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THE INDIAN AMERICAN WOMAN EXPERIENCE: THE PROCESS OF DEFINING HERSELF

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * * *

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2001

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Currently, the Indian community is the fourth largest Asian American population in the United States (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sandhu, Portes, & McPhee, 1996) and is projected as the fastest growing Asian American population (Dasgupta, 1986; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). Yet, little research has been done on the Indian American population. In fact, Indian Americans have been noted as the "forgotten Asians" (Kurian, 1986; Rocher, 1995) since they are commonly excluded from literature on the Asian American population. Thus, the author interviewed 10 women of Asian Indian descent about their personal experiences growing up in the United States. The author and a research assistant generated codes and then coded respondents' statements from the initial interviews. Agreement between coders was examined and a third party was sought if there was disagreement. The coded transcripts were presented to the participants for feedback during the second interview. Consensual qualitative research (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) and the interpretive methods were used to derive major domains from the data. Six domains that emerged are the following: (a) cultural influences, (b) romantic relationships, (c) caught between cultures, (d) coping mechanisms, (e) ethnic identity development, and (f) advice for parents and other Indian American women.
The domains were further organized into 28 themes, and were categorized as: (a) general (where all the participants shared a similar experience), (b) typical (more than half of the women shared the experience), and (c) variant (less than half of the woman shared the experience) according to Hill et al.’s (1997) instructions. The only general finding, where all of the participants shared a similar experience, was that the women experienced pressure about their career choice.

Implications for counseling are discussed and suggest that second generation clients share experiences that are similar to biracial individuals. The findings also suggest that counselors cannot assume that the current literature on counseling Asians or Asian Indian immigrants is applicable to the second generation Asian Indian American woman. Therefore, these findings illustrate the uniqueness of the Asian Indian American woman’s experience.
This dissertation is dedicated to Felicisima Serafica for her life-long commitment to Asian American issues.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in two cultures, or coming from one to live in another, is like moving in two directions at once, or like being in two places at once. For those who haven't experienced it, it seems a simple matter of picking and choosing the best of both worlds, but for some of us it is more painful than that.

Voice over, Indu Krishnan  
Director of “Knowing Her Place” in  

Indu Krishnan's description captures the experience of Indian Americans who feel torn between two cultures. Many social scientists agree that children of Indian immigrants experience conflict between American and Indian cultures (Das & Kemp, 1997; Dasgupta, 1986; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Segal, 1991; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981; Yao, 1989). It appears that conflict arises from growing up in the United States, which emphasizes individualism and being raised by an Indian family and community that emphasizes interdependence and collectivism; therefore, confusion is inevitable while forming one's identity.

India is a country of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and beliefs (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997). India’s civilization is dated from 3000 to 1700 BCE (Leonard, 1997) and has been colonized by the Turks, Greeks, Arabs, Huns, and the
British (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997). Indians came to the United States for several reasons, and there were two major waves of immigration.

The first arrival of Asian Indians occurred from 1899 to 1914 (Leonard, 1997) where mostly Sikh men came as laborers to California. The second major wave of immigration occurred with the passage of The Immigration Act of 1965. This act removed the quota on Asian immigration to the United States (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988). With the passage of this act, the Asian Indian population increased in great numbers (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988).

Currently, the Indian community is the fourth largest Asian American population in the United States (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sandhu, Portes, & McPhee, 1996) and is projected as the fastest growing Asian American population (Dasgupta, 1986; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). With an increase in this community’s population, it is extremely important for counseling psychologists to understand the experience of second and third generation Indian Americans. There are several additional reasons why the field of psychology should examine the issues of Asian Indian American clients.

First, Sodowsky and Carey (1987) state "that second generation Asian Indian immigrants may suffer from a deeper sense of marginality than do their parents, feeling that they are neither American nor Indian, being more confused about their role and identity, and having more ambivalent attitudes" (p. 139). Indian Americans are faced with defining and establishing their new identities within the context of differing cultures,
Indian and American (Segal, 1991). It appears that the second generation struggles to create a new identity that combines aspects of both American and Indian cultures.

Also, a few researchers have examined immigrant-child relationships within the Indian community. Segal's (1991) and Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil's (1981) studies concluded that Indian American children feel confused between the two opposing cultures because it is difficult to combine the two cultures. Because of the difficulty, conflict between the children and their immigrant parents is increasing.

Second, current psychological literature on Asian Americans has emphasized the importance of studying specific subsets of the Asian American population in psychological research (Leong, 1986; Uba, 1994). Despite the psychological conflicts and tension Indian American children undergo, little research has been done on the Indian American population. In fact, Indian Americans have been noted as the "forgotten Asians" (Kurian, 1986; Rocher, 1995) since they are commonly excluded from literature on Asian Americans. One example of this exclusion is that Asian Indian Americans are not included in Leong and Whitfield's Asians in the United States: Abstracts of the Psychological and Behavioral Literature (1993). Therefore, more studies are greatly needed that examine the experience of the "Forgotten Asians."

Third, although numerous typologies (Kitano, 1989; Sue, 1971), ethnic identity development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Cross, 1971; Root, 1990), and acculturation models (Berry, 1980) have been developed, the models do not incorporate the complexity of people's lives (Maira, 1998). Many of these models are therefore not helpful when describing the ethnic identity development experience of individuals who
have multiple factors that may influence their ethnic identity (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, generation status). Further studies are necessary to examine whether these models are applicable to the second generation, Indian American, and female experience.

Fourth, since current psychological literature defines the Asian American experience dichotomously (e.g., the individualistic vs. collectivistic aspects as mentioned above), problems can arise when working with this population. The problem with these divisions is that when psychologists study or work with second generation Indian Americans, the counselors' view of the client as either American or Asian identified can be damaging to the client. Understanding that clients have a *multidimensional identity* (e.g., defining themselves multiculturally versus choosing one culture or the other) is crucial to understanding the complexity of a client's life (Berry, 1997; Reynolds & Pope, 1991).

Also, previous research has found that Indian American women experience additional conflicts as a result of their gender (Agarwal, 1990; Kurian, 1986; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). True (1990) argued that Asian American women suffer from double jeopardy: they are valued because they are considered exotic and submissive, while they also experience sexism and prejudice because of their ethnicity.

In addition, Gupta (1998) found that Indian American women report a more pessimistic view of their lives than Indian American males. She stated that pessimism is related to depression, and since these women report more pessimism, Gupta (1998) argued that the women might be more likely to be depressed. However, in-depth studies have not been conducted that examine the content of Indian American women's struggles.
How can psychologists study or work with this population with the lack of information that exists on this community?

Accordingly, this study focuses on the experience of Indian American women. This study examines the general experience and the ethnic identity development of second-generation Indian American women. The purposes of this study are described below.

Purposes

The current study had several purposes:

(1) The researcher examined how Indian American women make meaning out of their lives. The "essence of their experience" (Patton, 1990, p. 69) was explored in order to understand the multiple identities of Indian American women.

Examining the general experience of Indian American women is important since there is no current study on this topic. While conducting a literature review on the Indian American experience, several important themes emerged from previous studies and literature reviews. These themes were examined in the current study: (a) dating and marriage (Agarwal, 1991; Das & Kemp, 1997; Dasgupta, 1986; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Kurian, 1986; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Rocher, 1995; Segal, 1991; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981; Yao, 1989), (b) prejudice (Dasgupta, 1986; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Segal, 1991; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981; Yao, 1989), (c) Indian familial aspects (Das & Kemp, 1997; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987), (d) academic and career decisions (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Segal, 1991; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981; Yao, 1989), and (e) peer influences (Kurian, 1986).
(2) In addition, Yao (1989) believed that Indian Americans create separate identities at home versus in school. Root (1990) called this "social chameleon" type of behavior the segmentation of the self. This study examines if Indian American women segment aspects of themselves. In addition, this study tested ethnic identity development and acculturation models to see if the models included this aspect.

(3) The current acculturation and ethnic identity models may not accurately represent the Indian American experience because of the multidimensionality of the women. This study examined both acculturation and ethnic identity as constructs that may be more fluid rather than static aspects of one's life (Berry, 1997; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Root, 1990). Berry (1997) and Root (1990) argue that acculturation is dependent on the contextual cues or the situation. They argue that there are many influences on the acculturation level and people can vary according to the situation. Berry's (1997) and Root's (1990) arguments were investigated in this study.

(4) The researcher also utilized qualitative research methods to produce a more holistic portrayal of the experience of Indian American women. This method allows the researcher a window into the emotional experience and personal understanding of the participants.
LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides definitions of the terminology used in this study. Overviews of Indian history and religions, and immigration to America are also presented. A review of the available studies on the Indian American population is included. Next, a description on the concepts of ethnic identity typologies, development, acculturation, and conflicts between the first and second generations is discussed. Finally, the qualitative paradigms (interpretive, consensual qualitative research, and grounded theory) utilized in this study are described.

In preparing for the literature survey for this study, the researcher used a psychological database to examine works in this area. After entering several words related to the topic, the search revealed only 21 references. However, over the last year several new studies and books have been published on the Asian Indian American community. These studies and books are summarized below.

Definition of Terms

In this study, Asian Indian refers to those people who are originally from India (Gupta, 1999; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993) who may or may not have U.S. citizenship,
whereas Indian American refers to those who are born and/or raised by Asian Indian immigrant parents in America. Indian Americans have spent the majority or all of their lives in America.

Ethnic Group refers to "a distinct category of a population in a larger society whose culture is usually different from its [the larger culture] own" (Varma, p.30, 1980). This definition makes the term ethnic group very similar to a minority group (Saran, 1985). Yinger (1978; as cited in Saran, 1985) describes an ethnic group as a portion of the larger population that has a common origin, culture, and shared activities. An immigrant is a person who leaves his/her country of origin to live in another country (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1985).

First generation are people who are originally from India, but are now residing permanently in the United States (Varma, 1980). In this study, the words “first generation” and “immigrant parents” will be used interchangeably. However, the second generation are the children of the first generation immigrants. The second generation consists of those individuals who were born in the United States (Gupta, 1999) or have spent a majority of their lives in the U.S. Second generation females were the focus of this study.

Also, this project examines the experience of Indian American females’ ethnic identity development. Therefore, defining terms related to ethnic identity development is necessary. One’s racial/ethnic identity development is based on the perception that he/she shares certain racial/ethnic values that are similar to a particular group (Helms, 1990). Tajfel (1981), on the other hand, defines ethnic identity as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or
her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and the emotional significance attached to that membership” (p.255, as cited in Phinney, 1990). In this study, the second definition will be used when referring to ethnic identity development since it incorporates “the emotional significance” of the individual to her membership of a group and that is of interest in this study.

Another construct that appears to be used interchangeably with racial/ethnic identity development is acculturation. **Acculturation** is the process of change within an individual that results as two cultures come into contact with each other (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Both the constructs of ethnic identity development and acculturation were explored in this study. A review of Indian history and religion follows.

**The Indian Subcontinent**

Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu (1997) contend that it is important to understand the history and culture of India, in order to fully appreciate the Asian Indian American experience. The civilization in India is dated from 3000 to 1700 BCE (Leonard, 1997). India was an agriculturally based civilization that also traded as far as Mesopotamia. Since India’s culture is so old, many have described India as being very rich culturally and historically.

India has had a long history of colonization from several countries; therefore many of these countries have influenced the culture. The Turks, Greeks, Arabs, Huns, and the British colonized or had a major influence in India (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997).

After India’s independence from the British in 1947, the Muslim populated area, now known as Pakistan, separated from India. Currently, India consists of 17 states.
"Each region has its own cultural, traditions, beliefs, and values" (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997, p. 37). There are 15 main languages spoken in India. The national language is Hindi since 30% of the population speaks Hindi; however, there are hundreds of different dialects spoken in India (Srinivas, 1993). Diversity in religions can also be seen in the Indian subcontinent.

Religions of India

"India is a religious country in the sense that religion remains an important and pervasive force in the life of most people" (Srinivas, 1993, p. 565). In this study, women of different religious beliefs were interviewed (Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and a Buddhist); therefore, a brief discussion of these religions is provided.

Hinduism. Hinduism has the largest group of followers in India; in 1981, 549.8 million people were Hindus (Srinivas, 1993). Hinduism is practiced in a variety of ways throughout India. Hindus have several books that are sacred, one of the well-accepted books is the Vedas, which are the oldest Indian texts ("Hinduism," 1998). There were several main Gods in the Vedas: Vishnu, "a god of extension and pervasiveness," and Siva, the creator and destroyer.

How are women treated in religious texts? Another text, according to Sugirtharaja (1994), the Rg-veda, considers sons to have the highest value; however, the daughters were not devalued (Sugirtharajah, 1994). Hymns in the Rg-veda even emphasized the equality of men and women (Sugirtharajah, 1994). However, the Brhamana texts influenced the marginality of women in India. These texts allowed men to perform more of the religious rituals, and women were expected to focus on domestic activities
(Sugurtharajah, 1994). In the *Upanisads*, men were encouraged to seek salvation, while women were encouraged to devote their lives to their husband and children.

Hindu law books, the *Dharmasastras*, classify women as the lowest caste. Women were also considered impure and only marriage would entitle them the pursuit of religious studies (Surgirtharajah, 1994). These books do allow some freedom to women (e.g., choosing one’s partner after a certain age), but the woman is clearly expected to follow her husband’s wishes. Surgirtharajah (1994) asserts that women who do not follow these “duties” may experience guilt and anxiety.

Several fundamental beliefs of Hindus are the principles of Brahman, a realization of the relationship between the self and the universe; *samsara*, the pilgrimage of one’s soul; *karma*, one’s actions determine one’s destiny; and *moksha*, stopping the cycle of rebirth through realizations about the self (“Hinduism,” 1998). Jayakar (1994) argues that *dharma*, traditional order or duty, and *karma* contribute to a fatalistic view among Indians. Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu (1997) also noticed the fatalistic view of Asian Indians. These concepts influence Indian women to view relationships with others as a highest priority, therefore “the Western doctrine of individual human rights is profoundly alien to the Indian, who pursue ‘adjustments’ rather than ‘rights’” (p. 166).

The caste system also is a construct in Hinduism. The Hindu caste system is divided into four groups: “priests, warriors, agriculturists and traders, and servants” (p.935). Finally, most Hindus worship at home, called *puja*, where individuals make offerings to idols.

**Islam.** Arab Muslim traders came to India for a number of reasons such as to conquer cities and teach their religion (Hardy, 1995). In 1981, there were 75.5 million
Muslims in India. Muslims live mostly in West Bengal, Kashmir, Assam, and Kerala (Srinivas, 1993). The religion was founded in the 7th century AD by Muhammad ("Islam," 1998). The holy text for Muslims is the Qur'an, which is considered to be the direct words of God ("Islam," 1998). The belief system contains five articles of faith: 
“(1) belief in one God, (2) in angels, (3) in the revealed books, (4) in the prophets, and (5) in the day of judgment” ("Islam," 1998, p. 409).

Muslims are also to (1) say the “profession of faith” (p.409) at least once in a lifetime, (2) observe five daily prayers, (3) pay money to help the poor, (4) fast for the month of Ramadan, and (5) if possible, make a trip to the holy place of Mecca.

Badawi (1994) noted that “for Muslims every thought and every action has both spiritual and ethical consequences, and thus has religious significance” (p.84). Therefore, the practice of Islam affects every action of the individual. This dedication can be seen in the translation of the word Islam that means ‘self surrender to God.’

Literal translations of the Qur'an reveal that men and women are addressed equally. The religion does not advocate a hierarchy among believers and sees all believers as equals (Badawi, 1994). Although the literal text emphasizes the equality of men and women, conservative traditions and culture are commonly confused with the Muslim religion. Also, verses are commonly misinterpreted. For example, a verse in the Qur'an encourages women to be modest. The misinterpretation of that verse has caused people to believe this modesty translates as women needing to cover their heads in public, otherwise known as purdah.

Currently, women are expected to sit in the back of the mosque to worship (Badawi, 1994). Also, women are allowed to pursue religious studies, but are not
allowed to teach individuals outside of the family. The practice of *purdah* is still followed to different extents depending on the social customs of the environment.

**Christianity.** The date when Christianity came to India has created a large debate (Neill, 1995). However, most scholars believe Christianity existed in India in the 4th century (Neill, 1995). In 1981, 16.2 million people in India were Christian (Srinivas, 1993). A large number of these people are converts and live in Southern India. The major teachings of Christianity are from the life of Jesus of Nazareth (“Christianity,” 1998).

Although there are many different divisions in Christianity, there are several common beliefs: (1) an emphasis on the Bible as the holy book, (2) being forgiven for one’s sins, (3) faith being the only condition necessary for God’s acceptance, and (3) having some participation in church (“Christianity,” 1998).

Similar to Islam, Christianity has also been noted to change with the cultural ideas of society (Drury, 1994). Therefore, when examining the position of women within Christianity depends on how literal one interprets the Bible or takes into account the cultural norms of the time. A Christian woman’s role in society began from the chapter of Genesis in the Bible (Drury, 1994). In this chapter two different accounts are provided on the creation of Eve, the first woman. First, the chapter describes how men and women are equals and were created simultaneously (Genesis 1:1-2:3; Drury, 1994). In Genesis 2:4-3:24, Eve was created from the rib of Adam, the first man. She was created to be a companion and helpmate for Adam. Some Christians use this verse to show a hierarchy of women being second to men. Also, since Eve was tempted to disobey God, the book of Genesis emphasizes “the fundamental wickedness of women” (p. 34). Drury (1994)
explain how these views of women became so well accepted since these views matched
the views of women in society at that time.

Drury (1994) found that women were allowed to study religion, unlike Hindu
women. However, they were not allowed to teach men about religion (similar to Islam).
Currently, in the West women are now priests and clergy. The only Christian religions
that resist the idea of women as clergy are the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox
Churches (Drury, 1994). Also, according to Drury (1994) some of the earlier beliefs
about women being inferior to men have been disappearing.

Sikhism. In 1981, Sikhs made up 13.1 million people in India and a little more
than 50% live in the region of India known as Punjab (Srinivas, 1993). Sikhism
developed as a combination of both Islam and Hinduism. In the later part of the 15th
century, Guru Nanak founded Sikhism, and nine people succeeded after him. The
writings of these ten people are in a book entitled “Adi Granth.” In this religion,
believers have one God, who is not worshipped with idols or images. One’s purpose in
life is to lead a “good life in obedience to his commands and by prayer” (“Sikhism,”

Guru Nanak emphasized and practiced the philosophy that men and women are
equals (Kaur-Singh, 1994). Therefore, both men and women are allowed to perform
religious rituals that take place in the Gurdwara, a Sikh place of worship. Both partners
are expected to be faithful and monogamous.

Buddhism. In 1981, Buddhists consisted of 4.7 million Indians and most of these
followers are recent converts (Srinivas, 1993). Siddhartha Gautama established
Buddhism in Northeast India from the late 6th century to the 4th century B.C. Siddhartha
was born to a royal family in India; however, when he saw the suffering in life, he turned away from his family and became an ascetic ("Buddhism," 1998). He began to instruct people in the dharma, or truth, and the "middle way" which is "a path between a worldly life and extremes of self-denial" ("Buddhism," 1998, p. 602). Buddhism teaches Four Noble Truths: (1) life is full of suffering and disappointment, (2) suffering results from one's desire, (3) desire must be extinguished in order to eliminate suffering, and (4) one will stop desiring things if one follows the Noble Eightfold Path (the right views, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, awareness, and concentration) ("Buddhism," 1998). The temple is the main place of worship for Buddhists.

The core teachings of Buddhism are gender-free according to Gross (1994). However, the societal treatment of women has greatly affected Buddhist practices. Generally, Buddhism has been male-dominated and has followed the societal and cultural treatment of women (Gross, 1994). Initially, the Buddha would not allow women to follow his lifestyle. Later, after being convinced by his attendant, the Buddha allowed women to practice the lifestyle. The presence of female figures can be seen throughout the history of Buddhism and they actually created a text, *Therigatha*, which include their poems and songs of liberation (Gross, 1994).

Currently, in teaching, Buddhism remains a gender-free religion (Gross, 1994). However, Buddhist nuns are not as well respected as the monks. However, Gross (1994) noted that groups of Buddhist laypeople have emerged and seek the same goals and nuns and monks. This newer form of Buddhism has been more appealing and attainable to women.
Now the review will shift from a discussion on Indian history and religions to
Indian Americans in the United States. The next sections will discuss different periods of
immigration in the States. Following this section, the literature review will then discuss
identity typologies, development, and acculturation models.

Background of Asian Indian Immigration

Why did Indians emigrate to America? Leonard (1997) noted two major periods
of immigration from India. The first arrival of Asian Indian immigrants to the United
States occurred from 1899 to 1914. These Indian immigrants worked as laborers and
planned on returning home after earning money (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Sandhu, 1997).
The immigrants were men from the province of Punjab, and they were farm workers in
California (Leonard, 1997). During this same time, Mexican families relocated to
California to work in the cotton fields. The men from Punjab and the Mexican women
began to marry. From 1913 to 1949, the Punjabi men married more Hispanic women
than Anglo, African-American, Indian, or American Indian women. This high rate of
inter-ethnic marriage created a “biethnic” community (Leonard, 1997). Several laws
were passed by the government, during this period, that restricted Asian immigrants from
coming to the United States (Leonard, 1997). And in 1917, the “Barred Zone”
Immigration Act was passed which stopped nearly all Asian immigration (Leonard,
1997). However, in 1946 a small number of Indians were allowed to come to the U.S.;
only 7,000 Indians entered the U.S. at this time (Kitano & Daniels, 1988).

The second major wave of immigration was the result of the passing of the
Immigration Act of 1965 (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sadowsky & Carey, 1988). In 1965,
President Johnson sought to decrease discrimination by endorsing the 1965 Immigration
Act (Bhutani, 1994). This act removed the quota on Asian immigration and therefore, the Asian Indian population in America increased in large numbers (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988). Behind the Filipinos and Koreans, Indians were the third largest group to emigrate to America (Yao, 1989). Between the years 1965 and 1977 the Asian Indian population grew 3,000% (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 1982; cited in Sodowsky & Carey, 1988).

Asian Indians have continued to emigrate to the United States, and in 1985 they constituted 10% of the Asian population in the United States (National Education Association, 1988; cited in Yao, 1989). Currently they are the fourth largest Asian group in the United States (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988). In Ohio, there are approximately 21,000 Asian Indians. Columbus, Ohio has the highest population of Asian Indians in the entire state of Ohio (2,500; Department of Census 1990).

The Asian Indian community is projected to be the fastest growing subset of the Asian community in the United States (Dasgupta, 1986; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994; Segal, 1991). The 1990 census found the Asian Indian population has grown 125% in the last 10 years, with 815,000 Asian Indians and their children currently living in the United States (Department of Census 1991; cited in Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994). These statistics include both first and second generation Asian Indian Americans (Gupta, 1999).

In addition to the uniqueness of the Asian Indian population's growth rate, this community is different from other immigrant groups. For example, the majority of Indians who came to the United States in the mid-sixties are professionals, mostly
physicians and engineers (Agarwal, 1991; Dasgupta, 1986; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Sodowsky & Carey, 1988; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981; Yao, 1989). For example, Sheth (1995) found that 22.2% of native born and 30% of foreign-born Indians have professional jobs, while 14.4% of White Americans have similar positions. Second, similar to the Filipinos, the Asian Indian community has been exposed to Western values before immigrating (Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981) due to past British colonization. British colonization required that all children be taught in English and therefore most Indians are fluent in English (Segal, 1991).

On the other hand, Yao (1989) noted that the characteristics of Asian Indian immigrants since the 1970's are different from those who emigrated in the mid-1960's. These later immigrants have a lower education level, and the males seek paraprofessional jobs, while the females are housewives. Therefore, this group is more similar to other immigrant groups in that the education level is lower than the Indian immigrant professionals who came in the mid-sixties.

Despite these demographic differences, this community contributes a great deal to the economy of the United States (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993). For example, in Ohio the mean household income for Asian Indians is $74,000 compared to $36,602 for White Americans (Department of Census 1990). Due to this community's wealth and education, Indian Americans will become a very strong political and social force in the States (Dasgupta, 1986).

Although the above comments highlight the increase in the economic and political strengths of the Indian American community, numerous authors have noted the lack of research on this group (Dasgupta, 1986; Segal, 1989; Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Rocher,
1995; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). The only research that has been conducted in the United States, with the exception of three major studies (Agarwal, 1991; Maira, 1999; Segal, 1989), has focused on Asian Indian Immigrants (Rocher, 1995) versus second generation Indian Americans. The results of these studies will be discussed later in this review.

Several questions arise when examining the impact of immigration to the United States. First, what happens to people's ethnic identity once they live in a new and different environment? How are the recent immigrants' children affected by the cultural differences among the family and environment? What process do people undergo when they are exposed to new and different cultures? Several researchers have developed ethnic identity models in hopes of answering some of the previous questions. The models they developed are described below.

**Identity Development and Acculturation**

Racial and ethnic minority issues have currently been receiving attention in the counseling psychology literature in two major areas: ethnic identity development and acculturation (Atkinson & Thompson, 1992). However, distinctions between the two constructs have not yet been fully analyzed. It appears that some researchers have not clearly defined the differences between the two constructs (Leong & Chou, 1994). Therefore, this section will provide an overview and critique of the typologies of ethnic identity, ethnic identity development models, and acculturation models.

**Typologies.** Typologies were the predecessor to the ethnic identity development models, and the typologies were formulated on adults (Sue, Mak, & Sue, 1998). Typologies do not focus on development over time. Rather these models show the final
outcome or classification system. Two Asian American typologies that have been
developed are described below.

In 1971, Sue and Sue developed the Typology of the Chinese American which was
one of the earliest ethnic identity models (Leong & Chou, 1994). Unlike the ethnic
identity models that support the idea of a process of development, Sue and Sue’s model
(1971) describes types of Chinese American personalities. Therefore, the model does not
suggest a process of development, but more a product or a particular state at a certain
point of time. The model can also be used to classify Asian Americans.

The model is made up of the following identities: the Traditionalist describes the
individual who maintains his or her traditional aspects of Chinese culture. This person
places a strong emphasis on family values, dedicated work ethics, and an emphasis on the
collective. In comparison, the Marginal Man is described as one who assimilates towards
White American culture. When this person experiences racism, he rejects his Chinese
heritage. The last typology in this model is the Asian American, who develops a new
identity in which he/she combines aspects of both cultures.

In their review on ethnic identity, Sue, Mak, and Sue (1998) discuss another
typology model. Kitano’s (1989) model combined the aspects of assimilation (or
acculturation) and ethnic identity (maintaining one’s original culture or heritage). These
typologies yield four different types: Type A (high assimilation, low ethnic identity)
defines those who highly identify themselves as Westerners. Type B (high assimilation,
high ethnic identity) refers to those who are bicultural. Type C (low assimilation, high
ethnic identity) are those who identify more heavily with their culture of origin. Finally,
Type D (low assimilation, low ethnic identity) comprises those who feel that they do not fit into either culture.

**Ethnic identity models.** Racial/ethnic identity development is based on the perception that a person shares certain racial/ethnic values that are similar to a particular group (Helms, 1990). Most research on ethnic identity development throughout one’s lifetime has focused on African Americans (Myers et al., 1991) and is unclear about the development period being studied (e.g., adolescence versus adulthood).

One of the first and frequently discussed African-American identity models was developed by Cross (1971) that includes five-stages. This model describes the process that an African-American individual undergoes in developing a Black identity (Stokes et al., 1998). In Stage One (Pre-Encounter), the individual idealizes White ideas and beliefs. The individual regards Whites positively while regarding all other ethnic minorities negatively. During Stage Two (Encounter), the individual undergoes a racist event, which then challenges the individual’s previous idealization of White culture. In Stage Three (Immersion/Emmersion), the individual searches out one’s ethnic minority culture and shares the experience of being victimized by racism. In Stage Four (Internalization), the individual begins to see both the negative and positive aspects of his/her group. Finally, in Stage Five (Internalization-Commitment), the person becomes more of a “humanist” and is concerned about the victimization of all humans rather than his/her own ethnic group.

Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989) designed a general model of ethnic identity development (Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model; R/CID, 1979) that they argue applies to all racial/ethnic minorities. This model has five stages: conformity,
dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness. The
participant moves from identifying solely with the dominant culture while being ashamed
of one's own ethnicity to viewing both the dominant and one's own ethnicity positively.

The authors argue that this model reveals the struggle that racial and ethnic
minorities undergo to understand themselves in relation to (a) their own culture, (b) the
dominant culture, (c) towards one's own minority group, and (d) towards other minority
groups (Sue & Sue, 1990).

Counselors are then able to apply the R/CID (Atkinson, Morten, and Sue, 1979) to
clients in order to understand how the client's beliefs will be exhibited. The R/CID is
developmental in that counselors are encouraged to help clients reach the final stage,
known as the Integration stage. When clients can regard both their own culture and the
dominant culture positively, then they have achieved the highest level of development
(Sue & Sue, 1990). Therefore, the model also assumes that individuals progress through
the various stages over time. People who progress to the highest stage, integrative
awareness, are believed to be the most well adjusted (Sue, Mak, & Sue, 1998).

Root (1990) discussed the ethnic identity development of biracial individuals.
She calls her model the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM, 1990) where there are
four possible options for identity resolution: (1) Passive, where an individual identifies
with only one aspect of his/her identity as defined by society, (2) Passive, where an
individual identifies with only one aspect of their identity as defined by oneself, (3)
where one embraces all aspects in a segmented fashion or creating separate identities, (4)
where an individual identifies oneself as a new group by creating a new identity.
Acculturation. Acculturation is another construct that has received much attention recently, but researchers do not agree on a universal definition of this construct (Atkinson & Thompson, 1992). The oldest definition of acculturation is the process of change that results as two cultures come into contact with each other (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936).

Berry's (1980) model of acculturation has been widely used with Asian Americans in this area (Leong & Chou, 1994). Berry expanded on Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits' (1936) definition by adding that “acculturating individuals are likely to hold attitudes towards the ways in which they wish to become involved with, and relate to, other people and groups they encounter in their acculturation arena” (Berry, Kim, Young, & Bujaki, p.186, 1989). Berry’s (1980) original model of acculturation is similar to the typologies described above. Sue, Mak, and Sue (1998) argue that acculturation models are more appropriate for immigrant ethnic identity development, whereas the ethnic identity development models are more applicable to those who were primarily born and/or raised in the United States. However, ethnic identity development has been used interchangeably with the term acculturation; therefore, it appears that most researchers have not clearly defined the differences between the constructs (Leong & Chou, 1994).

Berry’s (1980) model of acculturation, widely used with Asian Americans (Leong & Chou, 1994), posits four outcomes: separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. The model reveals the interaction between one’s own culture and the dominant culture. The Separatist identifies only with one’s own ethnic culture. Second, the Marginalized group consists of those who feel uncomfortable in both the host and their own culture groups. Third, the Assimilationists are those individuals who identify
with the host’s culture. Finally, Integration occurs when someone combines both her own
and the host culture. The four outcomes have been noted as similar to those found in
racial/ethnic identity development models and the typologies, and some have argued that
Berry’s model is therefore more a model of identity development than acculturation
(Leong & Chou, 1994).

Measurement of acculturation. The most common measure of acculturation in the
Asian American community is the Suinn-Lew Asian Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-
ASIA; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987). The measure contains 21
multiple-choice items covering: language, identity, friendships, behaviors, background,
and attitudes.

However, this instrument has received much criticism because it measures
acculturation on a unidimensional scale where participants must choose between
American identified, Asian identified, or Bicultural identified. The participant must then
make a choice between the identities versus rating them on a continuum. In addition,
acculturation is a complex construct that has many choices and outcomes (Leong &
Chou, 1994) that are difficult to measure using a multiple-choice instrument.

Criticism of current models. One danger in assessing racial/ethnic identity
development is to assume that the person’s present stage is representative of their global
personality (Sue & Sue, 1990). However, current researchers have argued that clients
may represent different stages in different contexts at different times (Berry, 1997;
Helms, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990). For example, Berry (1997), has reconceptualized the
construct of acculturation. He argues that the former view, that acculturation is a static
state, is not accurate. He also argues that many contextual factors can influence one’s
acculturation. For instance, he argues that the state of the society of origin (which includes the political context, economic situation, demographic factors) can have a great effect on acculturation. Group acculturation and society of settlement may also impact acculturation. For example, if the place where one lives is not open to people of other cultures then this negative attitude may influence the acculturation choice. Berry (1997) also states that aspects such as gender, age, education level, and differences among the cultures can moderate the process of acculturation.

Similarly, Maira (1998) argues that ethnic identity development must include “dimensions of lived experience, such as gender, sexuality, class, religion, language, and race” (p.316). After completing a, qualitative dissertation on twenty-four Indian American men and women, Maira (1998) explained that ethnic identity development should be reconceptualized to include aspects of the different models and the complexity of people’s lives since individuals “embrace identities that emphasize fluidity and multiplicity at other moments” (p.316).

Also, if acculturation is a "process" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936), then researchers should be examining how and why ethnic minorities experience their contact with two or more cultures, not simplifying the process by only asking what specific culture they identify with. It appears that ethnic identity development measures the outcome (e.g., where does the client view him/herself in the stages?) versus the process. But is ethnic identity a static construct, or does it change over time? If ethnic identity does change, what causes the changes?

In addition, the constructs have not been clearly delineated and defined. Therefore, how can researchers effectively study these constructs? If acculturation is
truly a process, then how can the process be understood using a multiple-choice questionnaire (e.g., SL-ASIA; Suinn-Lew Self Identity Acculturation Scale; Suinn, Khoo, & Ahuna, 1995)?

Sue, Mak, and Sue (1998) argue that ethnic identity models have several other limitations: First, not all individuals will undergo the stages in exact order. Therefore, this study examines the progression of the stages. Second, some of the stages may extend onto one another. Some people may experience a combination of the stages at one time. Third, other models (Myers et al., 1991) have suggested that the stages are cyclical throughout one's life. Therefore, as someone reaches the integration stage, one may still experience other stages. Fourth, further studies need to be conducted to ascertain the correlation between certain stages with adjustment levels. Finally, the models need to include aspects of real life, such as how context and other factors may affect identity development. For instance, will prejudice affect the ethnic identity of individuals? Do people feel that they have a choice in identification if they are being threatened because of their ethnicity?

Studies are needed to examine both the ethnic identity development and the acculturation constructs in order to clearly define and understand their meanings. Therefore, the current study examines the ethnic identity development and the process of acculturation of Asian Indian American females. Questions regarding the females' view of (a) themselves, (b) other minority groups, (c) their own minority group, and (d) the dominant group were investigated using Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1989), Berry's (1984), and Root's (1990) models as guides. Also, an examination of the process these women employed in coming to know their ethnic identities was conducted. One way in
which this study may have an impact on the area of ethnic identity development is that it will examine the concept of the segmented self into current ethnic identity models. The segmented self is defined and described below.

**The Segmented Self**

Root (1990) described a phenomenon for biracial individuals where the biracial person changes her identity according to the context and therefore creates a "segmented self." The segmented self means that the self is divided into separate and very different aspects that are expressed in certain situations.

Similarly, Yao (1989), in her study on Indian immigrants in Houston, Texas, noted that Indian American children live in two separate worlds (one at home and one at school). The two worlds that she describes are with the children's diet and religion. The first world is the Indian homes where the children eat Indian food, yet Indian food or food of a similar consistency is unavailable in the school cafeteria. The second world is the one these children experience at school or outside of the home. Furthermore, most Indians are Hindus, yet in America most children are exposed to Christianity. Yao (1989) argues that Indian American children must create two different sets of behavior to employ, depending on the context. Although Yao states that she believes this "social chameleon-like" phenomenon occurs, no research to date has examined this phenomenon in the Asian Indian American community.

Similarly, in her discussion on the development of adolescent South Asian women, Ahmed (1999) argued that South Asian American girls "sometimes lead two different and separate lives and engage in relationships that are kept hidden from their families" (p.45). She also argued that females who lead lives that are segmented tend to experience intense
feelings of guilt. This fragmented experience leads these females to feel that they do not have a sense of themselves as a whole person.

Leonard (1999) addresses similar issues in her exploratory essay on the sexuality and marriage of young South Asian women in America. Rather than using the terms above (segmented selves, compartmentalized, or fragmented) she chooses to describe this behavior as non-disclosing behavior. She contends that South Asian women deal with their fear of their parents by not discussing issues concerning marriage and sexuality. She also states that it is surprising how many women who avoid or delay telling their parents about their intimate partners. Also, Gupta (1999), in her essay on the dating and marriage patterns of first and second generation Indians, states that by hiding their dating life from their parents, the females do not receive any guidance because they cannot discuss dating issues with their parents.

Does this behavior also occur for White Americans? One source stated women who were married between the years of 1965 and 1984 dated 12-15 men before they married ("Dating in Detroit," 1987). Although, the study did not describe the parent-child interactions relating to this behavior, it is doubtful that White American women undergo the same type of scrutiny in regards to dating as Indian American women. Also, literature on Asian Indians has concurrently agreed this is a major issue common to most Indian American women.

Social psychologists have developed a term for a similar concept to the segmenting-self concept which they refer to as "self-monitoring" (Myers, 1996). Myers (1996) defines self-monitoring in a similar way as Yao (1989) and Root (1990), that an individual adjusts one's behavior depending on the situation. However, Myers (1996)
goes one step further in his explanation by stating that self-monitors make this type of social adjustment in order to create a favorable impression. On the other hand, it appears that Yao (1989) believes that Indian American children have no choice in how they act because of limits (e.g., social and parental expectations) in the American and Indian environments. Therefore segmenting of the self could be a different behavior from self-monitoring in that it differs in degree and for different reasons for Asian Indian Americans.

This study explored the factors that influence women's identification with American and Indian cultures. Also, this study examined the process and the cultural contexts where the women create separate identities. Since we have already discussed the ethnic identity models and the segmented self, the review will now shift to research conducted with Asian Indian Americans.

**Asian Indian Americans**

As part of her senior thesis at Stanford University, Priya Agarwal wrote a concise and brief book, entitled *Passage from India: Post 1965 Indian Immigrants and Their Children* (1991). She conducted brief interviews with first and second generation Asian Indians and Indian Americans in California. Both groups consisted of 120 participants total (60 males and 60 females) from the Los Angeles area. In her book, she examines the experience of Indian immigrants' reasons for immigration, experience of immigration, characteristics, and future. In addition, she also explores the Indian Americans' experiences regarding culture, college life, ties to India, career, gender, and social issues.

In her study, Agarwal (1991) found that immigrants experienced several problems after emigrating to the United States. Many immigrants reported problems within the
workplace regarding difficulty obtaining a visa and experiences with prejudice because of their accents. Agarwal (1991) also stated that many of the immigrants missed the companionship of their extended families and some had difficulty adjusting to the fast pace of life in America. Also, the female immigrants reported feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The second generation reported difficulties of trying to balance both Indian and American cultures. Agarwal (1991) reported that many of these difficulties were resolved in college. She also found that many of the second-generation children felt there was a huge gap between themselves and their Indian parents. In addition, the second generation described the pressure they received to pursue certain careers in order to please their parents. Furthermore, the second-generation daughters reported that they encounter more expectations from their parents because of their gender.

The Agarwal study addressed many interesting aspects of both the first and second-generation Asian Indian American experiences. Although this book was unique for its time, since so few books have been published on the Indian American experience, it does not discuss any topic in depth. The reader becomes familiar with a wide spectrum of issues that this community faces, but the reader is left with many unanswered questions about the emotional experience of this community.

Therefore, the focus of this study was solely on Indian American females so that a deep analysis can be achieved. Also, Agarwal (1991) reported only the changes she observed, but she did not explore the process that either generation went through to make the changes in their lives. This study examines the women’s recollection of the process they underwent to create their identity and how this identity varies due to the context.
In addition, Uba (1994) reports that more research is needed on Asian Americans outside of the West Coast since the majority of psychological research has been done there. This study is a major contribution to the literature on Asian Americans since only Midwestern Indian American females were interviewed.

Other researchers have found that the children of these Asian Indian immigrants experience confusion and conflict (Das & Kemp, 1997; Dasgupta, 1986; Kurian, 1986; Segal, 1991; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). Das and Kemp (1997), Sodowsky and Carey (1987), and Yao (1989) assert that children of Asian Indian immigrants are raised within two cultures, Indian and American. Being raised in two cultures creates confusion and conflict between Asian Indian parents and Indian American children (Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981).

Sodowsky and Carey (1987) hypothesize that the children of these immigrants may feel more of an anomaly in America than their parents. They argue that these children feel out of place in both Indian and American contexts. The children may be more sensitive, withdrawn from their surroundings, and feel divided between their Indian and American sides.

**Intergenerational Conflict**

Each of the seminars began with a 15-minute presentation by a social worker and psychiatrist, one of which was of Indian descent. After the presentation, the parents and teenagers were separated for a discussion, during which data were gathered. The data revealed major areas of conflict among the two generations: issues of control, communication, prejudice, and expectations of excellence.

Also, Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil’s (1981) study in Western Canada examined 50 families; 12 from Pakistan and 38 from India. To be included in this study, all 50 of the families had to have at least one child. The researchers explored disciplinary and career decisions, dating and marriage, and adoption of Canadian social customs. Although not explicitly stated, it appears that the research was collected using interviews.

Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981) concluded that the parents and children’s adjustment to Canadian culture did bring about adaptations in values of the immigrant parents. In addition, the authors found that the parents were willing to adapt to Canadian culture in general ways (e.g., allowing the second generation to eat Canadian food); however, the authors note that the parents were not willing to change their “core values” (p.939). For instance, the parents were terrified of their children dating, especially the girls.

These authors also note that these families are confronted with difficult decisions about maintaining their native culture and adopting Canadian values. One conflict between parents and children is due to the second generation’s fluency in colloquial English. Therefore, the children are able to understand slang and western jokes more so than their parents. The researchers also found that parents noticed that their children had more White friends, enjoyed more Western music, choice of food, and the second
generation preferred to speak in English. Also, parents were more concerned about retaining Indian culture than their children were. The second generation reported about half as much interest as their parents in retaining their values, customs and rituals, religion and language. Kurian (1986) noted that parents are following the traditional lifestyle, and they find it extremely difficult and painful to adapt to American culture. Therefore, Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981) concluded that the communication gap between the two generations is widening because of these differences in values. The communication gap among White American families also exists, but the difference seems to be exacerbated by Asian Indian cultural and religious beliefs.

Also, Agarwal (1991) noted that Indian immigrant parents compare how they were brought up in India, with very little freedom, and therefore they believe that their children have much greater amounts of freedom. For example, Agarwal (1991) noted that one of her immigrant female participants stated that she experienced so much freedom in America compared to her experience in India. On the contrary, the participant found that her own daughter feels stifled and that her parents are too controlling. The daughter, in comparison with the mother, contrasts her experience with her American counterparts and feels she has no freedom. Therefore depending on the context, the women feel very different about their experiences.

Segal's (1991) study supports Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil's (1981) assertions. Furthermore, she argues that the Asian Indian community in the United States is unprepared to deal with these conflicts. It appears that while the parents are struggling to maintain their own identity (Dasgupta, 1986), the children are confused about defining
their own identity (Sodowsky & Carey, 1987). Both generations are too busy struggling to survive; therefore each has very little support to offer the other.

Although the above studies contribute to the area of Asian Indian American research, the experiences beyond the parent-child conflicts were not examined. The process that the children undergo to define themselves and give their lives new meaning, in addition to educational, socialization, and gender differences among the second generation were lacking in both studies. The focus of parent-child conflicts draws the reader's attention away from exploring issues that are more significant to the second generation. In addition, since the authors' samples utilized both parents and children, an in-depth exposure of gender and women's issues were not explored. Therefore the present study addressed these concerns.

Importantly, Segal (1991) reported that communication between these two generations does not exist. Communication is usually one-sided: the parents speak to the children, but the children are not permitted to respond. As a result, the adolescents did not share their personal problems with their parents.

Who do second generations talk with then about their personal problems? How does the second generation deal with the pressure to conform to their parents' expectations, yet also experience pressure from their peers to be another way? How do these children resolve their cultural conflicts if they feel uncomfortable talking with their parents? Even though the researchers have noted the conflicts, many questions about how these children experience the conflict with their parents has not been addressed. Several areas of conflict have been described below; however, further research is needed to explore what support system and sounding board the second generation utilizes.
Dating/ marriage/ social relations. Agarwal (1991) and Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981) note that social relations, and dating and marriage are the most sensitive areas to Indian parents. Also, even though there are few articles on this population, almost all of the articles mention dating and social relations as a major source of intergenerational conflict. Agarwal (1991) states that the topic of interpersonal relationships is the "greatest strife" (p.48) within the community. There may be several reasons why this area creates such conflict.

First, when the 1965 group of immigrants came to America the concept of dating did not exist in India (Agarwal, 1991). Therefore, dating is a foreign concept to these parents. Arranged marriage is the common practice of finding a mate in India. Dursvala and Mylvaganam (1994) describe the process of an arranged marriage as a chaperoned visit between a prospective bride and groom. Both sides, the bride and groom, are allowed to meet and talk, and then decide upon their potential mate. The authors note that physical and/or sexual contact is extremely rare. Jayakar (1994) notes that the sexually conservative attitude is ironic since the Kama Sutra, a book on sexuality, came from India. However, she notes that most Indians are ignorant of the erotic culture in India’s past. Currently in India, however, the current love themes in Indian movies, education, and urbanization are changing this system of marriage (Srivastava, 1974).

Because of the differing dating practices in India (parents are still subscribing to the 1960's values of India) and the current trends in America, the parents almost equate unchaperoned dating with premarital sex (Agarwal, 1991). In addition, the concept of dating in India had negative associations from the mid-sixties; those who did date were looked down upon in the community. Agarwal (1991) found that 95% of the second
generation in America did date, but they were conflicted about how to discuss the dating issues with their immigrant parents.

This confusion experienced by the second generation, supports researchers' (Berry, 1997; Leonard, 1999; Yao 1989) arguments that Indian American children develop different identities (segmented self) depending on the context: the one who dates a partner around friends versus the one who hides a relationship in order to maintain their parents’ approval. This pressure to create different identities was discussed earlier in the segmented-self section, and this concept is addressed by this study.

Another reason why dating and marriage are such sensitive issues to this community could be the parents' fear of losing one's culture if the second generation marries outside of their ethnic group. Marrying within the culture is important to Asian Indian parents because of the Indian belief that the partners will be more compatible if the two are of the same ethnicity (Das & Kemp, 1997). For Indian parents, allowing their children to date means allowing the opportunity for their children to marry non-Indian people.

Although dating in America does not necessarily lead to marriage, Indian parents who have not had experience with the concept of dating interpret dating as a direct road to marriage. Therefore, their children casually dating anyone is perceived as threatening. In addition to the fear that marrying non-Indians will result in incompatible partners, and because the divorce rate in America is so high, Indian parents are afraid their children will end up getting divorced (Segal, 1991). Divorce in India is not well accepted.

Overall, it appears that parents are so apprehensive about dating that Indian immigrant parents "... were extremely reluctant to allow their children to go out socially,
and particularly reluctant to allow them to mix with the opposite sex" (Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981, p. 934). In addition, within the Indian immigrant community, different rules are applied depending on the person's gender; for example, different rules for dating are applied to second-generation females (Kurian, 1986). Boys are given more freedom, while girls have very strict rules they must follow.

What is it like for women not to be allowed to associate with those of the opposite sex, while their peers attend dances and date more frequently ("Dating in Detroit," 1987)? When these women do begin to date, how do they receive guidance about the process of dating and love relationships?

The experience of growing up in America and being the child of immigrant parents who are unfamiliar with and opposed to common practices in America needs to be explored. Kurian (1986) and other authors have noted that double standards apply to female Indian Americans in other areas as well. These will be discussed next.

Gender roles. Although double standards are also experienced by European American daughters, it appears that Indian American females are held to more extreme gender role expectations than their American female counterparts. Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981) note that it is more devastating for a second generation daughter to disobey her parents than a son. Parents experience more shame because of the emphasis on the obligation to the family, because Indian females are expected to be more dutiful to the family than Indian males. In addition, Kurian (1986) noted that Indian sons experience, and are given much more individual freedom than daughters. Leonard (1999) also supported this argument noting that families are more concerned about their daughter's
dating habits because of the possibility of pregnancy, which can ruin the reputation of the family.

Indian American females do experience double standards such as less freedom than males, and this phenomenon may have its roots in Indian culture. Ahmed (1999) stated that when adolescent girls of other ethnicities are developing themselves outside of their families, the reverse occurs for Indian American girls. In fact, Indian American girls may be strongly discouraged from developing relationships outside of the home. Ahmed (1999) also argues that women are taught the concept of shame in order to protect the family name. On the other hand, 53% of White American households “want kids to be independent and value independent thinking” (Mitchell, 1998, p. 306).

Characteristics that describe the ideal female are also instilled in adolescent Indian American girls. Contrary to Indian culture, 71% of women and 68% of men want to share equal responsibilities for earning the income to support the family and “Americans have reversed their opinion on traditional sex roles” (Mitchell, 1998, p. 336). However, it is widely accepted in Indian culture that certain roles are usually expected for women. “Submissiveness is an integral part of womanhood in India. The image of being dependent, deferential, devoted to their families, and personally unambiguous is promoted through oral history, traditional and epic stories and the movies” (Bhutani, 1994, p. 65). Trying to balance the mixed messages that they receive in and outside of the home can be very difficult (Ahmed, 1999). Berry (1997) argued that some of the messages women receive complicate the ethnic identity process.

True (1990) also noted that Asian females experience what she calls "double jeopardy." She explained that if an individual is both a woman and Asian she
experiences discrimination because of these combined characteristics, and is valued for the “exotic and submissive” stereotypes of her ethnicity. Whereas, while European American women may experience sexism, it appears that they do not experience the added effect of prejudice.

Furthermore, Agarwal (1991), Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981), and Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996) noted that when second generation Indian Americans are old enough to get married, the Indian American females are usually considered "too independent" for the Indian American males by the Indian community. These families then go to India in search of an Indian woman who is more submissive and will reflect better on the family. Gupta (1999) revealed similar findings in a study where she interviewed Indian men and women about their ideal mate. She notes that Indian American women sought egalitarian relationships, whereas Indian American men sought younger women because the relationship would be “easier.” In addition, some men stated that Indian American women were too independent and assertive.

In Maira’s (1998) dissertation she found similar findings to Agarwal (1991), Gupta (1999), and Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil (1981). When examining the ethnic identity of New York City Indian Americans, Maira (1998) found that traditional and chaste women were considered more “Indian” than their peers who did not possess similar characteristics. Therefore she “became alerted to the ways in which ethnic identity was a gendered and sexualized construction” (p.306).

Some of these beliefs regarding the chaste Indian American women have their roots in Indian culture and religious beliefs. For instance, Jayakar (1994) discusses how
women are treated like property and valued for their physical beauty. In addition, women are also considered of less value than males.

Also, raising second generation, Indian American women in the American context sends them many different messages. For example, one of Agarwal's (1991) second-generation female participants stated that she must comply to many conflicting expectations, namely to achieve in school and career and yet be subservient to her husband. These messages are conflicting and confusing.

Furthermore, Gupta (1998) conducted a study on 32 males and 58 female Asian Indians. After administering depression, optimism/pessimism, college adaptation, and acculturation inventories, she found that Asian Indian women were more depressed. She also discovered that acculturation and college adaptation were both negatively correlated to depression. In this same study, Gupta (1998) also found a positive correlation between reported level of pessimism and depression.

Therefore, although it has not been studied specifically, Indian American females appear to experience confusion when they are raised with Indian values, and yet are exposed to different expectations and values through American socialization and their peers (Leonard, 1999). Also, Reynolds and Pope (1991) stress the importance of understanding multiple identities (being Indian and American, female, etc.) and how these identities may affect the individual.

Although Maira's (1998) study indicated gender differences in regards to perceived ethnic identity, her study was plagued with several methodological problems. Maira (1998) conducted only one, second interview out of 25 participants. She also was unable to contact the majority of her participants when trying to review the transcription.
of the interview. Lastly, she was the only one who transcribed and analyzed the data which; this could have created a great deal of experimenter bias. This current study sought to correct some of these methodological issues and examine less of one's peers' perceptions of ethnic identity and gender bias. Instead this study explored how these women understand their multiple identities and the sexism that Indian American women experience.

Academic/career decisions and the pressure to succeed. Another area of concern in the Indian American community is the high achievement within the Indian immigrant generation. It appears that the drive to succeed has been passed down to the second generation. Success is expected because the behavioral norm is that "all Indians do well" (Segal, p. 239, 1991). Researchers have found that the second generation is comprised of successful engineers and physicians, and these career choices were made for them by an older brother or the parents (Agarwal, 1991; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981; Yao, 1989). These researchers also found that most of the children willingly complied with their parents' wishes. It appears that following the wishes of the family matches the cultural norm of maintaining peace within the family (Uba, 1994).

One reason why these parents push their children to succeed may be that the immigrant parents have found that finances create a sense of security. Since immigrant parents have to work especially hard to support a family without the help of relatives and extended family, making a good living would help people feel more secure and stable. However, the impact of parental pressure and lack of interest in a career could have a significant affect on Indian Americans.
For example, a participant in Agarwal's (1991) study argued that Indian immigrant parents stifle their children's intellectual development by forcing them into occupations that the second generation might not find interesting. Agarwal (1991) and Segal (1991) also warn the community about the devastating implication these achievement expectations might have on those who do not succeed. Those who do not succeed may suffer from isolation as a result of comparing themselves to the community's expectations. The impact of family pressure on the individual has not been examined. Although researchers note these difficulties in choosing a career path and pressure to succeed, none have studied how the individual deals with and processes these conflicting experiences. The present study focused on the impact of these decisions on second generation Indian American women.

Prejudice

In addition to the sexism that Indian American women undergo in their family, do they also experience prejudice due to their ethnicity from the dominant culture? Although Indians have been noted as an affluent population and as having professional success in America, some have assumed that Indians have therefore not experienced prejudice (Segal, 1991).

However, Das and Kemp (1997) report that school-age children do experience prejudice. In addition, the authors note that these children have not been raised to deal with prejudiced people of other ethnicities, and therefore lack the skills necessary to cope with prejudice. In African American families, many parents have experienced racism in America and thus have the skills to raise their own children with the skills needed to deal with racism, the lack of skills may increase a sense of isolation (Root, 1994). Therefore,
African-American families can understand and possibly buffer the effects of racism. However, Indian immigrants may not understand the type of teasing that their children receive or they may even disbelieve their children because they themselves did not experience prejudice in the United States while growing up. As a result, these parents lack the knowledge they need to teach their children how to cope with and handle prejudice.

Minde and Minde (1976; cited in Sodowsky & Carey, 1987) found that Indian Canadian children reported feeling lonely. Even though most of the Indian immigrant parents encouraged interactions with White Canadians, very few of the children had friends. Some parents reported that their children were referred to as "niggers" (Yao, 1989). Both Ramisetty-Mikler (1993) and Yao (1989) hypothesized that prejudice toward Indian immigrants was due to the presence of the Indian accent, lack of fluency in English, and skin color. However, although the children of Indian immigrants do not lack fluency in English or have an accent, they still experience prejudice. Therefore, it must be skin color of the children that separates them from European Americans and may attract negative attention. The authors did not make it clear why these children experience prejudice from the dominant group.

Existing research has not explored how prejudice affects Indian American children. What impact does prejudice have on them? One Indian American child who was growing up in New Jersey stated that the White students at her school would tell her she was ugly. She then tried to become friends with the Black students at her school, but they would not accept her (Lee, 1991). Also, Sabah Aafreen (1999), in an article on her life story, reported being called "ugly" and targeted by other children at her school.
Since the population of Indian Americans at schools is quite low, and if these children have no one in their environment who understands their experience, these children may find it difficult to understand why they experience prejudice. Further, how do they handle the prejudice they experience? These questions are extremely important in working with second generation Indian Americans, and were specifically addressed by this current study.

Counseling Psychology and Indian American Women

Leong (1986) and Uba (1994) stated that Asian Americans underutilize mental health services. Many researchers noted that Indians are hesitant to use mental health centers because of their strong value of keeping family problems private (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Ross, 1987; Segal, 1991; Yao, 1989). Families have reported that seeking counseling would stigmatize the entire family (Das & Kemp, 1997; Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994), and the Indian families in America would try to find other means of solving their problems (Durvasula & Mylvaganam, 1994).

However, children of Indian immigrants may not share their parents' feelings, but research has not examined the attitude of the second generation towards counseling. Because the children of Indian Americans are combining aspects of two cultures (American and Asian Indian), counselors need ways to make the experience of counseling more inviting and comfortable for them. Therefore by understanding the complexities of growing up with immigrant parents and the cultural norms of the community, counselors may be more effective in the counseling context.

In addition, several of the articles used for this literature review gave suggestions or applications for clinical practice (Ramisetty-Mikler, 1993; Segal, 1991). However,
none of these articles focused on the experience of the second generation Indian Americans. Therefore what guidelines can therapists use when working with second generation Indian American women?

It appears that in the literature on Asian Americans, many of the applications for therapy are based on aspects of Asian culture. This knowledge is useful for those who are immigrants. However, those who are second generation, probably combine aspects of both cultures. Therefore, research needs to be conducted with Asian Americans to understand within-culture differences (Atkinson & Thompson, 1992) between the first and second generation rather than making assumptions about the second generation.

In addition, both True (1990) and Gupta (1998) have shown that individuals who share multiple identities experience greater stressors. True (1990) argued that these women experience racism and sexism. Gupta (1998) reported that Asian Indian women show higher rates of depression and pessimism than Asian Indian males. Therefore, this research project examined the Indian American female experience in depth in order to provide useful findings for counselors working with this population. From this in-depth analysis, psychologists will be able understand and help this community through its various struggles. This literature review will now conclude with a discussion on qualitative paradigms used in this study.

**Qualitative Methodology**

Traditional research in psychology has utilized positivist forms of obtaining knowledge about human behavior over other forms or research. Positivism is defined as procedures that focus on obtaining the "truth" and use data collection methods that are "rigorous" (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992). The field of psychology has viewed
other data collection methods, such as qualitative, as deficient forms of obtaining knowledge (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992).

However, Gichelberger (1989) argues that "much psychological research is done with college freshman and sophomores by faculty members" (p.31). For example, in the field of career-related psychological research, the research excludes 75% of the United States population (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994). Therefore, although psychology uses rigorous methods, the field is seriously lacking in theories and research findings that apply to people of different races, ethnicities, gender, and socioeconomic status.

In addition, Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) assert that traditional quantitative methods in counseling psychology are limited when examining complex phenomena and persons. Also, several authors contend that quantitative methods cause a distance between the participants observed for the study (Janesick, 1994; Sipe & Consable, 1996). For example, in a qualitative study that was conducted with people affected by AIDS, the researchers wanted to use qualitative methods because of their desire for "research methods which are both respectful and more representative of our research participants" (Viney & Bousfield, 1991, p.757).

Hence, Hoshmand and Polkinghorne (1992) argue that psychology needs to be more accepting to new methods of research. The authors state "...that the knowledge base of the profession should be derived with diverse methods with multiple sources..." (p. 55).

Qualitative research is composed of several postpositivist paradigms: interpretive, critical, and deconstructive (Denizen & Lincoln, 1994). Postpositivist research attempts
to examine all factors that contribute to the participants' life, and examines unique experiences, inner processes, and complex phenomenon (Hill et al., 1997).

Moreover, the main characteristics of qualitative design are to focus on capturing the whole picture, examining relationships in a system or culture, emphasizing personal contact, understanding the experience of those being studied, and addressing the role of the researcher in the project (Janesick, 1994). Therefore, it appears that the type of research method used for collecting data is dependent upon the purpose of the study.

Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) state that qualitative research provides rich data that use the naturally occurring phenomenon for conclusions. In addition, the researchers are not limited to initial hypotheses, but seek to investigate and discover findings as data analysis occurs.

In this study, the interpretive paradigm has been chosen for several reasons. One reason is that "Interpretivists attempt to understand situations from the point of view of those experiencing the situations and are concerned with what will assist them in doing so-" (Sipe & Constable, p. 158, 1996). Denzin (1989) asserts that by using “. . .subjective verbal and written expressions of meaning given by the individuals being studied. . .” these expressions are then “. . .windows into the inner life of the person (p.14). Also, Schwandt (1994) explains the interpretivist paradigm as the researcher examining the meaning that the participants use to explain their lives. Since the purpose of this study is to understand and reveal the experiences of Indian American women, the interpretive method is most appropriate.

Two assumptions are necessary to employ this perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). First, the interpretive paradigm assumes that all human behavior has a purpose.
Second, the interpretive perspective focuses on how the meanings are defined, maintained, and explained by the participant or how the individual constructs her knowledge. In addition, the language and symbols in a culture are part of the participant. Schwandt states that "the inquirer constructs reading of the meaning-making process of the people he or she studies" (1994, p.123). He also defines the task of the interpretivist researcher as not just an observer who writes down a description of what is observed, but adds meaning to the participants' actions.

In addition to exploring the general experience of Indian American women, it is also important to explore the development of their ethnic identity. Therefore, another method of qualitative research is necessary to develop and expand a theory. Since the current ethnic identity, typologies, and acculturation models have been criticized, the method of consensual qualitative research (CQR) was utilized by this study to produce and expand a more applicable model of ethnic identity development and acculturation. This method will be discussed below.

The method of CQR was most influenced by grounded theory (Hill et al., 1997). Grounded theory is one type of qualitative research that develops themes and theories as data collection progresses. Grounded theory is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1994) as "... a general methodology that is grounded in the data systematically gathered and organized" (p. 273). Themes and categories emerge throughout the development of the research project. From these themes the researcher will develop hypotheses which will then help to create or expand theories.

CQR also seeks to develop conclusions generated from the data. The researcher continually generates hypotheses from the data and examines people's experiences in a
nonlinear fashion. However, CQR differs from grounded theory in the following ways:
First, all the data are collected before it is analyzed to ensure consistency among
participants. Second, a research team is constructed in order to obtain consensus with the
findings. Third, the data are coded into common themes and ideas are then abstracted
from the codes. Fourth, the number of cases that express the core ideas are calculated
and results are expressed partially by the number of participants who experienced the
phenomenon. Finally, findings are described by core ideas versus linear or hierarchical
description.

By using the CQR approach, further exploration of the ethnic identity and
acculturation models was possible for Indian American women. Also, common themes
and findings were discovered. The findings of the current study will be discussed in the
results chapter. After conducting the qualitative portion of this study, the data collected
on the general experience and ethnic identity development of Asian Indian American
women may be applied to this population.

A list of the research questions can be found below.

Research Questions

General Experience

1. What types of cultural aspects influence the women’s identities?
2. Do the women integrate aspects of the cultures?
3. How does the experience of growing up in different cultures affect the women
   personally?
4. How does their experience affect their intimate relationships with others?
5. What costs and benefits do the women have from this experience?
6. What coping mechanisms do they employ to deal with their experiences?

7. What advice do these women give to others like themselves?

Ethnic Identity Development

1. Do women segment aspects of themselves? If so, is this behavior a result of a developmental stage or coping mechanism?

2. Can the current ethnic identity development models provide a framework for understanding the Indian American female experience?

3. Are there patterns in the ethnic identity development of these individuals?

4. What conditions in the environment influence the ethnic identity development of these women?
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this chapter, a summary of the participants and the process of obtaining the participants are presented. Second, the ethical treatment of participants is discussed. Third, methods of validity and data collection are included. Fourth, a summary on data analysis is provided. Since Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest that writing in first-person singular matches the style of qualitative research, I have chosen to use first-person singular voice when discussing my own decisions and thoughts that evolved with this study.

Participants

Participants selected were those able to provide "information rich" experiences (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Therefore rather than using a representative sample, a purposive sampling was used (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling is used when studying a particular subgroup in depth. Consequently, I sought as participants Indian American females who were born or raised in America.

I targeted three different age groups to represent three different developmental stages or possible cohort effects: First, group A consists of women in their late teens or early twenties, and represents the late adolescent group. Second, group B includes
women in their middle to late twenties, and exemplifies women transitioning to adulthood. Finally, group C were women in their middle to late thirties, and portrays individuals who have established themselves with career and/or family. The age range, from 18 to 37, allowed for a fuller and more comprehensive view of the diverse experiences and life categorization patterns of women in different stages of their lives.

The women were asked to participate in an initial interview that lasted 1-2 hours and a 20-minute follow-up session over the telephone. The follow-up interview allowed the participant and me to review the transcribed interview and discuss any additional questions not discussed in the initial interview. In addition, the women were asked to complete “Reflections on the Interview,” a short journal entry on any thoughts that may have emerged from the interview. The total time commitment required of each participant ranged from 3 to 4 hours. The interviews were conducted during 1998-1999, autumn, winter, spring and summer quarters. In addition, interviews took place at locations where the interviewees felt comfortable. Generally the site was the women’s homes or at a local public library. All the interviewees volunteered to participate in the study.

To obtain names of possible participants, I first contacted the Coordinator of Asian American Student Services at The Ohio State University and a leader at the Asian American Commerce Group for possible names of interviewees. I asked the Coordinator specifically for Indian American women who met the age criteria of interest and who would be interested and open to sharing their personal experience. The Coordinator provided me with names and numbers of three possible participants. Two of those people
were participants in this study; I was unable to contact the third person since her telephone number had been disconnected.

Second, I contacted a member of the Asian American Commerce Group. A leader of the group provided me with a list of nine women who met the criteria. From this list, I excluded one woman who was not of Indian descent, e.g. her family was from Sri Lanka. The remaining eight women were contacted. However, only four of the eight women who met the criteria for this study agreed to participate.

Third, I asked several of the Indian American participants if they had any recommendations for women who fit the criteria in this study, a sampling technique known as the snowball or chain sampling technique (Patton, 1990). Through chain sampling names of possible participants are selected from the women already participating in the study. Although I received seven names from women already participating in the study, only three of the participants were obtained through the snowball technique.

Last, in order to obtain a diverse representation of religious backgrounds, I contacted several Islamic and Sikh organizations throughout the Columbus metropolitan area. None of these organizations provided me with names of potential participants. As a last effort to find someone of the Islamic faith, I contacted the Pakistani student organization. The leader of this organization provided me with the name of one woman of Indian descent who agreed to participate in this study.

Each woman was contacted by phone and by letter (see Appendix A) in which the goals, method, and time commitment were stated. The letter also emphasized the
voluntary nature of participation by the interviewees. Follow-up phone calls were then made to confirm the participants' interest.

Demographics

The 10 participants represented a wide age, occupational, and religious range (see Table 1). On the demographic questionnaire, six of the participants stated their ethnic background as "Indian American," whereas three of the participants indicated that they were "Indian," and one participant identified herself as "Pakistani." Four of the ten participants spent some portion of their lives in India or Pakistan. However, 9 of the participants have spent the majority of their lives in the United States, the tenth participant came to America when she was 10 years old. I decided to include the women who were not born in the United States since they still spent a significant portion of their lives in the U.S. Similarly, Maira (1998) also included individuals in her study who spent their high school year in the United States, but were born in the Indian subcontinent.

The participants' ages were: 18-22 (Group A); 25-30 (Group B); and 33-37 (Group C). All of the women are heterosexual. Four of the ten women were uncomfortable describing their socioeconomic status while growing up; therefore the remaining information that was provided from the women during the interview is presented in Table 1. The average income of the women who did include this information is $53,333. However, this figure includes the income of a graduate student. When this number is excluded, the figure raises to $84,000, which is slightly above the average income of Asian Indians in Ohio ($74,000; Department of Census 1990). I tried to locate less affluent Indian American women; however, I was unable to find women from other
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Education</th>
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<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Family Income Current (Past)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group A</strong></td>
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<td>Padmini</td>
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<td>Married</td>
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*Note.* a,b,c,d = parent's income; e = graduate student income; f = self-employed.
socioeconomic backgrounds. For instance, I contacted two blue-collar, Indian-owned businesses and asked for referrals. Neither one of the businesses knew of individuals who matched the criteria necessary to participate in this study. Seven of the women have a bachelor’s, Master’s, a medical degree, or higher degree. Although the education level of the general U.S. population is less (Sheth, 1995), the level of education of the participants in this study is representative of the education level of Indian Americans (Sheth, 1995). Sheth (1995) reported that 64.7% of native-born Indian Americans earned a bachelor’s or Master’s degree. She did not provide statistics for more advanced degrees. Occupations of the participants include: 3 students and a reporter (Group A); freelance writer, financial analyst, and a graduate student (Group B); and a graduate student, teacher, and physician (Group C). Two of the women in Group C are married to European American men. Both of these women have two children. The remaining participants are single and do not have children. Five of the women identify themselves as Hindu, one woman is Christian, another is Sikh, one woman is Muslim, one woman is Buddhist, and one women identified as nothing.

**Procedure**

This study was reviewed and approved by the Behavioral and Social Sciences Human Subjects Committee at The Ohio State University. I followed the ethical guidelines by contacting all participants by phone and letter. I outlined the goals, methodology, and the time commitment needed for each participant. In addition, all participants in this study were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix B), a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), and an interviewing priming list or Pre-interview Guide (see Appendix D).
Methodological note. I incorporated an interviewing priming list after I completed the first interview since the participant stated that she would have liked a list of questions so she could prepare for the interview. In addition, I found that the questions helped to focus the remaining interviewees.

I also emphasized that participation in this study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were also informed that each interview would be audio taped and transcribed by a research colleague or myself.

Methodological note. In order to enhance the study methodologically, I modified a set of field notes from another qualitative dissertation (Finley, 1997). Hill et al. (1997) stated that notes from the interviews are very helpful in understanding each participant. I recorded four types of notes (see Appendix E): (1) observational notes, (2) methodological notes, (3) theoretical notes, and (4) personal notes.

Observational notes record the setting, distractions, and nonverbal behavior of the interviewee. Methodological notes record problems with the equipment, logistics, and information to follow-up on during the second interview. The content of the theoretical notes are any themes or insights I obtained from the interview. Also, space was provided to connect each interviewee with specific areas of interest. Finally, the Personal notes track my personal feelings and thoughts about the interview. These notes also provide space for my own feelings about the interviewee that could bias the data.

Strengthening the Credibility

Patton (1990) states that in order for qualitative research to be credible “there is also a side to analysis that is analytically rigorous, mentally replicable, and explicitly
systematic” (p. 462). The following procedures were utilized to strengthen this study’s rigor.

**Negative Cases**

Patton (1990) defines negative case analysis as the researcher searching for data that does not support the researcher’s findings. Therefore, both the research colleague and I specifically coded the interviews to find cases where the data did not support my original hypotheses. These differences are included in the “Results” chapter under the heading “Negative Case Analysis.”

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is defined by Patton (1990) as using a “combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon or programs” (p. 187). By using different methods in a study to obtain more data from participants, the researcher has several forms to support or challenge her findings (Hill et al., 1997; Patton, 1990). In this study, I used several forms of triangulation: Reflections on the Interview (data triangulation), external coders (investigator and theory triangulation), member checks (data triangulation), another interviewer (to examine interviewer bias), an auditor (who reviewed the codes and categories), and a stability check (additional interviews are conducted to test the stability of the codes).

**Reflections from the interview.** First, interviewees were asked to record any relevant thoughts they did not discuss in the initial interview (see Appendix E). The participants received the directions (Appendix D) at the time when they received the other materials about participating in the study. The participants continued their reflections until they completed the second interview. Since Uba (1994) stated that Asian
cultural values emphasize not sharing private information openly, the use of a journal is therefore a method that is culturally sensitive to Asian cultural values. A participant may feel more comfortable sharing her thoughts on paper than in the interview setting.

In addition, methodological triangulation (Janesick, 1995), or collecting data using several methods, reveals the complex picture of the participants' lives, and also serves in triangulating the data. Journal entries may reveal more information not revealed in the interview. However, only one participant completed the "Reflections from the Interview." This additional information helped in developing a more complete picture on this participant. I compared her written entry with the information provided by her in the initial interview.

**External coders.** I also used two external coders to analyze the data. By using several coders, I tried to eliminate a possible bias by coding all the data myself (Hill et al., 1997; Patton, 1990). I coded all 10 interviews. Nine of the interviews were independently coded by my research colleague who is a 32-year-old, Caucasian, female, undergraduate psychology student. The other interview was coded by a 42-year-old Indoeuropean American female, a Coordinator at The Ohio State University, and myself. The coders were taught to highlight passages or words that stood out and provide a theme that would summarize the meaning of the passage from the list of codes already generated. The coders were allowed to create new themes if necessary.

I examined the amount of agreement between the external coder and myself. Here, I define agreement to mean that the external coder and I agreed about how the text should be coded. We both coded the texts independently and we met after each interview transcript was coded to review our coding of the text. We then compared the codes and if
we disagreed about the coding, we consulted a third party to decide the code for that
particular text. The third party was a 50 year-old European American graduate student in
counseling psychology. Using the two coders, the level of agreement for interviews one
through ten were in Group A: 76.4%, 79.4%, 74.7%, 66.3%; Group B: 73.4%, 65.4%,
53.7%; and Group C: 66.9%, 75%, 78%, with a mean agreement of 70.9%. Patton (1990)
and Hill et al. (1997) did not provide a standard for inter-rater reliability. However, there
were only four instances where my research colleague and I could not reach consensus.
We sought the feedback of the third party to decide how the text should be coded and we
changed the text accordingly.

Member checks. Member checks not only serve as a form of triangulating the data, but also add to the process of data collection. Reporting the exchange
that takes place during the member check enhanced the data on the participants.
By observing what issues the participants struggle with, I was able to develop a
more comprehensive understanding of the individual. This procedure also
ensures trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) making sure the voice of the
participant has been heard. To verify that I had accurately captured the
experiences of my participants, each participant was sent a follow-up letter (see Appendix G), a coded transcript of the interview, and a request for feedback or
member check form (see Appendix H) regarding the accuracy of the coding and
transcription.

The duration of the second interview ranged from 10 minutes to 25 minutes. I
asked participants several questions regarding their family history of immigration (see
Appendix I) and answered any questions about the coded transcript. All 10 of the
interviewees returned their feedback forms. I have incorporated their responses in the results chapter under the heading “Member Check.” Many of the women corrected grammatical errors and were concerned about how the interviews would be represented in the final dissertation. I informed them that the data would be cleaned up by omitting “sighs, laughs, stutters, nonlanguage utterances (‘er,’ ‘um,’ ‘ah’) or fillers (‘you know,’ ‘okay’)” (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997, p. 543).

Interviewer Bias. Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) discuss the benefits of having more than one interviewer. For instance, “having more than one interviewer helps reduce the possible effects of interviewer style and bias” (Hill et al., 1997, p. 541). However, one advantage of having one interviewer is consistency across interviews (Hill et al., 1997). Since I had conducted six of the ten interviews, I decided to have my research colleague conduct two interviews to examine the possibility of interviewer bias. I trained my research colleague with the interview schedule and techniques on interviewing. In addition, she reviewed two interviews I had previously completed to simulate my style of interviewing.

Methodological note. After my research colleague completed the two interviews, I transcribed the interviews. My research colleague also reviewed the transcript for accuracy, and then we coded the interviews separately. Next, we compared the results of the interviews to examine interviewer bias. The only difference we discovered between the interviews conducted by myself versus my research colleague was in the interview with Khema. This interviewee asked the research colleague if she knew about the Hindu book, The Gita. The participant proceeded to explain the contents of the book to the interviewee. The research
colleague and I agreed that if I had been interviewing Khema, Khema would assume I had knowledge about the book and would not have explained its contents.

Overall, my research colleague and I did not find any major differences in the interviews we conducted. Therefore, interviewer bias was minimized.

**Auditor.** Hill et al. (1997) argue that an auditor should provide a different perspective to the research. The auditor in this study was a 52-year-old, White American, female, graduate student in counseling psychology. She examined parts of the transcripts where my research colleague and I did not agree on a code. She also reviewed the list of codes and made suggestions about the wording of ideas and the places of some codes in certain categories. The auditor’s ideas were then discussed by my research colleague and I, and we made the suggested changes.

**Stability check.** Finally, after eight of the interviews were conducted, I decided to interview two additional participants to examine the stability of the codes. Hill et al. (1997) argue that “if an additional case is completely different from previous cases, this suggests that findings have not stabilized” (1997, p. 553).

**Methodological note.** Only one interview produced new information. One of the last participants stated that she identified herself as Pakistani versus Indian, or Indian American. All other information in the interview was repetitive of the other nine interviews. This participant has very strong religious beliefs. She is Muslim, and she was born in Pakistan, but her parents were from India. Her religious beliefs and place of birth may have influenced her Pakistani identification. My research colleague and I examined this issue to determine
whether this response was “new information” that could be categorized as “completely new information” (Hill et al., 1997). We decided that her response was similar to the other women who identified themselves as Indian. Therefore the major content of the information was similar and we believed this interview did satisfy the criteria of a stability check.

Data Collection

The Investigator

When conducting a qualitative study it is important to acknowledge the researcher’s influence on data collection (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) states that the researcher’s connection to the community, experience, training, and possible positive or negative role in data collection should be discussed. Therefore, I have included a description of my personal role as the researcher in this study below.

As an Indian American woman, this study was influenced by my ethnic background and experience. I was born in 1972 in the United States to Indian immigrant parents. I have lived in Ohio all of my life. While I was conducting this study, I found that my background gave me certain advantages. I was invited to many of the participants’ homes, which added to the scope of my data collection because I was able to gain more information about the person through her surroundings. Also, many of the participants noted that they knew I understood their experiences by repeating “You know what I mean...” throughout the interview.

However, while my background provided the right vocabulary and a connection to the community of interest, my background may have had some drawbacks. For instance, some women may not have wanted to participate because I am part of the Indian
American community. A possible explanation for this behavior is that Indian culture has an emphasis on privacy. Since I am part of the community, many women may not have shared as openly with me as they would with someone who may have been from outside of the Indian community.

Methodological note. Because I am from the same community as these women and due to the culture’s emphasis on privacy, the research colleague (a 32 year-old European American, undergraduate, female) interviewed two women. We then compared differences in the data that was produced by another interviewer with the other eight interviews. The findings from the comparison of the interviews conducted by my research colleague revealed that interview bias was minimized. Therefore, I believe this study benefited more from my ethnic background than disadvantaged the study.

For the past four years, I have focused my training and research on Asian American issues in psychology. My training and personal experience with the Asian American community provides me with insight into issues of ethnic identity development, the general experience of Indian American women in Ohio, and knowledge of the Asian Indian community. This knowledge and experience was particularly helpful in designing this study.

Setting

When I contacted each participant, we agreed to meet in a quiet, private, and mutually agreed on location where I was able to audiotape the interview. Four of the participants requested that the interview take place at their home; one of the interviews took place at my office, and I had to conduct this interview twice due to recording
difficulties. This interview, along with the other four, occurred in libraries in the greater Columbus area. One interview took place in my home. Privacy and freedom were insured by reserving a private room in the libraries, or asking for a private room in the homes of the women.

**Interview Protocol**

**Initial interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a standard set of 33 interview questions, but I freely responded to the interviewees’ comments and asked follow-up questions (Hill et al., 1997). Therefore I had the freedom to delve deeper on certain questions when I felt it was necessary. The participants received a demographic questionnaire, an interview priming guide, and directions about reflections from the interview in the mail before the initial interview. The interview schedule (see Appendix J) was used for the initial interview and focused on issues that emerged through the literature, from the researcher's direct and vicarious experience from being an Indian American woman, and from the Coordinator of Asian American Student Services' personal and professional experiences.

**Methodological note.** The interview schedule was revised after the first interview. The first participant discussed at great length that the Hindu temple she attended as a child had a great impact on her identity development. Therefore I included more questions about the role of religion on ethnic identity development. In addition, I decided to include several questions about arranged marriages since the first participant stated in private conversation that she had experienced pressure to have an arranged marriage. Several questions were also omitted due to redundancy. Another participant recommended that I include questions about
discrimination in the workplace. The revised questions are noted with an asterisk (*) in Appendix J. The one question that was omitted was due to redundancy; this question is noted in italics in Appendix J.

The questions in the interview centered around the general experience of Indian Americans and focused on questions pertaining to: peer relationships, dating, community, religion, academics and career, racism, acculturation, ethnic identity, segmented self, tension between cultures, and future advice and concerns.

Each interview was tape recorded because the direct quotations of the participants served as the source of data.

Methodological note. After conducting the second interview, I decided to use two tape recorders. I realized after the second interview was completed that the interview had not recorded. Using two tape recorders provided not only a method to back up data collection, but were also helpful when transcribing the interviews. My research colleague and I used both recordings when transcribing the interviews.

I designed the second interview to allow me to ask questions that were not answered in the first interview. I kept notes about my first interview, and these notes helped me in preparing for questions in the second interview. Follow-up questions were also based on findings from the first interviews.
Data Management and Analyses

Data Management

The initial interviews produced over 200 typed, single-spaced pages of data. By reviewing these transcribed interviews, I identified themes and noted differences between the participants. My notes also provided me with ideas and further questions.

Transcription. After the initial interview, the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. I transcribed four interviews, while an undergraduate research colleague transcribed the other six. I trained the undergraduate research colleague by providing a sample of a transcribed interview and providing an outline of directions for transcription (see Appendix K).

After the interviews had been transcribed, the research colleague reviewed each transcript to insure accuracy by listening to the tape of each interview while reading the transcript. I also read each transcribed interview while listening to each tape to further insure accuracy.

There were a few instances where information could not be transcribed due to a participant whispering information. The information could not be heard on either tape recording.

Methodological note. After this occurrence, I placed at least one recorder as close to the participant as possible. I asked the participant to speak louder if I thought the tape recorders would be unable to pick up her voice.

A 20-minute follow-up phone interview was scheduled. With the permission of the participant, each interview was taped. After the interview was completed, the recording was transcribed. This material added to the existing data on the participant.
Data Analysis

I located common themes and patterns regarding the general experience of Indian American women and their ethnic identity development. Qualitative Solutions in Research, Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (QSR NUD*IST) was used to analyze, code, and develop theories about the data. QSR NUD*IST is a computer program that allows the researcher to code and retrieve interview data (Weitzman & Miles, 1995). The computer program also aids the researcher with analyzing and creating theories from the data by developing a “coding tree,” a hierarchical way of organizing the data (Weitzman & Miles, 1995). Below, I have described five stages in qualitative analysis: (1) organizing the data, (2) generating categories and patterns, (3) testing hypotheses against the data, (4) and generating alternative explanations, and (5) writing up the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

First when organizing the data, reading and rereading was necessary to become familiar with the data. In order to organize the data more efficiently, the data were entered into QSR NUD*IST.

Next patterns and categories were generated that matched, expanded, and disregarded the initial areas of interest. The categories have both internal and external convergence, meaning the categories are consistent, yet distinct from one another respectively (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The data were also "chunked" (Feldman, 1994) into categories by themes. The common initial patterns and themes of interest in this study are: (a) Cultural Influences, (b) Lack of Romantic Relationships, (c) Feeling Caught Between Two Cultures, (d) Experiences with Prejudice, (e) Coping Mechanisms, (f) Advice, and (g) Ethnic Identity Development. The final code list also included
subcodes (see Appendix L). These codes shifted and emerged as the project progressed until patterns and categories emerged (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). See Tables 2 and 3.

After the categories and patterns were delineated, I tested the hypotheses. I searched the data seeking both to confirm and to challenge the hypotheses. This information was then (a) analyzed for consistency, to examine if the participants provided consistent information, and to (b) examine whether the information addressed the questions of interest.

Next, I sought alternative explanations. These alternative explanations are provided in the discussion section. Finally, through writing up the findings, more ideas and findings emerged from the data. Also, this process allowed me to make meaning out of the massive amount of data.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I first present the life histories of the 10 women who participated in this study. Next, I address research questions by describing commonalities and contradictions across participants. Further, I use the women’s own words to illustrate various themes that emerged from the data. Finally, I apply the ethnic identity and acculturation models with the interview data.

Individual Profiles

Preceding each participant’s profile, I describe my contextual observations prior to the interview. Then I provide a summary of important events that influenced each woman’s ethnic identity development and general experience. In each profile, I paraphrase or use direct quotes from the interview data. In order to triangulate and provide credibility of the findings, each profile is followed by information produced by member checks and the second interview. The women are listed below by age group as seen on Table 1.
Phoolan (The Rebel)

Contextual Field Notes

Phoolan and I met at a library in an upper-middle-class suburb in Columbus, Ohio. I waited a half hour for her at the library. After finally running into her inside of the main lobby of the library, I realized that we had not clearly designated the location of the interview. Phoolan seemed distant and slightly uninterested in the interview. However, she was open to my questions, although she did not appear to have thought through the pre-interview materials. Therefore, initially I found this interview more difficult than the others because I felt that Phoolan was keeping parts of herself closed off from me. However, towards the end of the interview, I found that I really enjoyed seeing her independent spirit.

Phoolan was dressed in a wind-breaker jacket with blue jeans. Her hair was pulled back in a bun. She has beautiful, almond-shaped, brown eyes, and her face had some blemishes which seemed typical for her age. The interview lasted only 45 minutes.

Pseudonym

I chose the name of Phoolan for this participant because of the historical figure Phoolan Devi. Phoolan Devi was an Indian woman who was very free spirited in India. Phoolan fought with “gangs” of men while being very generous to the poor. After the interview, it was apparent to me that this participant had a very independent, softly rebellious spirit, and therefore I felt that the name of Phoolan symbolized her experience.

Demographic Information

I am an 18-year-old, Indian American female. I just started my freshman year at a state university.* I have not decided on a major, although I am interested in computer
Currently, I am dating someone;* he's African-American. My father does not know I am dating him.

**Family Background**

Both my parents came to the United States in 1975. My father has a master's degree in engineering, and he came to the States "for a better lifestyle and opportunities." My mother completed an associate's degree in computer programming. I have an older sister who is 23, who is marrying a White American man next year.

My mother passed away in 1996 from cancer; I was 15. Since then I have stayed at home to help my father take care of my younger brother. My younger brother is 12 years old.

**Chronological Summary**

**Childhood.** When I was a child, I remember focusing on wanting to be friends with "who was popular and things like that." However, "I did have real friends that weren't based on popularity, but I know that [being popular] played a big role" in my friendships.

When I think back to those who were considered the popular ones, they were "what was considered pretty... so they were all White girls, [with] long hair, [who] dressed very nicely." I went to a local public school* "so it was like all White people."

I also remember playing with "my cousin, 'cause we lived seven houses down from" each other. "So me and my cousin, he's a year younger than me, we always played together. And then I had another good friend, an Indian girl, and my mom and her mom were best friends." So, "when I was younger I did have some Indian playmates."

I also went to "those [Indian] camps, and that made me feel really proud..."
of who I was.” At the camps, I was “with all Indians, you were learning about your culture, and there were just special bonds you created when you're in a position like that.”

Although I cannot remember any specific incidents of racism, “I'd get comments, like they’d think I was a Native American instead of Indian so they'd be like ‘So do you live in a teepee?’” I just remember thinking “that was just kids being kids, so I didn't really take it to heart.”

**Adolescence.** “Then in high school... I don't remember how I made my friends but I still have my friends from high school.” So “I just stayed friends with them.”

I remember fighting with my parents. One source of conflict with my parents was that I was not allowed to date in high school. When I would approach the topic, “You just heard ‘No, not yet.’” My father said that “he doesn't mind me hanging out with guy friends. He's like, as long as it's a big group, but no dating, that's the big thing.”

There was a group of Indian people I could have become close friends with, but I decided not to become friends with them. “I had two really good Indian friends, and they became part of that little circle of friends.” I still decided not to become part of that group. “I'm glad I didn't, because I see what it did to my sister, that's why.” I remember in “high school she was really close to all them, and she'd sneak out and they'd drink, and...they would double cross her, talk behind her back.” I tried to fit in with them, but I just felt that they did not accept me.

My mom was ill while I was going to high school. “She had cancer... She passed away three years ago. So that was a big time change for me too.” So now “it's my little brother, me, and my dad.”
When I was in high school I remember, “when my mom was there…we would go to [the] temple a little more. We would do pujas, and stuff every night.” I feel like my dad is “definitely more into the American culture.” So we don’t go to the temple very much.

Young adulthood. Now “I have three really good friends. One's Indian, and we're a lot alike 'cause we're different than the Indian crowds around the state university,* because they're so clique-y.” I have other friends and “they're Black.” My boyfriend* is also “Black.”

Since I have been in college, “I know it's really bad to say, but I only relate to minorities. I don't have one single White friend.” I can’t say exactly why I am more drawn to minorities, but “I think I just feel more accepted by them. And the culture (pauses), I don't know.”

It took me awhile to figure out where I belonged “because I didn't really know where I fit in.” I know “I didn't really fit in with the Indian crowds, and I wanted to.” On the other hand, with Americans I’m still “Indian, [and] usually being the only Indian you don't feel like you necessarily fit in.”

“Because they [Indians] have so many restrictions on you that you can't be open, you can't tell them everything that's happening in your life because you know they wouldn't approve of it.” So I don't share everything about my life with my father. “So there's definitely a limit” to what I share with him.

I still have fights with my dad, especially about dating. “I'm not allowed dating. So it's a big secret. It's really hard that I'm not allowed dating.” My dad says, “You're [only] eighteen.” I also “think he compares me to my older sister. And she started dating
openly around 21 or 22, [when she was] a junior in college.” So since she dated when she was older than me he will say, “When you get older you can start dating.’ It's very hard. Right now it's really hard, because me and my boyfriend are really serious, but I can't tell him.”

Right now, all my father wants me “to concentrate on is school, not dating or not going out all the time, just school.” So right now I'm studying business.* But “I'm not sure” what I am going to do with that yet. If I had my choice of any career I would go into computer graphics. But “I still really don't know what my knack is.”

I am living at home while I attend school. “It was just a given [that I would stay at home]. I knew I wasn't going to move out.” Currently, I couldn't move out “cause I do a lot at home, so it'll probably be hard for me to move out. And it would just be my dad, 'cause my brother's still too young to help out much.” Several times a week “I have to cook, and then there's the whole cleaning thing, and someone has to be there for my brother 'cause he's still a little young to be staying by himself, and my dad works late.”

Was it my decision to live at home? Well, “I mean, I know he doesn't want me to move out though, so I don't really argue with him.”

Theoretical Field Notes

QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague and I discovered the following themes: (a) a sense of isolation where she does not feel like she is accepted in the Indian and White American communities; (b) pressure to be successful and make “acceptable” career decisions; (c) having to segment different aspects of herself, especially in regards to dating; (d) experiences of interracial dating; (e) experiencing covert forms of racism; and (f) a sense of obligation and loyalty towards her family.
Credibility

**Member check.** Phoolan reviewed her transcript and codes and returned them to me with no corrections.

**Sushila** (Good Woman)

**Contextual Field Notes**

Sushila’s neighborhood was very similar to Kavita’s. Like Kavita, Sushila lived in an upper middle-class neighborhood where all the houses on the street looked similar.

Sushila greeted me at the door with a wide smile and a giggle. She appeared extremely friendly and excited about the interview. Sushila was dressed in very conservative clothes: a red wool sweater and white turtleneck. She was also wearing jeans. Her black hair was cut shoulder length and curled under. She wore neither makeup nor jewelry.

Sushila offered me a seat in her living room. The entire family, which consists of an older sister, mother, and father, were out for the day. The only distraction that interrupted the flow of conversation was the phone ringing several times; Sushila let the answering machine take a message. The interview lasted exactly one hour.

**Pseudonym**

For this participant I chose the pseudonym Sushila, which translates in English as a “good woman.” Throughout the interviews with Sushila, I observed her struggle to fulfill her parents’ wishes while at the same time trying to honor her independent spirit. Also, she had an amiable and friendly personality, and because of these characteristics she could be described as the “ideal” Indian daughter.

**Demographic Description**
I am a 19-year-old Indian female. I entered college when I was only 16 years old. Currently I have completed two and a half years of undergraduate studies at a Midwestern university.* I am working on a degree in business and am single.

Family Background

My father “came and studied when he first got here [America]. He had a couple odd jobs, and he lived in New York City. He was selling newspapers at a newspaper stand . . . He worked his way [through] until he got a scholarship and he went to school.” “He went to college in India and came here and did his master’s” in a science field.* My father “came from a state in western India;* he lived in a major Indian city* since he was in eighth grade.” Before moving to the city, “he grew up in a very small town which is outside of Goa.”

My mom came to the States because she married my dad. My mom is from the same state as my father. My father came to the States first and then went back to India to look for a wife, “and he met my mom, well his parents introduced them, actually his mom because his father died . . . They met and got married within a week or a couple days.” I would call their marriage “quasi-arranged because their parents introduced them to each other. They each had somebody they knew in common. My dad’s brother was married to my mom’s cousin. So the families knew each other.” My dad met a lot of women, and my mom met a lot of men. “I think they ultimately had the final say. They asked their parents for advice. They were like ‘Go with her,’ and my mom’s parents were like ‘Go with him.’” Currently, my mom “does some clerical work, but it’s just part-time work.”
Chronological Summary

Childhood. When I was little, "I grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood." However, there were two Indian girls who I became friends with since my parents and their parents were friends. But I picked friends who I had things in common with, so I did not just pick Indian kids "because I've always grown up in an area where there are so few Indians. I had no other choice; otherwise I would be completely secluded (laughs) from everyone. So I kind of just had to."

While growing up, "I can't think of any one person [who was a role model to me]...I don't think there was any one person that I looked up to." When I really think about why I never had a role model, I realize that "there wasn't anyone who was exactly in my situation. I mean being one of the first generation kids, there are not many Indians that are brought up here."

Since I was one of only a few Indians, I did experience racism, but only on a few occasions. I remember one time I experienced overt racism:

There was this bully I guess, and he used to pick on everyone, and he picked on me a lot too. I can't even remember the comment he said, to tell you the truth. But I just smacked him right on the face. It was on the bus, so I just smacked him. I was like 'Oh you're so racist!'

However, there were many times where I had to educate people about my culture. "You just feel that people don't know about you. You kind of feel like, I have to explain everything. I am constantly being the educator." For instance, "I remember somebody asking me about the Indian Ganesha, about the elephant head, and I remember telling the story of how he got his elephant head. I remember that kind of stuff."
Although I had some negative experiences because I am Indian, overall I have felt very positive about being Indian. I remember feeling like I was very "Indian" from an early age. "I mean, I grew up in a house where my parents were very involved in the Indian community, and I became very involved in the Indian community. It shaped my life completely." Also, my parents are Hindus and raised me as a Hindu. Being Hindu has really influenced me to accept "other people and that has influenced a lot of the way that I see things and the way that I behave and the way I go about my life is very accepting."

Since I have grown up with both Indian and American cultures, "I have had both viewpoints, and I can select the good things out." I feel that knowing both cultures has allowed me to feel like "I have really benefited from having another culture." Presently, "I can choose the best of both worlds and make it fit to my life and see what works for one culture and put that in my life and what works for the other culture and put that in my life." On the other hand, I really feel like "there isn't anything about me that is strictly American... I can't think of anything American [about my values or beliefs]." I feel completely Indian only.

**Adolescence.** During high school, "It was difficult. I didn't like my high school time at all because I was at home, and I was restrained when I wanted to go out." It's not like my parents did not want me to go out, "my parents wanted me to go out, but was on their own terms, which was not acceptable terms to my friends." When I would ask to go out and stay out late "my parents said 'No way!' I had to be accountable [for] all those, little things that normal teenagers don't like to do." My other friends would be allowed to go out and do things but "in my house they wouldn't do that (pause). . . I was almost
kept in a cage here, and I hated it. But I didn’t resent Indian culture for that; it was more that I resented my parents for that.”

Also, in high school, “My mom yelled at me all of the time, ‘Do your homework, do your homework.’” When I went to India, I talked to my aunt about our arguments, “And I told my aunt, ‘What’s going on with her?’ She explained that my mom is bringing me up in a place where she doesn’t know what happens.” Because my mom is raising me in a culture she is unfamiliar with “she doesn’t know what goes on here, what goes on in the schools and so she is protective that way.”

However, I noticed that my friends had a different relationship with their parents. “American kids grow up and their parents know exactly what is going on, their parents are like ‘Yeah, you know when I was in college, I did this and I used to drink with the best of them’” (laughs). But “my parent are like ‘You are not drinking, you are not touching alcohol!’” So I saw how my friends’ parents “are more understanding of the culture they are faced with. I think their parents know or have a general idea of what it’s about.” How did I cope with all the arguments?

It is really funny for me because I grew up wanting to get out of the house. I left this house at 16, just because I could not stand being here. My parents (pause), I hated it here. I would just cry my eyes out. My mom would always yell at me. I hated it, I felt so trapped here. I didn’t have a car and so I was just stuck at home all the time. I couldn’t make too many friends at school because my friends didn’t understand what was going on at home and so I decided to graduate early. Nobody could understand why. I never told anyone. My dad thought it was great because it was like ‘push, push, push.’ Because I was faster than everyone else. It felt great, ‘Go ahead!’ My mom said, ‘You’re not ready for it!’

Early adulthood. Currently, “I am a business major, but I took the pre-med courses and science courses. My sister is a doctor. Well, she is in her first year of
medical school.” I feel pressure to be a doctor since my father looked at my GPA and said “I could get into med school.” I told him, “No dad!” (laughs).

Now I notice that the expectations of the Indian community are much higher than those of the White American community. I can see this especially with my parents. “No matter what it was, my parents want me to be good at something. They definitely want success...sometimes that is a lot of pressure.” Like when “you come home and you don’t get the grades that you want to and you just feel horrible. Most of the time I don’t feel bad because I didn’t do work or I didn’t want the grade, I feel bad because I am disappointing my parents.” However, there are benefits to the pressure. “I’m glad they push me, sometimes I wonder if it is a lot of pressure or what, [but] I’d rather have too much pressure than not enough.”

But all of this pressure “takes a lot out of you, you want to do your best. When you do fail, it is a horrible feeling. I feel miserable when I let my parents down.” My main goal is to “make my parents happy. But when you are not able to do that, that makes someone feel bad. I would hate to disappoint my parents.” I also feel guilty when I disappoint them because “they do so much for you and then you can’t return the (pause), but what can you do?”

This pressure to appease my parents has also caused me to “not [be] the same around my parents [as I am around my friends].” I notice that “even the way that I dress, I don’t wear clothes that are” conservative. However, around my parents “it is always the conservative look. But when I am with my friends, I don’t dress like trash but, I don’t wear the same kind of clothes.” Also, “they have no idea that I drink or anything like that, so that is like a whole other life I have at school.” I think this is pretty common for
Indian kids, “their parents are really strict and as soon as they get any freedom they go crazy.” Well, “I didn’t go to that extent, but I did a lot of partying (pause), it wasn’t so much partying, but I just started to enjoy myself.”

I usually try to make my parents happy, but when my parents do not agree with my choices, they “threaten that ‘I’m not going to pay for your education, I’m not going to pay!”’ This threat has become such a big issue that “I think that after I graduate I don’t want any of their money or anything. I want to actually go out and make everything myself and buy everything by my own money.”

At my college, I am still one of few Indians. “There is 10% minority which includes every type of minority; it’s ridiculous, it’s just White people (laughs).” However, “I have friends from my dorm that I live with; my roommates and I have become very close.” As far as Indian friends, “it’s not just because they are Indian they are my friends,” I look for friends who I have something in common with. “I also try to integrate my friends at school. Like my Indian friends with my American friends. I try, like they know each other well and they’ve become friends. I don’t try to separate them.”

Is there currently a man in my life? Well, to be honest, “I haven’t dated at all (laughs). I mean, I just haven’t, I’ve never had the opportunity. But as far as my parents, it’s just more of something that has not yet been discussed. I mean I don’t know if there is [or] what my parents think about that. We haven’t really had the topic come up.” Also, even though my sister is older than I am “we both really haven’t brought anyone home. It has not been an issue that has been brought up in the house.”

But I do feel very conflicted about my parents. Because on the one hand “I want to live my own life and just be glad that I’m free.” On the other hand, “I do feel very
obligated to my parents. I argue with my parents all the time, but they are still my parents. I feel a great amount of respect; they gave me a lot.”

Theoretical Field Notes

QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I found the following major themes from Sushila’s interview: (a) a sense of isolation where she did not feel she fit into Indian or White American communities; (b) experiencing a great deal of pressure from her parents regarding her academics and career choice; (c) being strongly influenced and proud of her Indian culture; (d) gaining independence from her parents by completing school ahead of schedule; and (e) segmenting certain aspects of herself.

Credibility

Member check. After reading the contents of her interview, Sushila did not want any changes made to the content or coding scheme of her interview. At the end of the second interview, she stated:

I'm glad someone is writing about it [Indian American women]. It's not something that a lot of women talk about. It's not something that you encounter everyday. Keep it up, and I encourage you to keep going because I think it is really important and I'd like to hear what it's like, because sometimes you feel isolated. Especially for me, because I don't know that many Indian girls because my university* doesn't have many of them at all. It's kind of hard to think I'm the only Indian person who understands.

Padmini (The Dancer)

Contextual Field Notes

Padmini and I met at a library in an upper-middle-class suburb in Columbus, Ohio. This was the same library where I met Phoolan. Padmini was on time to the interview, and we sat down to get started as soon as we introduced ourselves.
Padmini wore a pale blue sweater. I noticed that her looks were quite striking. Padmini is extremely petite. She has large, beautiful brown eyes and wore her hair pinned up.

There were several environmental distractions. We heard a baby crying, general sounds from the library, and a buzzing noise from the lights. None of these distractions impacted the interview process. The interview lasted 50 minutes.

Demographic Information

I am a 19-year-old Indian female. I was born in Africa, and then my parents moved to India. I then lived in New Delhi, India for several years. In 1988, when I was nine, my parents moved to the United States. I am an undergraduate and am taking classes that will help me apply for a medically-related program.* Currently, I am single.

Family Background

My father and mother came to the United States in 1988. They came to the States in order to open up a store.* My father is retired,* and my mother works with computers and teaches. I have an older brother who is a doctor. He is married to a woman from India.

Pseudonym

I chose the name Padmini for this participant because Padmini is the name of a famous dancer in India. Initially, I chose this name for her because she wanted to study dance but her parents would not approve of this career choice. However, after reading through her interview, this name appeared even more appropriate for her. Since Padmini lived in three different countries by the age of nine, she learned to adapt and change according to her surroundings, just as a dancer dances to music.
Chronological Summary

Childhood. "I was born in Africa; Ethiopia," to be exact. "Then I moved to India and lived there for about seven years." "It was difficult" adjusting to so many different cultures.

In Africa, "I spoke English, and then I moved to India, and I spoke Hindi and Punjabi, and then I came back here so it all had to come back to me again." Now "my English is fine; I talk to people; I don't feel any different. But back then, when I first came from India, I felt out of place." I was also "discriminated [against], a little." For instance, "People would say, 'Don't talk to her, she doesn't know any English.'"

All of these experiences, made my first year very hard here. "I remember I was really sad, and I wanted to go back to India." When I was "in elementary school [there was] a boyfriend/girlfriend kind of thing, and that was a shock to me." In India, "you don't see that until high school, or even college!" I kept saying, "'There's no way I'm going to stay here,' and I hated it." Later, "when I went to middle school... I [learned to] just adapt to it."

My family is Sikh and "when I go out with my dad a lot of times, he's got the turban and everything. So you get a lot of stares, and a lot of people wonder about it." I remember "when I was young I did feel a little embarrassed or ashamed about it, because I wanted to fit in." But now "it doesn't bother me at all. People look, and now I'll tell them I feel proud about him, and this is my religion." These childhood experiences "have made me a stronger person. I'm a lot stronger now."

Adolescence. "When I was in high school, I didn't know English very much so it was hard making friends, so I never really bothered to make friends." Now, I become friends...
with people that I have something "in common with." "My parents were, well they still are very strict about dating. They were really strict. It was like no dating, period." They kept saying, "'Arranged marriage,' that was it." Finally, "they've started to learn that I'm in the American culture." They are beginning to "accept the fact that it's okay to date, they haven't okayed it, but I can tell them if there was any time that I found a really nice guy," they would be open to meeting him. However, he "would still have to be in my own culture. I can't go out of it."

But "in high school I was not around much Indians, so I never even thought about" dating an Indian. "My parents were always telling me, 'You're going to have to marry an Indian; you have to stick to your culture,' and I was really out of my culture." I kept saying to myself, "No way! There's no way I'm going to go out [with an Indian] because I was only around Whites and Blacks."

In high school, "I got caught [sneaking out on a date] once." So "my mom and I had our talk about dating." How did I get caught? "I was supposed to go out with one of my girlfriends, and my mom ended up calling my girlfriend and she was home, and she was supposed to be out with me." So then "I admitted to her, and ever since then I've like lost her trust."

**Young adulthood.** Since I've lost the trust of my mother, I can tell "my mom gets suspicious now and then." I notice, "my mom is always checking up on me. Wherever I go I've got to give her the phone number; she is suspicious." This makes things really "tough. It's very tough." Now, "My curfew is nine or ten." Even when I'm at college, she'll "call me and check up." I tried to tell her, "You have to get used to the fact..." but she still calls.
My mother would like me to marry a Sikh, Indian man. But “It's very difficult, because the Sikh population alone in Ohio* is like two people total!” Okay, in actuality, “it's a little more than that, but there's not that many.” Although my dad never says much, “he always agrees with my mom.” He only encourages me to get my education, but he always warns me, “I want you to study; I want you to be educated, but you know in our family nobody's going to accept the dating thing because they all had arranged marriages.”

I am really glad I live in the United States because “I feel a lot more independent.” In India people are much more strict. Even here, when I'm around Indians, “I have to watch out what I do, because it's like every Indian knows every other Indian, and you do anything, it goes right back to somebody.” For example,

I have to watch [how] I dress if I go to an Indian party versus an American party, or even when I go out to an Indian place, because people will talk and people will say things, and they expect you to dress more fully clothed, not showing a lot of skin.

With Sikhs this is also true. Recently, I cut my hair and “we're [Sikhs] not allowed to.” So I have to be careful with my hair.

Even with all of these restrictions, I still follow my religion. “I try and go to our temple, which is a Gurdwara. I try and go every Sunday if I can with my parents.” And I will just sit and listen.

What is my career? Since my brother is a doctor, “and on my mom's side of the family a lot of people are doctors, they expect that out of me.” Right now, I think I'm going into Optometry.”* “My mom has kind of eased down a little because she says, ‘You're a girl, it's okay.’” If I could do anything, “I love dancing, so a dance major, but
my parents would never accept that.” Since my family is full of such well-educated people, “I was like, I should get into a higher position, it would be good for myself.” Therefore my decision to go into optometry,* “At first it was like a compromise, but now I'm like, it's good for me.”

Overall, all my life experiences, have “definitely made me stronger. I'm a strong person. And I'm more open-minded to a lot of things. . .” The other thing I’ve noticed is “that I learned to adapt, like how a team works [together].”

Theoretical Notes

QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I found the following themes from Padmini’s interview: (a) pressure from her family; (b) a sense of isolation; (c) segmenting aspects of herself; (d) transformations in her identity; (e) coping through compromise; and (f) a transformation in her parents.

Credibility

Member check. Padmini returned her form and stated that she had no corrections for the transcript or the codes. When I ran into Padmini outside of the interview context, she stated that her friends thought this study was fascinating, and Padmini is looking forward to reading the results.

Shanaz (The Jovial One)

Contextual Field Notes

I was very excited to interview Shanaz because she was the only Muslim woman who agreed to be part of my study. I finally reached her by telephone and found out that she would be relocating in a few days. She rushed over later that evening to participate in this study.
Shanaz was very open to the interview questions, but she appeared tired from her flight the night before. She explained to me that she had to wait on the plane for five hours because of some technical difficulties. Therefore, she was unable to prepare for the interview, but she was able to focus more as the interview progressed.

She agreed to meet me at my house because of the short notice. The only distraction during the interview was a knock at my door by a neighbor. He stayed only briefly, and then we continued the interview. The interview lasted two hours.

**Pseudonym**

Shanaz was very funny and jovial throughout the interview. She told me many jokes and stories about her life. I gave her the name of Shanaz since it is a Muslim name that means “the jovial one.” I expected her to be wearing the traditional dress of Muslim women, with her hair covered; however, she dressed similarly to the other participants in the study.

**Demographic Information**

I am a 22-year-old, Pakistani-American woman. I came to the United States at age three. I just finished my bachelor’s degree in journalism and am starting my first full-time job in my field. Currently, I am single.

**Family Background**

My parents are from India, but moved to Pakistan when I was born. My father came to the States to find a better job than what was available in India or Pakistan. Since my parents were married, my mother came with my father. My father works as an accountant, and my mother is a teacher. I have one older brother and several* older sisters. I am the youngest.
Chronological Summary

Childhood. “I was born in Pakistan, and I left when I was a three-year-old.” My sister calls herself Indian, but I think I’m more Pakistani. When I came to America, “I grew up in a total White suburb, and all my friends were White Americans. . .” I remember, “when I was younger, I had zero friends of my culture.” I grew up in an environment where it was a “99% White neighborhood.” I also had a difficult time with “the cultural people in my community because I didn’t like them at all. I couldn’t relate to any of them.” I think that is because “the majority of them were immigrants; I was brought up in the U.S.”

“When I was younger, it [my ethnicity] was very prevalent, and I would not do that to a minority child.” This year I worked for a paper in a White suburban neighborhood. “It’s really White, and you’ll see an occasional Desi [a person from India or of Indian descent], because you know Desi’s are usually doctors and live in a rich neighborhood, a nice neighborhood.” When I see their kids, I become sad because “I don’t think these people consider their kid sticks out like a sore thumb. If you want to live in a nice neighborhood, but you live in a nice White neighborhood, your kid has no identification, your kid is the one that sticks out.” This reminds me of when I grew up, “I was very confused. You know, ABCD [American Born Confused Desi] was my name.”

In “elementary school, I used to play by myself in the back. I didn’t play with other kids because I was really shy and kids used to treat me like a freak.” I remember, “Kids used to make fun of me, alienate me. I used to hang out with the teachers during recess.”
Adolescence. In middle or high school "I wanted to date... just so I could be like everybody else." However, "I was not allowed to date. I wasn't allowed to talk to boys. I was not allowed to have boys call me. My parents were very strict." Since my family is Muslim, "I grew up in a very, very strict environment. You didn't go anywhere unless you went with family, a brother, or sister, or something."

The way I decided to deal with the strictness was to do the opposite and be "very defiant." "I'm the youngest, and everybody else did what they were told except me. So if the first one didn't do what they were told, it would have been easier for the rest of us, but all the rest of them did what they were told." For example, at home "we had phone rules, I'd break them, and then I'd get the phone taken away."

I still felt isolated in high school because, "My friends were getting pregnant. My friends were doing drugs. My friends were getting wasted. I had friend after friend losing their virginity." I really "couldn't relate to them. I had no connection to them. They couldn't relate to me. I felt totally alienated all through school."

But "people didn't bother me as much in high school as they did while I was growing up. I didn't try to fit in anymore. I knew I couldn't." All of these feelings really affected me, "I think I was very insecure. I didn't have any self-confidence. I always, if I really think back in my brain, I always felt like I didn't fit." If I could go back to that time and listen to my thoughts "you could hear in my head, 'I don't fit. I don't fit here. I don't fit here.' Every situation I'd feel like, 'I don't belong here.'"

Also, "I grew up very poor. I think I learned what hard work really means." Since age 15, I've had a job. Now "I pay my own bills. I know what it means to work hard. I
have friends who never had a job in their lives.” All throughout my education, “I've always worked at least part time and gone to school.” So that was an added pressure, too.

Young adulthood. As I became older and I’d visit home, I’d “count the days where I could get away from there again.” Things have changed though, because “now I'm just myself.” But I remember, “I didn't tell them [my parents] anything.” Actually, “I think more often than not they don't see my personality, just because every conversation turns into a lecture.” With my father, “I avoid talking to my father like the plague.”

Since I’ve lived on my own, “I've developed my own rules. I learned my parents' rules don't work in this world. Because my parents' world is not the reality world.” So I adapted their rules to “what was okay for me in my world. And in their world it was not okay for them to have guy friends, but in my world I've always had guy friends and a lot of my really good friends are guys.”

Even though I’ve created my own rules, my faith is still important to me. “I don't drink; I don't go to bars; I don't date. I don't sleep around.” I think, “There's a difference in being any culture and growing up in the U.S. and being Muslim and growing up in the US.” Since I’m Muslim, “Your life is your religion.” With “every other culture in the world you have your life and then you have your religion.” But things are different when you’re Muslim, “There's no separation, there's just none... You can't take those apart.”

Adulthood. Recently I graduated from college. “I was going to do Biology when I got to college, because I wanted to get a real degree,” but since I had some experience in high school as the “editor of the yearbook and poetry magazine...” I decided to go into Journalism. I graduated in less than 4 years with my degree.
Now, "the majority of my friends are of my culture." But I am open to meeting any kind of person. But, "now I have 25 close Desi friends." Still, "I don't date. I don't date." As far as marriage is concerned, "I don't know what I'm going to do." When I think about it, "I've never gotten the opportunity" to date. "I don't like flirting. I'm not the flirting type of person." Also, my parents "would not be happy with" me dating. Although, "They know that I go out with large groups of friends." Sometimes "I stop by and see one of my friends at work sometimes, and we go out to eat on his lunch break or whatever." Also, "I'll stop by and see my other friends at their apartments or something, because I'm a very busy person and I see people when I get the opportunity." I know my parents would not be happy with this, but "I have no problem with that because I know I'm not doing anything wrong."

I still feel isolated when I walk "into a newsroom when everybody's a middle-class, White male" and "It's very, very alienating." In college, too, people are mostly White, except "When I was a Biology major, the White people were the minorities." However, "in Journalism I stick out like a sore thumb everywhere I go."

How do I cope with this? I do notice that I act differently when I'm in a different context. When I'm not around other Muslims, "when I get angry, I'll swear out the mouth." Recently, I was on a plane with a bunch of White males, and I noticed I "assimilated" to my environment by using their language. "I swear I assimilate when I'm with Americans." But when I'm with Pakistani people "it's different." Overall, I don't feel as insecure as I used to. Now "I'm very self-confident. I don't think I'm confused. I just let life take its own." I feel like "I've developed my own identity away from my parents' identity and away from everybody else's identity; this is what my identity is."
Theoretical Field Notes

The following major themes were revealed by QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I: (a) Shanaz had many encounters where she felt isolated throughout her life; (b) she also developed ways to cope with the pressure from others and her parents: becoming defiant, and assimilating her behavior; (c) she also exhibited times where she segmented aspects of herself; (d) she described several problems and conflicts with her parents; and (e) she discussed her role as a woman in her family.

Credibility

Member check. Shanaz made five corrections on the original transcript. The corrections included personal information about other people’s lives: a friend and her sister. One correction dealt with inserting the word “not” in a sentence. The fourth and fifth corrections were in regards to information to maintain her confidentiality. For instance, I substituted fake names and places where Shanaz talked about specifics that may not ensure her confidentiality. All of these corrections were added to the final transcript. Shanaz made no comments about the coding. She did comment that she was impressed with the depth of the interview. She also asked to obtain a copy of the interview because she hopes to write a book about her experiences in the future.

Indira (Goddess of Fire)

Contextual Field Notes

The research colleague in this study conducted the interview with Indira. The following notes are from her interview. I met Indira at a Cafe in the University’s Student Union. She was a little early and arrived before I did. She greeted me and I sat down. One of the first things that struck me about her was how relaxed and friendly she
was, and I found it very easy to talk with her. She had a nice, amiable face and personality. Her eyes were very dark and expressive. Her black hair was shoulder length; she is slim and was dressed as a typical college student: red short-sleeved shirt, cut-off overalls and sandals. After speaking briefly, we located an empty lounge on the third floor and began the interview.

There was one brief interruption when a person cleaning the union began running a vacuum cleaner. We then spent a few minutes locating a spot in an empty lounge. The interview lasted about 90 minutes.

**Demographic Information**

I am a 25-year-old Indian American female. I am in my second year of graduate school in a physical therapy field. I completed my bachelor’s degree a few years ago and have continued my master’s at the same institution. I am single.

**Family Background**

My parents came to the United States in the 1960’s. My father came to pursue a master’s in engineering. My mother came to the States with my father since they were married. He moved to the States first, and then she came a few years later. They both came from the same southern state in India. Recently, my father passed away. My brother, mother, and I have been dealing with his death.

**Pseudonym**

I thought the name Indira was the most appropriate to capture this interviewee’s strong-minded personality. In Hindu mythology, Indira is the “Goddess of Fire.”
Chronological Summary

**Childhood.** When I was in elementary school, “I don’t know if I chose who I was going to talk to—it just sort of happened.” Growing up, “I don’t think I’ve sensed any sort of community and I didn’t feel a sense of community until I came to college.” I grew up in a suburban neighborhood and “in the non-Indian [suburban] community, no one comes out in suburbia and my parents weren’t involved in that.”

However, “They were involved in the Indian community...And it was like having an extended family.” In the Indian community “there were six of us that are of the same age, and we were always together, and then in high school we kind of went and did our own things.” However, when we all reached college “we all came back as a group again and they are like family to me.”

When I think back to my childhood, I have a difficult time separating how I was influenced by my culture and religion. “In my household it was definitely connected.” My parents gave my older brother and me a choice of religion, but they also said, “You are going to follow what we practice in the household, but if you decide to change after you leave then that is up to you.” I remember “...every Friday I had to go to the temple and sing these Bajans, and actually I still enjoy it.”

**Adolescence.** When I started high school, “I always felt like an outsider.” I think because “my father lost his job a couple of times while I was growing up, so we didn’t always have money.” This really bothered me in high school because “everyone had the name brand clothes, and even food. We had to eat generic food...”

My family’s financial problem was one reason I felt like an outsider, but “I felt that [like an outsider] because of the fact of my physical appearance, I don’t know if I felt
obvious, I don’t think it was overt racism or anything, but I just felt like an outsider.”

One example of this is that I noticed that “everybody’s families were different from mine, and how they look is different from mine, and what they thought was important was different than mine.” I also have the distinct memory that while:

they were learning jazz and ballet, I was learning Indian classical dance. Friday nights people were going to football games, while I had to go to temple. My parents don’t eat meat at home, so we didn’t have Thanksgiving dinners or celebrate Christmas.

Also, my family dealt with dating differently than other Indian families. “If there was a guy that called, it wasn’t like a big production. I think my parents just didn’t want to deal with it.” So “they would just tell me, ‘OK he called.’” I think they handled things this way because “they didn’t want to know.”

As far as academics, “I never felt pressure academically. It was always expected you were going to school. So it was always indirect.” But I also learned about how things operate in my family by watching my older brother. “I felt [an] indirect pressure because my brother wanted to go to art school, and my parents wouldn’t let him. My parents were like, ‘You are not going to make any money; what kind of job is that, you have to do something that is secure and stable.’” By watching my brother I’ve learned not to make the same mistakes, “I put pressure on myself to make sure I chose something that was secure and stable.”

Young adulthood. During college I thought about majoring in “women’s studies my freshman year. And my dad didn’t like that whole thing.” We never had a direct conversation about it, but “he would subtly be like, ‘Why are you telling everyone that
you are studying women’s studies?’ And he’s like ‘that’s just not what you should do.’”

Eventually, after taking more women’s studies courses, “I realized I cannot go into this.”

After I went on a trip to Mexico, “I was with these people that were so different from me, and I was having these really great connections from these people that I was with.” I then began to realize that “being Indian American is a strong component of who I am but that’s not all I am.” Even when you ask me questions about being Indian American, “I kind of feel like I am past all of that anger...I feel like I’ve dealt with it.” Sometimes I become really frustrated with these questions because by “putting myself into categories or compartments it adds to who I am, but it limits who I am too.”

**Adulthood.** How’s my dating life? I’ve dated “mostly Indian, and African, Black” men. I notice that I mostly “connect with other minority groups, like African-American or Latino American, and Jewish American” because “I always felt there was a voice in those communities that connected with who I was.” Overall, I feel like who I date is more “a personality issue” versus an ethnicity issue. And as far as my parents are concerned, “my parents know that I am the kind of person that fights and my parents have always told me that they would accept whatever decision” I make about my partner.

My parents have not brought up the whole arranged marriage issue since “they saw how much I would get irritated with what they were doing with my brother.” However, I know “if the time comes when I turn 28, and I still wasn’t married by 30, my dad would have pressured me.”

Now I’m in graduate school. I decided to pursue my current field because “I was sitting and talking to my mom and saying how much I didn’t like a certain field and I thought it was kind of boring and my mom was like, ‘What about Physical Therapy?’”
After I thought about her suggestion, I completed some classes in the area and really liked them. I've noticed, "I've always sort of done that [tried to make my parents happy]. And that probably has a lot to do with being second born--finding ways to balance."

Even though I thought I picked a good field of study, "I hate graduate school. I feel like I am back in junior high, and I've never had this low of a self-concept in my life." I've noticed, "being in grad school totally makes me feel like, completely nothing." Sometimes I wonder, "if I looked different maybe they would treat me differently." I can't tell if it's my ethnicity... "I don't think it is ethnically related. I have no idea what it is related to."

Recently I interviewed for an assistantship to help people reduce their accents. "Everyone else had this warm experience in interviewing, but when I was interviewed he seemed put off." It could be due to the fact that "I have some issues doing accent reduction. I don't really believe in it." The interviewer "basically said you have to change the way you're thinking if you want this job." But I don't know if this is related to my ethnicity.

Recently, my brother and I went on a trip to India. My experience in India really challenged my thoughts about my identity because:

while I was there, I realized what I place importance as far as being Indian, is not India. I didn't feel that I had a connection to the country that I thought I would. Before, I always had this feeling that I'm Indian American, and then while we were leaving India I put on a Walkman that my brother had, I think we were eating something. It was this rap group, "A Tribe Called Quest," and I was listening to it and it just felt like home. And I just realized who I am has so much to do with my family, and has nothing to do with the countries. I mean it does, but it doesn't at the same time. I think I realized roots have nothing to do with land, roots have so much to do with your parents and the community.
My brother and I have tried to sort through this identity stuff. But my father always complains and says "Why do you guys sit there and talk about this bi-cultural identity stuff? You are American, just deal with it!" My father would always complain about these conversations and say, "You guys think too much, you watch too many artsy movies." Both of my parents don’t see what the big deal is they always tell my brother and I to "stop thinking!"

Theoretical Field Notes

The following major themes were revealed by QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I: (a) experiencing a great sense of isolation throughout her childhood and adulthood; (b) developing coping mechanisms to deal with her parents: compromising her decisions to make herself and her parents happy, avoiding complaining and arguments in her home; (c) a transformation in dealing with her ethnicity throughout her life; (d) indirect pressure from her parents; (e) her parents’ style and process; and (f) identifying with other ethnic minorities.

Credibility

Member check. Indira read through her transcript and codes and had several corrections. However, these corrections dealt with the word changes I made to secure her confidentiality. Therefore, her changes were not related to content, but to names and places that would identify her. She also made several grammatical corrections and corrected misspellings. These corrections were changed in the original transcript.
Kavita (Poem)

Contextual Field Notes

This was my first interview, and it was scheduled with Kavita, a 28-year-old Asian Indian American woman. As I drove up to Kavita’s house, I noticed that her home was very similar to the home where I grew up. She lived in an upper-middle-class neighborhood where each house on her street was built in a very similar style.

Kavita was dressed in “American style” clothes—a sweater and jeans. However, she had very long, beautiful black hair worn in the style of most “traditional Indians” by placing barrettes in her hair. She also wore a few Indian bangles on her wrist and dangling Indian earrings.

The interview lasted 1 1/4 hours and was held in her parents’ home. Her two cats and dog joined us as I interviewed her. Only once in the interview did the animals’ presence distract her attention.

We sat in Kavita’s kitchen, and I began by explaining to her that this interview was my first. I gave her a copy of my interview guide. She took several minutes to read the guide, and then we began the interview. She had recently completed her master’s degree in creative writing and had decided to stay home for one year while she looked for work in her field. I felt very nervous conducting this interview since it was my first, but I was also excited about beginning my journey with these women.

Pseudonym

The pseudonym Kavita, a Sanskrit name for poem, was chosen for this participant for several reasons. I believe this term best describes what she revealed to me about herself.
in the interviews. First, since she is a creative writer this term fits her chosen profession. Also, I am familiar with her written work, which is very poetic and full of creativity.

**Demographic Description**

I am a 28-year-old, Indian-American, “straight” woman. Currently, “I'm a writer, and I just graduated with my master’s, and I'm pretty much trying to get published right now to get a publications page together.” I am living with my parents in order to gain more experience in my field and concentrate solely on my writing. I also have a sister who is a physician and lives with her husband in a Midwest state.*

**Family Background.**

In 1966 my father and mother came to the United States from India. My father came because he received a scholarship to study engineering. My parents both came from a southern state in India.* I was born in Pennsylvania, and then moved to Ohio when I was 13. Currently, my father works as a researcher, and my mother works in a lab.

**Chronological Summary**

**Childhood.** Growing up in Pennsylvania and Ohio, I lived “pretty much [in] a White neighborhood.” Therefore, “...when I was little, I selected my friends just by proximity, or if they were close to us...(pause). They were always girls…I thought boys would make fun of us—fun of Indians ‘cause I thought—in our neighborhood they did.”

There were also other incidents where I experienced a great deal of racism; “there was just constantly stuff about our clothes, being Indian, or skin color. We'd have "For Sale" signs put up in front of our house or tomatoes thrown at our house.” Also, I remember when “I'd walk with my mom when she was wearing a sari and people would
scream, "'Go back to your own country' and stuff." Kids would also do stuff at school, "they would make fun of your name even. I hated my name for so long (laughs)...."

I also received negative messages about being Indian through the media. Therefore, "when I was younger I thought Indians were less somehow because always on the news too there were these starving Indians and everything, and not anything good. I thought I was less for the longest time."

However, there was only one place I really felt at home. "When I was younger I wanted to be part of the community..." When "I think about happy times, they are at the temple." My experience at the temple greatly influenced my identity. "...it gave me great appreciation for the arts..." and also "...I thought that a lot of Indians had really good hearts."

Adolescence. I remember that in my adolescence:

I was drawn more towards people who were more understanding, but also people who were more artistic... I just found that a lot of people interested in the arts or music were a little more understanding or open to the experiences of an Indian American girl. Or they would understand the ways I was raised and how that might be different than the ways that other kids were raised...certain restrictions that I had.

However, in my adolescence I felt very isolated. Since I did not have the temple anymore, all I had was the racism. "I didn't deal with it [the racism] very well for a long time." In order to cope with all of the racism "I internalized it all and believed it." I tried to fight back and stick up for myself at first, but "eventually I just stopped [and] I internalized it all." When I started high school, "I really rebelled...I got really interested in art and music, and I went out a lot, and I didn't know why. I didn't know why I was rebelling against the system. I didn't understand it."
Later I realized that "I struggled with a sense of my identity because I thought that Indian culture was so looked down upon. And in some ways I looked down upon it too." Later, in college, "I started to get interested in identity and what Indian Americans have gone through."

**Early adulthood.** My attitude towards being Indian changed "when I started to look into it and everything, and I [realized] I was special because I am Indian." This occurred "maybe like 18, 19, 20—somewhere around that time period. It was a hard thing but also it was this quality that made you special, this unique thing."

In college, I also started to date. "Well, first of all I didn't tell my parents for two years, that I was even dating anyone. And then I told them two years later, and we all had dinner, and it was OK." But before I told them about my boyfriend, my life at college and at home was completely separate. "I couldn't even bring the two [worlds] together because I really wanted my parents' approval so much, and I just thought [that] having a boyfriend and a lot of my friends would not get their approval so I just like never even had the two [worlds] meet too much." This time in my life was very difficult because "it was kind of like constantly juggling" and splitting myself into separate halves, which made me kind of doubt myself "because there wasn't one whole identity it was [more] like two identities, so I wasn't certain myself what I was."

**Adulthood.** A shift occurred as I became older, and later "I selected my friends based on how understanding I thought they would be...But now I think it's changed even more because...friends are important and they always were important, but I think now I select my friends by people who will just support me in what I do."
Right now I am doing freelance work from my parent's home. I no longer feel the need to please everyone and obtain everyone's approval. For example, when Indian people ask me what I do for a living I say:

‘Well, I'm a writer (tone lowers)’ Am I going to make a lot of money? ‘No’ (laughs) and I am really not making anything right now but I'm going to keep at it. And I'll say that! And if they've got a problem with it, then that's their damn problem, not my problem, I'm doing my best. So it's changed a little; there is more of a security in my identity. I don't need so much the approval of the outside.

I also have changed my perspective on White Americans, so “it's like I don't have a problem anymore...I can go with the flow.” Now when I interact with White people I believe that “they look at me and kind of see a White person with a tan (laughs).”

Also, I've seen the benefits of being both Indian and American:

As I've gotten older, it’s [being Indian] not even something that is special, it is just who I am. And I can honestly say it's who I am. And I am grateful for it. I am glad that I can go between two cultures and go to an Indian function and understand how and what they're thinking...[and] at the same time be able to flow in America.

I also changed my need for my parents' approval. “I used to think I had to listen to my parents in order for them to love me or find value in me.” However, throughout all the decisions I have made in my life, “I've found that they still love me even though I don't listen to them.”

Also, I found over the years, that when I was younger I struggled with my identity so much. “It was hard and it was painful. I thought childhood was very painful. A lot of people are like, ‘Oh, I loved my childhood, they were the best years of my life!’ I thought they were so hard, I thought teenage years were terribly hard, almost unbearably hard.” However, once I started college, “it started to get better but it was still hard. But as the
years go, you find out who you are more and more and it gets better. It doesn't get worse, it seems to get better.”

Theoretical Field Notes

Using QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I found the following main themes from the interview with Kavita: (a) Kavita experienced a great deal of prejudice while she grew up; (b) the racism was then internalized so she reported feelings of inferiority; (c) she has felt very isolated in her life; (d) she had a need to gain the White/European American community’s approval; (e) she received pressure from her parents regarding her marital choice, specifically to marry someone Indian; (f) there were periods in her life where she felt herself segmented; Kavita felt as if she had to separate aspects of her life and only shared portions of herself depending on the context; (g) the temple was a source of pride for her; (h) Kavita noted that she has seen a transformation in her identity over time, wherein as the time progressed she became more comfortable being herself and following her own needs and desires; and (i) a major theme throughout her interview was her need for independence.

Credibility

Member check. After reading her individual profile, Kavita was satisfied with the accuracy of the transcript and codes. She had no changes for the transcript or coding. While reading the transcript, Kavita commented to me that the transcript helped her realize how painful some of her experiences have been.
Durga (Strength)

Contextual Field Notes

Durga and I met for the “initial interview” two times. For the first interview, I had difficulty with the tape recorder. This difficulty caused me to lose the entire first interview. It was at that point that I decided to use two tape recorders in the future to ensure this mistake would not occur again. Below, I have described my contextual notes from both interviews since I feel that both interactions helped me to understand Durga’s experience as an Indian American woman.

Initial Interview A

Durga and I met in my office. When I first saw her, her appearance was different than my expectations from talking with her on the phone. Since Durga was very assertive and direct when we talked on the phone I imagined her as a tall, more masculine-looking woman. However, for this meeting she wore a pale pink suit and a pearl necklace; a very conservative, professional, and feminine look. She had shoulder-length hair that was perfectly styled. At first Durga appeared very uneasy and distant in the interview; however, as the interview progressed she became more comfortable. The interview lasted a total of one hour and fifteen minutes.

Initial Interview B

Due to problems with the recording of the first interview, we scheduled another “initial interview” to be held at my office. However, after waiting for Durga for a half hour, I called her at home. Durga then stated that we needed to reschedule the interview for later that day. We then decided to meet at a Columbus public library.*
Durga’s appearance was different from the first interview. Today she dressed in jeans and a casual shirt. She appeared very tired, but seemed excited to meet again. At the library, I could hear a baby crying through the walls of the meeting room. However, the baby’s cries did not interrupt the interview. The only other distraction was the librarian informing us that the library soon would be closing. Durga and I decided to stay, finish the interview and then lock the doors to the library ourselves. This interview lasted one hour and fifteen minutes.

Pseudonym

The pseudonym of Durga was chosen for this participant. Durga is a Hindu deity and the direct translation of her name means strength. Throughout the interviews with Durga, I sensed an immense amount of strength from her, not only in her assertiveness, but in her ability and desire to wrestle with her painful experiences. Therefore, I felt that she needed a name that fit the strength I saw in her.

Demographic Description

I am a 30-year-old Indian-American woman. I have completed a bachelor’s degree in business administration and am currently working as a financial analyst at a major corporation.* I have no current boyfriend and am living with my parents.

Family Background

My father came to the United States in the 1960’s. He has a Ph.D. and came from a southern state in India.* My mother came to the United States because she married my father. She completed an undergraduate degree and now works full time.
Chronological Summary

Childhood. As a child, "I would take the friends I got. I wasn't very selective, so to speak." My parents' approval [of my friends] was very important, "in my case especially." The neighborhood where I grew up "was predominantly White, and then when I was in about fifth grade, our schools desegregated." Before the school desegregated, "there were a few Black kids and they were always very, very nice to me. And I felt they were no different from me. And then, it didn't feel like racial tension when I was younger." After the schools desegregated "we had a large number of Black children come into our school." When there was a mixture of Black and White races, "I kind of felt like in the middle. I didn't really feel like I belonged with the White kids exactly, but I certainly didn't feel like I belonged with the Black kids either." I felt like "I was just in the middle. And I was sort of a novelty to the Black kids, I think, and always a little bit different than the White kids."

"When I was a child all my role models were American." I can't remember specifics, "but I remember they were Americans. I was 90% around Americans and 10% around Indians so it naturally kind of moved that direction." Now that's changed, but when I was a kid, "I just didn't have any [Indian] role models..."

"At an early age I had to make a connection to God and to the people around me, way different than the traditional Hindu maybe, or the traditional Lingayat." My parents wanted me to understand their religion as well as Christianity. So "at home I was taught about God in one way and then at the same time my parents gave us exposure to church and the Christian religion, so I knew that they went to church every Sunday, and I knew that's how they worshipped God." This exposure helped me to deal with people's
questions about my faith, “so when they would ask me ‘Well, do you believe in God?’

well of course the answer was, ‘Yes, of course I believe in God.’” And the questions
stopped there. However, when I was in the:

seventh grade they [my friends] were standing around, we were all talking about
something and they said, ‘Well, we all believe in God, right?’ And then they kept
going, and then the person that was talking looked at me all of a sudden and was
like, ‘You believe in God don’t you, Durga, even though you’re not the same
religion, even though you’re not Christian?” And I was like, ‘Yeah,’ and that was
it. And I always had to make a connection to God, make that direct connection to
God.

Because I looked different, and had different beliefs, “I got teased for being
Indian... I mean I would be quiet, usually, for a long time. I didn’t ever say anything and
then eventually if it got me pissed off enough I’d say something.” There was this “one
kid [who] used to always...like he kept saying... ‘Are you from Ohio?’” Or he’d say,
“‘Redskins’ or something like that. And whenever I’d get on the bus or whenever I’d be
around, he would start making those funny comments or saying something.” One time,
“I think I turned around and I was like, ‘Shut up, Paleface!’” And that made him shut up
after that.

Adolescence. “In high school, I did have some interaction with Indians but they
were always in controlled settings, either for a function or a festival. . .” It was nice
because I also started attending an Indian youth camp, and I finally had people I could
connect with. However, back at my home town “I didn’t have a best fiend who was
Indian or a classmate that was Indian, ever...all the way through I graduated.”

Early Adulthood. When compared with my younger brother, I have noticed subtle
differences in the way that my parents treat us. However, my “mom, takes just an
unbelievable amount of pride in the fact that she treats us exactly the same, which is just
really bull [laughs], you know?" But, "with my brother there is a sense that they can't control him, and they feel like they can control me, probably because I give in a lot. Things that I don't feel like fighting about I just give in." Then, it seems, "they interpret or misinterpret that as they have some sort of control over me, or had. But with my brother I can't ever remember a time when, if he didn't really push for what he wanted he didn't get it."

Adulthood. Now, I think I have more role models than in the past. "Now I'm always looking for people who've started their own business or just had a lot of accomplishments on their own, and done it in this country." When I was younger, I only "looked for people who were born here. Now it doesn't matter to me as much." I also make friends "if I find something I admire in them," then "I go out of my way to be friends with them. And I don't have a racial or gender bias at all or any other kind of bias."

Even though I am 30, my parents never pressure me to get married. However, my parents' "brothers and sisters have, frequently." My parents are pretty open about whom I can marry. "They never put any restrictions; they never said 'no.' I don't ever recall them even implying that I couldn't date, or there was a certain person I couldn't date or a certain kind of person I couldn't date." There has been no attention placed on the subject of dating. So "I didn't feel like they were going to hold me back or stop me from doing something I wanted to do."

When I have dated, which is rare, I have mostly seen men outside of my ethnicity. My experience with these men has been mostly "positive." However, "there's always questions about my background, but then I always had questions about their background
too.” My parents still are pretty good about not pressuring me. Actually “there have been
times... I don't care what they say about that stuff. I mean, they're not going to push really
hard. Once I say ‘no’ they'll stop.” But “there is some logic to what they’re saying.” I
mean with arranged marriages, “you kind of have to sell yourself, sort of, so I can sort of
see the logic behind, ‘You don't want to be too old.’” However, “I don't really fit into
that mold anyway, so I just told them.”

They do pressure me to “continue my education and accomplish a lot
academically.” Also, other people in the Indian community will say ‘When are you
going to do your master's?’ and ‘When are you going to do your MBA?’ and ‘When are
you going to do your Ph.D.? ’ and ‘When are you going to get married?’ They just have
their list of things: “it's a checklist, ‘make sure you get 'em all done before you die’ type
thing.” I don’t see this much with Americans.

I still experience prejudice. I notice more prejudice towards “my eating habits.”
They always “seem to be the topic of major conversation always.” I have also noticed at
work “I get asked questions about my skin color and stuff on occasion.” For example,
“I've noticed that whenever I'm new in a workplace and there's no one else with dark
skin, that I get quite funny questions. Comments like ‘oh your skin color is so
beautiful,’” or “‘oh, that would only look good on you because you have a permanent tan’
type comments.” Although these comments are more like compliments, I feel isolated
and uncomfortable. It sends me the message that “‘you're different,’ you know, that
‘you're not me, you're not like us.’ I don't think that's the intention. But it's very difficult
not to take it that way. Not to recognize that it also means that (pause), it's not intended
that way, I know that, but it's very, very, very hard to not recognize that, in a way that person is saying 'hey, that's what I noticed is different about you.'"

Despite all the prejudice and hard times I've experienced, I have kept a very strong faith in my religion. My religion is Vaisnavism, they're also known as Lingayats, and some people consider them part of the Hindu system, and others consider them outside the Hindu system.” Lingayat differs from Hinduism “because women in my religion are considered equal to men.” A professor “wrote a book about Vaisnavism, and he said it's actually the first religion, first documented religion, to recognize women as equals.”

Recently, I had some questions and saw some contradictions in my religion so “I talked to a priest once and [he told me that] there are some, like any religion, there are hypocrisies in the religion and in the text. And so I'd heard stories and so I just spent about three hours asking him questions about why were certain kinds of phrases said in our books, and of course I can't read any of it, but I've heard it said. And he just answered every single question of mine, either with a practical thing, saying "Nothing is perfect, and these are things that you are going to see in any religion," or explaining that maybe I didn't understand the true meaning, or maybe in the translation the true meaning wasn't coming across.”

Even though I feel very positive about my religious beliefs and my direction in life, I feel like my life experiences have been very “hard. Boy, that's not a very good word to use though.” It is very difficult for me to describe,

I mean it never was easy to be, I don't think it's ever easy, period, to become who you want to be, and I'm not sure I'm there anyway. I haven't gotten to where I want to be, where I can say I've accomplished what I want to accomplish.
Theoretical Field Notes

QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I found the following themes from Durga’s interview: (a) experiencing racism throughout her life; (b) feeling a sense of isolation where she does not feel that she fits into either Indian or American cultures; (c) strong influence of her religion on her self-concept; (d) conflicts as a result of being both American and Indian; (e) a transformation in her identity throughout her life where as she has become older she feels more confident about herself; (f) coping with the racism by internalizing the racism; and (g) lacking specific role models who could guide her in different aspects of her life (e.g., personal, professional, culturally).

Credibility

Member check. Durga reviewed her transcript and codes. She had no corrections for the codes or the transcript. During the second interview she provided me with more details about her life during her adolescence and young adulthood. These details have been included above.

Khema (A Wise Woman and Teacher)

Contextual Field Notes

The research colleague also conducted this interview; therefore the following notes are from her interview with this participant. I met Khema at her apartment, which was in an old Victorian-style home on a tree-lined street. Khema had just come from the pool, and I waited in her room and set up while she changed.

The room was a nice setting, quiet and peaceful. I noticed a small Buddhist shrine that was on a small table nearby. Khema was slender and attractive. She had short hair and a lovely face. I found her to be very elegant and articulate. As we were talking she
pulled out notes she had made on the pre-interview guide. Since she had prepared so thoroughly for the interview, the interview went very smoothly.

There were a few minor noises from outside. The interviewer’s phone rang once, and the answering machine interrupted the conversation briefly at the end of the interview. However, these interruptions did not inhibit the interviewing process. The interview lasted 90 minutes.

**Pseudonym**

I chose the name Khema for this participant because of her devout Buddhist beliefs. “Khema was one of the two women responsible for running the first community of [Buddhist] nuns” (Murcott, 1991). Khema came from a royal family and she was very beautiful. When she met the Buddha, she realized that beauty is only a temporary state and she became enlightened.

After analyzing her interview, it appeared that Khema had worked through her past more than the other women. It appeared to me that she struggled with very painful aspects of her life. Through therapy and her religious practices she has been able to come to terms with her past. Therefore by facing painful thoughts, she too has become enlightened, similar to Khema.

**Demographic Information**

I am a 33-year-old Indian American female. I completed a master’s degree several years ago in Political Science. Currently, I am completing coursework towards a Ph.D. in an environmental science field. I was born in India and came to the States with my parents when I was seven years old. I am single.

**Family Background**
Both of my parents emigrated to the States in the early 1970's. "My mother encouraged him to come here so we'd all have better opportunities." I have two younger brothers. Currently my father is a practicing physician, and my mother has her own business.

**Chronological Summary**

**Childhood.** Growing up in "the United States we moved around a lot and usually my friends were non-Indian. In fact, up to the point where I was almost in high school, most of my friends were non-Indian." It's not like I stayed away from Indians, but "mainly because there weren't Indians my age."

We were "raised Hindu, and my parents, every home that we had, they reserved a bit of space for a temple." I remember, "whenever an Indian holiday was coming up, we'd always observe it together. It always made me feel a little sad that we couldn't observe the Indian holidays in a big way like the Americans did Christmas or Thanksgiving." However, my family always made the Indian holidays "important, and it was observed..." But I felt "a sense of isolation many times where growing up we couldn't really celebrate Thanksgiving with all of our family because half of them were on the West Coast, the rest were in India." Similarly, "when Indian holidays came around, we celebrated them, but not the way they would be in India with the whole neighborhood celebrating the same thing."

Therefore, when I was a child I felt very "isolated." I now realize that "I was extremely depressed." I coped with my depression by pleasing my parents. I felt pleasing them "kept my whole world from falling apart." So I kept "Doing the things that would really please them. I didn't stray at all from that."
“From a very early age it was implied that I would be, especially from my father, that I would just be a much better daughter if I did well in school.” I gave into this and “never questioned it. I never rebelled. I never tried to get bad grades. I did everything I could to please my parents in terms of school.” But when I began college, “I began to question [myself] since I was no longer the top of my class when I got to college, because there were twenty other, all of the other kids in this program I entered were valedictorians of their high school.” I began to ask myself “What was I supposed to use to define myself now?” And still “my parents really wanted me to go into medicine, and my father encouraged this from a very early age.”

When I was younger we lived on the East Coast.* I have very painful memories of “kids calling me names at the bus stop, and I know that really hurt me.” I remember coming home from school, “and I’d see my mom on the balcony, and she would call over to me, and she would be speaking in Hindi with me; I felt ashamed.” I would ask her not speak to me in Hindi, but to speak to me in English.

Adolescence. “When I got to high school I went to my first Hindu camp. And that was really wonderful because that was the first time I got to meet other Indian Americans with my issues…” After I went to the camp, “my closest friends became Indian women, Indian American women.”

During high school, “I never dated…because at that time I had this sort of fantasy of meeting an Indian man and getting married to him. And there was no one like that in my high school, so I just didn’t date in high school.” During high school, kids continued to make fun of me. I don’t think they meant to be mean, but “they made jokes that were racist and that really hurt me. And I know that they made comments that hurt my brother
also.” For example, “we’d be joking around and they’d say something like ‘Well, show us your green card.’ Or ‘Well, why don’t you just go back to where you came from?’” I began to blame myself for all of these comments “instead of push[ing] it all back onto the other person, I think that built up to the point where I just felt like ‘I don’t belong here, I don’t feel like I belong in this country.’” These kinds of comments did not happen often, but “whenever I did experience it, it was very significant.”

“I began to question whether medicine was right for me, I’d say probably my junior/senior year of high school.” My father asked me, “‘Well what else will you do with your life?’ I said, ‘I don’t know, but I just don’t feel like medicine is right for me.’” Yet, I gave in because “I wasn’t strong enough to say no to his assertiveness.”

Young adulthood. During college, my attitude towards being Indian American shifted. “I think I really resented being Indian American because I was very unhappy with the field I was in, I had chosen this field mainly because of a lot of parental pressure.” I coped by “staying away from Indian Americans through college even though there were a lot of Indian Americans in the program I was in. I didn’t really want to associate with them.”

In 1993, I moved to another city in the Midwest,* and “I started meeting Indian American women because of this Asian American reading group” and because of that I started to identify once again with the importance of meeting other Indian American women.

During this time, my parents started pressuring me to get married. “I was grateful that they didn’t want me to marry someone straight from India.” However, “at the same time I know there was a lot of struggle, and problems every time they wanted me to meet
these men because I felt like well, they live in a different city, how am I really going to get to know this person? And I always felt very nervous and uncomfortable before meeting them.” My parents wouldn’t really listen to my fears; they “would always say ‘Well you’re not dating anyone, what’s the harm in meeting this person?’” I decided to go ahead and meet several men, but it never worked out. In fact, “in some cases, the men were dating other women at the time, and they were just meeting me to satisfy their parents.”

I finally told my father that I was not going to go into medicine. “When I did quit medical school, he told me that it was the worst day of his life.” He seemed to take this decision “as some kind of failure, that I had failed him. For many years I lived with the guilt that I wasn’t good enough because I had chosen to quit something that my father thought was really good for me.”

Adulthood. My parents have pressured me and have “always questioned my decisions and that’s always resulted in a lot of self-doubt and depression within me in the past.” So I’ve had to deal with “a lot of negative consequences.” But I’m fortunate to have grown up in America because I’ve had the option of going to therapy. “Therapy has been extremely important. Because I know that had I been living in India that wouldn’t have been an option for me. And I’ve been able to see therapists and really do a lot of healing.”

I’ve also grown closer to my parents, and “I share more with my parents now than I used to.” In the past year, “I started practicing Buddhism.” Since “I am practicing Buddhism things are very different. I feel—for one thing I have a lot less self-doubt and if
I do have it, I find a way to discuss it with them in a way that they will be able to help me.”

I live an “untraditional life in comparison to most of my Indian friends, I’d say all of my Indian friends were married by the time they were 30.” They also “had already established their careers.” Therefore, “I’m very different in that way,” I’m still not married, and I’m focusing on my career and exploring myself, “and that there’s nothing wrong with being like this.”

**Theoretical Field Notes**

The following major themes were revealed by QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I: (a) Khema’s forms of coping through self-blame, depression, and pleasing her parents; (b) equal amounts of influence from both Western and Indian cultures; (c) a transformation in dealing with her ethnicity throughout her life; (d) a sense of isolation; (e) pressure from her parents and the community regarding her spouse, career, and success; (f) demographics of the neighborhoods she grew up in; and (g) the transformation of her parents over time.

**Credibility**

**Member check.** Khema made eight corrections regarding the content of the transcripts. She did not have any questions about the coding. Her corrections were similar to Indira’s in that they were corrections on places and names I had used to maintain her anonymity. Therefore, the only changes that were made were to replace the fake names and places with more vague terms to retain her identity.

She did state on the correction form that she thought the study “was a lot of fun, and I’m really glad to have a copy of the interview transcript.”
Mary (A Servant of Christ)

Contextual Field Notes

I was surprised when I met Mary. If I had not known where to meet her, I might not have been able to tell she was of Indian descent since her skin color was very light and her dress was entirely American/Western. However, like many Indian women she did wear several gold bangles on her wrist.

Mary and I met at a Columbus public library* for the initial interview. Mary had a very pleasant temperament, and she appeared very interested in being interviewed. She had thought through most of the questions using the pre-interview guide I had sent her, and she also informed me that she had spoken to her parents about the questions. There were no distractions during this meeting. The meeting lasted 1 and a 1/2 hours.

Pseudonym

I chose to give this participant a name from the Bible for several reasons. Throughout the interview and description that follows, one will see that this participant sees herself primarily as “American,” and she is a devout Christian. In order to capture her experience and her beliefs in her name, I thought the most appropriate name was the English and Christian name, “Mary.”

Demographic Description

I am a 37-year-old, married Indian American woman. I have completed a bachelor of science in education. I have been married to my husband * for 18 years. My husband * and I met in college and married when I turned 21. We have two children: one is a teenager * and the other is middle-school age.*
Family Background

My father has a Ph.D. in the field of chemistry and came to the United States in the late 1950's. My mother came to the United States in 1960, and is a housewife.

Chronological Summary

Childhood. "I grew up in White middle-class America, so there weren't any Indians, it was just all Whites. And so I really didn't have a choice [of friends], those were the people that I was just friends with." However, I am Gujarati, so I used to spend time with a lot of other Gujarati's, but "it wasn't my choice, that was just the people that my parents hung around with and so that's who I had to be friends with."

"Up until third grade I didn't even realize I was different, that's how weird it was. And then one day a kid said something about my brown skin and I thought, "Oh I do have brown skin!" I think I didn't realize that I was different before "because looking out at the world, everybody around me was just White, and I knew my parents were a different color, but it just never occurred to me."

I don't remember being treated differently until that time in the third grade, then it continued all through, "Gosh, almost all the way through junior high, it was really hard." Many people "thought I was Black, and that really upset me because I know Indians don't associate with Blacks, and Indians, to insult [others] will talk about Blacks." This teasing really affected me, "I have, I had very low self-esteem. I mean, now at the age of 37, I think I've finally, I'd say in the last 10 years have basically come into my own."

Adolescence. "When I got to ninth grade, that's when things started to change. I don't know if I got prettier, or if I started to know how to do my face and do my hair and wear decent clothes at that point, but it was like all of the sudden I got a lot of attention"
from the guys.” When I was in high school people would say, “‘I love the color of your skin,’ and ‘You never have to lay out and get a tan.’” I just felt that “all these years you guys tormented me and teased me, and now you want to be my friend. Forget it, just forget it.”

I also started dating in high school. “I had to wait until I was 16, and I thought that was pretty good because a lot of my other Indian friends weren’t allowed to date at all.” I remember starting to ask “as early as probably 11 about allowing me to go do stuff with girls and guys, like just as a group thing. And they were very much against that, especially since there were guys involved.” Although they let me date at sixteen, there were many restrictions. “I was only allowed to go out one night a week [and] I had to be home by midnight.” I also “didn’t have any restrictions as far as who I dated; of course, they wanted to meet him, but it wasn’t like ‘You can only date Indians,’ I was allowed to date whoever.” But all their restrictions made my life “hard until I got into college. So in college, by then, my parents didn’t really have any restrictions on me.”

If I wanted to date someone Indian, there “were very limited choices as far as Indians went when I was growing up, there were only like two guys; they were brothers, and they were like my brothers (laughter).” The idea of having a relationship with them seemed weird.

During this time, I felt a lot of pressure from my parents’ friends. It seemed that they “expected me to be a certain way.” I just gave in and didn’t mind because “I felt like that’s all I owed them.” However, “my mom would come back to me and say ‘So-and-so said that your hair looks too wild’ or ‘So-and-so said your clothes weren’t right’ or
'So-and-so said they saw you with a boy. “ I just felt like I could never win; no matter what I did it seemed the Indian people would talk about me.

After “I graduated from high school my dad basically said, ‘You're going to a state university.*’ I didn't have a choice as to “pick[ing] the place I wanted to go to school. At that point, “I really wanted to get away from home. Things weren't going well. My parents and I just did not get along.” My mom and I “were enemies, and so I really felt like I needed to get away but I couldn't.”

We fought about “normal teenage rebellious stuff, but along mixed in with that were all the restrictions that I had.” I just felt that “my parents were just so different from everybody else's parents that I hardly ever had people over because I was embarrassed.” My parents could not “speak clearly.” My mom “forced [me] to learn” how to cook Indian food and although I’m glad now, “there was a nicer way to do that, because when I was growing up I just resented my mom so much.” I also remember, “the house smelled different because of the Indian food, and they dressed weird, and it was just really hard.”

**Early adulthood.** I converted to Christianity “when I was right out of high school, probably my first year or second year of college. But I really didn't practice it until the first year after I got married.” My husband * mostly introduced me to Christianity. However, I remember while I was “growing up they [my parent’s friends] would stop by, pick me up on Sundays and take me to church every Sunday.” Later, I studied all other kinds of religions, “even varieties of Christianity.” Also, I was a practicing Hindu in junior high, “I was really into that, but I just wanted to worship God in the right way, and
I didn't feel peace about it until I became a Christian.” Now I just feel that “there's a peace that wasn't there before. I know in my heart what I'm doing is right for me.”

At the same time, I was getting tired of school, so my father and I “talked about the different options, and we picked Psychology. That was going to be my major.” After taking a couple of Psychology courses, I thought “Man, I don't want to end up like those professors; they're so weird.” I then “switched to teaching, and I didn't tell my parents, I just went ahead and did it.” I also “did my four years of college in three years.” Even though I finished so quickly, school was a major struggle. “My focus wasn’t there when I was growing up. There was too much tension at home. I just wanted to get out and experience life.”

During college, I met my husband.* I “dated him for a year, and then we were engaged for a year. He was a Physical Education major at the time, and that was totally” unacceptable. Even though his field was not considered “good enough...I got married right after I turned 21. I turned 21 in October, and I got married that same December.” But my parents, “they really didn't like my husband* at first, and I know the first five years my dad really expected it to not last.” My father “didn't trust American guys” (laughs). He thought my husband* “would take my money and leave me, or I'd get bored with him, and it would be all over.”

Adulthood. My interaction with the Indian community is very minimal. “I've gone to their weddings, and I say ‘hi’ to everybody, and they say ‘Oh, your kids have gotten so big.’” I feel like I am the “black sheep of my family because I only have a four-year college degree. I didn't go on for my Master's, I didn't go into Medicine, I didn't go into Law, I didn't do anything that was expected of me.”
Since I have become a Christian "most of my friends are either from church or they go to church or from where I work, and I work at a Christian school." Also, most of my friends "have the same interests that I do—the same goals, the same—we want to raise our kids the same way, we're all kind of headed in the same direction so to speak."

Now, looking at my relationship with my husband,* I haven't noticed many cultural differences between my husband and me. He doesn't give me a hard time when my family is around, and if I say he has to bow down and show respect, he will do it. Also, "he won't complain if there's Indian food—a lot of times he'll say, 'Is there going to be Indian food? I'll just stop at McDonald's.' He doesn't make a big deal out of it, like 'Ooh, I won't eat it.'"

Presently, he doesn't look at me as if I am an Indian woman. "He has never thought of me that way. It's just always been just as a woman." I see myself as a mother, daughter, and a wife. "I do everything...I am the healer, I am the confidante, I am the disciplinarian, I am the teacher, I am the laundry person, I am the cook." Our only source of conflict is about the kids. "I might think he's too lenient and I'm too strict, or he doesn't follow through with discipline like I think he should (laughs), which is normal. Those are just normal [problems]." I feel like my family is "probably like 90% [American], just because my husband is American. Actually, it's an American family."

**Theoretical Field Notes**

QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I found the following major themes: (a) a sense of isolation where she did not fit in with other Indians or Americans; (b) coping by finishing school quickly; (c) influence of religion which can be seen through her devout beliefs in the Christian religion; (d) role of her self as a woman where she has
several responsibilities as a woman; and (e) she stated that she felt a transformation in identity and self-esteem over time.

Credibility

Member Check. Mary responded to the member check by correcting three inaccuracies from the initial interview. One correction dealt with a spelling error. The other two inaccuracies were regarding words that were inaudible. One of the corrected errors can be seen above in italics. I corrected the other error on the original transcript. Mary also stated that she wanted the “you knows” and “likes” deleted from the interview.

Manjula (Beauty)

Contextual Field Notes

I met Manjula on a rainy, spring afternoon. She had a very busy schedule, but she managed to find time to meet with me. She chose for us to meet at her home. As I pulled into the development where her house was located, I noticed that she lived in a new upper-class development.

Her husband greeted me with a warm smile at the door. He commented about an interracial dating program on which he and Manjula had been panelists. He asked me if I had attended the program. I could not recall. He then invited me in.

Their house was decorated in blues and pinks. As I entered, Manjula greeted me. She was wearing a bulky, black sweater and leggings. I noticed that she was very physically fit. She had black hair that curled at the ends. Her two children were playing with her father in the living room.
Since the house was full of people, I asked Manjula to find a place in the house that had the least distractions and was quiet. She took me upstairs to her children’s playroom. Throughout the interview there were several interruptions when her daughter came to talk to Manjula. Manjula appeared to enjoy these distractions, and they did not seem to inhibit her responses during the interview. However, I found it interesting that when she described certain experiences from her past that her parents were unaware of, she would whisper about them, almost so her father could not hear her. When transcribing the tape, the whispers were inaudible. This interview lasted a total of two hours.

**Pseudonym**

I chose the name Manjula, which when translated means “beautiful,” for this participant. After interviewing her, I felt that she examines her life experiences in a very positive light. While this has helped her to have a happy marriage and two beautiful children, I felt that she has a difficult time processing the more problematic aspects of her life, and she agreed with this. Throughout the interview, it appeared that Manjula wants to maintain a lifestyle where she can enjoy only the benefits and beautiful aspects of her life.

**Demographic Information**

I am a 37-year-old Indian woman. I am a specific-type* of physician. I am currently married to a White American man.* We have two children.

**Family Background**
My parents came to the United States in the early 1960's. My father completed both an MD and a Ph.D. My mother completed two years of college. I have a younger sister who is married. I also have a younger brother who is still single.

I was born in India and moved to the United States when I was six months old. My parents and I then moved to a state in the Midwest.* "I skipped a grade when I was between second and fourth grade, I skipped third grade." In the fifth grade, I was having a lot of conflicts with my parents, so "I went to boarding school in India for three years, too, in between—for sixth, seventh, and eighth grades." I came back to America and I finished high school in a Southern state.* Then I finished my undergraduate degree in three years, and then went to graduate school in Psychology. I then decided I did not like graduate school, so I decided to go to medical school.

Chronological Summary

Childhood. Growing up in the Midwest, "All my friends were American." Except, when I lived in India for three years all of my friends were Indian, obviously. But during the years in America, all my friends "were American." However, things are different now, "all my closest friends are Indian. But they're all married to Americans."

When I think of my childhood, I cannot think of a time when I wanted to be anything else but a doctor. "I think that's how brainwashed we were (laughs), for as long as I can remember" my parents were telling me to be a doctor. However, "after a while you don't know if you were saying it or your parents were saying it." The only other careers I thought about were "when I was six, seven, eight years old even, that I was going to be a teacher or a psychologist, but it was kind of always in the back of my head
that I would go to medical school.” Also, “there was no question in my mom’s mind that her daughters were going to be doctors.”

I also remember “when we were growing up, my parents did a very good job of assimilating.” At my home, “we ate different foods; because my mom was vegetarian, she cooked Indian food every day.” We also “celebrate[d] Christmas, they would buy us Christmas presents and put up a Christmas tree ‘cause they knew all the other kids were going to come and talk about Christmas.” They even went to the extent to take “us to church like on Easter, and we went to Sunday school a little bit.” We went to church “before there were temples” in America. “I mean this whole concept of Indian temples has just been in the last ten years. Before that people either did stuff at their homes or just did things individually.” I even remember “going to church on Easter, I remember wearing an Easter bonnet.”

But in the fifth grade my parents sent me to a boarding school because I was getting bored at school, and I would cut class. At boarding school, I “learned, for three years how to speak Hindi, and write Hindi and read, and learn Sanskrit.” I think more than my misbehaving, my parents “felt like they needed to expose me to the Hindu culture and religion, but they wouldn’t be able to do that here” so they sent me to India.

Adolescence. During junior high and high school, I had one friend who was “Jewish, and Jewish families are very similar to Indian families.” My friend seemed to understand “that since I wasn’t allowed to date, I would sneak out and date. She would help me in terms of sneaking out.”

I wasn’t totally isolated from Indians. “My parents always did the Indian [functions] on weekends.” All the kids “would be in the basement playing, and the
parents would be talking.” Even though we associated with Indians “I never felt comfortable with the Indian girls that were the same age as me.” So “my sister and I stayed together at those things. But I probably felt more comfortable with my American friends growing up.”

I think I felt different from the Indian girls. I was always “active in all these different clubs. And there were other Indian girls who just went home right after school, I mean they never did any of those outside activities.” So I felt different from them. Recently, I’ve been going through the yearbook trying to remember names because my reunion is coming up and “there’s not one other Indian person in my class” even though I graduated in a class of 800. Even though I was the only Indian in my class, I don’t remember any prejudice I experienced. I do recall that at first no one noticed me because I wore glasses and had braces. When I was “between ninth grade and tenth grade, I got contacts and I got my braces off and I came back to school” and this “guy who was a big old jock…was being real flirtatious.” I don’t remember any negative comments. Only when I was in a Southern city* “I was mistaken for being Hispanic a lot. I mean, a lot.”

In high school, my parents “didn’t want me to date, although they did allow me to go to my prom.” My parents were oblivious to the fact that “I had a boyfriend. He was a football player, and I dated him for six, seven months.” But they never knew. “They would let us go out with a group of boys and girls, but not out on a date every weekend.” So, in order for me to go out with him, “I would tell them I was baby-sitting, or I would tell them I was going out with my friend.” Even though I had to lie to my parents “it
didn't bother me at all. My sister and I both decided that it was easier to do that than to hurt our parents' feelings."

Young adulthood. "I went to India for a year, thinking I was going to try to go to medical school in India and not go to college here. But I hated it so much that I came back after a year." I lived in a house with three American guys, and "my parents were okay with that." However, I'm sure to Indian people this living arrangement was just shocking. "I mean it's interesting, because that was the year I probably felt more prejudice than I ever felt here." I really felt like "I stood out as far as [being] an Indian woman. I mean, I remember other Indian women in our class would gossip and say stuff about me just because I hung out with this group of Americans."

Although my parents had very high expectations for me educationally, as "we got older they expected us to have [a] traditional marriage." Marriage is the one area "I think that my parents did the wrong thing, because if they wanted us to stay in the mold of an Indian wife, then they should have never given us all the freedom that they did and all the independence that they did." I felt I received mixed messages.

After the one year in India, I transferred to a state university in the South.* During "my first year in college, I really just dated superficially. I didn't have a boyfriend or anything. Then, when I transferred to another state university in Ohio,* I met my husband* probably three or four months into being there, and we started dating." I remember that "he would call in the summertime, when I went home for summer, and my dad would always go: 'Oh, it's that boy on the phone' and then just hand me the phone, [he] never ever talk[ed] to him, never said hello, never did anything."
So while I was going to medical school, my then boyfriend was also finishing his degree at another school. "And so we would just spend weekends together and go back and forth." My parents never knew about this. "I had a sofa bed, and I had a bedroom, and I just said, 'well, he sleeps on the sofa bed' and I don't know if they believed it or not [laughs], but it made them feel better."

I remember that my husband* "spent four hours talking to my dad about getting married; he was asking to marry me." My dad asked him all kinds of questions like "'How are you going to support my daughter?' and I'm like 'Dad, I'm in medical school, he's not going to support me.'" My father even asked "him about religion, he asked him about politics, money, all his beliefs." And my husband's* family is "wonderful. He's grown up in a very stable home, and he said the same thing to my parents which was 'there have never been any divorces in my family, I have no plans to have that happen in my life, the person I marry is going to be the person I stay with for life.'" Finally after four hours, "my dad said 'yes,' and once he said yes then they did the traditional Indian engagement party."

"I think because of my age there weren't any [Indian marriages], I was probably one of the first people in Ohio,* there had been one other marriage besides mine of an Indian girl to an American." I felt like we were the "trendsetters, the trailblazers." After we were married, my parents were wonderful. "They never looked back, they completely, wholeheartedly gave their approval. And that's how it is now. We're very close to my parents because they're over here once or twice a week, and we as a family go over there once a week."
Adulthood. My husband* is Methodist, and I am Hindu. So with the kids we are trying to show them both religions. We “don’t know which way they’re going to end up.” But “my daughter hates to go to the temple.” She always complains when we go and says, “Don’t bring me here!” I think “part of it is that I think that they don’t understand, you get bored because you don’t know what is going on.” Since I don’t understand parts of it and “my parents explained the generalities but not the specifics...it is then hard for me to explain to my kids, other than this is who [which deity] they are singing to.”

I also feel like we’re raising our kids with the Indian standards of being “more respectful of their family. We do try to keep up the whole extended family relationships, as far as like what they call my parents, what they call my brother and sister.” Also, “we’re trying to teach them about the Indian culture, same thing with Indian foods, going to the temple, trying to make sure that they have a balance and that they understand that half of their heritage is different, it’s not from here, it’s from India.” This year “my son had to fill out [questions] about himself, and one of the questions [the school] asked is ‘What religion are you?’ and he put down ‘Hindu.’ That was like [a] surprise!”

In my marriage to my husband,* I haven’t experienced ethnic or religious problems between the two of us. “I mean, we have fights, but that has nothing to do with this.” He’s been to India. He thought India was fascinating, yet dirty. He really “like[d] going in the Himalayas and Jaipur, and you know all of the old palaces, he thought that was really impressive. But the dirt was overwhelming. And the crowds.”

Now, most of my close friends are Indian. “And it’s interesting that we’re all the same in terms of being Indian with American husbands.” I’m glad we have friends like we do because “it gives the kids that...they see that bridge, that there are other families
that are doing what we're doing and aren't either completely American or completely Indian.” I also have “a lot of Indian patients, and obviously they come to me because I'm Indian and I can understand their backgrounds and how they're raised and what they're going through.” But I struggle with them “because I don't think women should [let] their husbands do all the talking for them and they just sit there.”

Do I ever experience racism as an adult? “I would think so, I don't know. I mean, I don't think you can tell racism, I mean it's not so in-your-face.” But “where I feel different or out of place is sometimes when I'm at the kids' school and we're doing things at their school.” I think that has more to do with the fact that “I have a career, I don't think it's because I'm Indian. Although I am the only Indian parent, there's, I think, two other Indian families in their school.” It’s hard for me to answer questions like that because as “my husband will tell you, I am not an insightful person.”

Lately, I have been so busy. Let me describe a typical day for you: “Thursday morning I got up, I worked out, I came home, I showered, I went to the office from 8:30 to 11:30 or 12:00.” I made rounds in the hospital and “I worked in the afternoon from 1 to 4, then I came home.” My son* “was supposed to have soccer practice from 5:30 to 6:30, but it was raining.” Then my daughter had “ballet at 6:30 then I went to the hospital. I was there from 7 o'clock on.” This is what my life is like, “I like my life busy, and so that way I don't have time to think about things.”

Theoretical Field Notes

The following major themes were revealed by QSR NUD*IST, my research colleague, and I: (a) experience of segmenting aspects of oneself when she was dating in high school; (b) dealing with prejudice in the Southern state* and as an adult at her
children's school; (c) pressure to choose an Indian spouse; (d) coping with her problems by achieving; (e) being influenced by Indian and American culture; and (f) seeing her role as a woman as a major part of her identity.

Credibility

Member check. Manjula made several corrections to the transcript. She corrected four errors where I could not hear what she was whispering. These corrections were added to the original transcript. One correction Manjula wanted was with the code entitled “Contradiction.” My research colleague and I coded a specific section as a contradiction since the content of the section dealt with Manjula’s freedom at home. Manjula explained earlier that her parents allowed her to have a lot of independence, but later in the interview she described her greatest conflicts related to dating and her independence. Manjula thought that this section was not a contradiction; she explained, “they [her parents] did not allow dating, but did allow school activities.” I changed the code for the section due to Manjula’s request. The research colleague and I decided to code sections where the women expressed different views from other parts of the interview as “Conflicted” versus “Contradiction” since it appeared Manjula misinterpreted our coding for that section.
The Indian American Woman Experience

QSR NUD*IST revealed several categories from the data collected during this study. Specifically, this section describes the following six domains that emerged from the data: (a) Cultural influences, (b) Romantic relationships, (c) Feelings of being caught between cultures, (d) Coping mechanisms, (e) Ethnic Identity Development, and (f) Women's Advice and Needs. The six domains are further broken down into categories and these are described below. For a summary of the domains and categories please see Table 2.

**Cultural Influences**

All 10 interviews revealed that Asian Indian and "American" cultures influenced the women's identities. First, I will discuss ways that Indian culture influenced the women's identities. Second, I will discuss American influences on identity. Third, I will conclude this section with a discussion of how Indian American women integrate aspects of both cultures.

**Indian Influences**

**South Asian religions.** South Asian religions had a major influence on 7 of the 10 women. These women believed that their religion shaped their ethnic identity from their childhood onward. For example, Kavita reported that during her childhood she went to the temple with her parents every week. She recalls that when she was little "we lived near a temple... and that was great...I am a writer and I find that a lot of what comes up when I think about happy times is at the temple." Kavita emphasized that her religious background taught her the concept of "ahimsa," a respect for all living things, which is a central belief in Hinduism.
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Sushila saw Hinduism as "...shaping my life completely. I think it has worked towards my advantage because I'm Hindu and the whole essence of Hinduism is accepting other people and that has influenced ways that I see things..." Sushila believes that Hinduism has taught her a sense of acceptance.

Durga emphasized her devout beliefs as a Lingayat, which is a specific subsect of the Hindu religion. "...That's the one Indian link that I think I've had all along. My parents always made really an extraordinary effort to tell us as much as they could about religion, even though they couldn’t necessarily answer our questions..." Durga also acknowledged that her religion influences her strong sense of herself. "I think it gives me a great deal of strength and it's a very practical religion."

Indira explained how her parents gave her and her brother the option of being Hindu. Her parents stated that "...if you decide to change [your religion] after you leave then that is up to you." Currently, she identifies herself as a Hindu, and says that her "parents are surprised that me and my brother* are so into Hinduism and being Indian."

She recalled that:

...when I was growing up, every Friday I had to go to the temple and sing these Bajans, and actually I still really enjoy it. [I remember] going to the temple and singing with my mom...There was always Hinduism, being Indian, speaking the language that I speak, it's all just one and the same...I try to practice, and it [Hinduism] still [remains a big part of my life]. I don't think I can separate Hinduism from the culture.

Shanaz also had difficulty separating the influences of culture from religion. She found that her Islamic religion and culture had an impact on almost every aspect of her life:

I don't drink, I don't go to bars, I don't date, I don't sleep around. That's my cultural thing...[in] the Muslim culture your life is your religion...
doesn't separate from your religion. You get up in the morning and religion is
part of your life. You eat your food and you say something to bless God for your
food. You go to bed at night and you say something to bless God for your . . . I
mean you can't separate religion . . . from your life. It's not possible. I mean it's a
daily part of your life. It is just not possible. It's who you are.

Padmini tries to follow the Sikh religion. She described her religion as "...very
different, it's very unique." Padmini tries to go to the Gurdwara (the Sikh temple) every
Sunday with her parents. When Padmini and her father are out in public she notices that:

...he's got the turban and everything, so you get a lot of stares, and a lot of
people wonder about it. When I was younger I did feel a little embarrassed or
ashamed about it, because I wanted to fit in. Now it doesn't bother me at all.

Now she feels "proud about him, and this is my religion." She argued that these past
experiences "have made me a stronger person."

Although Khema was raised in a Hindu home, she converted to Buddhism two
years ago. Khema emphasized that her Buddhist practices have transformed how she
feels about herself:

From the mid eighties to about last year...I defined myself as a Hindu more
culturally than religiously. I went home and celebrated the holidays with my
family. But it was not that I really practiced Hinduism. I was aware of its
philosophies, but wasn't practicing it and then about two years ago I began to feel
that spirituality was something that I needed in my life. I was missing it. I
became involved in Buddhism and it has just totally changed my life. It has been
phenomenal. It's been wonderful for me.

Negative case analysis. Phoolan identified herself as Hindu. "Yeah, I've never
considered myself religious at all." She "...take[s] certain parts of the religion, like the
whole idea of karma and reincarnation, I believe in that strongly." However, Phoolan
does not believe "that it has influenced my identity."
Trips to India. Five of the women interviewed acknowledged that visits to India had a major impact on their identity. For example, Kavita questioned her Indian identity until she went to India:

I remember going to India. I just didn't know anything about India, and we went when I was seven and I loved it. I loved my grandmother, I loved the temple, and I loved all the people around and the extended family and everything. I liked it and then I thought, 'I like Indian culture too.'

Phoolan also mentioned her trips to India as a major influence on her identity. She explained that she “love[s] going back to India... I love the whole culture. I mean it was a culture shock the first time I went, but I love it there.” She enjoys her trips to India because “you aren't the minority anymore. And the whole feeling there is different, with my relatives.”

Manjula was sent to India when she was in the fifth grade because she was not attending class in the United States. Her parents thought “...they needed to set some limits. And I think my mom also felt that if I went to school in India, then I would learn the Indian language.” For “three years I learned how to speak Hindi, and write Hindi, and read, and learn Sanskrit.” Manjula mentioned that her time in India had a major impact on her. She even felt like she “…didn't want to come back. I mean, I really liked boarding school. And my cousins were there, I had two older cousins who were there.”

Khema expressed how much she enjoys her trips to India because she is able “to see my grandmother.” She also stated that her trips to India allow her to “…always be in touch with how the Indian culture has an influence on my life.” Khema explained, “unless I do go back to India it would be really easy to lose touch with certain parts of my Indianness.”
Because Padmini came to the United States when she was nine years old, she spent several years in India. She described her ethnicity as Indian versus Indian American. When I inquired about this, she explained that she sees herself as Indian “...because of the years I spent living in India.”

**Negative case analysis.** Although Indira expressed how her trip to India made a major impression on her, her trip also made her realize that her identity is not completely Indian. Going to India after 10 years “...was really weird. I love India; I think I realized, I need to go much more often in order to feel connected to it. But while I was there, I realized what I place importance [on] as far as being Indian, is not India.” She stated that her family versus her cultural background has had the most influence on her identity.

**Movies, music and dress as influences.** South Asian movies influenced the identity of four of the interviewees. Mary, Phoolan, Shanaz, and Padmini all mentioned watching South Asian films. For instance, Phoolan said, “I'm really into the movies and the music.” Four of the woman stated that South Asian music also influenced their identity. Kavita, Mary, Phoolan, and Khema discussed their love of Indian music. For instance, Mary stated, “I like their music, I have some of their tapes.” Also, four women stated that Indian culture influenced their style of dress. Kavita stated that she “like[s] a lot of interesting prints and Indian clothes.” Phoolan stated, “Jewelry's a big thing.” Mary expressed a similar liking for Indian jewelry.

**Family.** Four of the women stated that Indian culture emphasized the importance of family. Although the women acknowledged that Indian culture had taught them the importance of family, some of the women stated this was a mixed blessing. For example,
Kavita admitted that her “parents paid for college . . . and also they helped me pay for graduate school too.” She stated, “I think Indian kids are privileged like that.”

Durga acknowledged her “strong sense of family.” She described the story of a 21-year-old Indian American woman whose father died. The daughter has “basically taken over her dad's responsibilities because she didn't have any siblings...It's really a lot of responsibility for someone who's 21 or 23. But that is the responsibility that you have as an Indian child.”

The previous example could also be seen in Phoolan’s life. Although she did not acknowledge the influence of Indian culture on her family values, she described her role in the family since her mother passed away. She is responsible for the cooking and cleaning in her house. And although most women who are her peers are living in the dorms, Phoolan has decided to live at home to take care of her brother and father.

Sushila described that she “was always brought up to respect my parents, really look after them.” However, she also stated that this respect for her parents had a high price because “I feel miserable when I let my parents down.”

Western Influences

Independence. After analyzing the 10 interviews, only one common element for Western influences was found. Six of the ten women reported that American culture had given them a sense of independence.

First, Kavita explained that:

…the Western community has really influenced me in that I am independent in my thinking and I think a lot of Indians aren't. I think there is a group mentality with Indians. But I think being also Westernized was good because it's made me a little more aggressive and a little more independent than a lot of Indians or Indian women.
Although Durga stated that she is sometimes be too independent and assertive, she was thankful that she has a “sense of independence, my sense of getting out there, and doing what I need to do to take care of myself, and recognizing that no one’s going to do it for me. I think that’s the strongest part of the American culture in me.” She also stated that this sense of independence has taught her how “to take care of yourself.” She explained that many women in America “are divorced...And it's practical good advice because you don't know when your husband is going to pass away and if he's the person taking care of you, or your father. You need to learn how to take care of yourself.”

Khema acknowledged that she is “autonomous and speaks against--any time I disagree with my parents, I am very vocal and open about it.” She also explained that she has “an unconventional career...that I’m living away from my parents, though I’m unmarried.” She attributed these choices to living in America where she has the opportunity and privilege to live alone.

Shanaz noted that she, too, has gained a sense of freedom and independence from American culture. She explained that “other female [South Asian] friends--either they live with their families or they're just not as independent as I am...I don't need other people to do stuff for me, get things done. I do stuff for myself.” She also explained daily living differences between her and the other South Asian women:

I go out when I want, wherever I want. My parents rarely know about my whereabouts, unless I’m going to be leaving town for a long time. And that’s American. And that’s not Desi [South Asian]. Desi girls tell their parents where they go.

Manjula identified that American culture has also given her a sense of independence. She explained:
I have my own office, I run my own business, I do all the grocery shopping in our house, I do all the cleaning—not all the cleaning, I shouldn’t say that—my husband is very good about cleaning and stuff. But I do all the cooking, I do the ironing, he does the laundry, he does clean up when I cook. With the kids we both spend equal time.

Finally, Padmini explained that American culture “showed me a whole different thing. If I was just with my parents right now in the Indian culture, I’d be so tied down, I wouldn’t know anything out in the real world.” She elaborated by stating, “With American culture, I’ve become more outgoing. Later in the interview, Padmini said that she loves India, but would choose to stay in America “because of the freedom here that you have, because I know if I go back to India there’s going to be restrictions.”

Integration of cultures

It was interesting to note that most of the women identified specific ways they were influenced by South Asian and American culture. In addition, five participants discussed ways that they combine aspects of the cultures that they like. Below, I have provided examples of how these women integrate both cultures to create a more cohesive unit.

Although Mary converted to Christianity and is married to a White American man, she stated that she tries to uphold both her White American and Indian cultures by:

…taking the best of both worlds…I love Indian food and I used to watch a lot of Indian movies, I just don't have much time anymore. I haven't in a long time, but I have a lot of Punjabis and I like to wear those sometimes.

Also, in Mary’s “Reflections from the Interview” she wrote that she “took what I liked about both cultures and mixed it.”

Durga’s beliefs were very similar to Mary’s. She also stated that she tries to “take the best out of both worlds. Khema noted that she feels comfortable in either culture, which represents a more integrative state because she “…feels comfortable in both worlds.”
Finally, Kavita also reported a similar integrative identity that formed when she was:

18, 19, 20—somewhere around that time period, being Indian was a hard thing, but it was also a quality that made you special—this unique thing. As I've gotten older it is not even something that is special, it is just who I am...and I am grateful for it. I am glad that I can go between two cultures...

Although Sushila identified herself as Indian, she found that being raised in both Indian and American cultures gave her an advantage professionally:

...I am a business student and it helps to know, you have to interact with people, that is the whole part of being in business, knowing how people react and interacting with them. Having a different culture, coming from a home with a different culture allowed me to recognize those little nuances that people forget, and be more aware of them. I think that helps.

**Romantic Relationships**

It was interesting to note that these dating experiences were with men of outside of the Indian American community. However, half of the women in this study reported very little or no experience dating, while several of the women did have dating experience.

Data supporting these findings are presented in the following paragraphs.

**Interracial Dating**

Eight of the ten women reported dating men of different ethnicities. As reported earlier, Mary and Manjula are married to White American men. Mary stated that she does not see many cultural conflicts in her marriage even though she and her husband are of different ethnicities. She explained that “my husband doesn't give me a hard time. If we’re with my grandmother and I say, ‘You have to bow down and give some respect,’ he will do that.” Also, he does “not complain if there's Indian food—a lot of times he'll say ‘Is there going to be Indian food? I'll just stop at McDonald's.’”
Manjula also felt that her problems in her marriage are not related to their different ethnicities, but are normal problems of any married couple. She describes their experiences very positively. She stated that “I think you have to find somebody you are compatible with” and that is the most important quality of a relationship.

Although Durga has not had a lot of experience dating, her experiences have been “positive” when she has dated outside of her ethnicity. However, she did note, “There’s always questions about my background, but then I always had questions about their background too.” For instance, a question that kept arising was that many people did “not understand why I eat certain things.” Since Durga is a vegetarian, people always ask her about her eating habits.

Kavita described more negative experiences with interracial dating. She dated a White American man for several years during her undergraduate education. She described the relationship as:

...overall... I would say that there were some problems. In the sense that people sometimes did remark, and we had cultural differences...In the way that we were raised, just small little things, maybe the way that we thought about travel— I was raised going to India... but to him, he was not interested in travel or anything. It was a complete luxury to him.

Phoolan, Khema, Padmini, and Indira revealed that they were currently or previously in a relationship with African-American men. Phoolan has been seeing her boyfriend for one year and has kept the relationship a secret from her father. She described having to keep her a relationship a secret as the biggest problem with dating someone outside of her culture.
Religion is another area where Phoolan predicted that she and her partner might have conflict. Since her partner is a Christian and she has been raised Hindu, she noted some potential conflicts. She also explained that “...family problems, I think it is sometimes hard to relate to other cultures...because the characteristics are different than what I am used to.” Overall, she found her relationship extremely satisfying; she explained, “...well if you love him, than that is it.”

Khema’s most recent relationship was with an African-American man. She described how the relationship gave her “such an appreciation for the African-American community now.” This relationship transformed the racism against African Americans she had been raised with to “a tremendous appreciation for the warmth, liveliness, and the depth of their community, and how much richness it brings to the American culture.” She also found that her relationship helped her “learn a lot about myself too.”

In high school, Padmini dated an African-American man and described her experience as both negative and positive. “I think it was hard for him to get used to me. I’m really into my family and culture and it was hard for him to adapt to that,” she explained. She remembers that “sometimes I’d want him to listen to Indian music...he would refuse to even listen to it, and he’d make fun of it [Indian music] sometimes.”

Indira revealed that she has dated “mostly Indian, African, and Black” men. She stated that dating outside of her ethnicity is not “…so much of a cultural issue.” She explained, “I think it’s more of a personality issue.” Indira expanded upon this by stating, “I’m not going to date someone that is not interested in what I am interested in;” therefore she does not see culture as the most important issue.
Lack of Romantic Relationships

Since the women’s ages ranged from 18 to 37, I expected to find a wide range of
dating experiences. However, half of the women reported relatively little or no
experience dating.

For example, Sushila noted, “dating has not been that much of an issue for me. I
haven't dated at all (laughs). I mean I've never had the opportunity.” She also explained
that she has not discussed the topic of dating with her parents because “we haven’t really
had the topic come up.” Even though Sushila has an older sister, dating:

...has not been an issue that has been brought up in the house. And it’s funny
because you would think that most people would bring that kind of stuff up. But
we really haven't, it hasn’t been an issue. My sister and I would bring home
someone if it was serious, and if not, I probably would not even think about
telling my parents.

Shanaz also stated, “I don't date. I don't date.” One reason why she does not date is
similar to Sushila; she explained, “I've have never had the opportunity.” I asked her if
she wanted an arranged marriage and she kept repeating, “No. I don't know. I don't
know.”

Durga also revealed that she has had very little experience dating. She attributed her
lack of experience to the fact that “I haven’t been asked out a lot.” She explained further:

I don't know how to do that thing [flirting]. I think I don't necessarily send out
whatever signals it is. I can be attracted to someone and not ever let them know
that I have any interest in them, and that's too bad. I mean I regret being that way
now, especially because I see my friends and they know how to make themselves
beautiful... they knew what to do or how to talk to guys... which I didn't know
how to do that when I was little...there was no one to really identify with.

On the other hand, Khema stated that although she had some dating experience in the
past few years she “never dated in high school.” She explained that her lack of dating
experience in high school was due to her “fantasy of meeting an Indian man and getting married to him. And there was no one like that in my high school, so I just didn’t date in high school.” Since Indian men in her community did not exist, Khema decided not to date.

Like Khema, Kavita did not date until later in her life. She explained “…when I was in high school, I didn’t date at all—I didn’t even think about it. It was not even considered to be thought about in this family.”

**Negative Attitude Towards Indian Men**

Three of the ten women interviewed held strong opinions about dating Indian men. These women would not date Indian men for various reasons. Even though she has very little experience dating Indian men, Khema explained that:

> ...in general men who come from India to the States tend to want women to conform to their needs...things like communication and compromise are not high on their list of priorities. I think things like respect and the need for the family to really see the father as the important person in the family, sort of the pinnacle of the family. These become very important [to Indian men] instead of a relationship based on equality. I would like to think that Indian American men place a lot more emphasis on communication and on making decisions based on mutual agreement than men from India.

While she was growing up, Mary explained that “there were very limited choices as far as Indians went...there were only two guys, and they were brothers, and they were like my brothers...I just couldn’t see having a relationship with them.” After dating one Indian man, Mary believed that “Indian guys seem to have a dual identity...like Indian guys seem to think ‘I can do whatever I want, but you have to behave in a certain way.’” Mary said she did not find this double standard with White American men.
After one or two dates with Indian men, Manjula said that she found these Indian men "boring." She explained this further by stating that she thought these men were "...passive-aggressive...they're really not much personality but then they want you to be this little, meek person." Manjula found her mother in a similar, submissive role because she always says, "'whatever you want' or 'that'll be fine.'" Manjula becomes frustrated with this response and wishes her mother and these men had "...an opinion, say what you feel, I mean it's okay to do that."

**Negative case analysis.** On the other hand, Sushila and Padmini both want an Indian or Indian American husband. Padmini found that "after dating an Indian there is a big difference..." from dating someone who is African American. She has decided that dating someone who is Indian "would be the best thing." Similarly, Sushila "...would prefer an Indian guy." Sushila explained that she was tired of having to explain aspects about her culture to other people:

> For example, when you go to an Indian party and all this gossip goes around, how do you explain that to an American guy? The little things like why are the guys sitting out there, what are the women doing? What are they talking about, what is going on? The Indian guys, when they are talking, they have to be more respectful to the older guys—it's just—I don't think that—it would be hard to explain that—and all the food and, "What is this? What does it come from?" I don’t know if I want a husband that I had to explain everything to.

Sushila’s description not only reveals her desire to be with an Indian man, but it also shows the conflict that Indian American women confront because of being raised within two cultures. In fact, all ten women expressed conflicts between American and Indian culture. These conflicts are described below.
Caught Between Cultures

Pressure Regarding Career Choice

These women also experienced pressure to choose a high status career, usually as a
doctor, engineer, or lawyer. All 10 of the women reported pressure to choose a high
status profession.

“If it would have been their choice, I would have been a lawyer.” However, Kavita
“...want[ed] to be a writer.” Sushila also reported a great amount of pressure to succeed.
She attributed her parents’ high expectations regarding career and performance to her
parents being immigrants. Because her parents are immigrants they “...had to be better in
order to survive.” She explained that her parents had “to be the best in order to succeed
and so they expect just as much from their children, which is my generation.”

Sushila described the pressure by stating that “they expect a lot out of you; they
expect top grades; they expect you to know your culture, have ideas about both American
culture and Indian culture. They expect a lot out of kids.” Her father also would like
Sushila to change her major. Although she is a business major “...I took the premed
courses and science courses...I got my grades today and my dad was still looking at my
science GPA wondering if I could get into med school.” She expressed that she has no
desire to attend medical school, but “I think they would prefer me to be a doctor or a
lawyer.”

“I think it takes a lot out of you; you want to do your best; when you do fail it is a
horrible feeling. I feel miserable when I let my parents down. That is the one thing you
don't want to do.” Sushila describes the amount of pressure she feels to perform at a
certain level in school. She explains that she “...was always brought up to respect my
parents, really look after them, but when you can't make them happy you feel bad.” She explains how she:

...hates bringing home bad grades; it doesn't hit me ‘Like, oh I didn't do so well’ but then when I see their face and see the disappointment in their eyes... it tears you apart. They do so much for you and then you can't return the--but what can you do?

Although Durga is a successful business woman, Durga reported that the people in the Indian community:

...expect me to continue my education and accomplish a lot academically. And Indians always say, ‘When are you going to do your master's?' and ‘When are you going to do your MBA?' and ‘When are you going to do your Ph.D.?'

She described that “There is just a whole string of things you'd better be...it's like a checklist. Make sure you get 'em all done before you die type thing; and with Americans, I don't see that as much.”

Mary's parents placed a great deal of pressure on her to go to college and her father also decided where she would go to school. “After I graduated from high school my dad basically said ‘You're going to a state university.*' I mean I didn't have a choice as to-- I didn't get to apply to different colleges to see if I could go away. I really wanted to get away from home.” Mary also described feeling like the “Black Sheep” of the family since she only has a bachelor's degree and the other members of her family have higher-level degrees. In her written portion of the interview, Mary explains how “high academic standards were expected. I was able to pick my career (a teacher). However, this was an ongoing issue in elementary throughout high school.”

Phoolan watched as her parents “wanted my sister to be a doctor, for so long.” She also described how “...education is really strongly pushed in my family. School is a big
thing, to finish your education and to get a good job.” For now, Phoolan has decided to
major in computers. She feels that her career choice is her own, yet also meets the
approval of her father.

However, Indira initially wanted to major in Women’s Studies. She eventually
changed her mind and is now pursuing a medically-related degree. Below she describes
the change in her career path:

...And my dad didn’t like that whole thing [majoring in Women’s Studies]. He
never came out and told me. He would kind of subtly be like ‘Why are you
telling everyone that you are studying Women’s Studies?’ or ‘That’s what you
want to do?’ And he’s like, ‘That’s just not what you should do.’ So I always put
it out, but then as I started taking more and more Women’s Studies, I realized I
cannot go into this field.

Khema explained how her choice to go to medical school caused her many
problems:

When I got to college, I think I really resented being Indian American because I
was very unhappy with the field I was in. I felt that I had chosen this field mainly
because of a lot of parental pressure. So I stayed away from Indian Americans
through college, even though there were a lot of Indian Americans in the program
I was in. I didn’t really want to associate with them.

Furthermore, Khema described the pressure she received from her family to perform
well at school. Sometimes it was not verbal pressure, but “I think it was just implied,
especially from my father, that I would just be a much better daughter if I did well in
school.” Khema acknowledges how she “never questioned it. I never rebelled. I never
tried to get bad grades. I did everything I could to please my parents in terms of school.”
When she entered college, “I began to question that...since there were 20 other people
ahead of me in my class, so how was I supposed to use to define myself now?”
Her parents also "...really wanted me to, my father especially, go into medicine and he encouraged this from a very early age." When Khema began to question whether the field of medicine was right for her, her father asked her, "Well, what else will you do with your life?" I said, 'I don't know, but I just don't feel like medicine is right for me.'" Khema stated, "I wasn't strong enough to say 'no' to his assertiveness."

Although Shanaz did not explicitly describe any overt pressure to choose a certain career, she initially majored in Biology. She explained that she chose Biology as her major because it is considered a "real" degree. However, after struggling in Biology for several years, Shanaz finally switched her major to journalism. She reported being much happier in this new field.

Manjula also could not recall explicit messages she received from her parents about being successful or going to medical school. However, she does recall, "their expectations were that we would all be successful, we'd go to college, and we'd go to medical school or get an MBA, and would do well at whatever we did." She also remembers "There was no question in my mom's mind that her daughters were going to be doctors."

Padmini has chosen the field of optometry.* She stated that her mother has sent her the message that she does not have to worry about obtaining a high-status job since "you're a girl, it's OK." Padmini explained her mother's comment: "...like between men and women, they expect men to go into high jobs, but with girls it's like, 'she's going to get married off.'" Padmini still chose a medically-related field because "I think with my family being in such high positions, I myself would feel bad if I didn't get into a higher
position.” Although she feels content with her choice of optometry,* she did say that she would love to be a Dance major, but “my parents would never accept that.”

**Pressure about Spousal Choice**

Nine of the ten women expressed feeling pressured by their families to date and marry someone of Indian descent and/or well-educated. Kavita describes her parents’ expectations: “It would be a nice, Indian guy or Indian American guy, doctor or engineer. That would be the first part, but if he was [the same state as Kavita’s parents]* that would be great. And that’s about it.”

Since Kavita is almost 30, her parents have started pressuring her to get married. “They want me to put an ad in the ‘India Times’ and I’m like ‘no, no, no, no, no, no.’” This is a practice which is customary for most Indian women when they are ready to be married. Kavita’s family has also started “…talk[ing] to relatives and talk[ing] about guys, and they want to invite them over.”

Sushila’s parents also expect that she date and marry someone Indian. She explained that “…my dad, more than my mom…” wants “someone of the same state and caste and all that stuff, and it goes on, and on, and on.” She described her frustration with her father’s specific criteria for her marriage partner by telling a story about a family friend:

> we have these family friends, and a couple of their kids are at that age when they are getting married and seeing people. Two of the kids have started seeing American people. And the third kid, he brought home an Indian girl, but he was complaining that is still not good enough because she is not from the same state. So it doesn’t matter. No matter who I bring home, they are going to complain. ‘He’s not from the right state, he’s not the right caste,’ and it goes on, and on, and on.
Sushila also argued “I think realistically it is hard to find someone. Especially with us being so isolated from each other.” She believes that finding someone who meets her father’s criteria will be difficult since so few Indian people live in the Midwest.*

Padmini expressed similar difficulty in meeting her parent’s expectations because there are so few Indians in the Midwest* who meet her parents’ criteria. Her mother stated that she prefers an Indian, “but she would want him to be a Sikh, within the religion.” Padmini explained how difficult it is to find Indian Sikhs since the “Sikh population alone in the Midwest* is like two people...Well it’s a little more than that, but there’s not too many.”

Durga stated that her parents do not pressure her to get married. She also stated that her parents “...don't care [who she marries], as long as he's Indian.” She explained that her parents “always surrounded themselves with friends who are not the same religion, and the same background, and the same everything.” Therefore her parents are open to her marrying someone of a different faith, as long as he is Indian. Even though she is 30, Durga described few arguments with her parents about getting married. However, when her father is “mad at me about five other things, that gets lumped into the category too, like, ‘and you’re not married yet!’”

Since Phoolan’s father has no knowledge about her relationship with her boyfriend, he has told her that even though her “…older sister's marrying a White guy, he's like ‘yeah, you're going to marry an Indian guy now’ and ‘I just want you to look for one when the time comes.’” She also said that the level of the man’s education makes a major difference of whether or not he is marriage material. Phoolan explained that if she were to “find an engineer, a doctor, [this] is a big thing.”
Around the age of 18, Manjula’s parents tried to arrange her marriage. She describes how her parents “tried to arrange my marriage, and they tried, and they tried, and it didn’t work.” Manjula explains how her parents “just kept introducing me to Indian boys, men, guys.”

Although, Indira and Mary’s parents did not pressure them to be with someone who is of Indian descent; both of their parents did emphasize that their partners should be well educated. For example, Mary’s parents wanted her to marry a “doctor, a lawyer, that type of thing...” When she met her husband and he did not meet their expectations, her parents asked her, “Did I want to be working the rest of my life, or am I going to marry someone who can take care of me...”

Khema also reported similar pressure. She described how her parents expected her to meet men through an ad in a newspaper (a common practice within the Indian community). She agreed several times to meet with some of the men.

**Negative case analysis.** Indira explained that her parent’s expectation “is for me to be with someone who has a college degree, that has a good job, and comes from a stable family.” Therefore, her parents did not describe specific criteria about her partner being Asian Indian.

**Feelings of Guilt**

Because these Indian American women receive pressure to choose a certain type of high status career and marital partner, it is important to discuss the consequences they receive if they do not follow their parents’ wishes. Seven of the 10 women reported intense feelings of guilt if they did not follow their parents’ desires. The following data support this conclusion.
When she decided not to stay home and attend college, Kavita's parents "treat[ed] me like I abandoned them, but I felt guilt, that's the consequence, guilt—a lot of guilt." She explained that they did not openly state their feelings, "but just subtle things like mentioning things that they would need if I would have been there, would have been taken care of, stuff like that."

Sushila explained how her parents "...expect me to be a dutiful daughter and just obey what they say and go along with [them], be humble and do that. I am more the kind of person that is independent and like a free bird." However, Sushila acknowledged feeling pulled in two directions, "...on one hand I do want to be independent and live my own life and just be glad that I'm free. On the other hand, I do feel very obligated to my parents."

Also, she explained how her parents would use money to make her feel guilty or control her behavior. "They always threaten that 'I'm not going to pay for your education!'" Because of this constant threat she has decided, "...after I graduate I don't want any of their money or anything."

Similarly, money also influenced the sense of obligation and guilt Mary felt towards her parents. "...Like if my parents gave me money for college and they paid for my books and my fees, and then I would want to do something, 'Well now, we did pay for this.'" This type of emotional blackmail made Mary feel that she owed her parents something. She also explained how her mother is "the queen of the guilt trip, she can get me to do almost anything by making me feel guilty."

Although she did not describe feeling guilty, Khema did mentioned how she felt she had failed her father when she decided to quit medical school. She explained that she felt
"that I had failed him [her father]" and "that I wasn’t good enough because I had chosen to quit something that my father thought was really good for me."

Because she is hiding her relationship with her boyfriend, Phoolan reported strong feelings of guilt. She explained, "I know I can’t be as happy as I would be if he [her father] knew about it and if he was happy about it."

If Manjula “brought home anything less than an ‘A,’” she knew her parents would be disappointed. She explained that this felt “Terrible. I mean but it was never yelling. It was never ‘oh, you’re such a terrible person,’ it’s just more the sense of guilt and disappointment.” Manjula stated that this sense of guilt helped push her and her siblings to become high achievers. Currently her siblings also have advanced degrees and are successful in their professions.

Padmini reported feeling somewhat guilty when she does not measure up to her parents’ expectations. However, she has realized that “...if I really want to do something, if I think it is reasonable—I have my own rules.” She stated that she may lie to her parents in order to do what she wants and she will “...make myself not feel guilty.”

Negative case analysis. The consequences of Indira’s parents’ disapproval were that her parents “...didn’t approve when I’d get real angry and be very negative...They would just be like ‘Why are you talking like that? Don’t be that way!’” Indira also explained that her parents would “...disapprove of her being negative or angry.”

Similarly, Shanaz remembers her parents constantly yelling at her if she did not follow their wishes. She described how “…they harassed me every single day, ‘You didn’t listen to me, this is what happened when you didn’t listen to me!’” She also remembers her parents screaming at her, “A lot of screaming. Just a lot of it.”

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Durga reported very few conflicts with her parents; therefore she reported no consequences from their disagreements. She stated that “...in my heart I don’t feel guilty, I just do it [religious rituals] to make them feel happy.” She also explained that she will do certain rituals because “In a way it’s just a way of being respectful to them and their beliefs, and since it doesn’t hurt me.”

Isolation

Many of the women reported feelings of isolation. This section will now discuss examples of these feelings from the participants. Nine of the women reported feeling pulled between the two cultures (Western and Indian). During different times in their lives, these women wanted to be part of Indian culture, and at other times they wanted to be part of the dominant American culture. Therefore, these women reported strong feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Kavita explained that this “push and pull” from each culture created a lot of pain which “I took a lot of that to heart, especially, when I was a teenager, and in college.” She stated that she:

...struggled with a sense of identity because I thought that Indian culture was looked so down upon. And in some ways, I looked down upon it too. But in some ways I kind of wanted to be a part of it, and I didn't feel like I could live up to it.

Kavita also explains how she wanted to fit into American culture, but there “...were too many Indians where we lived and so my parents were really traditional...my mom used to wear a sari every day and walk around in our neighborhood with a sari.” Kavita recalled how her mother’s dress would embarrass her. Therefore she also felt she never fully fit into American culture. Kavita’s skin color also affected her sense of isolation:
...with skin color, extremely fair skin was attractive... I'm not dark skinned, but I'm not white skinned either so I knew I could never be what the ideal woman was. So I thought screw it, maybe I'll just forget the whole thing and not even try to fit in there [the Indian community].

Similarly, Phoolan “...didn't really know where I fit in. Because I didn't really fit in with the Indian crowds and I wanted to.” On the other hand she felt like she “...fit in with Americans, but usually being the only Indian you don't feel like you necessarily fit in.”

Currently, Phoolan explained that “...I've been friends with minorities because you relate more to them, being a minority yourself, than being with all White Americans.”

Although Sushila identifies herself as Indian, she feels out of place in India and in the United States. She noticed that people in the States “...recognize that I am different.” However, in India “...people just stare at me and look at me like I am different...I swear there are kids that look the same as I do, but these people can see the difference.” In addition, Sushila does not feel “that my American friends have ever really understood just how strict my parents are.” She explained that her friends have acknowledged that her parents are strict, but “...they don't understand the kind of responsibility that I have towards them, the obligation I feel.”

During our second interview, Sushila stated that “...sometimes you feel isolated. Especially for me because I don't know that many Indian girls.” She went further to say that “It's kind of hard to think I'm the only Indian person who understands.” Furthermore, when Sushila tried to identify her role models she discovered that “There isn't anyone who was exactly in my situation. I mean being one of the second generation kids, there are not many Indians that are brought up here.” Since she could not identify a role model, one can see the extent of isolation Sushila has felt.
Durga also recalled struggling to find a group of peers who shared similar experiences to her. She remembered the African-American children exoticizing her by telling her "...your hair is so pretty," or 'your hair is straight..." Whereas with the European American children "...I always felt a little out of place but I made friends.” After her school district was desegregated, Durga recalls “...I was just like this person in the complete middle.”

Durga described her experiences using the analogy of walking on a fence:

...All through school I always felt like I wasn't completely comfortable in the Indian culture, and I wasn't 100% comfortable in the American culture either. I still feel that way when I'm around Indians who are my age who recognize a difference between South Indian and North Indian...I always feel like I'm in the middle and the only way I can describe it to people is to say that I sit on a fence. And it's like one side is America, whatever America represents, and the other side is India, whatever India represents. I'm the happiest in the middle...if you pushed me over into one side I would be a fish out of water.

In addition, when Durga was “...little we had no one.” She remembers that her “mom and dad, when they helped us fill out our college applications, it was their first time as much as it was our first time.” She recalls all of her cousins and relatives were living in India. Therefore, she reported she had little guidance on many issues she encountered while growing up.

During our second interview, Durga described ways that she felt out of place within the Indian community. She described that being around the Indian American community "...was different for me, [and] it was intimidating and fun.” She recalls that “...I never knew what the right thing was. I never felt at ease because I had never just been around Indians.” She remembered one particular incident:
There were all these new names— I’d never heard. I had no clue how to spell certain names. I remember I spelled out a name once, and they laughed. I applied American grammar to the name, and they were just like ‘What the hell is this?’ So it was funny, but I wasn’t necessarily at ease.

Mary remembers feeling very embarrassed about her Indian heritage. She recalls “...the house smelled different because of the Indian food, and they [her parents] dressed weird, and it was really hard.” At the same time, people “...thought I was Black, and that really upset me because I know Indians don't associate with Blacks...” I was separate from the European American kids since “I didn't look like them, and I didn't act like them...I didn't watch the same shows they did...it was like, I was like a nerd, just kind of lower on the social class, along with the other kids that were considered misfits.” She remembers times “...when I did feel isolated, it felt like there were times when nobody understood me.”

Currently, Mary still reports feelings of isolation. She explained that even though she has been married for 16 years “...I don't know if he's [her husband] any closer to knowing the real me or not.” Sometimes he will do things, and she will think, “‘You don't get it [me]!”

Indira described how she “...always felt like an outsider...because of my physical appearance” and cultural practices. She recalled how:

...everybody's family was different from mine, and how they looked was different from mine, and what they thought was important was different than mine. And they were learning jazz and ballet, while I was learning Indian classical dance. Friday nights people were going to football games, while I had to go to temple. My parents don’t eat meat at home, so we didn’t have Thanksgiving dinners or celebrate Christmas...

In addition, when Indira recently went to India she remembered that “...India didn’t feel like home to me. I felt different.” For example:

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After being there, I didn’t feel that I had a connection to the country that I thought I would. I always had this feeling ‘I’m Indian American.’ And then while I was leaving India, I put on my Walkman that my brother had. It was this rap group, A Tribe Called Quest, and I was listening to it and it just felt like home. And I just realized, who I am has so much to do with my family, and has nothing to do with the countries. I mean it does, but it doesn’t at the same time.

Khema recalls growing up in a small town in Ohio. She “...created this sort of bubble around myself while I was in high school. I just saw myself as very different from all the other people in my high school.” She decided not to “...engage in dating, or partying, or all the other things that kids in high school were doing and I just focused on just doing really well in school and doing all of my extra-curricular activities.” She also remembers “There were no other Indian American women in my town.” Khema stated that she felt very depressed during this time. “I never felt like I belonged in this country, I never felt like an American. I always felt very different.” The holidays seemed to magnify Khema’s sense of isolation:

The only way living in America has been a hindrance is that- there is sort of a sense of isolation many times where growing up we couldn’t really celebrate Thanksgiving with all of our family because half of them were on the West Coast, the rest were in India. When Indian holidays came around, we celebrated them, but not the way they would be in India with the whole neighborhood celebrating the same thing. And I remember these holidays because I was almost eight when we came over [to the United States]. And then when things like Christmas came around we didn’t really fully experience those holidays either. And that’s mainly because of the places where we were living; there really weren’t a lot of other Indians in our community.

On the other hand, “...when we were living [in the States] and when we would go back to India to visit, I never felt like an Indian either.”

Shanaz also described how she felt very different from her White American peers. She remembers her friends from high school who were “...pregnant. My friends were doing drugs. My friends were getting wasted. I had friend after friend losing their
virginity.” Because of Shanaz’s religious upbringing as a Muslim, she did not participate in these activities. She states that she “couldn’t relate to them. I had no connection to them. They couldn’t relate to me. I felt totally alienated all through school.”

Even though Shanaz currently has a solid group of friends she still “…think[s] I stand out among my friends sometimes. I’m the ABCD [American Born Confused Desi] and most of my friends are from Pakistan. So it’s like they’re international.” Overall, Shanaz had a sense of not connecting with her American peers and still feels a difference between herself and her Pakistani friends.

**Neighborhood demographics.** Eight of the ten women stated that they grew up in European American neighborhoods and this surrounding contributed to their sense of isolation. For example, Kavita, Sushila, Mary, Indira, Khema, Shanaz, and Manjula explained that when they were young they chose their friends by those around them. Manjula remembers “…all my close friends were American.” Kavita explained “…that where we grew up there weren’t too many Indians, or minorities even. It was a middle-class, White neighborhood…” Mary also described how she “…grew up in White, middle-class America, so everyone at my school was—there weren’t any Indians, it was just all Whites. And so I really didn’t have a choice…” Similarly, Padmini recalls “…in high school I was not around many Indians…” Indira recalls living in “…the non-Indian community in suburbia and no one comes out in suburbia. And my parents weren’t involved in that.” Sushila also described her neighborhood as a “predominately White neighborhood.” In addition, Khema remembers:

...mov[ing] around a lot, usually my friends were non-Indian. In fact, up to the point where I was almost in high school, most of my friends were non-Indian. Mainly because there weren’t Indians my age. We lived in a lot of small towns...
Shanaz stated she also grew up in an "...all-White neighborhood..." She revealed that she "couldn't relate to them. I had no connection to them... I felt totally alienated all through school. In elementary school, I used to play by myself in the back [of the school playground]."

**Negative case analysis.** Phoolan stated that the friends from her childhood were mostly Indian. She recalls spending a lot of time with her cousin and an "...Indian girl, my mom and her mom were best friends."

**Prejudice.** As can be seen above, many of the women were ethnic minorities in predominately European/White American neighborhoods and 8 of the women were subject to many incidents of racism. Because her childhood was filled with incidents of prejudice, Kavita does not understand how "A lot of people are like 'Oh, I loved my childhood, they were the best years of my life!' I thought they were so hard, I thought my teenage years were terribly hard, almost unbearably hard." Kavita provided me with several examples where she was the target of prejudice:

I remember 'For Sale' signs put up in front of our house, or tomatoes thrown at our house...or I'd walk with my mom when she was wearing a sari and people would scream, 'Go back to your own country.' And even in school, kids aren't exposed [to people of other cultures] so they would make fun of my name even...I hated my name for so long... I can see when we went to stores, I became really sensitive to finding when people were treating us like we were less.

Padmini shared similar feelings with Kavita even though Padmini came to the United States when she was 10. She explained, "I know I felt out of place, I was discriminated [against] a little" since she had a difficult time speaking English. During this time
“People would say, ‘Don't talk to her, she doesn't know any English.’ I mean I could understand, I just wasn't able to speak really well.”

When she was little, Sushila “...used to go back to India and get henna done on my hands.” When she would go back to school “...people would be like ‘Oh my God, what is that!’” Sushila explained, “I felt good because I was teaching them something, but I was just like ‘Why can't you understand?’” She became frustrated with “...stupid questions like that...it is funny how ignorant people are about other cultures.”

However, Sushila could not recall any covert forms of prejudice “...because people don't come out and say ‘You're a bad person cause you’re Indian.’ It comes out in little ways.” Sushila explained that the prejudice she has experienced has been when:

People ask you what culture you are--they don't know anything about Indian culture. I can't tell you how many people think that I am Spanish. And that is a form of racism. It is just ignorance. You just feel that people don't know about you. You kind of feel like I have to explain everything. I am constantly being the educator.

Currently at her workplace, Durga has been the target of other people's prejudice. She commonly hears comments about her eating habits since she is vegetarian. She described how she “think[s] my eating habits seem to be the topic of major conversation, always.” In addition, she is “...asked questions about my skin color on occasion... whenever I'm new in a workplace and there's no one else with dark skin, then I get quite funny questions.” She provided examples of “Comments like ‘Oh your skin color is so beautiful,’ or ‘Oh, that would only look good on you because you have a permanent tan.’” Although these comments sound positive, Durga explained that she is constantly reminded that she is “...different... that ‘you're not me, you're not like us.’ I don't think that's the intention. But it's very difficult not to take it that way.”
Durga also described an incident at her last job where she was having a discussion with her boss. Her boss said, "if we took the family picture of our group, our department picture, you would be the only one that doesn't look like you're from the Midwest." Durga stated that her boss's comment made her angry because her comment "...was extremely ignorant..." because Durga was born and raised in the Midwest.

Mary did not realize she was of a different ethnicity from the other children at her school until she entered the third grade. She discovered she was of a different ethnicity from the dominant group when "...one day, a kid said something about my brown skin and I thought, 'Oh, I do have brown skin!!'" After that time through junior high, Mary revealed "It was really hard" because "people made fun of the color of my skin."

Mary experienced prejudice later in her life when a colleague confronted her about her marriage to a White American man. Her colleague said that "...the Bible states that it is wrong to be unequally yoked together. And he was talking to me in terms of me being Indian and my husband being White, that we were unequally yoked together, and that really hurt my feelings."

Phoolan remembers "In grade school I'd get comments, they'd think I was a Native American instead of Indian so they'd be like 'So do you live in a teepee?'" More recently she cannot recall any forms of overt racism, but she describes feeling "...out of place 'cause everyone was White there [at her workplace]...I don't think they treated me necessarily different, but I just don't think they were as friendly, as open, like ready to become best friends with me as they were with other people."

When talking about her experiences with prejudice, Indira struggled about whether the problems in graduate school were a result of her own behavior or actual prejudice. She
reported that her experience in graduate school has been disappointing. For example, she described a recent interview with a professor for an assistantship to tutor international students to reduce their accents. Indira explained, “I have some issues with doing accent reduction, because I don’t really believe in it. He was basically saying you have to change the way you’re thinking if you want this job.”

Indira also mentioned that “…sometimes I do feel like, that if my interests were different, they would be more interested…Because…working with a diverse population is so important…” Indira explained that these experiences have made her feel “…like I am back in junior high, and I’ve never had this low of a self-concept in my life. Like being in grad school totally makes me feel like, completely nothing.” She has struggled with the idea that “…if I looked like her [a European American classmate], maybe they would treat me differently.”

Similarly, Manjula had difficulty classifying some of her experiences as incidents of prejudice. She argued that “…it’s not so in-your-face…” She explained that “…where I feel different or out of place is sometimes when I’m at the kids’ school and we’re doing things at their school, [she feels out of place]. . .but that I think is because I have a career, I don’t think it’s because I’m Indian. Although I am the only Indian parent…”

The only other incident with prejudice that Manjula reported was when she lived in a city in a Southern state* and worked at a store in the mall. “. . .One lady yelled at me for not knowing Spanish. And she said, ‘What kind of person are you? You don’t know your own background and you don’t know your own language?’” Manjula finally informed the women that she is Indian not Spanish.
On the other hand, Khema remembers frequent encounters with individuals who were prejudiced. “There was a lot of antagonism and racism among these kids... so the kids would call me names at the bus stop, and I know that really hurt me.” She also recalls that “…when we would walk to the mall, my family and...I felt like, everyone was just looking at us, everybody felt we were a bunch of strange, weird people, I never felt like I belonged. I didn’t feel at all comfortable.”

She also recalled some painful incidents when she lived in a small town in a Southern state.* She explains:

I was the only Indian in the class, and I started playing basketball. That was the first time I wore a skirt in front of everybody else, or shorts. My legs were really hairy, and I got called names for that. And then in high school, which was back in a small town in Ohio*...they [kids] made comments that hurt my brother also. We’d be joking around, and they’d say something like ‘Well, show us your green card.’ Or ‘Well, why don’t you just go back to where you came from?’

Similarly, since Shanaz’s family was one of the first Asian Indian families in a city in Ohio,* she reported being the target of people’s prejudice. She recalls being “…treated like a freak...I was treated very badly all through high school...Kids used to make fun of me, alienate me, I used to hang out with the teachers during recess...”

Coping Mechanisms

Since many of these women experience pressure from the community and family, a sense of isolation, and prejudice, how do these women cope? Coping mechanisms are ways that people deal with painful events and feelings in their lives. Several forms of coping, both helpful and destructive, were described in the interviews. These forms of coping are described below.
Segmented Self

Nine of the women reported segmenting parts of their identity in order to survive the pressures from their parents and peers. Most of the women hid their relationships with men from their parents. For example, Kavita explained that she “...didn’t tell my parents for two years that I was even dating anyone and then I told them two years later and we all had dinner and it was okay.” Although Kavita’s parents accepted her relationship with her boyfriend, Kavita felt that she had to hide the relationship for two years. She explained in the interview that “It was hard, it was kind of like constantly juggling—it was stressful, if ever the worlds would collide...” She stated that juggling these aspects of herself “…made me doubt myself because there wasn’t like one whole identity. It was like two identities—so I wasn’t certain myself what I was...”

Similarly, as stated earlier, Phoolan has had to hide her relationship with her boyfriend from her father. She explained that “The main thing [problem in her relationship] is that it has to be kept a secret, so it is very, very hard.” In other aspects of her life Phoolan explained that she is “…more myself with my dad than I am with other adults, but even with my dad I’m different [than] with my friends because I can be more myself [with my friends].” Phoolan went further to say that, “Because they [Indian parents] have so many restrictions on you that you can’t be open, you can’t tell them everything that’s happening in your life because you know they wouldn’t approve of it.”

Kavita also recalled segmenting her Indian identity from her peers at school. She described singing in the choir at school, and how her:

...mom would come in with a sari and a bindi, which was a big deal to people, and people would be like ‘Is that your mom?’ And I’d be like ‘Who?’ It wasn’t her, it was her sari, just because I knew it was looked down upon. If I thought it
was because of something that was a positive thing it would be different. If someone had said, ‘That's cool, that your mom is in a sari,’ then I would have been like ‘That's my mom!’

Currently, Kavita still does not share most of her experiences with her parents. She explained that “Because I think in a lot of ways I don't think our worldviews are the same, or what we hold as important...so I just figure they won't even understand, so forget it.” Although, she was more likely to talk with her mother if something hurt her feelings than to share with her friends. On the other hand, she would share information about dating relationships with her friends and not her mother.

Padmini segmented aspects of her life when she began dating in high school. Even though she was not involved in a serious relationship, she “...did go behind my parents' back.” However, Padmini explained that her mother caught her going out without her knowledge and “...since then I've lost her trust.” And although it has been over a year since this incident occurred, Padmini still has not earned her mother’s trust back.

Padmini also described how she has to present herself differently depending on the context. She explained, “I have to watch what I wear if I go to an Indian party versus an American party, or even when I go out to an Indian place, because people will talk and people will say things.” She illustrated the difference by stating that “...they [Indians] expect you to dress more fully clothed, not showing a lot of skin.” In addition to being concerned about the clothes she wears, since Padmini is Sikh, “...there are some people there who are very strict about hair and they don't want you to have your hair down, and I had my hair cut, which we're not allowed to.”
She has also noticed a difference between herself at school and at her parents’ home. For instance, “At home, I have to show them I study a lot and I'm clean...” However, “…when I'm around my friends I don't worry about all those things. I'll go out, I'll enjoy...I think I'm more myself when I'm around my peers. With my parents, I always have to watch out.”

Padmini recognized that she did not like hiding aspects of herself from her parents. She described the pressure as “really frustrating...” However, she felt “…it's like you kind of have to. You can't do anything about it, because you know they're not going to accept it.” She also explained that she does share more of her emotional side with her parents compared to what she shares with her friends.

Sushila described how she dresses differently in front of her parents compared to her friends, “...when I am with my friends, I don't dress like trash, but I don't wear the same kind of clothes.” She also explained how she “...go[es] out, and they have no idea that I drink so that is like a whole other life I have at school.” Sushila also stated that she still will not “...tell them much, I don't tell them anything. I tell them the good stuff...I used to never tell them anything.” She also acknowledged that “They [her parents] know that my friends drink; they just don't think I drink. They are kind of naive. I think it is really funny actually.”

Currently, Mary’s relationship with her parents is very open. However, she does remember when she was growing up that she did not share much of herself with her parents because “…I didn't think they would get it.” She illustrated this by describing how if she told them that a “…boy that I liked didn't talk to me, they wouldn't get it. ‘Good!’ that's probably what they would say, ‘We're glad!’” In her written entry, Mary
explained, “In school, yes, there was pressure to maintain separate selves. After I began college, I chose to be me.”

With regards to the dating issue, Indira “...didn’t feel like it was necessary to tell them.” She explained that if they knew she was dating someone they “...would be like “What’s going on? How serious is it? Are you going to be with this person?”” She explained how all of these questions would “...be too much of a discussion, and I felt like already being in a relationship and dating is already a pain in the neck as it is, and I don’t feel like I need to tell to compound it.”

She has also noticed how she acts differently around her parents’ friends. She notices that “...I don’t talk as much. Maybe that’s something. It’s more me listening to them or them asking me like questions that have short answers.” She also explained how she shares most of her meaningful experiences with her friends versus her mother and brother. Therefore it appears that some parts of her are segmented from her relationship with her family. She explained this further:

...I can’t talk to her [her mother] about working with a fellow graduate student,* or doing Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy, or tutoring kids in the urban populations, what I’m learning from these kids of mine in the clinic, or how it felt to teach. I don’t talk to them about that, I talk to them directly about what relates to them.

Khema had similar experiences to Indira about avoiding conversations about dating partners “unless it was really, really serious.” Another way Khema segments aspects of herself is that she “…tended to be more conservative around my parents than around my friends. Although she finds this difference less, “I probably tend to be still a little bit more conservative around my parents than I am around my friends.” Khema also
explained that “If I’m really going through a period of depression and any aspects of sexual relations that I might have with a boyfriend... I don’t talk about it with my parents...” She stated that she “feel[s] that my parents would just really have a hard time supporting me because either they would just try to fix the situation for me or make me feel like I made the wrong decisions, and that’s why I’m having these self-doubts.”

Shanaz recalled that while she was growing up she “used to go home and just be quiet all the time and I never used to say anything. And they didn’t know any of my friends; they didn’t know anything about me.” Because Shanaz feels like she is being lectured by her parents, “...more often than not, they don’t see my personality.” Shanaz stated that she does not share meaningful aspects of her life with her parents. She explained “I don’t have a communicative relationship with my parents.”

Shanaz also noticed that she tends to compartmentalize aspects of her South Asian American identity. She described a recent plane trip where she was seated next to two European American men. She described how she “talk[ed] different[ly].” to these men. She stated that when she is around another group of people she will “...swear when I talk to those people, like those guys on the plane, and that’s from my upbringing in the United States.” However, “Nobody swears in [the Muslim community].” Shanaz admitted that she swears to assimilate to American culture.

Manjula hid certain parts of herself from her parents when she was in high school since she was not allowed to date. A Jewish friend of hers would help her with “sneaking out.” Manjula “…had a boyfriend in high school, he was a football player and I dated him for six, seven months.” When Manjula finally met her husband, they dated for three years before her parents agreed to meet him. During those three years, Manjula met his
family and had this relationship that was outside of her relationship with her parents since they were not open to her dating.

**Negative case analysis.** Durga was the only participant who did not describe segmenting herself. Durga stated, “I would probably tell my parents more than I would tell my friends. I'm pretty close to my parents; I mean, I think I'm more close to my parents than the average person.” However, Durga “...wouldn't tell them details about a relationship that would make them uncomfortable.”

**Internalizing the Racism**

Six of the ten women explained how they began to internalize the racism they received from others. By internalizing the racism these women believed that there something wrong with them. For example, Kavita explained how “I think I had a lot of problems—I didn't deal with it very well for a long time...I internalized it all and believed it.” She explained how she “...started out by saying ‘Shut up’...but eventually I just stopped and...internalized it all.”

Similarly, Durga appears to have internalized the prejudice she experiences regarding her eating habits. She explained several times in the interview that her eating habits were a result of being “...just a picky eater anyway...” However, she described frustration about people’s comments regarding her eating habits, but she still regarded her eating habits as “picky” versus a part of her Indian background. She explained that this explanation “seems to put people at ease.” When Durga was describing the incident where she did not know how to spell the Indian names she stated that “I do remember thinking maybe I should have known.” Furthermore, she explained, “I have a tendency to beat myself up. So I'm sure I thought in my mind I should have known.”
When I inquired about Durga’s lack of dating experience, she explained, as stated previously, that she was never taught how to attract men. She also stated that “I do sense that I’m not beautiful enough. I look at the girls who they did ask out, and they were gorgeous…”

Mary’s response to the prejudice from others and pressure from her family was that she “…didn’t trust people, and it’s still very hard for me to trust people.” She remembers, “never giv[ing] a relationship a hundred percent because I always held back because I figured there’s going to be hurt and pain down the road somewhere.” As stated earlier, the prejudice she experienced really hurt her self-esteem. She explained that for many years “I was very unsure of myself, not confident, just hesitant.” Like Mary, Durga explained that she “…didn’t necessarily get close to people.” Even now “I find that I still have to build a relationship with somebody, and I don’t get close to people right away.”

Indira described her feeling of isolation in graduate school “Because not only do I have different skin color and different hair, but because I don’t wear ‘those’ color shoes or ‘those’ kind of clothes and put on that much makeup…” But, Indira began to doubt whether these differences really caused her sense of isolation, “I don’t know if I feel it more than everybody else feels it.” Furthermore, she explained, “That’s why I’m really scared because when you ask these questions about discrimination, I don’t know if it is me or them. It’s hard…Because I am already like a paranoid person.” From this statement it appears that Indira takes responsibility for the prejudice she has encountered in her graduate program.

Khema explains, “I became extremely depressed. I was already very unhappy with where I was in college.” She also described that “I just had this overall sense of despair
underlying my life, and I really felt like there was something wrong with me.” When she was the target of racism, Khema recalls “...I tended to take everything in...I think that just really built up to the point where I just felt like I don’t belong here. I don’t feel like I belong in this country.”

Similarly, Shanaz explained that she “...didn’t try to fit in. I knew I couldn’t.” She stated that:

...I think I was very insecure. I didn't have any self-confidence. I always, if I really think back in my brain, I always felt like I didn't fit. And if you could go back in the history of my brain, you could hear in my head, 'I don't fit here. I don't fit here.' Every situation I'd feel like, 'I don't belong here.'

The Rebels

In addition, 5 of the 10 women described how they became very rebellious and defiant in response to the daily pressures of their lives. Mary and Shanaz each described herself as the “defiant” one in the family. Shanaz explained that she “...did the opposite of what my parents told me...” Similarly, Kavita explained that when she was in high school “I really rebelled.” Although Manjula and Padmini did not describe themselves as defiant or rebellious, they both acknowledged that their parents had some unrealistic expectations. In the end Manjula stated that “...I was going to do what I wanted to do” and Padmini stated she will make her own choices.

Identifying with Other Minorities

Three women found that developing friendships with other ethnic minorities helped them cope with their experiences as Indian American women. For example, Indira described that she connected with “...African American or Latino American, and Jewish American...” because “...I always felt like there was a voice in those communities that
connected with who I was.” She went on further to describe how African American
culture”...is the most accessible minority group that has so much political influence and
because of that I have always felt like this, validated from it, they validated who I was.”

In the same way, Phoolan stated that “...I only relate to minorities, I don’t have one
single White friend.” Later she explained that her own experiences with prejudice
helped her “...automatically understand where they were coming from.”

Also, Manjula stated that she had one Jewish friend throughout junior high and high
school. She described how “Jewish families are very similar to Indian families.” Since
her friend could relate to all of the strict rules Manjula had to follow, she felt that her
friend understood her.

Graduating Early

Three of the ten women decided they could not live with their parents any longer.
Their dislike for their home environment was so strong that these women decided to
finish school quickly so they could leave their parents’ homes. For instance, Mary
decided to take “...twenty-eight hours or twenty-nine hours my last quarter” because
“there was too much tension at home. I just wanted to get out and experience life.” To
avoid repeating this pattern for her children, Mary has tried to help her daughters “...not
feel like there’s something better out there.” Mary felt that she had to “...hurry up and get
through this part so you can finally experience life.”

Shanaz explained, “I graduated in three years from high school.” She explains that “I
just got up and decided one day that I couldn’t stand this place [her parents’ home]
anymore, and I was going to go crazy.” Similarly, Sushila recalled, “I grew up wanting
to get out of the house.” Therefore she graduated from high school in three years, stating
“I left this house at 16, just because I could not stand being here.” She explained that “I couldn’t make too many friends at school because my friends didn’t understand what was going on at home, and so I decided to graduate early.”

**Ethnic Identity Development**

Since one of the interests in this study is the ethnic identity development of Asian Indian American women, this section describes several patterns of ethnic identity development among the 10 women in this study. When I began writing and analyzing this aspect of the data, I tried to apply several of the ethnic identity models discussed earlier. When I tried to apply these models, I became extremely frustrated because the ethnic identity development models did not apply to these women’s experiences. I found that in this study the women’s ethnic identity development was more fluid and complex than initially theorized. It appears that context, gender, religion, and life experiences with prejudice impact ethnic identity development. With these aspects in mind, I had difficulty discovering patterns of ethnic identity development in the data. Even though Root’s (1990) model on biracial individuals includes these factors, I had difficulty applying her model to the Indian American female experience. Therefore, I decided to examine the factors that influence the ethnic identity of the women until further research is conducted on this population.

First, I began to conceptualize ethnic identity development with a more multicultural lens. Rather than viewing these women as part of only two cultures (American and Indian), I discovered that these women were exposed to, and internalized aspects that are represented among various cultures (e.g., African American, gender, socioeconomic, etc.). Second, I also discovered that context and environment (e.g., the neighborhood...
these women grew up in) strongly influenced the women's experience and their ethnic identity development. Third, several of the women did not start their ethnic identity development in the conformity stage described by Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989), and their development did not proceed in a linear fashion. Therefore, I decided to examine the factors that influence the women's ethnic identity. These factors are described below.

Factors in Ethnic Identity Development

Religion. The women's religious beliefs also had an impact on their ethnic identity development. The seven women who identified themselves as one of the South Asian religions also identified themselves as more Indian or Indian American. All seven women described how their religion has a major impact on their identity. One individual, Mary, who converted to Christianity identified herself as more White American. She described how her Christian religion had brought her a sense of peace and completeness. Therefore, as the women described in this study, religious identification strongly influenced one's ethnic identity.

Neighborhood demographics. Some of the ethnic identity models begin with a progression from childhood to adulthood. For example, Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1989) model begins with the stage of conformity where an individual identifies with the dominant culture. In this study, six of the women explained that they had no choice but to identify with White culture. Sushila, Durga, Shanaz, Indira, Khema, and Mary explained that their environment was predominately White and therefore they had no choice to make friends with persons of their own or other cultures. This finding suggests that Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1989) model may want to examine people's ethnic identity development as a result of the political context/environment and the access that
one has to one’s culture versus a decision or desire to be of the dominant culture. For example, the women in this study felt they had no choice and therefore they made friends and were most influenced by White culture due to the limits in the environment. In support of this finding, Berry (1997) stresses the importance of the environmental opportunities when conceptualizing one’s acculturation since these women did not choose to identify with the dominant culture, but had no other options.

**Gender.** After analyzing the interviews, it was evident that the women’s ethnic identity development is impacted by gender. Maira (1998) found that gender and ethnic identity were very closely intertwined and related for the Asian Indian American community. Maira (1998) explained that Indian American women were judged to be more authentically Indian if they were chaste and pure. The women in this study reported similar messages. However, in this study these messages about gender were expanded beyond sexuality and even applied to education, domestic activities, and double standards among siblings. Five of the ten women reported messages they received because they are female.

First, Padmini’s father stressed the importance of her education, and insisted that she study hard, and do well in school. At the same time, Padmini stated “he still reminds me about ‘this is where you come from, so just watch out.’” This comment sent Padmini the message that the opportunity to have an education is an American concept, and therefore Padmini should not become too Americanized or Westernized by her opportunities.

Padmini also explained how her parents set separate standards for her brother and her.
She remembers that:

...my brother never had a curfew... I have a curfew, just because I'm a girl. That's why they look after me more. I used to fight with them a lot about that, like, 'How come he is always allowed to go out at 10 o'clock at night, 11 o'clock at night and here I am, be home by 9 or 10!' So they're like, 'Well, you have to be more careful with a girl, there's more dangers out there for a girl.'

Similarly, Durga explained how her religion emphasizes the equality of men and women. Although Durga described her parents as devout Lingayats, she has noticed that her parents treat her and her brother differently. She explained that her parents feel like they "can't control him, and they feel like they can control me, probably because I give in a lot, things that I don't feel like fighting about I just give in." She also described an instance where she was not allowed to attend a spring break vacation with her friends in another state.* When she returned home after being in college, her younger brother was not at home. She discovered that he was allowed to go on the trip even though she was not allowed.

Mary explained that at her home, she was expected to learn how to cook and clean from her mother. She emphasized that she wants other Indian immigrant parents to "treat their daughters with the same understanding as they would their sons, because the sons are the prince—I just couldn't stand that." Mary also described how "daughters are expected to do so much and sons are expected to—they won't even pick their glass up and put it in the sink, you know. That would just make me so angry." Mary also suggested that Indian immigrant parents should "value he [their daughters] as a person versus the fact that she's the daughter, the one who will be loyal to you the rest of your life."

Khema explained how living in the United States has given her more freedom to explore herself and a career. Whenever she attends Indian parties and people ask her if
she’s married yet, she realizes the message she receives about her role as a woman in the Indian community. She commented that getting married is “always the big question from them [the Indian community].” Khema went further to explain “A woman’s marriage validates her in the eyes of the Indian community whereas an unmarried Indian woman is still just not quite as good enough as a married Indian woman.”

Shanaz reported a similar experience where she receives many questions in the Pakistani community about her marital status. However, unlike Khema’s experience with an equal emphasis on education for both genders, Shanaz’s education was never emphasized because her parents just assumed she would get married.

Manjula explained that her father did not treat her brother and her differently due to gender. However, she acknowledged that when she turned 18 he expected her to have a traditional marriage with an Indian man. She explained that she was extremely frustrated with “mixed messages” because she could not become a “traditional” Indian wife after she had been so well educated and had experienced the freedom in the United States.

The experiences described above reveal how Khema, Mary, Padmini, Durga, Shanaz, and Manjula’s identities are shaped by their gender. Although these women did not directly describe how the sexism in their lives affects their ethnic identity development, they did discuss the impact on their self-concept and experiences. It also appears that these messages about gender send clear distinctions about what it means to be Indian and female. It is clear that several of these women were sent the message that unless they were married or behaved in certain ways, they would remain illegitimate members of the community. Maira (1998) found similar findings in her study where the perception of one’s Indianness was judged by gender expectations. In addition, the parents of these
women seemed to send mixed messages regarding education and how the community defines the ideal "Indian woman."

These messages essentially entrap women into a no-win situation where the women feel they have to compromise aspects of their ethnic identities to be able to access certain opportunities or to hold onto their ethnic identities. Therefore the women essentially have to compartmentalize aspects of themselves in order to maintain both American and Indian cultures. They are then constantly faced with decisions about maintaining their cultural heritage or "becoming too Americanized."

**Early identification with Indian culture.** Four of the women explained that they had a strong Indian identification from their early childhood. Kavita, Sushila, and Indira described how their trips to the temple and reading Hindu texts made them feel very proud of their Indian heritage. Phoolan remembers having mostly Indian friends and attending a Hindu camp in her early childhood. She described both of these experiences as having a great impact on her pride as an Indian American.

**Contextual shifts in identity.** It is interesting to note that 4 of the 10 women described how they experienced their ethnicity differently depending on the context. These women may have been forced to develop the capacity to adapt to the context in order to function in a multicultural environment.

These four women explained that they felt either more Western/American or traditionally Indian depending on the situations they encountered. For instance, Shanaz explained a recent trip on an airplane where she sat next to White American men. She describes how she began to exhibit behavior that she would not exhibit around other people:
I was on a plane trapped for five hours last night and there's these two guys there... So I started talking to these guys just to entertain myself, and yeah I talk different. I'd talk to them like they're in a bar almost, and I'm talking to a bunch of guys...I almost speak differently...I was swearing to those guys when I was on the plane. I swear when I talk to those people, and that's from my upbringing in the United States. Everybody swore growing up in high school, that's where it's from, everybody swears.

Similarly, Khema noticed that she, too, experienced her ethnic identity differently depending on the situation. She stated that when she is around other Indians she likes to sit in the kitchen with the women and cook. However, when she is with her American friends she can easily step out of that role and enjoy going out to clubs with her friends.

Durga explained that, "I feel more American around my Indian friends, and I feel more Indian around my American friends." Therefore, when Durga is surrounded by other Indians, her American aspects seems more magnified. However, within the context of White Americans, Durga tends to feel different and conspicuous, and, in turn, she feels that her Indian aspects are magnified.

Lastly, Indira explained that she has tried to downplay the role her ethnicity plays in her life. She decided that her experiences are similar to many other groups in America. However, Indira felt that the situation and context has an impact on her ethnicity. She described a situation at a bar where she felt very different from others in the environment because of her clothes and looks. However, Indira seemed conflicted about her perceptions because earlier in the interview she described herself as more integrated versus being compartmentalized into a specific type of person or box. She explained that the bar environment, where everyone looked a certain way, made her feel different and isolated.
Similar to these shifts is the finding that 9 of the 10 women segment aspects of themselves (see segmented-self section). Although, 5 of these 9 women did not report the shifts in identity, they did express different aspects of themselves depending on the situation. Therefore, the segmented-self findings also support the idea that several of the women in this study shift their behavior depending on the context.

**Partners' influence on ethnic identity development.** Another factor that affected the women's identities was their partnership with their significant other. Three of the ten women in this study are partnered or married. The data revealed that for two of the women's, their partner's ethnic identity influenced the ethnic identity development of the women. For instance, Phoolan's partner is African American. Although, she identified herself as Indian American, but she also explained in the interview that she relates to other ethnic minorities more than the Indian community. Similarly, Mary described her family as being 90% American "just because my husband is American, actually we're an American family." It is also interesting to note that Indira explained that she would teach her children "everything [about her culture and religion] that my parents have taught me." However, she also stated "it would so much depend on who I was going to marry."

**Negative case analysis.** Manjula's experience with her husband is different. Since her closest friends are all Indian women who are married to American men, she has been able to keep a more bicultural emphasis in her home. She explained that she and her husband expose their children to both sets of cultures. Therefore since her husband values her Indian identity, he has helped to increase her identification with Indian culture.
Patterns in Ethnic Identity Development

As shown, there are many factors that affect the ethnic identity development of Indian American women. By examining the findings above, one can see that ethnic identity development is a very complex construct that should include the aspects of gender, religious beliefs, environmental context, and one’s partners. Below, I examined the different factors that influenced the women's ethnic identity throughout their lives; this is described below.

Childhood

During this time all 7 of the 10 women were influenced primarily by their playmates. The women explained how they had no choice about their playmates since their neighborhoods were predominately White American. However, Phoolan, the one woman who played with other Indian American children felt more comfortable with her Indian ethnic identity. Two of the women also explained how they enjoyed going to the temple and reading Indian classics as children. The women stated that the temple and the books had a positive influence on their Indian identity.

Adolescence

During this time, eight women received negative feedback from their peers about their ethnic background. This negative feedback and prejudice led to different coping methods. Six women internalized these comments and therefore developed negative feelings about themselves which made several of the women assimilate towards White American culture.

During this time, some of the women began developing interest in boys. Because of the cultural and gender issues of the parents as described previously, these women were
affected in two ways. First, nine of the women began segmenting aspects of their lives in order to maintain peace within the home and avoid conflicts with their parents. Second, three women also began receiving mixed messages about their education. On the one hand, the women were expected to achieve high standards. On the other hand, it did not really matter how well the women performed in school because they would just get married off and take care of their husbands and families.

**Early Adulthood**

All of the women in this study attend or attended college. During this time all 10 women experienced conflicts regarding their careers or major field of study. The four younger women, in Group A, stated that they were compromising their choice of a major so that both they and their parents would be happy. However, the women in Group B developed a stronger sense of themselves and this conflicted with the expectations or pressure of their parents. The three women in Group C stated that they chose their own major and their own path that made them happy. They were no longer willing to give into the parental pressure regarding careers or spousal choice.

**Adulthood**

As stated previously, the three women group C began to make their own, individual decisions. Women in this age group were primarily focused on their career and/or family. The two women who were partnered were heavily influenced by their partners' ethnicity. Therefore their partner either enhanced their ethnic identity, emphasized assimilation, or feeling of being bicultural.
Advice

Finally, the women were asked to provide advice for other Indian American women and their parents. One of the coders believed this advice could also be examined as needs of the women. Therefore, this section will examine the advice the women gave to others.

Communicative and Accepting Parents

Four women desired parents who were more communicative and accepting. For instance, Kavita stated she “would tell them [Indian immigrant parents] to talk to them [Indian American daughters] more—to talk to them.” Instead of only focusing on their daughter’s grades, try “just asking them about their day and genuinely letting them talk to you.” Also, “I think it is important to try to understand where they are coming from.” Sushila described similar advice about wanting parents who would try to understand her. Similarly, Indira suggested that parents not disown their children for making decisions they disagree with; rather parents should “be supportive in everything that’s not just Indian, be supportive of what your kids decide.” Also, Mary argued that parents should “value her [their daughter] as a person versus the fact that she’s the daughter, and the one who will be loyal to you the rest of your life.”

General Advice to Parents

Khema suggested that the “number one, most important thing is for parents to instill self-confidence in their children.” She explained further that parents should instill “a very, very strong sense of self-confidence so that their children feel that they are each very special just as they are.” Khema believes that if parents can instill this confidence, “their children learn to love themselves, whoever they are.”
Manjula did not appreciate the mixed messages she was sent by her parents. Therefore she suggested that parents should “not send mixed messages.” She argued “that’s the hardest thing, either you have to accept if you’re going to raise your kids to be American and live in an American culture, then you’re going to have to accept every aspect of it.” Otherwise, “you have to stick with the traditional role models.” Lastly, Durga suggested that parents should “participate in their [daughter’s] school as much as you possibly can. Become your child’s teacher’s friend.”

Following Your Own Voice

Five of the women advised Indian American women to follow their own choices and maintain their independence. Kavita’s quote best captures the message of many of the women I interviewed:

I would just tell them if they think something is right or they feel something is right to do their best to follow it no matter what anyone says. And if they can't fully follow it—just don't sell it short completely—just try to, follow it a little bit. I guess just try to follow your heart as much as you can instead of listening to so much of what other people will tell you. Because I used to think I had to listen to my parents in order for them to love me or find value in me. But I've found that they still love me even though I don't listen to them.

Durga believes that Indian American women should “maintain your independence and know how to take care of yourself…” She also emphasized, “Your identification comes from you, not from a man or from anything else.” Similarly, Indira advised women to develop a strong sense of self. Mary also advised women “to follow their dreams because ultimately that is what's going to satisfy them.” She explained, “If you're a good person and you try to follow your dreams and please yourself, eventually you will please everybody else.” Lastly, Phoolan suggested that Indian American women should “just be who you are. Don’t worry too much about what’s considered acceptable.” She also
advised women to “have your own opinions about things, and... listen to your parents, but if you disagree, just be smart about things.”

In addition, Indira encouraged women to “never allow themselves to feel insecure, or if you do, don’t let it consume you.” For instance, “girls growing up, it is so physically based that you cannot let that get in the way.”

Raising Indian American Children

Knowledge of India. Four of the 10 women stated that they would want their children to know about the history of both India and their families. Kavita explained that she would want to take her kids to India and “I want Dad to tell them stories about his village and what he experienced there.” Mary also stated that she would want to take her kids to India “just for them to be able to experience it, and see it firsthand. That’s the only way to experience India is to go there. You can’t describe it...”

Furthermore, Mary would “like to take them to the little tiny town where my dad was born—just so they have a history of where they’ve come from. I think that’s important. I think that’s part of your self-esteem.” Khema would also want to take her children to India and she would also “want to teach them about their great-grandparents, about our family history, our family tree.”

In addition, Shanaz stated “I would take them to Pakistan or India to see their roots...I want them to be aware of who they are, but I also would give them their freedom.” Indira explained, “I think it’s important for them to know, where they come from, what their culture is. But I would, I’d give them their own choice.” Khema stated that she wants her children “to know about Indian culture- what different holidays symbolize, and meanings of different Indian festivals...”
Religion. Three of the 10 women stressed the importance of passing their religion on to their children. Indira stated that “One thing is the religion, that's the big thing; I'd want them to know what their religion is about.” However, Indira acknowledged that “when they grow up they'd make their own decision.” Shanaz also explained that “the most predominant, most important thing would be religion. And then second would be culture.” Shanaz further explained that she thinks her children should also know “their language.” Manjula stated that she and her husband are already trying to teach both their children about “both religions.”
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I review the purpose of this study. The results are summarized and discussed using Elliott's (1989, 1993) conventions, as described by Hill et al. (1997). Accordingly, the results are broken down into three categories: general, typical, and variant. Implications for the community and counseling are also presented. I also discuss the limitations of this study. Finally, I provide a section that discusses directions for future research. Table 3 summarizes the General, Typical, and Variant findings.

Review of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge regarding the experience of second-generation Indian American women. To achieve this understanding, this study explored several aspects of the Indian American female experience. Several questions this study sought to explore were: What types of cultural aspects influence the women's identity? How do women experience growing up in two different cultures? In what ways do these women cope with their experiences? This study also sought to examine the following questions regarding ethnic identity development: Do women segment aspects of their behavior? What are the patterns of ethnic identity development among these 10 women? Are there environmental influences on ethnic identity development?
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Summary and Discussion of the Results

In Hill et al.'s (1997) "A Guide to Consensual Qualitative Research," they contend that it is necessary to examine the frequency of themes within the sample. In order to examine the frequencies, Hill et al. (1997) suggest using three categories to describe the sample: General, Typical, and Variant.

General Finding

Pressure/expectations to choose a career. A general finding is a code that applies to every participant in the sample (Hill et al., 1997). There was one "general" finding in this study. All 10 women felt pressure or strong expectations to choose a high-status profession (e.g., a doctor or lawyer). This finding is consistent with other studies on the Asian Indian community (Agarwal, 1991; Segal, 1991; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1980; Yao, 1989). Leong and Serafica (1995) also found generational conflicts regarding career choice among Asian Americans.

One possible explanation for the conflict is that the parents are unwilling to finance an education in a different, nontraditional area because a different major may be impractical (Root, 1998). Furthermore, since the women's parents emigrated to the United States, the parents may pressure the women to provide the family with a sense of security achieved through a high-status profession.

In order to maintain peace within the family (Root, 1998; Uba, 1994), the women may have felt pressure to choose certain occupations. Another reason for this pressure could stem from the need for acceptance and social status that the parents feel within the Asian Indian community. Since Asian culture emphasizes how one's individual choice can greatly affect the reputation of the family (Uba, 1994), a child who is in a high-status
position attracts positive attention to the family. This finding is unique to Indian American women and was not described as a common experience of biracial individuals (Gibbs & Hines, 1992), but has been expressed as a common experience of Asian Americans (Sue, 1998). On the other hand, Root (1994) explained how biracial people may try professionally in order to challenge people's expectations that they are inferior; therefore these women may be at risk to go into a high-status career due to parental pressure, and also to compensate for feelings of inferiority.

**Typical findings**

Typical findings are those themes where half or more of the participants reported similar experiences (Hill et al., 1997). There were three themes where 9 of the 10 women shared similar experiences. These were a sense of isolation, segmented self, and pressure to marry a partner with specific characteristics.

**Isolation.** A sense of isolation was a common theme for 9 of the 10 participants because they felt they did not completely belong in either Indian or American culture. This sense of isolation was addressed in the Asian Indian community in only one study (Minde & Minde, 1976; cited in Sodowsky & Carey, 1987). However, Minde and Minde's study was conducted in Canada. Their research findings are similar to Root's (1990) research on biracial individuals where she found that a sense of isolation could lead to one internalizing rejection from others.

In addition, after conducting a study on 12 biracial adolescents, Gibbs and Hines (1992) found that “biracial teens are often rejected by both majority and minority groups because they do not ‘fit in’ easily with either group” (p. 231). Therefore it appears that Asian Indian American women share a sense of isolation similar to biracial individuals.
Segmented self. Nine participants also described how they segmented or continue to segment aspects of their lives from their parent and friends. These nine women explained how they might act differently depending on the context. Similarly, Root’s (1990) and Gibbs and Hines’ (1992) studies found that biracial individuals identified more with one culture than the other depending on the situation and context. Therefore certain aspects of their personality were expressed in certain situations, while not in others. Similarly, Root (1990) noted a similar shift in identity that may occur throughout one’s entire life. She stated “this alternating represents conflict and lack of experience and strategies for integrating components of self” (p.198). Root (1990) argues that once an individual has resolved her identity issues, the shifts or needs to segment aspects of one’s life will decrease. A decrease was seen in this study since the women tended to segment less as they aged.

An alternative explanation for segmenting behavior is provided by Roland (1988; cited in Jayakar, 1994). He discusses how this segmenting behavior is the result of gaining self-esteem through the approval of others. Therefore, these women may be using this mechanism as a device to gain the approval of others and, in turn, improve their self-esteem.

Pressure about choosing one’s spouse. Nine women consistently reported pressure to date men who matched their parents’ expectations: Indian, same caste, well-educated, and of the same religion. These expectations are similar to traditional views of marriage in India (Gupta, 1999). In addition, this finding is consistent with Das and Kemp’s (1997) examination of the Asian Indian community where they found that many Indian parents want their children to maintain the Indian culture. Therefore, the parents believe that
marrying within the culture will increase compatibility between two partners and maintain the cultural traditions. Furthermore, Jayakar (1994) explained how this custom is based on the Asian Indian belief that marriage does not just take place between two people, but between the two families. Therefore, the two families need to be compatible. Lastly, consistent with the findings in this study, Gupta (1999) acknowledged the "constant, sometimes unrelenting, pressure surrounding the entire marital process that women are reporting" (p.137).

There were several typical findings where 8 of the 10 participants had similar experiences. These findings are described below.

**Interracial dating.** Eight of the ten women also described their experiences of dating outside of their ethnic group. None of the previous studies have examined the experience of interracial dating among individuals within the Indian American community. Both of the women who are married to White American men reported few cultural differences. Three of the women in the study stressed the importance of compatibility over ethnicity to ensure a "good" marriage. Six other women reported one positive result of interracial dating (e.g., learning a respect for different cultures), and several negative experiences from interracial dating (e.g., dealing with questions about background and habits, differences in values, and religion).

It is also interesting to note that "Asian American women as a group have the highest rates of interracial marriage" (Root, 1998, p. 216). Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996) also observed the exogamy of the second-generation women. They argue that the community’s intolerance of strong-minded women has led to this phenomenon. For example, in 1995 the Federation of Indians in America prohibited all women’s,
gay/lesbian/bisexual, and other politically affiliated organizations from joining the India Day Parade in New York City (Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996).

These authors note that India has a space and respect for strong, politically active women. However, the result of migration to the United States “has rested the validity of the entire community upon the submissiveness of the community’s women” (p.384). Therefore the combination of a sense of independence and the emphasis on the “good” Indian woman causes conflict. Therefore, Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996) argue that Indian American men have “unrealistic expectations” for Indian American women. The women then seek out partners outside of the community who can appreciate the strength of Indian American women, rather than seeing this quality as a threat. Women may also seek people of different ethnicities because they may be able to understand their multicultural experience. This pattern of dating people outside of the Indian community was also found in this study.

Prejudice. Eight of the ten women also described their encounters with people who were prejudiced. Das and Kemp (1997) did not that children did experience prejudice, but they did not examine the effect of prejudice on Indian American women. Some authors have noted the discrimination immigrants face in the workplace and the anti-miscegenation laws, laws that forbid people to marry outside of one’s racial group, that were passed before the Immigration Act of 1965 (Kitano & Daniels, 1988; Sheth, 1995). The present study found that eight of the women dealt with numerous incidents where they were threatened or teased for being Indian American. Since this is the first study on Indian Americans in the Midwest, the experience with prejudice as a common experience among the women may be due to the contextual and situational factors in which these
women live. Therefore, Indian American women on the West and East Coasts may not experience prejudice to the degree that the women in this study reported.

**Influence of religion.** Eight women described how their religion had a major impact on their identity. Seven of the women practiced a South Asian religion, while one woman converted to Christianity. The findings are described later in this chapter under the section Factors that Affect Ethnic Identity Development findings.

There were two themes where 7 of the 10 women shared similar experiences. These themes are described below.

**Feelings of guilt.** Seven women reported feelings of guilt when they do not follow the wishes of their parents or behave in ways they know their parents would not approve. No study has examined this phenomenon within the Asian Indian American community. However, Liem (1997) conducted a qualitative study comparing feelings of guilt and shame among first and second generation Asian Americans and European Americans. Liem found that European Americans based feelings of guilt and shame from their own evaluation of an event. Therefore, European Americans used a self-evaluation of their own behavior which produced feelings of guilt or shame. On the other hand, first generation participants described feelings of shame and guilt depending on how their behavior shames others (e.g., their family). For second generation Asian Americans, a combination of the two patterns was found. Second generation Asian Americans also reported a self-evaluation of behavior, but they also examined how their behavior affected others (e.g., one’s family). This causes an internal conflict between self and family wishes.
It appears that the women in this study also represent this “bicultural adaptation” regarding the emotions of guilt and shame. The incidents reported by the women show them evaluating their own behavior, but at the same time knowing their behavior impacts their parents’ emotional experiences.

An alternative explanation could be that White Americans, too, experience guilt when they disappoint their parents. However, Liem’s (1997) study clearly shows the difference among White Americans and second-generation Asian Americans experiences with guilt. The study clearly reveals that Asian Americans are more aware and concerned about how their behavior impacts others, and this concern produces guilt. This finding furthered studies on the Indian American community because it examined the impact of the pressure and expectations Indian American women face.

**Neighborhood demographics.** Seven of the women explained how the racial makeup of their neighborhoods influenced their ethnic identity and their experiences. The findings in this section are discussed later in the Factors that Affect Ethnic Identity Development section.

There were two findings where 6 of the 10 women shared similar experiences. Six women expressed a sense of independence from growing up in America and six women described how they internalized the prejudice they experienced while growing up.

**Independence.** Six women acknowledged a sense of independence as a major influence from American culture. This sense of independence may be one cause of the intergenerational conflicts discussed in previous research (Agarwal, 1991; Segal, 1991; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). This study found that a sense of independence is the most common American influence.
Dasgupta and Dasgupta (1996) argue that this sense of independence existed among women in India, but the emigration of Indians to the West produced the intolerance towards independent women. These authors assert that the immigrant parents who came in the mid sixties teach Indian ideals from the sixties and seventies and therefore have been outdated and are “idealized, reinvented, ‘familiar essentials’ of the hegemony” (Dasgupta & Dasgupta, 1996, p.385). Therefore Indian American women become labeled as undesirable when they have “independent” traits. The women in this study described their independence as a positive trait that sometimes interfered with their interactions with other Indians.

Internalizing the prejudice. As a result of the neighborhood demographics and prejudice, six of the 10 women reported internalizing the racism. The repeated taunting of peers and treatment from the community lowered the self-esteem of the women. Root (1994) describes how these painful experiences can lead individuals to place an overemphasis on one’s physical appearance and sensitivity to a connection with others. The effect of the prejudice will be discussed later in this chapter.

There were several typical findings where 5 of the 10 participants shared similar experiences: influence of trips to India, integrating aspects of both cultures, lack of intimate relationships, and rebellious behavior as a coping mechanism. The influence of gender on identity development and advice to follow one’s own voice were also common experiences shared by five of the 10 women.

Trips to India. Five women described how frequent trips to India had a major impact on their ethnic identity development. Saran (1985) also found that Indian immigrants made trips to India every two to three years. However, in Agarwal’s (1990) study, the
second-generation children she interviewed did not like going to India. This study found that five women found that visiting India increased their knowledge of the cultural and strengthened their Indian ethnic identity.

Integration of cultures. Five of the ten women discussed how they try to integrate and combine aspects of Indian and American cultures. Root’s (1990) and Berry’s (1997) studies describe that identifying with both groups as the “idealistic resolution of biracial status” (Root, 1990, p.200). This resolution is where an individual accepts both aspects of her identity. Five of the women combine and integrate the different aspects of the cultures in which they have been raised.

Lack of intimate relationships. Since all the women reported being heterosexual, intimate relationships were considered relationships or experience with men in a sexual or romantic context. A lack of intimate relationships was experienced by 5 of the 10 women. Many of these women had little experience with intimate relationships. This finding of a lack of intimate relationships among Indian American women in this study is consistent with Root’s (1990) description of the biracial experience. She contends that when a biracial individual begins to date many issues about one’s ethnicity arise. For instance, in one of her studies one Eurasian individual explained that she was not Asian enough to date an Asian and not White enough to date someone White (Root, 1994). Therefore, Root (1990) found that some biracial individuals may avoid dating in order to avert possible conflicting issues that may arise.

Gibbs (1987; cited in Gibbs & Hines, 1992) found that biracial individuals express their dating habits in extremes: either being very sexually active or being celibate. It
appears these women have chosen the latter, which Gibbs (1987; cited in Gibbs & Hines, 1992) argued is a way “to avoid the risks of intimate relationships” (p. 232).

Additionally, Asian culture makes sexuality a difficult subject to approach (Root, 1998). Because individuals are pressured by parents and friends, the area of sexuality may lead to some inner conflicts (Root, 1998). Therefore, it is not surprising that Gupta (1999) found that Indian American women in their late 20’s report one to two sexual partners. Furthermore, Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, and Kolata (1994; cited in Gupta, 1999) found 71% of Asian Americans, over age 18 have had only one to four partners. On the other hand, 67% of White American women have had a similar number of partners since they generally have more partners. Gupta (1999) concludes that Indian American women have had fewer partners than White European Americans.

Rebellious behavior. Five of the ten women described rebellious behavior as a form of coping with the pressure and tribulations of growing up as an Indian American female. In their study on biracial individuals, Gibbs & Hines (1992) found that individuals become overly dependent on their parents, or became very rebellious and sought independence earlier than normal. She also found that Gibbs (1998) found that biracial individuals may act out as a coping mechanism from negative experiences in their environment and this may lead to premature independence. Five of the Indian American women reported coping with their environment by obtaining independence through rebellious behavior.

Gibbs (1998) also found that individuals who utilize this coping pattern may also be involved “in delinquent behaviors, school problems, and interpersonal conflicts with parents, siblings, and peers...” (p.319). Although none of the women reported delinquent
behavior or problems at school, the women did report interpersonal problems with their parents. Gibbs (1998) believes that these individuals only want society and parents to validate them and they may use rebellious behavior to obtain attention.

**Following your own voice.** The last few questions in the interview guide sought advice from the participants for other Indian American women. The most common theme among the women was advice to follow one's own voice. This finding was shared by 5 of the 10 participants. These women shared the importance of following one's own desires and not allowing others to change one's path. This finding was not reported in other studies.

**Variant findings**

Variant findings are those categories where less than half of the participants shared similar experiences (Hill et al., 1997). Four of the participants described how Indian movies, music, and dress influenced their ethnic identity. Also four women in this study explained how Indian culture has influenced their sense of family and wish to have more communicative and accepting parents. Finally, four women also stated that when raising their own children they will pass on knowledge about India, how early exposure to Indian culture influenced their identity, and how their identity shifts with the environment.

**Indian movies, music, and dress.** As stated earlier, very few of the previous studies examine how the second generation learns about their Indian heritage. This present study found that four of the participants learned about their Indian background through Indian movies, music, and dress.

**Sense of family.** Four of the women explained that Indian culture gives them a strong sense of family. These women acknowledged the mixed blessing of the Indian family
who provide financially for them, but the four women then felt a great sense of responsibility towards their parents. This sense of responsibility could be due to the dynamics of the Asian Indian family (Sheth, 1995). Sheth noted that the Indian family is one of the foundations of social life in India.

Furthermore, Root (1998) noted that Asian Americans place “the family at the center of life and as the reference point for almost all aspects of an individual’s functioning” (p.219). Root (1998) notes that this value may cause conflict between the first and second generations since the second generation has been exposed to other values. Parents may remind their children of all the sacrifices they have made and these reminders may produce feelings of guilt in the second generation, as described by the women (see section on Feelings of guilt).

Communicative and accepting parents. Towards the end of the interview the women provided advice for Indian immigrant parents. Four of the women suggested that immigrant parents be more communicative and accepting. For example, one of the women suggested that parents talk to their children not only about school, but how they are feeling. Because of the emphasis on emotional restraint and hierarchical family structure (Sue & Sue, 1990), these children may not express their emotional experiences unless the parents inquire about their feelings. In addition, because of the cultural differences between the parents and their children, it may be easier for parents to discuss academic concerns, since they can understand this aspect of their children’s lives. However, parents may be uncomfortable with other topics for a number of reasons: emphasis on emotional restraint or not being able to relate to experiences outside of
academics. The four women in this study reported a strong desire for parents who would connect with them on a more emotional level.

Passing on knowledge about India. Four of the women stated that they wanted to pass on knowledge about India to their children. These women explained how they wanted to take their children to India to help them learn about their Indian heritage. Previous studies have not addressed issues surrounding third generation Indian Americans. This study found that four of the second generation women want to pass on their cultural heritage to their children.

Early exposure to India culture. Four of the women discussed how early exposure to Indian culture strengthened their Indian identity. These findings will be discussed further in the Factors that Affect Ethnic Identity Development findings.

Shifts in identity. Four of the women explained how their identity is heavily influenced by the context. These women also described how they segment themselves, depending on the context. These findings will be discussed in the Factors that Affect Ethnic Identity Development section.

There were several variant findings where only 3 of the 10 women shared similar experiences: graduating early, negative attitude towards men from India, and identifying with other ethnic minorities. Also, three women reported the influence of one’s partner’s ethnicity on ethnic identity development and a desire to pass on religious beliefs to the third generation.

Graduating early. Three women recalled graduating early as a way to escape the oppressive nature in their home while growing up. Gibbs & Hines (1992) describe how some biracial individuals may use overachievement in school in order to cope with the
experience of being biracial. In addition, they contend that individuals may seek independence early in order to develop a sense of autonomy. However, because this sense of autonomy may come at too early of an age, the women may have gained their independence prematurely and this may have some negative consequences.

Also, Root (1994) argues that biracial individuals may use overachievement as a form of compensating for feeling inferior to their peers. In this study, it appears that these Indian American women graduated early in order to cope with their surroundings, gain a sense of independence, and possibly increase their self-esteem.

**Negative attitude towards Indian men.** Three of the ten women acknowledged their negative attitude towards Indian men because they had negative experiences with Indian men (e.g., growing up with a family structure that is patriarchichal). One explanation for the women's negative attitude towards Indian men could be explained by Gupta’s (1999) findings. Gupta (1999) found that many Indian American women report that Indian American men are sexist and expect women to conform to the gender role of a typical Indian woman. Several of the men Gupta (1999) spoke with during informal interviews stated that Indian American women have become too independent and assertive. In this present study, the Indian American women were referring more directly to men from India versus Indian American men.

**Identifying with other minorities.** The experience of identifying with other ethnic minorities was shared by 3 of the 10 participants. These women explained that they felt other ethnic minorities could relate more to their life experiences than White European Americans. Although not discussed in previous studies, this finding makes sense that these individuals would share some common experiences with other ethnic minority
groups. These three women stated that they felt other ethnic minority groups could relate to and understand their experience as an Indian American.

**Passing on religious beliefs.** Three of the women described how it is important to pass their religious beliefs on to their children. Again no previous study has examined what the second generation finds important to pass on to the third generation. Again, as Sheth (1995) stated, religion may be one way to maintain one's ethnic ties to India.

**Partners' influence on ethnic identity development.** Three of the women described how their partners influenced their ethnic identity development. These findings will be described in depth in the Factors that Affect Ethnic Identity Development section.

**Individual Findings**

Hill et al. (1997) state that any code which applies to only one to two cases should be deleted from the findings. Therefore those codes that applied to only one to two cases were dropped. If an individual code was able to fit into another code, it was added to a code that contained more cases.

**Ethnic Identity Findings**

As stated above, it appears that the second-generation Indian American experience is extremely complex. This study examined the lives of ten different women. These women differed in age (three different age groups), religion (a Christian, Hindus, a Buddhist, a Sikh, and one woman who did not identify herself to any one religion), ethnicities of partners (African-American and White American), and amount of time spent in India. These differences are also indicative of the diversity of India herself (number of languages, religions, states, etc.). These differences created problems when
trying to develop and apply a general ethnic identity development model to the experience of these women.

After analyzing the data it appeared that the Indian American women’s experience is similar to the experience of biracial individuals. I therefore applied Root’s (1990) model of the ethnic identity development of biracial individuals to the women in this study. However, after applying Root’s (1990) model of ethnic identity development of biracial individuals to the data several problems occurred. There were also several problems applying Atkinson, Morten, & Sue’s (1989) and Berry’s (1980; 1997) model as described below.

First, Root’s (1990) and Atkinson, Morten, & Sue’s (1989) models begin at the conformity stage. In this study four of the women did not start their ethnic identity development at the conformity stage. Three of the women had access to Indian peers and felt more identified with Indian culture. These women started their identity development at the emergence stage and then cycled through the other stages in other periods in their lives. Therefore, the data from this study found that ethnic identity development did not support a linear progression of stages.

Second, one woman described how she was unaware of her ethnicity until later. Myers and Haggins (1998) would call this stage of development as “The Absence of Conscious Awareness.” This is where an individual “has no awareness of being and is totally innocent based on current incarnation” (p. 261). Further research needs to be conducted that will examine instances that started at an earlier stage in the women’s lives, especially since only one woman in this study mentioned this. Berry’s (1997), Root’s
(1990), and Atkinson, Morten, & Sue's (1989) models do not examine any experiences prior to one's knowledge about one's ethnicity.

Third, six women described how they identified themselves with the dominant culture during a specific time in their lives. However, in this study the women found their choice was due to the lack of environmental opportunities of their own culture versus a conscious choice of "wanting to be White." Although, Mary consciously chooses to identify herself more with White American culture, she did not describe a period in her life where she went through any of the stages of Root's (1990) model. Berry's (1997) revised model of acculturation discusses the pressure of the dominant culture to assimilate immigrant groups. He argues that when individuals assimilate because of pressure, this creates a "pressure cooker" situation versus an actual choice one makes.

Fourth, Root's (1990) and Atkinson, Morten, and Sue's (1989) models have a stage entitled emergence where individuals emerge into Indian culture and experience dissonance with the dominant culture and challenge the dominant culture. In this study, the women's experiences with prejudice, rather than causing the women to resist and emerge as in the models above, had an affect on the women's self-esteem. Six of these women explained how their experiences caused them to internalize their pain and blame themselves. So although these women did experience the dissonance stage, rather than challenging the dominant culture, six of the women internalized the prejudice and blamed themselves.

Sixth, Root (1990) offered four resolutions of biracial identity since she believes that psychology should offer more than one healthy outcome. The first outcome is "Acceptance of the identity society assigns." Root (1990) describes how people who are
raised in environments that lack access to their ethnic group, may identify themselves as "a person of color." These individuals passively accept the label the dominant culture has given them and their identity is largely defined by their environment.

In this study, none of the 10 women fit in this outcome. Since the model was developed for biracial individuals it is possible this category does not fit the second-generation experience in this study.

Seventh, the second outcome of Root’s (1990) model called “Identification with both Racial Groups,” describes those individuals who do not shift in different contexts (Root, 1990). In this study, Kavita, Khema, Manjula, and Padmini appear to identify with both American and Indian groups. However, Root’s (1990) argument that individuals in this outcome will remain the same in different environments, both Kavita and Khema still segment different aspects of themselves. On the other hand, Berry (1997) asserts that individuals do shift their behavior according to location and context.

However, many of the reasons Root (1990) provides for creating a biracial ethnic identity model are similar to the experiences of Indian American women. These similarities are described below. Berry (1997) also revised his model and incorporated some of the same concepts as in Root’s (1990) model.

First, Root’s (1990) model incorporates the complex and different aspects of an individual. For instance, Root (1990) argues that ethnic identity models should reflect the experience of those who are multicultural. Therefore, a model that includes the complex experience is needed for those individuals who have been exposed to more than one culture. This argument was also supported in Maira’s (1998) study since she also found that gender, sexuality, race, socioeconomic background, and religion were
important factors affecting ethnic identity development. Root (1998) and Berry (1997) believe that all of these aspects need to be considered when examining the ethnic identity development of individuals. In this study, the women also had complex factors that affected their development (e.g., socioeconomic status, religion, exposure to African and White American cultures).

Second, both Root (1990) and Berry (1997) reason that ethnic identity models should be nonlinear. They both believe that individuals use different strategies to cope with the various stages in one's life. Therefore, individuals may show different stages at various times. Root (1990) contends that individuals move through the stages in a nonlinear, circular process throughout one's entire life. This nonlinear conceptualization of ethnic identity is similar to Myers and Haggins' (1998) ideas about the process of ethnic identity development. In this study, the women described how they still had shifts in their identity and therefore these findings offer support to the finding above.

Furthermore, Root's (1990) and Berry's (1997) models underscore the importance of the context (e.g., political, cultural, and familial) and its impact on ethnic identity development. In this study, these contextual factors (e.g., home vs. the workplace) impacted the individual's ethnic identity development by causing the shifts in behavior and experience (Berry, 1997). Again, the results of this study discussed how the context and experiences from early childhood affected their ethnic identity choices, and later in life would sometimes cause shifts in their behavior. The importance of context on ethnic identity is supported by this study.

Finally, Root (1990) and Berry (1997) argue that there can be multiple resolutions of this identity crisis. In this study, the women represented different resolutions to their
identity crisis. Mary explained how she describes herself more as White American. On the other hand, Shanaz and Sushila were more heavily identified as Indian and Pakistani, respectively. Kavita, Khema, Manjula, and Padmini combined aspects of both cultures. And Durga, Indira, and Phoolan felt more marginalized. These findings support Berry’s (1980) model of acculturation where there are four outcomes to acculturation: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. However, Berry (1997) reports that certain acculturation strategies are correlated with more positive well-being: integration is most successful, assimilation and separation are in the middle, and marginalization is the least adaptive. Root (1990) on the other hand, believes the four outcomes are healthy resolutions of the ethnic identity crisis.

Therefore it appears that the emotional experience (e.g., feelings of isolation, lack of intimate relationships, rebellious behavior, overachievement, and segmenting self) expressed by Indian American women in this study is similar to Root’s (1990; 1994) findings on the experience of biracial individuals. However, Berry’s (1997) revised model, which incorporates several aspects from Root’s (1990) model, can be applied to the experience of Indian American women. These aspects are: a consideration of the individuals’ complex factors, nonlinear movement through stages/strategies, contextual influences, and multiple resolutions to the identity dilemma.

Again, this study was not able to reveal a clear developmental model of ethnic identity. Ho (1995; as cited in Berry, 1997) also found that “...there is not a set sequence or age at which different strategies are used” (p.12). In addition, Woollett, Marshall, Nicolson, and Dosanjh (1994) studied the ethnic identity development of Asian women in East London. They also found that the women’s “constructions of ethnicity and ethnic
identity are fluid and changing...” (p.119). Therefore, even though this study did not reveal a clear developmental model, one model that describes the ethnic identity development of such a diverse group of people is a very difficult task to achieve and may be impossible. However, this study did reveal six factors that influence ethnic identity development of the Indian American women in this study. These six factors are described below.

Factors that Affect Ethnic Identity Development

Religion. Eight of the ten women described the influence of their religious beliefs on their ethnic identity development. Seven of the ten women were heavily influenced by South Asian religions. In addition, one woman described the influence of Christianity on her identity development. The influence of one’s religious beliefs on ethnic identity development has been absent from the ethnic identity development models reviewed in this study (Berry, 1980; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Root, 1990). However, one model, the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (Myers & Haggins, 1998), discusses the importance of spirituality in identity development. Myers and Haggins (1998) view spirituality at the outcome of identity development, where individuals begin to see a spiritual connection between all individuals. In this study, the eight women described strong religious beliefs from a very early age; however, these beliefs were described as religious practices versus the spirituality Myers and Haggins (1998) are referring to. This may explain the discrepancy between this study’s findings and Myers and Haggins’ (1998) model.

Regardless, this study’s findings highlight the importance of one’s religious beliefs on ethnic identity development for Indian American females. The eight women clearly
explained how their religious beliefs had a major impact on the self-concept and cultural identity. Myers and Haggins (1998) emphasize a spiritual component as necessary for positive mental health among all people, and this study reveals the importance of religion in the lives of Indian American women.

Also, Woollett et al.'s (1994) study also found that religion played an important part in the way the women conceptualized their ethnicity. Since the study was conducted with 32 women of Indian descent, it seems that religion is an important factor to consider when examining the ethnic identity development of individuals in the Indian community.

Finally, Sheth (1995) argues that religion is one method that Indian immigrant groups use to maintain their ethnic identity. Therefore, she found that Indian immigrants are more religious in the United States than they were in India. It appears that the Indian American women in this study may use their religions as a way to maintain ties to their ethnic identity as well.

**Neighborhood demographics.** Seven of the ten women described how they grew up in predominately White neighborhoods. The racial demographics of their neighborhoods affected the access these women had to other people of their ethnicity and to Indian culture. The lack of access lead to a sense of isolation for nine of the women. Berry (1997) does acknowledge that the political climate of the environment does influence the acculturation strategies employed by individuals and should be considered when examining the acculturation of individuals.

**Gender.** Five women reported how their gender affected how they were treated by their parents and the community. These five women received messages that a double standard among Indian American males and females exists.
Maira's (1998) study found that ethnic identity development was largely influenced by gender. Maira (1998) found that mainstream American culture in combination with the beliefs of the immigrant parents promoted the differential treatment and attitudes towards Indian American women. She noted that other studies have also found that Indian immigrant parents have stricter rules for daughters than sons (Agarwal, 1991; Gibson, 1988; Mani, 1993; cited in Maira, 1998). She also argues that enforcing these cultural standards is necessary to maintain the family's reputation.

In a chapter on psychotherapy with Asian American clients, Root (1998) discusses the role of gender and its impact on one's identity development. She explains how Asian families value males more than females which impacts the amount of privileges and resources individuals of the different genders receive. Berry (1997) argues that females may be at more risk than their male counterparts, depending on the status of women in the culture. Since Indian American females are valued less than males (Root, 1998), and women have a more egalitarian value in the United States (Mitchell, 1998) this creates conflict for the women. This study revealed conflict created by expectations of the Indian community and immigrant parents, and the daughters' wishes and desires.

**Early exposure to Indian culture.** Four of the women discussed how early exposure to Indian culture strongly influenced their identity. These women discussed how going to the temple or reading classic Indian texts taught them about their background. Both Padmini and Khema spent several years in India before coming to the United States. The data from their interviews revealed that they were more able to shift between Indian and American contexts than the other women in the study. Therefore, this early exposure to
Indian culture can help Indian American women feel more confident and knowledgeable about their heritage.

**Contextual shifts in identity.** As stated previously, nine of the women discussed how they segment aspects of themselves, and four women described how they specifically shift their identity depending on the context. Therefore different situations may affect ethnic identity. Again, Jayakar (1994) and Roland (1988) both found these shifts among Indian women. Therefore this shift may be a part of Indian culture’s adjustment to varying roles in life. Also, Berry (1997) noted that different environments influenced the use of the different acculturation strategies. Woollett et al. (1994) also found that “These changing contexts make different demands on women, requiring them to rework their ideas about their ethnic identity” (p. 128). Therefore, depending on the context, Berry (1997) and Woollett et al. (1994) noted these shifts. Further studies need to examine if these shifts occur for Indian American men.

**Partner’s influence on ethnic identity development.** After data analysis, it was evident that the ethnicity of the women’s partners influenced their ethnic identity. Phoolan appeared more marginalized like her African American boyfriend, Mary’s choice to identify more with White American culture like her White husband, and Indira explained that she would be influenced by her husband in what aspects of Indian culture she chooses to pass on to her children. The partner’s influence on ethnic identity development was not noted in either Root’s (1990) or Berry’s (1997) models.

One of the women, Manjula, in the study who is married to a White American man did not say how her husband influenced her ethnic identity. Since she described how she is friends with other women in similar situations (Indian American women married to
White American men), it is possible that they share an identity as a bicultural couple
versus identifying as one group or another, as in the examples described above.

Implications for Counseling/Treatment

The results of this study have implications for counselors and community leaders who
work with the Asian Indian American community. In general, the results of this study
support the idea that second generation Indian American women share some similar
experiences with the biracial individuals. Also, some aspects of Berry's model (1997) of
acculturation describe the strategies the women use to negotiate the cultural demands in
everyday life. However, this study could not develop a model that could describe the
progression of stages throughout a lifetime.

These findings suggest that counselors cannot assume that the literature on counseling
Asians or Asian Indian immigrants can be applied to the second generation client nor
were models on ethnic identity development useful for describing the experience of
Indian American women in this study. Therefore, I hope these findings shed light on the
Asian Indian American woman's unique experience.

The findings mentioned above generated several themes for treatment. These areas
are described below.

Pressure for Career

Since all ten of the women reported pressure to seek a high status position, it is
important for mental health professionals working with these clients to examine the
career pressures they face. Asian Indian American women may choose a career path that
may not match their personal interests and talents in order to maintain harmony within
the family. The individual may value harmony above personal choice and therefore be
willing to follow her parents' wishes. In this case, the counselor may want to help the
individual satisfy her interests in other avenues, such as extracurricular activities.

If the individual is experiencing a great deal of conflict between her own desires and
her parents' wishes, family therapy may help illuminate the difficulties in the family.
The counselor can become a mediator between the daughter and her parents and help
each side understand the other. Individual therapy may also aid the woman in developing
some coping strategies in dealing with the pressure she receives from her parents.

In addition, career counseling may be particularly helpful to these individuals. In the
first case, finding a career that fits the parents' desires and the individual's choice could
be helpful. In the latter case, if the parents are unwilling to talk with their daughters
about alternative career choices from the high status professions, the counselor can help
the woman discover other areas of interest.

On the affective level, this pressure to succeed may become a coping mechanism for
these women (Root, 1994). Although, the pressure to succeed initially starts from
parental pressure, individuals dealing with ethnic identity issues may use success as a
form of compensation (Root, 1994) to avoid feeling inferior to others. Therefore,
counselors working with Asian Indian American female clients who are success driven
may want to examine the motivation behind this behavior.

**Sense of Isolation**

Nine of the women reported feeling isolated or had experiences with prejudice. Root
(1994) found that individuals who experience a great deal of isolation might personalize
the experience. By personalizing the events, the individual may become oversensitive to
feeling different or misunderstood (Root, 1994). If this isolation continues for a long

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period of time, depression and self-doubt may arise. Root (1994) argues that depression and self-doubt are more likely to occur for women than men since women are more relationship oriented; these feelings may represent the powerlessness the women feel in their lives.

This sense of isolation may also lead individuals to feel that they lack a connection with others. Root (1994) argues that a connection to others is the basis of self-esteem. Since nine of the women in this study reported feelings of isolation, one can also see the effect the isolation had on their self-esteem. Root (1994) found that biracial women become very sensitive to the connection and disconnection with others. This sensitivity could occur for Indian American women in this study. For example, in this study Mary explained how she feels that her husband still does not understand who she is.

It is important for counselors to explore the women's feelings of isolation in a larger sociopolitical context (Root, 1994). By examining the environment versus the women's loneliness, the counselor can help the client depersonalize her experiences. A support group (Root, 1994) may help the women develop a connection to others and examine how other Indian American women have been affected by a sense of isolation. For example, in this study, Khema explained how a reading group aided her understanding of her life experiences. Also, children would benefit from interventions at an early age. If interventions are done early, the children are less likely to internalize the isolation they experience.

Counselors also need to analyze the women's current self-consciousness that may have developed from the isolation versus labeling her self-consciousness and sensitivity as a dysfunction. A counselor can examine the women's past experiences and emotions
and connect these experiences to issues in the present. Lastly, it may be helpful to explore the connection these women have to several different groups (White American, Asian American, Indian American, African American, etc.). The women can also examine the connections they share with other groups rather than only focusing on the differences between the groups (Root, 1994).

Segmenting of the Self

Nine women described how they segment and hide aspects about themselves from their parents and friends. Root (1994) argued that changes in one’s identity might not be pathological because different events in the individual’s life will influence her self-identification. Therefore, it is important for the clinician to examine his/her own biases about identity. Counselors need to view identity as a fluid, cyclical process versus a static outcome.

In Root’s identity development model for biracial individuals (1990), she theorizes that this segmenting or changing behavior will decrease as one resolves her identity issues. This study found that the women’s differences in identity (around peers versus parents) did decrease with time as described by the two women who are married. Kim (1988; as cited in Berry, 1997) found that individuals will eventually find one acculturation strategy and will use it predominately. However, six of the women described how they still find themselves changing their behavior depending on the context, and four of the women described how their ethnicity shifts according to the context. In addition, two of the women who achieved the ideal state of integration according to Root (1990) and Berry (1997), but they still reported shifts in their identity.
It is important for counselors to acknowledge these shifts and to normalize this behavior among Asian Indian American women and see the behavior as a strategy versus pathology. Again, it is important for counselors to help clients lessen the gap between the different selves that one shares with others. However, it is important to note that six of women in this study, still reported shifts in their experiences. Berry (1997) found these shifts to occur as well.

In addition, Jayakar (1994) found that Indian women switch their behavior at work and at home. She argued that family members might not be supportive of the woman gaining a sense of independence and identity outside of the home. Jayakar (1994) explains that this constant shifting of behaviors causes a great deal of stress for the woman. She suggests helping the women integrate the different aspects, which may lead to a very individualized sense of self. Also, Jayakar explains how this shifting behavior may be motivated from a need to gain the approval of others. In this case, the counselor can help the client develop an inner sense of evaluation.

Prejudice

Since eight of the women reported incidents where they were threatened or teased due to their ethnicity, it is important for counselors to understand the implications of prejudice on well-being. When prejudice is based on one's physical appearance this increases one's sense of self-consciousness (Root, 1994). Therefore, if a counselor works with an Indian American woman, the counselor should be cognizant of the "reality base for feeling constantly judged and evaluated" (Root, 1994). Further research would need to be conducted to examine if this experience is similar for other Asian American women.
Also, as Durga reported comments about her skin color, these women can be stereotyped as "exotic." Although this comment was meant as a compliment, it emphasizes the physical attributes of the person and can put these women at risk for placing an overemphasis on their physical appearance (Root, 1994). Root (1994) argues that women may then pick partners who exoticize them in order to feel a higher sense of worth.

Counselors can educate women about the prejudices they may experience or have experienced due to their physical appearance. Counselors and community leaders can also teach individuals about defending themselves when they encounter prejudice (Root, 1994). These tools will help women to feel more empowered versus personalizing the incidents of prejudice (Root, 1994).

**Dating pressures**

Since eight women felt pressure to meet their parents' expectations when it comes to choosing a partner, it is important for community leaders and counselors to recognize and examine this pressure. None of the previous literature addresses the pressure these women experience.

Counselors can aid these women through individual and family therapy to explore the issues surrounding one's choice of a partner. If the woman desires to follow her families' wishes, the counselor can help the woman and her family explore the benefits and consequences of this decision. If the woman wishes to choose her own partner or a partner whom her parents do not approve of, the counselor can work with the individual and the family. The counselor can provide support to the woman during this conflict and serve as a resource generator if she is thrown out of the family.
Counselors may also want to explore the possible lack of romantic relationships among their Asian Indian American clients. If the client is avoiding a romantic relationship to elude dealing with deeper identity issues (Root, 1990), the counselor may want to explore and aid in resolving the conflicts.

However, the client’s parents may be another factor that prohibits the client from seeking a romantic partner. Since Indian culture has strong taboos towards sexuality (Jayakar, 1994), Indian American women may avoid romantic relationships in order to avoid the consequences from parents and the community. Counselors and community leaders will need to support and provide coping mechanisms for these women if they choose to develop romantic relationships. Therefore the counselor should not only look at this avoidance as an intrapsychic phenomenon, but also a contextual and cultural dilemma within the community.

Last, Jayakar (1994) states that the taboos in Indian culture regarding sexuality have caused many Indian women to have “no idea how they were ‘supposed’ to feel in a relationship or during sexual relations” (p.174). Counselors may need to educate women about “healthy” relationships and sexuality. This education is extremely important since these women may not receive guidance elsewhere.

The Power of Religion

Eight women stressed the importance of their religious beliefs. Although only one of the previous studies have stressed the importance of religious beliefs (Woollett et al., 1994), this study also found that religion was very important to the women’s everyday lives.
Counselors and community leaders need to pay special attention to the religious beliefs of clients within this community. If the individual has strong religious ties, the counselor may want to link the individual to temples, mosques, or churches. These ties could then lessen the effects of isolation that these women reported feeling. Also, counselors can learn about the individual’s worldview through their religion. This knowledge will aid in the therapeutic relationship and will also help to conceptualize the client’s issues more effectively.

Also, religious leaders can develop seminars and lectures on the various issues discussed in this study. Indian American women may be more open to discussing their beliefs within a religious context versus individual counseling. By incorporating their experiences within a religious setting, these individuals may gain the support they need. However, these women may feel uncomfortable to address their dating and sexual concerns in this context. Therefore, more resources are needed where these women can gain access to the information they may need.

Feelings of Guilt

Since seven of the women reported feelings of guilt when they do not follow their parents’ wishes, it is important for therapists to examine these feelings with their Indian American clients. In Liem’s (1997) study which compared the feelings of shame and guilt among first and second generation Asian Americans, and European Americans, Liem found that the second generation used a combination of responses from both European Americans and first generation Americans. The first generation Asian Americans were more likely to feel guilty and ashamed when doing any kind of behavior that may affect others. Therefore, the idealized person, according to the first generation,
is someone who considers his or her affect on others. Liem (1997) noted that second-generation Asian Americans may have "...conflict, in which the idealized, mature selves envisioned by parents and daughters are incompatible" (p.383) since the second-generation revealed an evaluation of self, in addition to, examining the impact of one's behavior on others. Since Liem (1997) argued that an individualized self is the "...shared understanding...of psychological maturity" within the European American culture, then conflict is inevitable for second generation Asian Americans because their immigrant parents do not share the same definitions of self.

An "American" Sense of Independence

Since six of the women stated that they had gained a sense of independence from American culture, it is important to examine how this impacts the women. Jayakar (1994) has found that the gender roles within an Indian family are very defined, with the males at the top of the family. She also described the traditional bride as someone who is flexible and accommodating to the needs of others. Women who develop a more independent set of beliefs and behaviors may feel frustrated when they are confronted with the Indian cultural norms (Jayakar, 1994).

Counselors can help women talk about their frustrations regarding their developed independence. Family therapy may help everyone adjust to the woman's independence. Community leaders can prepare parents and partners about the sense of independence the Indian American woman may feel. They can also help parents and partners examine the consequences and benefits of the independence, as well as the mixed messages they may be sending. By discussing the issue and preparing the community about this sense of independence, people may be more flexible and willing to adjust to Asian Indian
American women than trying to mold the Indian American woman into a traditional Indian woman.

**Coping Styles**

Root (1990) and Gibbs and Sweet (1991) argue that biracial individuals deal with the stress of being biracial in two ways that are similar for the Asian Indian American women in this group. Five women described how they dealt with the stresses at home by rebelling. Since Asian Indian families are very hierarchical (Jayakar, 1994), this rebellious behavior may not be seen as normal adolescent behavior. Again, it may be helpful for religious leaders, counselors, and community leaders to educate Asian Indian parents about this behavior. A support group for individuals may also help them discuss their frustrations that may be leading to the rebellious behavior.

Another way these women and biracial individuals cope is through achievement (Root, 1990; Gibbs & Sweet, 1991). Three women explained how they graduated early to move away from their parents. Since graduating early can be seen as a positive behavior because it makes their daughter appear smarter than her peers, it is important for Indian parents to examine their daughter’s motivation for early graduation. Again, educating parents about the dynamics underlying this behavior may be helpful. Also, providing the women with a support group may help to alleviate the need to avoid and escape the tension at home.

**Directions for Future Research**

This study examined the general experience and factors that impact the ethnic identity development of Asian Indian American women. Many fruitful paths for future research could stem from the findings in this study.
For instance, since so little research has been conducted on the long-term effects of prejudice on Asian Americans (Young & Takeuchi, 1998), it would benefit counselors and researchers to examine this area further. This study clearly indicates that dealing with prejudice is a common experience of Indian American women. By replicating this study with Indian American women in different parts of the country, we can develop more findings on intragroup differences. These findings will further enhance the understanding of the complexities among Asian American groups.

In addition, since most studies have been conducted on the West coast (Uba, 1994), examining the contextual factors that affect the women’s experiences in other areas of the country would be helpful. This study found that Indian American women in the Midwest do have different experiences than those on the West and East Coasts. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted in the Midwest using Asian Indian Americans as participants.

This study revealed how complex ethnic identity development is for Indian American women and found that no general pattern of ethnic identity development over time. It will be important to examine the appropriateness of a model that tries to encompass the diverse range of experiences into one model. In addition, the findings from this study support future challenges in creating an instrument that could measure the specifics of ethnic identity development of the individual. A longitudinal study may yield more information about the development and changes in ethnic identity over one’s lifetime. Therefore further research needs to be conducted to examine the construct of ethnic identity in more detail. Also, there was not an adequate amount of information of the
participants' early experiences, more research can be conducted on the early experiences of Asian Indian Americans.

An observational study on the ethnic identity development of Asian Indian American women may contribute more information to the field. An observational method may help to articulate the shifts in identity in specific contexts. This would expand the literature in this area from quantitative and qualitative findings to observational results. A researcher may be able to determine the idiosyncrasies of ethnic identity development that qualitative and quantitative methods have been unable to produce.

Finally, a major finding in this study revealed the importance of the participants' religious beliefs. Examining the relationship between religious beliefs and ethnic identity development further may yield interesting findings. A study that focuses solely on Indian American women with Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, or Christian beliefs may reveal interesting findings.

Limitations of the Study

Several methodological issues in this study will be discussed. Second, limitations regarding generalizability are provided. Finally, issues in measurement will be discussed.

Methodology. Although attempts were made to minimize experimenter bias through the use of another interviewer, subjectivity still existed throughout the research process. Also, the sampling method sought individuals who were willing to openly share their experiences as daughters of Indian immigrants. Therefore, the results in this study reveal the experience of women who are more open about their experiences. Those women who were unwilling to participate in the study may have experiences that are different than individuals who are more open. The chain sampling technique could have also excluded
other participants who might have shared different information, but were not friends with the women who were the initial women I interviewed.

Furthermore, since some women were uncomfortable providing data about the income in their household, it is unclear what range of economic backgrounds was represented in this study. A study that focused solely on the economic differences among Indian American would be interesting.

There was also a range of the time women came to the United States. This range could have contributed to the findings in this study. A study that focused solely on individuals who were born in the United States may produce different results.

Although the two women who served as research colleagues were White American and aware of ethnic minority issues, they did not have knowledge about Asian Indian culture. This lack of knowledge may have limited the amount of feedback and alternative perspectives they were able to provide to me.

Finally, the focus of this study was very broad, although in depth, since it is the first of its kind. A study that focuses on one aspect of the many that were in this study (ethnic identity development, prejudice, segmented self, etc.) may yield more detailed findings.

**Generalizability.** One limitation of this study is its limited generalizability. Since this study only examined the lives of 10 Indian American women in Ohio, the findings are limited to women who share similar characteristics.

Second, the women may have shared a limited amount of their experiences due to the procedural design of the study and cultural norms. Since I met the participants in person only one time, and had phone contact with them after the initial interview, I may have obtained less information than if I had interviewed them in person on an ongoing basis.
Third, cultural beliefs against sharing information about the family could have prohibited complete openness about one’s experiences. I tried to include the “Reflections from the Interview” to avoid this possibility, but only one individual chose to complete this form of data collection.

**Measurement issues.** There could be limitations to this study due to the reliance on the women’s self-report. Careful measures were taken to ensure credibility (second interview and the optional reflections on the interview), however, the study was entirely based on the women’s recollection of events and description of experiences.

The questions in the interview guide include personal questions regarding painful experiences with prejudice, relationships with parents, and significant others. These sensitive topics may have contributed in me asking less about these issues, and the participants may have provided fewer details about these issues.

**Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, this study explored a new area of research on the experience of second-generation Indian American women. On a personal level, these women’s experiences revealed the complex nature of the ethnic minority experience of Indian American females in the United States. Theoretically, this study has provided confirmatory research to view ethnic identity development as a more complex and fluid construct than initially conceptualized (Berry, 1997; Maira, 1999; Root, 1990). Clinically, counselors and community leaders can utilize the vast amount of literature on the biracial experience to understand the experience of isolation and coping mechanisms utilized by Indian American women. It is my hope that the results of this study are empowering and validating to Indian American women.
Finally, this dissertation reveals the struggle and isolation Asian Indian American women undergo in defining themselves. Many of the women's stories support the quote from Indu Krishnan in the introduction of this dissertation:

Growing up in two cultures, or coming from one to live in another, is like moving in two directions at once, or like being in two places at once. For those who haven't experienced it, it seems a simple matter of picking and choosing the best of both worlds, but for some of us it is more painful than that.

Her description reveals how painful it can be to resolve the cultural differences when one is exposed to both Indian and American cultures. However, the 10 women in this study showed me the incredible strength of the human spirit in seeking out ways to deal with the cultural conflicts. It is my hope that the strength of these women can be collectively shared with Asian Indian American women who follow in their footsteps.
APPENDIX A

Solicitation of Interest Form
Dear (Participant's name):

I am requesting your participation in a dissertation research project which is examining the experience of Indian American women. The principal investigator is Pamela Highlen who is an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department at The Ohio State University. I am working on my doctorate in counseling psychology and would greatly appreciate your participation on this research project. Currently, not a single study exists on the Indian American female experience. Therefore you will be making history with your participation, which will hopefully help other Indian American women.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to be involved in two interviews. The first interview will last approximately two hours where you can share your experiences as an Indian American woman and the process that has lead you to develop your identity. Questions in the interview will be related to your peers, career choice, racism, dating and marriage, relationship with your parents, and any advice you can give to other Indian American women. This interview will be taped on audio cassette and your identity will be kept confidential.

The second interview will last approximately one hour where you will check the accuracy of the transcribed initial interview and will receive a summary of themes that emerged from the initial interview. I will also ask you to keep a journal of any thoughts (see "Reflections on the Interview" directions) from the initial interview. I will ask you for your journal during our second meeting when you review the transcribed initial interview. I will insure your anonymity by excluding any information that could identify you.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Please contact me (299-3158) to ask any questions you may have. I hope you will choose to participate in this very meaningful project.

Sincerely,

Pamela Highlen, Ph. D.

Meera Rastogi, Ph. D. Candidate
APPENDIX B

Consent Form
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

**Indian American Women: The Process of Defining Herself**

Signed: ____________________________
(Principal Investigator)

Signed: ____________________________
(Person authorized to consent for participant – if required)

Witness: __________________________

Date: 09/08/98

Signed: ____________________________
(Participant)
APPENDIX C
Demographic Questionnaire
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

This form will be used to provide me with general information that we may not cover in the interview. I will collect this form at our first meeting.

Please answer the following questions (all of the information provided will be kept confidential).

Age: Birth date:

In what year did your father come to the United States?

In what year did your mother come to the United States?

Were you born in the United States?

If not, when did you come to the United States and where did you live previously?

What is your father's highest level of education?

What is your mother's highest level of education?

What is the farthest level of education you have completed?

What is your income if (1) you are the sole source of financial support, (2) you and your partner or spouse, or (3) if supported by your family of origin, your parent's approximate income?

What is your current profession?

Are you currently single, married, divorced, or widowed?

What would you call your ethnicity? Indian, Indian American, American, Asian, other?

What is your sexual orientation?

What is your religious orientation?
APPENDIX D

Pre-Interview Guide
PRE-INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am interested in examining and understanding the experience of female children of Indian immigrants. I would like to know what you think about your experiences with dating/marriage, the Indian community, academics, peer relationships, racism, and your family.

Please use this sheet as a way to prepare and think about the issues we will discuss in the interview.

General Questions:

Peer Relationships
Select of friends
Changes in selection process over time

Dating
Possible restrictions on dating
Possible expectations of whom you should date
Dating outside of your ethnic group

Community
Indian and/or American community influences on your identity.
Role models
Community's approval
Consequences of the community
Ways the Indian and White/European American communities' expectations differ

Academics and Career
Any pressure you receive from your parents to succeed academically/career
Parents influence in career choice
Incidents at work related to ethnic identity.

Religion
Influence on identity

Racism/Society
Describe incidents, if any.

Acculturation
How is Indian culture reflected in your life?
How is American culture reflected in your life?
Which parts of the culture do you retain and why?
Ethnic Identity
Path to developing yourself as an Indian American woman. Describe important experiences that have shaped your identity development related to being Indian and American.

Segmented Self Questions
Any from your parents to carry on Indian culture? Describe your role as a woman in the family. Does this differ from society's expectations? Consequences of your parents' disapproving of your choices? Any pressure to present yourself differently in front of parents or community, versus peers? How much of your meaningful experiences do you share with your family? Are there parts of yourself that you share with your family and not with your friends? If so, can you describe these parts. Are there parts of yourself that you share with your friends and not with your family? If so, what parts do you share with your friends?

Tension Between Cultures
Greatest conflicts between you and your parents. Were the conflicts different from non-Indian peers? Describe how these conflicts have changed over time.

Future
If you decide to have children, what do you believe are important aspects to teach them about your cultural background? What advice would you give the parents of Indian American children? What advice would you give the daughters of Indian immigrants?

Misc.
Is there anything you would like to add that you have not discussed about your experience as an Indian American woman?
Observational Notes

Setting:

Environmental Distractions:

Interviewer:

Length of the interview:
Date of the interview:

Interviewee:
  Non-verbal communication:
    Attitude towards interviewer:
    Speech:
    Physical/mental/emotional readiness:

Second Interview:
  Date:
  Time:
  Place:

Additional Notes:

Referrals:
Methodological Notes:

Equipment problems & suggestions:

Logistics:

Which research questions did the interviewee struggle with?

What information was not obtained?

Process/ Suggestions from interviewee?

Mental note to pursue with next interviewee:
Theoretical Notes:

Main themes and issues in the interview:

Thoughts and insights on the meaning of what the co-investigator was saying:

New hypotheses, suggestions, guesses suggested by the interviewee:

Acculturation Process:

Segmented Self:

Ethnic Identity:
Feelings about the interview:

Feelings about the interviewee:

Doubts:

Anxieties:

Pleasures:
APPENDIX F

Reflections from the Interview
Reflections from the Interview

Please write whatever thoughts arise from our initial interview. Please try to keep your comments focused on the various questions we discussed during the interview. I have listed the categories I used for the interview below. Please feel free to use a journal or word processor to keep track of your thoughts. Thank you.

Peer Relationships
Dating
Community
Academics & Career
Racism
Acculturation/ Indian Culture/ American Culture
Ethnic Identity
Pressure to maintain separate selves for family and friends
Tension between cultures
Advice
APPENDIX G

Follow-up Letter
Date

Dear Participant,

Hello! I hope you are having a nice summer. I am in the last stages of the project and plan to have the dissertation defended by January of 2000. I have tried to reach you by phone and by letter; however, it has been very difficult to contact you this summer. I would like to have all of the second interviews completed by September 26. This gives us 5 weeks to complete your portion of the project and then you are done :)

In order to finish the project I need you to send me several items:

- First, I need you to fill out the correction sheet from the transcribed and coded interview. I have included another form with this letter. If you have misplaced the transcript and need another copy please let me know. Or if you do not have any corrections please write that on the form and send it to me.

- Second, I need you to fill out the form about your parents (Interview 2 form), which is included with this letter.

- Third, since I have had trouble getting into contact with most of the women in the study, I have decided to conduct the second interview over the phone. The interview will be taped and will only last 30-60 minutes. Please schedule a phone appointment with me by Monday, August 30. I will call you on the 23rd if I have not heard from you just to make sure you have received these materials.

- Fourth, please include the optional “Reflections on the Interview” in the large envelope. I have included another copy of the directions. The reflections can include poems, journal writing, or any other comments you want to include since you participated in this project.

Again, please know that your contribution has been so valuable thus far. I would like to complete the project as soon as possible. Therefore, as soon as the second interview is scheduled and completed your responsibility to the project will be complete. Thank you for your time. You may reach me at (614) 299-3158.

Sincerely,

Meera Rastogi, Ph.D. Candidate
APPENDIX H

Member check Form
Member checks: Accuracy of Interview 1 transcript:
What changes would you like to make in the interview transcript?

Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:
Page ____:

Any other information you would like changed?

Comments or questions?

I have included my "Reflections on the Interview" with this paper:   Yes  No (circle one)

Thanks again for completing this form!!

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APPENDIX I

Second Interview Questions
Interview 2

Please complete the following questions. Thank you again for your time and commitment to this project.

Family History:
Why did your father come to the United States?

What state in India did he come from?
What did he do for a living when he came to America?

What does he do now?

Why did your mother come from India?
What state in India did she come from?
What did she do for a living when she came to America?

What does she do now?

Was their marriage arranged or was it a love marriage?

Do you have any questions about the transcript or this project?
INTERVIEW GUIDE

I am interested in examining and understanding the experience of female children of Indian immigrants. I would like to know what you think about your experiences with dating/marriage, the Indian community, academics, peer relationships, racism, and your family.

I will use this sheet as a way to check off the topics we discuss and then towards the end of the interview I will address some of the topics we have not yet discussed.

General Questions:
Peer Relationships
How did and do you select your friends?
Has your selection process changed over time?

Dating
Some Indian American women report restrictions on dating that were different from non-Indian peers and some do not. Where would you place yourself on this continuum?
If you had restrictions/guidelines how has this affected how you define or decide who would be your best partner or what characteristics would be important in a partner?
Most parents have expectations about whom you should date, what is your opinion about your parent's expectations?
Have you dated outside of your ethnic group? If you have, tell me about your experience.
* Do/did your parents pressure you to have an arranged marriage? Can you describe any specific incidents related to this?

Community
Please describe how the Indian and/or American community have influenced your identity.
Role models
Community's approval
Consequences of the community
Some Indian Americans report that expectations from the community differ from the White/European American community, do you experience these differences? If yes, name several ways the expectations differ.
* How has your religion affected you ethnic identity development?

Academics and Career
Describe, if any, the pressure you receive from your parents to succeed academically?
Some Indian Americans have reported that their parents have chosen their careers while others have chosen their own path, where do you fit in on this continuum?
* Does you ethnicity affect how you are perceived in the work place?
Racism/ Society
Describe how American society has helped or hindered your identity development.
If you were to go back to the time when you were in grade, middle, and high school were there times when you experienced discomfort/discrimination/harassment/violence for being Indian American or for looking different than the majority in America?

Acculturation
How is Indian culture reflected in your life?
How is American culture reflected in your life?
In comparison, how is Indian culture reflected in your parents' lives?
Some Indian Americans have chosen to keep certain aspects of Indian and American culture. Which parts do you retain and why? (This last question was omitted after the first interview was conducted).

Ethnic Identity
Describe your path to developing yourself as an Indian American woman.
What were important experiences that have shaped your identity development related to being Indian and American?

Segmented Self Questions
Describe, if any, the pressure from your family to carry on Indian culture?
Describe your role as a woman in the family. Does this differ from society's expectations?
How important is your parents' approval for the choices you make?
What are the consequences of your parents' disapproving of your choices?
Some Indian American females report feeling pressure to present themselves differently in front of their parents than around their peers and some do not. What is your experience?
Tell me about the pressure, if any, to become more American?
How much of your meaningful experiences do you share with your family?
Are there parts of yourself that you share with your family and not with your friends? If so, can you describe these parts.
Are there parts of yourself that you share with your friends and not with your family? If so, what parts do you share with your friends?

Tension Between Cultures
Describe, if any, your greatest conflicts between you and your parents.
Were the conflicts, if any, more extreme than what you saw non-Indians going through with their parents?
Describe how these conflicts have changed over time.

Future
If you decide to have children, what do you believe are important aspects to teach them about your cultural background?
What advice would you give the parents of Indian American children?
What advice would you give the *daughters* of Indian immigrants?

*Misc.*
Is there anything you would like to add that you have not discussed about your experience as an Indian American woman?
APPENDIX K

Directions for Transcription
TRANSCRIPTION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Thank you very much for your time and effort to help me complete this project.

2. Set up:
   * Foot pedal, headset, electrical plug, transcription machine.
   - Plug the foot pedal into the left side of the machine, make sure it is in the correct slot marked “F. Contr.”
   - Plug the earphones into the left side of the machine, make sure it is in the correct slot marked “Headph.”

3. Choose one letter to represent the interviewee, e.g. A:
   Use M for the interviewer (me).

4. Any information that identifies the individual should be replaced with an * (e.g., names, university, workplace)

5. Missing information can be shown using dashes ----

6. Difficult to understand information, use brackets with a question mark [?]

7. Unfinished sentences or interruptions use ellipses ...

8. Underline words that are emphasized

9. If a person quotes oneself or another person use quotation marks, (e.g., I said “I am so confused...”) 

Reminders:
   * Don’t forget to save the document every 10 minutes!
   * Make a backup copy on a disk and on your hard drive
   * Again, thank you so much for your hard work and time.
APPENDIX L

Final Code List
CULTURAL CONFLICTS
Rules
--Rules/ Dating
--Dating/Lack of rules/ dating

Parents process

Relationship with parents

Conflicts with parents
--Conflicts with parents/obligation
--Conflicts with parents/consequences

Children process

COPING MECHANISMS
Coping

Transformation in Identity

Segmented Self
--lack of segmented self

CULTURAL INFLUENCES
Indian Influence
--Identity Indian
--Identity Indian/contradiction

Religion Influence
--Lack of religious influence
--Contradiction of religion

Western Influence
--Pressure/ western
--American identified
--Lack of need of western approval

Need for others’ Approval
--White Approval
--No need for western approval
--Approval/ contradiction
--Indian approval
BETWEEN CULTURES
Isolation
--Contradiction in isolation

Demographics

Influence/ bicultural
--bicultural benefits

Dating

Interracial Dating
--Interracial Dating/Differences
--Interracial dating/ Benefits

Cultural conflicts

Influence of cultures

PREJUDICE
Racism
--Lack of racism

Inferiority
--Inferiority/ Beauty

Educator

Cultural mistrust

Internalize
--racism/ internalized
Identify with other minorities

PRESSURE
Pressure
--Pressure/career
--Pressure/spouse
--Pressure Indian Spouse
--Pressure/ culture
--Pressure/ succeed
--Pressure/ impress others
--Pressure/ community
--Pressure/ marriage
--Pressure/ academics
LACK OF RELATIONSHIPS
Lack of intimate relationships

IDENTITY
Transformation/path of identity
--Path of identity/contradiction in identity
--Path of identity/lack of identity change
--Path of identity/change in identity

Role as a woman
--Role as a woman/pressure/woman
--Role as a woman/mixed messages

Role models
--Female Role Models
--Western role models
--Indian role model
--Lack of models

NEEDS/ADVICE
Advice
--Daughters advice
--Parents advice
--Children

MISC.
Life history

Denial obligation

Conflicted Areas/Contradictions
REFERENCES


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