study is credible.

Several strategies exist to ensure verification in qualitative research. For example, member checking is used to determine the accuracy of the data. This process entails the researcher taking either the final report or specific sections/themes back to the actual individual

who was interviewed. Thus, the participant can voice any concerns over interpretations that s/he feels is incorrect. Another strategy to verify findings in qualitative research employs asking a third person to review, question, and provide an overall assessment of the study. Clarification of my bias as a researcher further enhances the verification of the project. Finally, providing a rich, thick description of the phenomenon allows the reader to determine whether the subsequent interpretation is adequate.

I plan on employing all techniques mentioned above. I will ask those participants who are willing to read over those parts of my thesis that describe overall themes I generated from the data. I will take into serious considerations any comments, questions, or doubts concerning the interpretation of the data, as put forward by these participants. Also, all phases of this project will be subject to scrutiny by a thesis committee well experienced in qualitative research methods. I expect a careful reading of my interpretations from the committee, and will incorporate all appropriate feedback and consider other explanations. Further, as detailed above, phenomenological data analysis requires the researcher to be aware of any preconceptions concerning the phenomenon of study. By doing this, my readers can be conscious of the level researcher bias that influences the findings. Finally, I will provide a rich description of the experiences, as to enable the reader to decide on whether my interpretations and findings can be transferred to other similar situations, due to shared characteristics (Creswell 1998).

Ethical Considerations

Due to the nature of qualitative work, and its goal of discovering the meaning behind the experience, ethical issues abound due to the often sensitive and personal data that must be collected for such a project. As described in Creswell (1998), the following measures will be taken to ensure that the participant's rights are protected. First, the research objectives will be

clearly stated verbally, so that the participant has full opportunity to understand the goals of the project. Second, the interviewee will be asked to sign a consent form that formally requests permission to conduct the interview. Included on this form will be a statement from the researcher promising total confidentiality of the participant. Third, the participant perspectives will be considered when final choices are made regarding the reporting of the data. Fourth, and finally, the participant will decide whether or not to remain anonymous. If she chooses to remain anonymous, this decision will be fully respected by the researcher and all possible measures will be taken to ensure her anonymity.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Before I begin my findings section, I want to first mention that my interpretation and consequent construction of the themes was at best a torturous practice. It was my desire to include all perspectives in my analysis, with the goal of not leaving anyone out. However, upon examination of the data, I began to realize what a formidable if not impossible task it is to create themes that fully account for everyone's experience.

I eventually reconciled these tensions, realizing that while it was near impossible to generate fully inclusive themes, I could construct themes that more broadly accounted for the individual differences that are prevalent in the study of all things social. I owe my revelation to Jennifer Sinclair and David Milner, who in their study of Jewish identity, mention:

...In this study, all 18 participants contributed some data to each major theme, but the pattern of each contribution was uniquely different. Again, all participants demonstrated some sense of social Jewish identity, but not all agreed that religion was an essential part of their Jewish identity (2005).

Findings

Nine second generation Indian-American women were interviewed for this phenomenological study. The women were all in their mid 20's, ages ranging from 22-26. All were of middle to upper-class backgrounds, with father's occupations including doctors, real estate brokers, and engineers, while mothers worked as doctors, nurses, nannies, and stay-at-home moms. The women I interviewed were born in America to foreign born parents, thus meeting the definition of second generation child, as discussed above. Due to the snowball sampling procedure, the women resided in various parts of the country, including New York, Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and Maryland, and West Virginia.

Each woman was aware of the dual cultures that existed in her life and was eager to talk about her experience. What follows below is a brief description of their narratives. I have highlighted those aspects most salient to the forthcoming analysis.

Participant #1:

Asha³ is a 26 year old second generation woman who currently resides in Maryland. Her father is a doctor and her mom stays at home. Asha has completed her graduate degree and is currently living at home with her parents.

From the time she can remember, Asha's mom encouraged her to embrace traditional Indian gender roles. For example, she would hear such demands as: Indian girls have to sit a certain way, learn to do housework, take care of your husband, and she was further told that these demands were her duties. Asha reported becoming resentful of these demands at an early age.

Asha describes her parents as very protective throughout her childhood, especially when it came to her dating. She was not allowed to date in high school and limited from doing so in

³ Names have been changed to protect privacy

college. Further, she was not allowed to attend high school social functions, such as school dances. Asha describes these restrictions as painful, and states that she wanted to do what her American friends were allowed to do, and not being able to do so was very hard. In reaction to her parent's strict rules, Asha stated that she struggled through different obstacles and imposed restrictions. She recalls keeping her life to herself and not telling her parents about her social behavior. For example, she stated would sneak out to dances when she was a teenager. However, as she got older she would talk about her life more freely. She states that at first her parents were uncomfortable with her open behavior, but slowly began accepting her lifestyle, albeit with some resignation.

Choice of career was another difficulty Asha faced as she was growing up. Asha's dad wanted her to become a doctor, as she stated the medical profession is seen as a "very prestigious thing" within their Indian community. Asha did not want to become a doctor and consequently much tension surrounded this issue. Asha had several arguments with her father surrounding this topic. Asha did not become a doctor, and instead is working as an epidemiologist.

Asha stated that she feels pressure to get married, both from her and parents and from her extended family in India. She explained that her family is really worried about her staying single at the age of 26, and constantly pushes for her to get married. She stated that they expect her to marry, in part to alleviate their personal concerns about the situation. She elaborated by stating that they think it selfish of her not to do something to solve a problem that is causing her family anguish.

Most of Asha's extended family, including grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, reside in India. She describes them as very community oriented. She notes the difference as she describes her herself as more independent than her family in India.

Asha has distanced herself from the Indian community within the States. She describes the Indian community as very judgmental. She believes that she became isolated from her local Indian community in order to have her freedom, and to be able to do whatever she wanted to do without fear of gossip or judgment on her family.

Asha describes growing up and living among Indian and American cultures as “very hard”. Asha recalls that her parents wanted her home life to be very Indian, whereas Asha describes herself as more American, constantly questioning the differences in the cultures.

Participant #2:

Dhara is a second generation Indian-American woman in her early 20’s who has finished her undergraduate degree and is contemplating graduate school. She was born in New Hampshire and currently works in North Carolina.

Dhara recalls pushing away the Indian culture as a child, as she found it difficult to reconcile with American culture. She explains that as a child, she wanted to fit in and do what her American school friends were doing. However, as she got older she began embracing the Indian culture more and more, owing this change to her growing maturity.

While Dhara was surrounded at school by mostly Americans, outside of the school, Dhara’s family was involved with a large Indian community, whom she refers to as “family friends.” She describes her family friends as acting as her family, in that many of her “aunties” and “uncles” became like second mothers and fathers to her. Although she was friends with both Americans and Indians throughout her childhood, she remarks that it was easier to be friends with other Indians in her ethnic community, due to similar shared experiences and situations as second generation Indian-Americans.

For example, Dhara notes that her Indian friends understood what it was like to have strict Indian parents. Dhara describes her parents as very strict and traditional. She was not allowed to date nor have platonic male friends. Dhara cites her parents “focus on education” as the primary reason for these rules. She claims that her parents always forced education and that her “studies always came first”, before any sort of social life. Dhara has completed her undergraduate degree and is currently deciding between business and law school.

Dhara claims that traditional Indian men expect women to take on “womanly roles that historically women have always taken.” She mentions cooking, cleaning, and childcare as examples of typical traditional Indian female behavior. She claims that she is okay with taking on some of these roles, albeit in a modified form. Dhara is aware that her desire to work professionally will limit her ability to embrace traditionally Indian female roles. She states that her husband would have to understand this, and expects that they would compromise on this issue.

When asked about her ideal marriage partner, Dhara states that he would be a fellow South Asian who also resides in the United States. She states that her parents expect her to marry an Indian, and claims that if she did not, they would be very upset to the point of disowning her. Dhara expects to choose her husband, and will choose someone that meets her parent’s requirements. Above all, Dhara states that her parents want her husband to come from a good family and get along with her family.

Participant #3:

Dayita is a second generation Indian-American woman who is in her mid 20’s. She was born and raised in a small Texas town. She has graduated college and currently lives at home with her parents.

Growing up, Dayita states that she did not have many Indian friends. She recalls that she was one of three Indians at her school, the other two of whom she describes as “dorky.” Thus, in school, she had mostly black and white friends. When Dayita went to college, however, she remembers being “blown away” by the number of Indians she encountered. She recalls being quickly embraced by the Indian community, explaining that she felt an immediate bond with other Indians. She credits this bond partly to the fact that “everyone got it”, referring to the notion that because everyone grew up as a second generation Indian American, everyone had similar issues growing up, as did she.

Dayita is generally fond of her childhood, however, stated that “the problem came” once she wanted to start dating. She was not allowed to date or attend most American social functions. Dayita stated that the restriction on dating was something that caused many arguments with her parents, throughout her teenage years. She remembers “fighting all the time” about this issue. She claims that the major reason her parents gave for their rules was their concern that dating and socializing would interfere with her education.

Dayita dated in spite of her parents restrictions. She dated predominantly black men in high school. At first she tried to be honest with her parents, however, when that didn’t work, began dating behind her parents back. Dayita continued to date black men in college, and was open with her parents about these relationships. She recalls that her dating black men created “huge disasters” with her parents and family. Also, while some in the Indian college community supported her decision, others saw inter-racial dating as a threat to Indian notions of cultural purity.

Due to the struggles she faced dating men of non-Indian ethnicities Dayita states that “bringing home” an Indian man would make things a lot easier. For this reason, she has

contemplated marrying an Indian man because it would be easier on her family than if she married a non-Indian. However, Dayita states that she will marry “whomever I fall in love with.” While her parents believe marriage is a choice that Dayita can make, Dayita believes that marriage is something that results from circumstances that she does not have control over.

Dayita feels as if American women sometimes have more freedoms than do Indian women. She attributes this to the difference the cultures place on the expectations of women. For example, she states that Indian women are expected to make decisions with the “greater good of the world” in mind, whereas American women have more of an individualistic tendency in their decisions.

Dayita was academically pushed throughout her schooling, yet has recently quit her “corporate job” in hopes of finding work in the non-profit sector. However, she states that her parents think that a career in the non-profit world is impractical. In the end, Dayita hopes to find a career that she “really loves”, while at the same time “making her parents proud.”

Participant #4:

Juhi is a second generation Indian-American in her early 20’s. She has recently graduated college with a degree in finance and has plans to study for her business degree. She lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Juhi claims that she has always identified with Americans over Indians. She claims that she always felt more embraced by the American community and states that she has always felt “more like a white person than Indian person.”

Juhi recalls being the the only Indian in her grade. Although there were other Indians in her school, they were all older or younger. Thus, Juhi feels as if she had no choice but to become friends with her American classmates.

Although Juhi was friends with her American classmates, Juhi was not allowed to socialize with them outside of school. For example, she states that she was never allowed to go to American birthday parties or sleepovers. Further, in high school, she was not allowed to date or go to school dances.

Juhi claims that her parents would often criticize her for only having American friends as a child. She states that parents would compare her to other Indian girls and ask why she couldn't be more like them.

Juhi explains that one reason she did not fully embrace other Indian friends in her childhood was due to her perception that the other Indian girls were cliquish, mean, and full of gossip. She recalls situations in which the other Indian girls were purposefully exclusive towards her and denied Juhi access within their clique.

Juhi describes her parents as very traditional and desiring deeply to hold on to their "traditional cultural values." Juhi describes herself as much more American than Indian, and Juhi states that this often created tension between her and her parents. For example, Juhi would often get into trouble for not having Indian friends.

As Juhi got older, she claims her parent's emphasis shifted from wanting her to be friends with Indians to increased pressure in her educational goals. Juhi's father strongly pressured Juhi to become a doctor. However, Juhi wanted to major in finance, and it took a lot of effort by Juhi to convince her father that finance was a lucrative career before she was "allowed" to pursue this line of work.

Juhi states that occasionally her parents bring up the topic of marriage, yet it is something that Juhi ignores. Although Juhi would eventually like to get married, it is not something she wants to "deal with" right now, as she claims she doesn't even have a boyfriend. She is certain

that she will never have an arranged marriage, and instead envisions a love marriage with someone of either Indian or non-Indian background.

Although a family is something that Juhi eventually desires, she claims that it is more important for her to first have a successful career. She claims that she wants to be able to “stand on her own two feet and know that she can provide for herself before getting married.”

Participant #5:

Jyoti is a second generation Indian-American woman in her mid 20’s. She was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and is currently studying for her PhD in Chemistry.

Jyoti expressed a deep pride for her Indian heritage. She has had a strong sense of identification with the Indian community and family friends all her life. She recounts growing up within an extensive Indian network/community and talks about how this community helped raise her. She describes Indian culture as “very communal” in that one is always tied into the community and family. For example, she states that her “aunties” from church, whom she has known since childhood, continue to have a vested interest in her current activities. Jyoti feels as if she will always be “tied into the community, tied into the family.”

Although Jyoti embraced the Indian community, she was very aware of living among both Indian and American cultures as a child. She claims that this often resulted in difficult situations, as she felt a little out of place in both American and Indian cultures. For example, she recalls confusing situations when explaining the Indian lifestyle to her American friends. Jyoti also claims that moving back to India would be difficult for her, due the culture shock she would experience as a result of her being born and raised in America.

Jyoti states that gender roles in America are sometimes confusing. She believes that in America there is more merging and crossing over in gender roles, which she believes leads to a

sense of confusion not found in the Indian culture. She takes pride in her unique womanly traits, stating that women have the important responsibilities of preserving culture and being at the heart of the community.

Jyoti describes her parents as stricter than her American peers. She cites restrictions on dating and her social life as examples of her parent's strict behavior. She claims that her parents did not want her to have a bad reputation as a teenager, and this was one reason for the restrictions on her social life.

Although discouraged from dating as a teenager, Jyoti's parents are currently would like her to get married as soon as possible. Jyoti wants to get married, and states that she would prefer an Indian husband that was also raised in the States, thus someone who understood both Indian and American cultures. Jyoti has decided to give herself a year to find a husband. If nothing materializes within that year, she will agree to entertain marriage proposals from family friends and Indian matchmakers.

Education is something Jyoti claims is highly supported and encouraged within her family. Jyoti is currently obtaining her PhD in Chemistry and hopes to either open her own drug company or go into academic medicine.

Participant # 6:

Rati is a second generation Indian Asian in her mid 20's. She was born in Cleveland, Ohio and currently lives in California where she is studying for her doctorate in pharmacy.

Rati describes her early childhood as "normal" and states that she first discerned differences between Indian and American cultures once she became a pre-teen. She states that at this age she began to realize that her life was "much different" than the American children around her.

One reason she came to this conclusion was due to her involvement in the Indian community outside of school. She describes being part of a strong Indian community and often feeling closer to her Indian friends than her American friends. She explains that it was “easy to make really good friends that were Indian because they knew everything that you were going through.” For example, as a pre-teen/ teenager she realized that her American friends did not have the same educational expectations or dating restrictions as did Indians.

Rati feels as if Indian parents place “great pressures and expectations” on their children’s education achievements. She believes that the aim of education differs in Indian and American cultures, claiming that most Indian parents push for a financially successful career whereas she feels as if children in America have more of a choice in their careers. She also feels that, within the Indian community, educational choice is something that is important to the entire extended family.

While Rati states that she enjoyed the Indian community as a child, she states that in college she became more critical of it. She claims that she would stay away from the gossip she felt occurred within the Indian college community. She often felt like she would be criticized if she did not do the “Indian thing.” She explains that there is a lot of pressure within the Indian community to stay true to the culture, and when one does not do so, she feels as if some Indians view this delineation as a betrayal to the culture.

Rati was discouraged from dating by her parents; however, she dated anyway, and would often not tell her parents about her relationships. She states that, in most cases, her relationship would be have to be “heading towards marriage” before she would tell her parents about it. She explains that she does this because her parents would otherwise “jump the gun” and immediately push for marriage in her dating relationships.

Rati does want to get married and plans on marrying “whomever she falls in love with.” She states, however, that it is critical that her future husband be “culturally aware”, in that he “needs to understand that life is a little bit different when you are growing up in America as an Indian.”

Participant #7:

Ratna is a second generation Indian-American in her mid 20’s who was born and raised in upstate New York. She still lives in New York, outside of Rochester, where she is in her last year of law school.

Ratna grew up in a small, white town in upstate New York, and her family was the only non-Indian family in the town. She recalls being the only non-white senior in her high school graduating class.

Ratna remembers wanting to fit in with her American peers throughout her childhood. This desire to fit in with her American peers is something that caused tension within Ratna’s family. Ratna recalls that her parents never wanted her to become Americanized, or “white”, and would encourage the Indian culture within her home. However, Ratna felt she had no choice but to become “white” because everything around was “white, American culture.” Ratna states that her parent’s main concern with regards to her impending Americanization, was the possibility of Ratna acting promiscuous, something she states her parents associated with American behavior.

Ratna states that her parent’s were stricter than her American friends. She recalls not being allowed to go to movies or sleepovers as a teenager. These parental rules were the cause of constant struggles, and Ratna recalls often fighting with her parents about these restrictions on

her social life. Often, Ratna would sneak out of the house to watch movies with her American friends.

Besides movies and sleepovers, Ratna was also not allowed to date as a teenager. However, Ratna would date anyway, and simply not tell her parents about these activities. She states that it was easier to keep this behavior to herself, explaining that her relationships were never serious, so “there was no need” to tell them.

Now that Ratna is older, she feels more comfortable with her parents and is more open with them than when she was growing up. For example, she is currently dating a white American, something that her parents are aware of and don’t object to. Ratna jokes that her parents “would just be happy if I got married at this point, I think, to anyone.”

Ratna is currently finishing law school, although she claims that her true passion is teaching. She states that she wants to be a lawyer for several years and then become a teacher.

Ratna states that she currently has more American friends than Indians and can not imagine marrying an Indian man. She attributes this, in part, to the fact that she was raised in predominantly American environments. At the same time, she is quick to claim her Indian identity, claiming that she knows and values the Indian culture and practices religious ceremonies with her parents. Further, she states that she feels an instant connection when she meets other Indians her age, due to similar experiences shared “across the board” by second generation Indian-Americans, specifically, experiences with “strict Indian parents.”

Participant #8:

Roshni is a second generation Indian-American in her early 20’s. She was born in Illinois, has lived in Mississippi, and currently lives in Chicago. She is currently in the process of applying to law school.

As a child, Roshni grew up in an environment with limited Indian contact. She states that she really didn't have many Indian friends growing up. She was one of three Indians at her school and recalls "never really talking" to the other two Indians.

Roshni describes her upbringing as non-traditional within the Indian culture, in that she was not raised with traditional Hindu beliefs. She describes this as something that runs in her family, explaining that both her families and grandparents were "very education oriented" and did not feel the need to practice religion in their daily lives.

Roshni states that she did not have much of an interest in Indian culture throughout most of her childhood. However, she began learning about Indian culture when she went to college. She remembers encountering many Indian people, to the point where she describes the situation as "kinda overwhelming." She remembers that her friends would jokingly call her "whitey" due to her lack of knowledge regarding traditional aspects of her culture.

Roshni embraced the Indian culture she found at college and continues to do so in her adulthood. She describes the Indian community as "a warm and welcoming network of friends", and believes that she could "move anywhere there were Indians and be able to make friends." At the same time, Roshni is aware of what she calls the "gossipy nature of the Indian community" and that states that "everyone knowing everything" can sometimes be a "bad thing."

Roshni stated that she thought dating was a "concept foreign to a lot of Indian people." She claims that her parents understood the concept of dating, and it was never a big deal for her and her parents. She questions the expectation many Indian parents have with respect to wanting their children to automatically marry at a certain age without having dated prior. She believes that dating is vital before a marriage, so that one can "know who you are supposed to be with or

what you want.” Roshni wants to get married and plans on dating beforehand. She states that while she is open to dating Americans, she finds herself more attracted to Indians.

Participant #9:

Sapna is a second generation Indian-American in her mid 20’s. She was born in a small town in West Virginia. She currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio where she studying for a Masters in Social Work.

Sapna grew up in a small West Virginia town, in which was predominantly Italian and Indian. She grew up embracing many aspects of her culture, performing in cultural fair in her town. She states that her culture is something that made her unique and is something that gives her a great amount of pride. Sapna was allowed to attend most school functions, although she was not allowed to date. She recalls her mother telling her that “boys were evil” and “all they wanted was sex.”

Throughout her childhood, Sapna recalls her mother putting a “huge emphasis” on education. She also recalls that this is something she felt within the school system as well, claiming that teachers often assumed that she wanted to be in honors classes. However, Sapna claims that she often felt like those honors classes were “forced on her.” When Sapna went to college, she majored in Liberal Arts, something she said distanced her from many Indians, due to the fact that she “wasn’t pre-med.” Sapna also embraced certain college activities, including drinking, that she claims didn’t go over that well with a lot of Indians. For example she recalls be called “loose”, by other Indians her age, because she went to parties.

Due to these factors, Sapna claims that she didn’t “hang out with that many Indians” in college, and instead socialized and dated with white people. She had two serious relationships with white men in college. After college, however, Sapna began to question her cultural identity,

and realized that she was becoming “more and more Western.” She states that she felt as if she was losing a part of her Indian identity and consequently her Indian heritage. It was at this point she decided to marry an Indian man. She explains that she didn’t want her children to be distanced from the Indian culture, and she fears this what would occur were she to marry an Indian man.

At the time of this writing, Sapna recently married an Indian man. She describes meeting her husband through the aid of her parents, although she is hesitant to call it an arranged marriage. She questions how her parents introducing her to her husband is any different that a Jewish mother introducing “her daughter to another Jewish mother’s son.”

Sapna is a young woman who has clearly defined conception of her role as an Indian woman and corresponding gender roles. She embraces an egalitarian ideology concerning domestic based gender roles, claiming that she fully expects her husband to take part in domestic and household duties. She understands that this is different than what traditional Indian women do, and is incredulous at many of the typical gender norms that characterize some parts of India. She believes that gender roles are more evenly divided in the United States. She claims that she has already started “prepping her husband” by telling him that “at the end of a long day, if you want to make tea, that’s cool, but I am not going to do it.”

Sapna is currently studying for a Masters in Social Work and has plans to obtain a Masters in Public Health. She states that she loves analyzing policy, however, Sapna’s self described passion is writing. She claims writing is something that she will have to keep as a hobby. She states her mother’s influence as a primary influence in this decision. She recalls her mother not talking to Sapna’s sister for several months, when her sister wanted to pursue a career

in acting. Sapna states “my passion is writing, however, it has to be my hobby, because I want to talk to my family!”

Examination of Cultural Differences

To understand how the women constructed a hybrid consciousness among two cultures, it is necessary to understand how the women made sense of each culture. The perceptions the women had of each culture, and the meanings the women gave to these perceptions help us understand those aspects of each culture that they identified with and those that they did not. By understanding those cultural attributes the women embraced or rejected, one can get a sense of how they constructed a cultural identity. The meanings given to Indian and American cultural practices were at times contradictory and clashed, creating conflict for the woman. This conflict opened up a place in which the hybrid space was formed and consequent negotiations continued to form and construct a cultural hybrid identity from this space. This process follows the theoretical work of Homi Bhabha and Gloria Anzaldua, to be outlined in more detail below.

Indian and American cultures contain unique cultural practices that contribute to their respective cultural repertoires. Ideological beliefs within each culture construct practices that serve to represent and signify the culture. The women were aware of both Indian and American cultural practices. Due to the differing cultural practices, as perceived by the women, the women were sometimes forced to modify or alter their behavior. In other words, the women had to draw upon more than one conception of culture in any given situation. The modifications that occurred in order to account for the varying cultural differences encompass what Bhabha calls “displacements of the present.” Thus, the articulation of cultural differences creates displacements of the present for the second generation Indian-American woman.

Cultural displacements can result in tense and conflicted situations for the person in question. Bhabha posits that these displacements lead to the formation of a hybrid space, a third space in between the two (or more) cultures in question. Similarly, Gloria Anzaldua (1987) refers to these cultural displacements as cultural collisions, and describes them as painful situations that occur when two incompatible frames of reference combine. She further postulates that a new hybrid consciousness is born from this cultural collision, a consciousness that embodies a “synergy of two cultures” (Anzaldua 1987:78). Both scholars content that the formation and consequent ongoing negotiation of this hybrid space or consciousness contributes to the construction of cultural identity.

The data yielded patterns of identity construction consistent with Bhabha’s and Anzaldua’s theories of hybrid cultural identity formation. The women’s perceptions and consequent articulations of cultural differences, experienced as a result of living in two cultures, created a situation in which behavioral modifications displaced the present. This displacement was generally accompanied by some degree of conflict and pain, and from this conflict, the formation of a hybrid space resulted, a new consciousness that was not wholly Indian or American, but rather somewhere “in-between”, a place in which both cultures were and continue to be in a constant state of negotiation. As is consistent with my aim to provide empirical evidence to postcolonial theories, my analysis will demonstrate how experiences in the women’s lives exemplify the process of identity construction within a hybrid space. I will show how the articulation of cultural difference displaces the present, resulting in the creation of a third space, a space in between essentialist notions of culture, a space which forms the basis of a cultural hybrid identity.

The ideology of patrilocality sets forth certain gendered expectations that lead to specific cultural practices, practices which have influenced the behavior of many people within the country of India. In a general view, patrilocality maintains the regulation of sexuality is vital to family honor and the interests of the community should take priority over those of the individual. The parents of the second generation, having been born and raised in India, are exposed to a patrifocal ideology, and upon immigrating to the United States, bring with them many of the associated cultural practices. In their attempts to recreate the Indian culture within the United States, the cultural practices of traditional Indian culture are often continued and encouraged, and thus the second generation is surrounded by these traditional Indian conceptions for behavior.

Patrilocality assumes certain appropriate behavior for the Indian woman. For the purposes of this analysis, I will concentrate on two overriding tenets of patrilocality. These include two separate but linked beliefs. First, I will explore the cultural philosophy that place great importance on the chastity and purity of the Indian women. Next, I will examine the cultural belief that expects women to make decisions, primarily those of marriage and education, in the interests of her family/ community. In both analyses, I will demonstrate how Indian cultural practices articulate those differences within predominant American cultural practices, an event which leads to the construction of the hybrid space.

Regulation of Sexuality

As set forth by the patrifocal cultural model, the purity and perceived chastity of Indian women is highly valued within the traditional Indian culture. This belief was present in a majority of the women's parent's as is evidenced by certain cultural practices that the women were subject to as they were growing up in the United States. For example, many of the women were forbidden to date.

- My parents...are very traditional. They didn't really want me to date in high school or anything like that. Even having friends that were guys was a big deal for them. (Dhara)

Also, parents were unfamiliar with coed school activities, and many feared that interaction with males may also lead to what they perceived to be inappropriate behavior. For this reason, many of the women were not allowed to attend school dances or other social functions.

- ...they wouldn't let me to go to parties or go to my friend's house (Dayita).
- ...I never got to go to any (American) parties.... I never got to go to birthday parties or have sleep-overs. (Juhi)

As suggested by the patrifocal philosophy, parents were concerned about the chastity of their daughters.

- ...they're (parents) don't want me to get a bad reputation, that's what they think; oh people will see you if you're with a guy, that kind of thing (Jyoti)
- ...I think growing up, it (dating) prob. would have been a struggle, they (parents) would have been really afraid, that I was going to become some slut or something, ...I think they were really afraid of that...of becoming Americanized, and to them that probably meant having sex when you were 16 and being really promiscuous (Ratna).

The women were aware that dating was taboo not only within their family, but also their larger ethnic community. Community pressures served to uphold the cultural practice of maintaining the women's chastity.

- if you're dating someone definitely don't tell your Indian friends, cause then it'll be all over the Indian community, and it'll be really bad (Asha)
- Like everyone (Indian peers) knew that you are not supposed to talk about your boyfriends with your (Indian) roommates' parents (Dayita).
- I just feel like some Indians... are very gossipy... it's not like you could tell every single (Indian) person that you are dating someone (Roshni)

The women were also aware that their American peers were not subject to the same strict rules and regulations as they were. They viewed their American peers and friends engaging in

social activities such as school dances and dates, and many of the Indian-American women wanted also to embrace such activities.

- I was friends with a bunch of white girls and black girls and they are all dating...so of course I wanted to date also... (Dayita).
- I just wanted to be allowed to do all the things that my American friends were allowed to do...(Asha)
- ...I remember when I graduated from high school, I wanted to go out with my friends and stay out past midnight and they (parents) would not let me (Ratna)

The women's exposure to cultural differences in the realm of dating and social activities led to the enunciation of cultural difference in areas concerning appropriate womanly behavior. The articulation of cultural difference led to a displacement of the present for many of the women I interviewed. Many times this displacement led to a conflicted situation in their lives. Many of the women protested the restrictions placed on their social freedoms and encountered struggles when they did so. The women dealt with the struggles in a variety of manners ranging from fighting with their parents to engaging in social behaviors behind their parent's backs.

- ...going to prom was a big deal for my parents. It took a lot of convincing that it wasn't a horrible thing. (Dhara)
- ...I started fighting for my rights. If I wanted to do something and I wanted it bad enough, I was going to do it and they (parents) weren't going to stop me. (Juhi).
- ...one time I wanted to go out and go see a movie, something so innocent, just wanting to leave the house, like you know can I go see a movie, and their (parents) instant reaction would be no, and then I'd have to fight for it, and I would have to, basically I was just a brat, I just totally would scream and cry till I basically got what I wanted (Ratna)
- ... everytime I wanted to go out I had to sneak out of the house. I mean I used to have to sneak out of the house if I wanted to go see a movie which was completely ridiculous (Ratna)
- ...then when I became a teenager, I started, you know, I'd have to sneak out to dances...(Asha)

The displacement and resulting conflict that occurred due to the articulation of cultural difference in conceptions of sexuality created a space in which a hybrid space was formed. In

this third space, “in-between” the notions of Indian and American culture, the women’s cultural identity was constructed. It should also be noted that while some women wanted to embrace American cultural practices of school dances and dating, others expressed concern about the amount of sexual imagery encountered in America. They remarked on how they sometimes felt over exposed to sexual imagery in the United States.

- in India, sex is the biggest evil, you don’t talk about it, no one has sex, the stork brings babies, and I like that...I like that it’s not out in the open, like blatant, like it is here (in America). (Sapna)
- We’re so tainted (in America). I went to India, and I was talking to some girls and they just had this freedom about them it’s just, innocence, at age 16, where I had just seen so much (sexual imagery) at an earlier age, on tv, the computer, stuff like that, that kind of joy and innocence and simple life... we (in America) don’t have anymore, we (Americans) were kind of exposed to too much too fast.. it’s almost like a lost innocence. (Jyoti).

Thus, the women moved back and forth between conceptions of sexuality, neither denying one culture nor fully accepting the other. In this manner, they actively negotiated conceptions of sexuality within a third space, which helped construct their gendered cultural identity.

Community Decisions

Along with expectations regarding feminine behavior, patrilocality asserts that individual decisions should be made with an emphasis on familial and societal interests. Thus, this belief system contends that the needs and wants of the individual are subordinate to those of the family and community at large (Subrahmanyam 1998). This ideology has important implications in several areas of the women’s lives, most notably in the areas of education and marriage. As is noted by several of the women, within the traditional Indian culture, decisions in both these areas are made with familial interests and desires in mind.

- In Indian culture, it seems like education and your future is important to the entire family. They take a really active role. That can be good or bad. It's good when you know that you have support. It's bad when you there's expectations that you just can't meet (Rati).

One woman explains this cultural belief by providing an analogy and comparison to typical movie plots:

- ...say you are watching an (American) movie about some princess girl and the princess wants to marry some schmoe from down the street, the moral of the movie is she should be able to do whatever she wants regardless of whether or not it screws up her country's entire political situation and causes havoc in the world. It doesn't matter. Go get married and love your life. And then I think Indian people are more like everyone should be shooting for the greater good of the whole world. And so if you watch an Indian movie in the same situation the girl would marry the guy that's she supposed to marry to make sure that her own country thrives. That would be accepted norm. I think that carries on in everything...that's sort of the way we grow up. (Dayita)

Thus, the ideology of patrilocality leads to the traditional Indian cultural practice of making decisions with familial/ community interests ahead of individual ones and is a concept that the women are keenly aware of.

In this section, I will explore the process of decision making within the areas of education and marriage, and how such decisions can be conflicted when family/ community interests are at odds with individual interests. Out of this conflict, one finds displacements in cultural conceptions of appropriate behavior with respect to decision making. Decisions that are made within the context of traditional cultural practices, that value the collective over the individual, displace decisions that are made within the context of American cultural practices that typically value the individual over the collective. In other words, the cultural differences that are articulated by the alternative practices of decision making displace the present, and result in the formation of a hybrid space, in which one's cultural identity continues to be constructed.

Education

Education was an important aspect in the women's lives. As discussed earlier, education was traditionally encouraged in Indian women to either enhance their roles as wives and mothers or to make them more appealing to potential husbands. The women in my sample all reported having felt educational pressures as children. However, while some of the traditional motivations may apply, the role that education played in the lives of the women's parents is vital. The parent's of the women emigrated to the United States as a result of the changes in 1965 immigration laws, which eliminated race and national origin as selection factors, and instead designated occupation as the main selection factor⁴. As a result, many of the post-1965 Indian immigrants were "upper middle class professionals who came to the United States to achieve professional and intellectual growth and better economic opportunities (Das 2002:139). Thus, the majority of the parents of the women placed a high degree of importance on education, as it allowed them to develop better economic opportunities for them and their family. Further, many post-1965 Indian immigrants used their upper class privileges to ensure higher education and career opportunities for their children (Das Gupta 1997).

The parents wanted their children to succeed professionally and this was apparent among the women's experiences. The women felt pressure from their parents to succeed educationally, with the eventual goal of a successful, lucrative career. Rati recalls hearing these pressures from an early age.

- I think that Indian parents really have high (educational) expectations of their kids off the bat. Even like first, second grade, I already felt the pressure from my parents. I remember bringing home things like tests. It always wasn't good enough. Regardless of the grade that you got, it's always, "where's the other 2%". I don't feel like my American friends went through that. (Rati).

⁴ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAimmigration65.htm>

The women were all heavily encouraged to pursue financially lucrative careers. Typical careers pushed by the parents were medicine, business, or law. As Rati explains,

- To them (parents) it's like education should lead to some sort of career. So you need to do something that's definitely going to lead to you being a doctor or a businessman, a lawyer, things like that... for them to feel like your education is worth while your career should be something that is substantial, that's going to bring home enough money in life, that's going to give you a definite job, job security. Because for them, coming home with an English degree or a philosophy degree, things like that just seem like a waste of time.

Pressure to pursue a lucratively financial career came not only from the women's parents, but also the larger ethnic community.

- the Marvari community here tends to be extremely highly educated it's not, like, I know there's a lot of Indians who own gas stations and you know all kinds of other stuff, but mainly Marvari's are doctors or engineers...so like with him if he (her brother) were like a carpenter or something, you know a painter or whatever, I think they would have just really looked down on it...and laughed at our family (Asha)
- it always seemed like your parent's friends always wanted to find out what your SAT score was, so they could compare it with their kids, and if you didn't get into the college you liked, they'd make fun of you behind your back, I mean I don't know, it just seemed kinda messed up...(Asha)

Several of the women felt that such pressures were not found to the same degree in the American community. Rati speaks of how she feels that in American culture, children are given relative freedom in choosing their careers.

- Regardless of the grade that you got, it's always, "where's the other 2%". I don't feel like my American friends went through that. I think in American society... they have those (educational) pressures but I don't think it's as...it doesn't seem as important...your education is more like, well this is what I want to do. (Rati)

Thus, the women were conscious that their American peers were not always pressured to the same degree as they were. This awareness of cultural differences led to a displacement of the present in some of the women's lives. Familial expectations were at times contrary to the individual desires of the child and this led to a difficult and conflicted situation for the child.

The women explain that the pressures placed on them by their parents did not always resonate with what themselves wanted.

- I didn't want to be in that group (with other Indians at her school), and I was constantly put in those groups, and everybody would just kinda interact with me like I was one of them (typical Indian student), I don't know...to generalize, these kids were over-achievers, and so, I guess since I tried to not follow in that same type of footsteps in school (Sapna)
- I didn't really like to study. I was in all the honors and AP classes in high school but for some reason I was the least interested in it (Dayita)
- ...they wanted me to be a doctor...I didn't want to do that, so that was another drama... that was actually a big old show down. My dad really wanted me to go to med school, and he was just so convinced that that was the only the career for me and anything else was just, it wasn't prestigious enough, it wasn't good enough and I wouldn't make enough money (Asha)

When the child pursued a career different than what their parents wanted serious repercussions were threatened. Sapna describes her mother's behavior when her sister wanted to pursue an acting career.

- ...my sister was in a movie, and she was like getting all this praise for it, and my mom stopped talking to her for 6 months, and also, she, I call it poisoned, my family against the whole idea, so my sister is now getting her MBA at Columbia (Sapna)

Thus, as Sapna's sister illustrates, the women are prone to compromise their true career interests for the sake of their family. Smith is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Social Work with plans for obtaining a future degree in Social Policy. Although this line of work interests her and she can not imagine doing anything else, a certain degree longing can be discerned when she speaks of her "true passion."

- ...my passion is writing, but it has to be my hobby, because...I want to talk to my family! (Sapna)

In this manner several women chose careers that would pacify their parents, yet at the same time found ways to pursue their true passions.

- I'm in law school but I'm also doing a masters degree in education, so next year I can also teach in the public schools cause that's really what I am passionate about...I kind of want to be a lawyer for a few years, maybe and make some money and save some money, because I really enjoy doing it, but my real passion is teaching (Ratna)

Finally, some women resisted the typical financially lucrative jobs pushed by their parents and instead opted for less conventional careers. For example, Dayita hopes to pursue a career in the non-profit sector, even though her parents view this career path as "impractical."

In sum, one can discern that when the women did not make career and academic decisions with the interests of their family in mind, conflict and tense situations resulted. In most cases, the women chose to make educational decisions that pacified their parents. However, this was not always the case when it came to marital decisions.

Marital Decisions

Within the traditional Indian culture, marriage is typically an arrangement between two families on behalf of the two people who are to be married. Families arrange a match based upon the best interests of the families in question. In other words, it is a contractual agreement between two families, and in its traditional form, emphasizes the interests of the family and community (Zaidi and Shuraydi 2002). The majority of the women with whom I spoke with mentioned that their parents had an arranged marriage. Although none of the parents insisted that their daughters marry according to traditional forms of arranged marriage, all of the daughters reported feeling immediate pressure to get married to a "good Indian man." All the women with whom I spoke to suggested that this was at the forefront of their parents minds.

- They (parents) just want me to marry an Indian... Just as long as he comes from a good family and they get along with his family (Dhara)
- ...they really want me to get married... they straight up said to me go find a guy (Jyoti)
- Dad wants me to get married between 24 and 26. So does mom. They want me to marry a Patel Indian guy... Very traditional. (Juhi)

Pressures to get married came not only from the women's immediate family, but also her extended family. One woman talks of feeling immense pressure to get married from her extended family in India.

- they're all like why aren't you married, soon no one's going to want you...you're already kinda over the hill. For them it is a big deal, for a girl who's not married by the time she's 26, there's a good chance she's not going to get married. Or she's going to get the undesirable husband. (Asha)

Most of the parents viewed the decision to get married as a *choice* the woman can make, as is reflected by the following statements

- I think it's funny because, I almost feel like a lot of Indian friends think that you kind of wake up one day and when you are supposed to get married in a year it is going to work out...(Roshni)
- ...it's not my choice to get married, in my opinion. It's circumstances. And I don't have control over them. So I don't see why I should be looked down upon myself if circumstances don't work out. Whereas I think they (parents) think a marriage is a choice that I make. And as long as I make the choice I will be married. (Dayita)
- They are like, if you are attracted to someone and he's nice, and his family is nice, and you don't hate each other, then it will probably dissolve as love. (Dayita).

The women are aware that their parents want them to get married, yet are uncomfortable with the amount of pressure placed on them to do so.

- It's not like I don't want to get married. So I wish that they would just understand and believe that... Because it's not my choice to get married, in my opinion, it's circumstances (Dayita).

Several comment that American women don't seem to have the same pressure to get married in their mid 20's.

- I want to get married and all of that but I don't think they (her family) understand that...I mean I've got (American) friends in their early 30's who aren't married yet... they're looking for husbands, but I don't think it's as severe (in America) as it would be in Karula...(Asha).

Some of the women felt the pressure to get married was contradictory to other cultural practices they were raised on. For example, the push that the women felt to succeed educationally seemed to wane as they got older and concerns of marriage became more pressing. This discrepancy was noted by some of the women.

- I guess we are expected to be really smart... our parents driving us to be like doctors, lawyers... (careers in which) we are supposed to be strong and independent and self-sufficient. At the same time, when it comes time to get married, they (parents) are all, you've got to be feminine. (Dayita).
- It seems like sometimes (Indian) women are expected to...it doesn't matter how your career is going... (The question is) Are you going to get married? (Rati)

In addition, several women questioned their parents logic that expected the women to “all of a sudden” marry someone, although they had never been allowed to date.

- ...the annoying thing in college was that all of a sudden, especially now, my parents are, when are you going to be married. I'm like you didn't want me to date in high school and pretty much most of college. So all of a sudden now, you're like get on it. I feel like a lot of Indian parents want them to not date at all during high school and pretty much in college and then all of a sudden they expect them to get married. (Dayita).
- ...dating in general isn't really allowed and stuff (in the Indian culture)... of course (now) it's like please get married! (Jyoti)

While all the parents were at times unwavering in their demands that their daughters marry, they varied with respect to the specific requirements of that marriage. Most women expressed that their parents would ideally want them to marry an Indian man.

- My parents want me to marry an Indian... They want me to marry like a Patel...Because we (Indians) are supposed to choose from this category, we are supposed to choose this Indian that's a Patel because that's our caste system. (Juhi).

Some parents were adamant in this demand.

- They (family) just want me to marry an Indian. If I married someone who wasn't an Indian, they would disown me. (Dhara)

However, most parents were willing to compromise on the race requirement, as long as the prospective (male) mate was white or Asian. Several of the women noted that their parents would have severe problems with them bringing home a black man. This is demonstrated well by the experiences of Dayita, who dated several black men in high school and college and had many struggles with her parents over her decisions in boyfriends. She recalls trying to bring home a black boyfriend and the negative reaction it caused in her family

- He came to visit and my dad basically told him that he was a nice kid but not really welcomed because he wasn't ever going to be a part of my life in the future and there's no way it would ever work out. (Dayita).

She explains that her parents believed that "you can't be with someone that's different from you culturally because our society is never going to accept it our friends are never going to accept it." Dayita disagreed vehemently with her parent's opinion and openly defied it by continuing to date her boyfriend. She tells of their eventual break up, blaming it primarily on her parent's inability to concede on the issue of race.

- Most of the reason we broke up was because of you people (parents and family). Not because of anything to do with me and him. It's because you people wouldn't accept him. (Dayita).

This experience has left Dayita with the realization that marrying an Indian man would be much easier for the relationship between her and her parents.

- ...maybe I should look at Indian guys a little harder and try to work with them a little more. It would just be so much easier especially if I can start off that way... start off on an even base with a marriage instead of starting off in the hole with a million problems before I even get to the point of being married. So it's definitely made me more open to the idea of dating an Indian guy. (Dayita)

This is something that is reiterated among the women. For example, Rati's parents want her to marry an Indian and Rati states that

- ...it would be great to marry somebody who is Indian because our culture would be similar, and things would probably be easier with my family.

At the same time, both women are adamant about marrying someone they love.

- I'm going to date whoever I want. And whoever I fall in love with I'm going to marry (Dayita).
- I would want to marry someone that I truly love. I think that is harder to find. So whoever that person ends up being, whatever color, race, it's fine with me (Rati).

None of the women were pressured to have a traditional arranged marriage, although several mentioned that they would be okay with a modified form of this type of marriage.

- I don't have a problem if my parents are like "we know this guy. We think you should meet him." I don't have a problem with that cause I just think it's like a blind date. (Roshni)
- ...they (parents) straight up said to me go find a guy and I told them, give me a year let me try and find a guy on my own then I'll start entertaining the proposals (Jyoti).

In sum, by looking at the decision making process of the women with respect to marital choices, one can get a sense of where individual desires conflict with those of the family /community and how this creates conflict in the lives of the second generation women. In the majority of the cases, the women with whom I spoke with claimed that their parents ideally would want them to get married as soon as possible. However, several of the women resisted against this desire of their families. Many of the women felt as if marriage was a matter of individual circumstance and not something that could occur over night. Some also insisted that they would marry whomever they wanted, whenever they wanted. In this vein, we see that decisions concerning marriage were not always made with the interests of the family in mind; rather the desire of the individual was prominent. At the same time, some women were okay with having their parents involved in decisions concerning marriage and were willing to entertain proposals from other families or be set up on blind dates by their parents. In this vein, the women were more in tune to making marital decisions within the context of family wishes.

To summarize, the Indian cultural tradition of patrilocality encourages those cultural practices that emphasize the interests of the family and community over those of the individual when making decisions. In other words, the Indian daughter is expected to compromise her own interests for those of her families. She is expected to comply with familial expectations regarding her educational and marital choices. As we have seen, this has led to conflicts for the second generation Indian-American women with whom I spoke with. Not all of the women followed parent's wishes with regard to educational goals or marriage, and in these cases, they stressed their own individual desires over those of the collective. At the same time, some of the women did make decisions that pacified and acquiesced their parent's wishes. In this manner, neither the Indian or American cultures were fully embraced.

The conflicts the women experienced with regards to choices in education and marriage leads to larger displacements with respect to her identification with the Indian culture. The articulation of cultural differences with respect to notions of decision making within the Indian or American cultures leads to a displacement of the present in the women's life. This displacement helps contribute to the formation of a hybrid space, one that is neither fully Indian nor American. The second generation Indian-American woman does not fully embrace traditional notions of decision making, nor does she fully reject them. Instead she is in the continual process of negotiating the differences, continuously contributing to the construction of her cultural hybrid identity.

CONCLUSION

The intersections of Indian and American cultures interacted in unique ways, exemplified by distinctive experiences the women had and continue to have in negotiating and reconciling their dual heritages. The women represent the crossroads of the interaction, each individual

manifesting the effects of cultural mixing. Living among two cultures produces two sets of cultural expectations and normative behavior that were negotiated in unique ways to construct a hybrid consciousness. While not all women had the same exposure to the American and Indian cultures, nor did they have the same experiences, each created a hybrid consciousness that was neither solely Indian nor solely American.

Based on distinct ideologies within the Indian culture, specific cultural practices instructed and guided the women with respect to their sexuality and how they made their decisions. These expectations were enforced by parents and family. However, as a result of being born and raised in the United States, the women were unavoidably introduced to different cultural practices outside the home and community. These American cultural practices were, for the most part, contradictory and opposing to the norms the women were expected to conform to in their homes and in their ethnic communities. The articulations of cultural difference and consequent tensions displaced the present and created a hybrid space where the women negotiated among the cultures, which led to the construction of a hybrid and gendered cultural identity. A selective appropriation of each culture resulted in a unique identity that moved back and forth between the Indian and American cultures.

Differing cultural practices often created tensions and struggles for the women and concentrating on those moments that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference hold important clues for the construction of a hybrid identity. This study has attempted to empirically demonstrate the process by which second generation Indian-American women negotiate between dual cultural practices in order to construct a cultural identity that reflects the women's active involvement in both cultures. Further, I have hoped to demonstrate a postcolonial alternative to the traditional theories of assimilation and pluralism. I agree with

Homi Bhabha's (1994) assertion that "the time for 'assimilating' minorities to holistic and organic notions of cultural value has dramatically passed" (251). I believe that assimilation is an outdated explanation for the children of the post-1965 immigrants, in part due to its inability to account for transnational or gendered experiences. In addition, the Indian-American immigrant's phenotypical difference from dominant white culture further limits the validity of classical assimilation. The Indian-American woman will always have a tendency to be "othered" due to her skin color. I also believe that cultural pluralism is inadequate in explaining the adaptation experiences of immigrants. Theories of cultural pluralism lead to the essentialization of cultural differences and are unable to account for the wide array of differences that exist within cultures. As Bhabha (1994) notes, "the incommensurability of cultural values and priorities that the postcolonial subject represents cannot be accommodated within theories of cultural pluralism" (249). For these reasons, I believe a postcolonial account of immigrant adaptation is best suited to explain the experiences of the second generation. This theoretical orientation views the subject as active and best captures the lives of the Indian-American woman, as she negotiates her own authority through a process of iterative 'unpicking' and incommensurable, insurgent relinking." (Bhabha 1994:265)

There are several aspects of this process that I was unable to capture appropriately in the analysis. For example, some of the women's voices were overrepresented, due to the fact that not all women experienced the same types and levels of tension. Whereas some women described their childhood as an immense struggle, others were happy with how they grew up. Religion as a variable in generating the degree of tension is something that should be further explored. Two of the women who had low levels of tension in their lives had interesting relationships with religion. While one was heavily immersed and took great pride in her

religion, the other commented that she was the atypical Indian woman, because she grew up in a household that did not embrace any religious ideology. Thus, degree of religion on both extremes seems to play an instrumental role in the degree of stress a second generation Indian-American women perceives while growing up in two cultures.

I suggest that this study serve as only the beginnings of a larger study that examines the construction of a hybrid identity in second generation women. Nine interviews, while appropriate for a phenomenological study, has the clear limitation of not being generalizable to the larger population. A more systematic, empirical study can be conducted using the ideas generated in this study. Also, class and ethnic differences as variables in the construction of a hybrid cultural identity are factors that could further illuminate the process of negotiation. All of the women interviewed were of middle to upper class, representative of the post 1965 Indian immigrants. However, in recent years, Indians of other classes are immigrating to the United States. It would be interesting to see how class differences contribute to the negotiation of a hybrid cultural identity. Finally, I suggest studying the negotiation process in other ethnicities, to fully understand how the intersection of ethnicity affects the construction of a hybrid cultural identity.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview will be semi-structured and open ended, as to allow the researcher to probe unexpected answers.

1. Tell me about your childhood. What was it like growing up in America?
2. Tell me about your parents? What is their immigration story?
3. Tell me about what it is like to live in America now, as an adult?
4. Can you explain to me what you consider to be the differences between Indian and American cultures?
5. What is it like to be a woman of Indian descent living in the United States?
6. What does feminism mean to you?
7. What are your hopes and goals for the future?
8. How do you see the future of Indians in this country?

VITA

Sonia Ladha, a second generation Indian/Austrian, defended her thesis and got married within one week of each other. She currently resides in New Orleans, however has plans to make Austin, Texas her home. Her research interests include postcolonial conceptions of identity and feminism across cultures.