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I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM: THE INTERSECTIONAL
COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCES OF
INDIAN AMERICAN
WOMEN

by

Alexis N. Alexander, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The University of Houston-Clear Lake
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements
For the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE
in Multicultural Studies in Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

MAY, 2018

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by

Alexis N. Alexander

APPROVED BY

Michele Kahn, Ph.D., Chair

Lisa Jones, Ed.D., Committee Member

APPROVED/RECEIVED BY THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Joan Pedro, Ph.D., Associate Dean

Mark Shermis, Ph.D., Dean

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis work to God, without your guidance and unwavering favor I could not have accomplished this goal of obtaining a graduate degree. To my grandfather, Edward “Professor” Yancey, for setting the path of educational excellence many years ago. To my father, Johnnie Alexander for inspiring me to pursue my graduate degree before I even received my Bachelor’s. To my participants, thank you for helping me to realize my educational dream. Finally, to my precious daughter, “Purpose” and all women of color around the world, may you always have the opportunity, resources, and support to pursue *your* educational dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Michele Kahn for supporting me throughout my collegiate experience at the University of Houston – Clear Lake and for introducing me to the world of intersectionality and feminist thought. I would like to thank Dr. Lisa Jones for setting the bar of excellence course after course and for being there for me when I needed her guidance. I would like to thank my mother, Dr. Karen Alexander for continuing to encourage me in my pursuit of completing this thesis work despite the times I wanted to give up. I would like to thank my husband, Ibrahim for his listening ear, unconditional support, and unyielding positivity. I would like to thank my sister, Kimberly for always offering constructive feedback. I would like to thank Rickey Frierson for introducing me to the notion of educational equity and for helping me to see various perspectives of educational issues.

ABSTRACT

I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM: THE INTERSECTIONAL COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCES OF INDIAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Alexis N. Alexander
The University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2018

Thesis Chair: Michele Kahn, PhD.

Indian Americans constitute one of the most academically and economically successful ethnic groups in the United States, however, their higher education experiences have been understudied in recent literature. When their experiences are studied, the data is most often included with data pertaining Asian Americans Pacific Islander Americans (AAPIA) as a whole. When the data is not disaggregated, it postulates that AAPIA's are highly satisfied with their college experience, which is not always the case. The aim of this study was to understand the ways in which Indian American women experience college toward the path of graduation. Specifically, this study aimed to highlight the college experiences of Indian and Indian American women regarding the intersection of

their racial/ethnic and gendered identities. This study also includes recommendations for colleges to consider when working with diverse students and recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Asian American population is one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. According to Nguyen, Nguyen, Chan, and Teranishi (2016), the Asian American and the Pacific Islander American population is projected to grow by 134 percent to over 35.6 million in the next 40 years. According to the United States Department of Labor in 2015, there were 17.4 million Non-Hispanic Asian Americans and 560,000 Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders living in the United States, representing 5.4 and 0.2 percent of the total population, respectively (2015). Chinese, Indians, and Filipinos make-up the largest share of the Asian American Pacific Islander American population.

In addition to a growing number of individuals, the Asian American population has the highest median income of any group in the United States and highest rate of bachelor or higher degree holders in the country (Pew Research Center, 2013). Further study into these figures will reveal Asian American sub-populations earn post-secondary degrees at different rates. Of the over 48 Asian ethnicities Koreans, Filipinos, and Indians have achieved the highest rates of bachelor degrees while Chinese, Indians, and Koreans, have achieved the highest rates of master or higher degrees (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014). Despite these impressive statistics, there is a lack of knowledge about the inner-workings of these and other sub-populations within the Asian American population. Within the Asian American Pacific Islander American population lie Indian Americans. In the United States, Indian Americans are included as a sub-population that is projected to triple in size by the year 2050 from 14 million to 41

million (Passell & Cohn, 2008). Indian Americans out of every racial and ethnic group including Asian sub-populations have statistically been the most educated and the highest paid in regard to weekly earnings and annual income. Indian Americans also constitute the third largest Asian sub-population in the United States following Chinese and Filipino sub-populations (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Despite such high status with regard to education and income amongst the sub-groups previously mentioned Indian Americans still experience a plethora of social, political, health, and educationally related issues in the United States. The experiences of Indian Americans and specifically, Indian American women have been understudied in recent literature (Lim, 2015). As the Asian American population continues to grow as well as other minority groups, it is critical that educational institutions be proactive in providing comprehensive culturally sensitive resources and support to promote the best college and classroom climates and experiences for all students.

Background

The idea of multiple identities intersecting concurrently and shaping various experiences in one's life was first addressed in the 1960s during the civil rights and feminist movements. Still, some argue that the origins of the concept of intersectionality go back even further when it was presented in Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I A Woman" speech in 1851 (Smith, n.d., Ain't We Women, para. 2). In the speech, Truth stated, "That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place... And ain't I a woman? Look at me" (Halsall,

1997). It was not until 1989, however, that scholar Kimberle Crenshaw coined the corresponding term, intersectionality. Crenshaw made the point that the racism experienced by women of color is different from males of color and the sexism experienced by women of color is different from White women. Thus, antiracism and antisexist practices do not adequately serve women of color. According to Saaticioglu and Corus (2014), “An intersectional approach facilitates contextualized understanding of the experiences of the marginalized” (p. 123).

Collins (2000) expounded on the work of Crenshaw and introduced the concept of “matrix of domination”. According to Collins (2000), the term describes the overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained. In the United States, domination affects such institutions as schools, housing, employment, and government that regulates patterns of intersecting oppressions that Black women face. Collins (2000) also notes that intersecting oppressions are historically based. For example, the confinement of Black women to domestic work sheds light on how race and gender affected the social class experiences of Black women.

In her work, Collins (2000) also discussed Asian Americans and their social position in the United States. The work stated that recent Asian immigrants including Vietnamese and Cambodians jockey to find a racial identity between static Blackness and Whiteness (Collins, 2000). Additionally, it was stated that Asians are encouraged to deviate from Blacks. The author also posits that while being the top minority earns better treatment than Blacks and Native Americans it remains a hollow victory as Asians are still a minority (Collins, 2000).

Mehrotra (2010) proposed a continuum of intersectionality theorizing that aside from racial, class, and gender-based oppression it also includes, “sexuality, ability, nation, and other axes of diversity and social identity” (p. 419). Purkayastha (2012) further explored intersectionality in transnational spaces, essentially how oppression and domination may affect an individual or group depending on where they are geographically located. In his work, Purkayastha (2012) presented an example of two women of color, one a Ugandan Black immigrant and the other, a Ugandan Indian immigrant.

Purkayastha (2012) posits that if these women made their way to the United States they would both suffer from marginalization, but in different ways. The Ugandan Black immigrant may experience the racism faced by African Americans in the United States, while the Ugandan Indian immigrant may experience the racism faced by Muslims or “Muslim looking” people in the United States. Conversely, if both women return to Uganda, they would experience different privileges and marginalization being that the country is majority Black. The Ugandan Black immigrant in this case will be advantaged, but additional intersecting factors would shape her precise social location. On the other hand, if both women visit India, the Ugandan Indian immigrant will be advantaged because Indians are the dominant group in that geographical area. It is important to note, however, that the Ugandan Indian immigrant may still be marginalized if she is Muslim or a low-caste Hindu.

Purkayastha (2012) emphasizes the importance of incorporating space into intersectionality if the framework is “to retain its explanatory power in an increasingly

transnational world where within country and between-country structures shape people's experiences" (p. 60). Purkayastha (2012) also underscores the potentially positive impact of forming communities and meaningful connections in virtual spaces with people in other countries. An example of this would be a South African Black female immigrant living in the United States who is able to maintain connections with her family and friends in her home country via phone or e-mail. These connections may work to minimize some of the negative impacts of the racism she experiences in the United States because her South African relationships are now more salient.

Juan, Syed, and Azmitia (2016), postulate that intersectionality may be the most salient in two social contexts, "family and the racial/ethnic group" (p. 235). They conclude that women construct what it means to be a woman from their racial/ethnic group and their family; thus, women of color may face barriers in their closest social systems. For example, women of color may feel pressure racially/ethnically to conform and uphold the group's traditional values and expectations of women; however, the women may also feel individually that being a woman means being assertive and independent which may violate their group's beliefs. According to Juan et al. (2016), "The negotiation of the push and pull between race/ethnicity and gender is a uniquely challenging life task for women of color with less-than-ideal resolutions" (p. 235).

Research under the theoretical framework of intersectionality has been conducted on several populations such as Black women, Asian Americans, South Asian, and South Asian American women within various contexts including healthcare, the workplace, and higher education. The theory of intersectionality, however, has rarely been applied to

studies focusing solely on women of Indian descent within the context of higher education.

Murphy, Acosta, and Kennedy-Lewis (2013) conducted a mixed methods study on school disciplinary practices within a middle school located in the Southeast area of the United States. The researchers interviewed seven girls of color about their in-school experiences and discovered the girls suffered from the intersectionality of race and gender; Such as being presumed guilty, being denied academic support, and experiencing a hostile school environment encompassing discriminatory disciplinary practices and interpersonal conflicts with educators as well as their peers (Murphy, et al., 2013). The researchers found that these dynamics contribute to the participants' sense of alienation and "tenacity to resist perceived injustices" (p. 604). The researchers posit, "Within the structural and disciplinary domains, empowerment is difficult for our participants because it is predicated on the transformation of societal institutions that reinforce their oppression" (p. 605).

Christopher (2013) studied the influence of race/ethnicity and social class on employment and caregiving practices among Black and Latina mothers. The researcher discovered that regardless of social class, the Black mothers shared the same perspective of not wanting to be a stay at home mom and receiving personal benefits from their employment. The Latina mothers on the other hand had differing perspectives. Some emphasized the importance of spending long hours with their children while some of the Latina mothers who worked subscribed to an ideology in which they spent more hours away from their children, but still identified as their primary caregiver. The researcher

stated that social class was a salient factor in the difference between the perspectives of Black and Latina mothers, although, race/ethnicity, social class, and one's own family background are important in understanding the work/family arrangements of the mothers.

Purpose

Asian American Pacific Islander American women and specifically Indian American women have been understudied in recent literature (Ruzicka, 2011). Not only are they navigating being a woman and a minority, but they are also faced with the possibility of negative interactions or experiences as the result of their nativity, class, sexuality, or other statuses. Because negative experiences related to race, gender, and discrimination can have an impact on mental health, it is imperative that further research is conducted on positive ways to mitigate and diminish such experiences for Asian American women in higher education settings. Previous research has also expressed the need to look at the college experiences of Asian American Pacific Islander Americans through an intersectional lens (Nguyen, et al., 2016). This study is designed to explore the relationship between intersectionality and college experiences of first and second-generation Indian American women.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was:

What are the lived experiences relating to the intersection of ethnic/racial and gendered identities of Indian American women who have obtained a college degree?

Definition of Terms

1. Asian American: “Any individual of Asian descent who has been born, raised, and socialized in the United States, or moved to the United States before the age of 5; also known as second generation Asian American” (Accapadi, 2005, p.18).
2. Pacific Islander: “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.” (United States Census Bureau, 2018).
3. South Asian: “Individuals whose countries of origins include Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. This term also includes individuals of the South Asian diaspora whose ancestors may have settled in other parts of the world including Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, and Europe” (Ruzicka, 2011, p. 25).
4. First-generation: “Individuals born outside of the U.S. and who immigrated to the United States as adults (typically 25 years or older)” (Ruzicka, 2011, p. 26).
5. Second-generation: “Individuals who were born in the U.S. or immigrated to the U.S. as children prior to reaching adolescence implying that their primary socialization occurred in the U.S.” (Ruzicka, 2011, p. 26).
6. Racism: “In the United States and Canada, racism refers to White racial and cultural prejudice and discrimination, supported by institutional power and authority, used to the advantage of Whites and the disadvantage of people of Color. Racism

encompasses economic, political, social, and institutional actions and beliefs that perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between Whites and people of Color” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p.187).

7. Sexism: “The systematic oppression of women by men, under patriarchy. Sexism is based on the belief that men are inherently superior to women. Sexism encompasses economic, political, social, and institutional actions and beliefs that perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power between men and women” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p.187).

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality grew from black feminist perspectives (Mehrotra, 2010). According to the concept of intersectionality, an individual may have a variety of experiences as the result of simultaneous memberships in multiple social groups such as gender, race, class, or sexuality. The idea of intersectionality is not new; however, scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1993) did not attribute the term intersectionality to the theory until 1989. The theory of intersectionality recognizes that an individual is never just one identity at any given point, but multiple identities at any given point. Thus, there may be a poor, gay Indian American woman or an affluent, disabled White man. Intersectionality highlights that the experiences an individual has in any context is influenced by the simultaneous interaction of their multiple social group memberships. Discrimination and oppression cannot be viewed based on race, gender, or class alone, but of all these and other social group memberships interactively.

In general, intersectionality “promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g. ‘race’/ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, etc.). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g. laws, policies, state governments, etc.). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism, and patriarchy are created” (Hankivsky, 2014, p.2). When intersectionality is applied to women and women of color, minority women face deeper degrees of disempowerment as many bear the burden of poverty, childcare responsibilities, and lack of job skills (Crenshaw, 1993).

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the chapter is to provide background information regarding the social position of Indian Americans. This chapter will begin by providing previous literature regarding the concept of this work's theoretical framework, intersectionality and specifically how the theory may be manifested within Asian American and South Asian American and Indian American women populations. This chapter will also discuss the traditional perspectives of womanhood in the South Asian culture, the higher education experiences of Asian American Pacific Islander Americans, Asian American women, and South Asian American and Indian American women. Furthermore, this chapter will explore stereotypes, in particular, how they are formed, and two salient stereotypes applied to those of Asian descent: the model minority and the lotus blossom. Specific stereotypes applied to South Asian and South Asian American women will also be discussed. This chapter will conclude with discussing racial and gender microaggressions, how they are defined, and how they are typically applied to those of Asian descent. The researcher made it a point to include to experiences of Asian American Pacific Islander Americans and Asian American women in order to provide a frame of reference into the social positioning of those who are of South Asian descent, in particular Indian descent in the United States within the specific domain of education.

Intersectionality and Asian American Women

According to Mehrotra (2012), Crenshaw's perspective of intersectionality "emphasizes the way in which identity politics does not attend to intragroup differences, leading to the marginalization of women of color's experiences within both (White)

feminist politics and racial justice movements” (p.17). Current discourses related solely to race deny the validity of gender and vice versa. Deng (2015) noted that individuals fall into specific areas in the social and institutional hierarchy, which places White males at the top, White females before Black males and females of color at the bottom. Bai (2011) found that when the theory of intersectionality is applied to Asian women, the racism experienced may be the same or different from Asian men, who are stereotyped as lacking the ability to be leaders. Likewise, the sexism experienced may be the same or different from White women, as Asian American women are stereotyped to be subservient to men. Seethaler (2013) pointed out that “the intersectionality of what it means to be female, Asian, objectified, hypersexualized, and seen as an eternal foreigner” (p.117). Bai (2011) also noted, “Asian women are not only gendered and objectified through the gaze of heterosexual White males, but also racialized to reinterpret the historical Orientalism embedded in American ideology and colonialism” (p. 11).

Mukkamala (2015) conducted a study utilizing CQR-M and inductive focus group interviews; the intersectional experiences of Asian American women were the focus of the study. From the study, three themes emerged “overaggregation” (p. 101), “gendered/racism and racialized/sexism” (p. 105), and “gender discrimination within the Asian American family” (p. 110). Overaggregation is based on the stereotype that all Asians share the same identity (Mukkamala, 2015). This view leads to discrimination and social exclusion. Assumptions within this category include the belief that Asian Americans all look alike, are hardworking, successful, good at academics, or are bad drivers. Participants also shared that they were viewed as criminals, discriminated against

because of their cultural practices, and their experiences of discrimination were denied or minimized.

The second theme that emerged from the study was gendered/racism and racialized/sexism. Within this theme the participants reported being treated as exotic, being objectified, and “referenced fetishes specific to Asian American women” (p. 106). The women also discussed that they were expected to be petite or small. The data also revealed that the women were viewed as submissive, passive, and invisible. The women stated that as Asian American women, they were perceived as not being capable of leadership roles; they were viewed as service workers with it being assumed that Asian American women and other women of color work in positions such as house cleaners and nail salon workers, especially in the case of Asian American women. The participants in the study also experienced being ignored or talked over in settings such as stores and when they attempted to be assertive, they were retaliated against.

While the preceding themes were directed to Asian Americans by Whites. The final theme of gender discrimination within the Asian American family reveals that Asian American women were treated differently than the males in their family; such as being held to different expectations as women or Asian American women and the family members of the women attempted to define gender roles for the women (Mukkamala, 2015).

Intersectionality and South Asian Women

Ruzicka (2011) and Mukkamala (2015) noted intersectionality is mostly studied through the experiences of primarily Black women, excluding and marginalizing other women of color including Asian American women. In 2017 Indian writer, artist, and activist, Kirthi Jayakumar explored the idea of Indian intersectionality on the basis of gender and caste by stating the following:

To Black Feminism, sexism, class oppression, gender identity and racism are inextricably bound together. To Islamic Feminism, gendered oppression is about discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm. To Feminists in India, gendered oppression needs to be studied through the lens of caste, class, ethnicity and colour. Chinese Feminism is tied to socialism and class issues.

(para. 4)

According to Accapadi (2005), South Asian women encounter many challenges in regard to their multiple identities on a daily basis. The first being the duality of their Eastern/Southern Asian identity vs. Western/American identity. Accapadi (2005) also mentioned that South Asian American women are stereotyped as being one-dimensional and passive in regard to their identity. Culturally, South Asian American women may experience isolation as they struggle to address the pressure of being “carriers of their culture” and the source of their families “izzat” or honor (Ahmed as cited in Accapadi, 2005, p. 58).

Indian Americans

Indian Americans stand out in discourses pertaining to upward mobility because of all of the major Asian American Pacific Islander American sub-populations, as well as any other group in the United States, they hold the highest rate of bachelor or higher education degrees. They also have the highest median annual household income compared with other Asian American Pacific Islander American sub-groups and all other groups in the United States (Desilver, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2013). Following Chinese and Filipinos, Indians are the third largest Asian group in the United States and are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States (Mehrotra, 2012).

According to the Zong and Batalova (2015), Indian immigration can be traced back to 1820. According to the Indo-American Heritage Museum (2017) the first recorded Indian in United States history was a man from Madras who may have visited Massachusetts in 1790. Following the immigration bans of 1917 and 1924, immigration from all parts of Asia to the United States was prohibited. Prior to 1965, only 12,000 Indian immigrants were living in the United States. Beginning in 1965 a major change in United States policy occurred when the Immigration Nationality Act was implemented. This act served as a pathway to the United States for highly skilled Indian immigrants. Further legislature stemming from the Immigration Act of 1990 also contributed to the growth of the Indian population in the United States. As of 2013, there were over 1 million Indian immigrants in the United States

(Zong & Batalova, 2015). “Indian Americans comprise 18% of the Asian American population in the United States” (East-West Center, 2015). Further analysis in the Indian American immigration patterns into the United States reveal that immigration occurred in three waves. The Immigration and Nationality of 1965 ended the quota-based immigration systems previously in place. During this initial immigration wave, preference was given based on skills and family relationships/reunification. The 12,000 Indian immigrants from this wave were well-educated, mainly skilled doctors, engineers, and scientists. The second wave of immigration occurred in the early 1980s, and primarily consisted of family reunification. From this “family” cohort some 30,000 Indian immigrants entered the United States. The third wave of immigration began in the mid-1990s, is considered on going, and has mainly consisted of those skilled in technology with as many as 100,000 computer specialists entering the United States from India annually.

Indian immigrants differ in comparison to the immigration histories of other groups for several reasons. First, the pool of immigrants entering the United States have the financial resources to immigrate, thus virtually no immigrants enter illegally (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Many immigrants arrived in the United States from India as international students or via the H-1B visa program, which is granted to new hires who already hold at least a bachelor’s degree. Additionally, according to Zong and Batalova (2015), Indian immigrants are much more likely to be proficient in English and speak it at home compared to the overall foreign-born population. As a result, many immigrants are

able to settle into middle-class lifestyles and prepare their own child to receive similar levels of educational achievement on United States soil (Zong & Batalova, 2015).

On the other hand, through family reunification some immigrants of middle and working-class status in their home country were able to occupy such professions as restaurant work and driving taxicabs (Mehrotra, 2012). In California, for example, the South Asian Network (S.A.N.) (2009) noted that unlike some South Asians that migrated before them, they (immigrants) face unemployment, job discrimination, workplace exploitation, hate crimes, police brutality, lack of access to adequate health care, poverty, and overt racism on a regular basis. S.A.N. (2009) goes on to state that many recent immigrants live and work in proximity to other minorities in which with whom they share a marginalized existence.

In discourses regarding the economic and educational success of Indian Americans, it is important to take note of a few facts. First, at least 70 percent of Indian Americans were born outside of the United States (Department of Labor, 2015). Second, immigration from India is highly selective and as a result, many who have been chosen to immigrate to the United States have already received a bachelor's or master's degree from their country of origin (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Notably, while Indian Americans have a high college attainment rate Indians in their native country have a much lower college attainment rate of just three percent for men in comparison to one percent of women (Velkoff, 1998). Third, a major factor behind the reported high household incomes is the fact that Indian American families tend to have more relatives living in the home. Finally, many Indian immigrants are concentrated in regions where incomes are

higher (Zong & Batalova, 2015). It is also crucial to note that although Indian immigrants have been in the United States for over 100 years their experiences with the dominant White population as well as other minority groups has not always been peaceful. Asian Americans, despite the lack of discourse regarding it, “have a long history of systemic, institutional, social, and individual racism and oppression” (Mukkamala, 2015, p.13). For instance, in 1907 roughly 300 Indians in boarding houses and mills were attacked by a mob of 500 men in Bellingham, Washington forcing the Indians to flee the area (Rao, 2003). In the mid-1980’s a Jersey City gang emerged called the “Dotbusters” (referencing to the dot or bindi that Indian women often wear) who targeted and attacked Asian Indian Americans (Kumar, 2017). Most recently, in 2017 Srinivas Kuchibhotla, an engineer of Indian descent was shot and killed by Adam W. Purinton, a White veteran of the Navy. Purinton entered a bar in Olathe, Kansas and demanded to know where Kuchibhotla and his friend, Alok Madasani were from and called both men racial slurs. After asking Purinton to leave patrons in the bar as well as the management assured the men that they belonged. Purinton returned sometime after leaving and shot both men, Kuchibhotla fatally. Purinton assumed the men were from Iran (Burch, 2017).

S.A.N. (2009) has noted that today, Indian Americans face overt forms of racism and discrimination in environments such as schools, workplaces, airports, and housing complexes. Such instances include wrongful job terminations, hostile work environments, and restricted access to health and human services.

South Asian Culture, Womanhood, and Racial/Ethnic Identity

Like other individuals of Asian descent during the 19th and 20th century, Indian women were prohibited from immigrating to the United States as a result of restrictive immigration policies. Nonetheless, Indian women of various roles including students, wives, and mothers did immigrate to the United States during the initial wave of immigration to the United States. Also, like their male counterparts, Indian women began arriving to the United States in larger numbers following the Immigration Act of 1965. Today, Indian women can be found in many facets of United States society with politics being a prime example (Bhatt, 2016).

According to Rahman and Witenstein (2014), some key cultural values in the South Asian culture include “collectivism, priority of family, hierarchy of relationships, patriarchy, strict gender roles and importance of education and financial success” (p.1123). In addition, family loyalty is deeply held in the Indian household (Jacobson, 2004). With regard to the traditional family hierarchal system, men tend to be in the top position followed by their wives and children tend to occupy the lowest position in the Indian family. Concerning women, modesty and chastity are values that are salient in the Indian culture. Inman (2006) found that first-generation South Asian women grow up immersed in cultural practices and have intense pressure to maintain culture and group obligations (p. 308).

Dasgupta (1998) stated that second-generation South Asian women are keepers of South Asian heritage in the United States and as a result must be monitored more than sons to prevent “cultural obliteration” or “Americanization” (p. 957). Furthermore,

Ruzicka (2011) argued that South Asian women bear the “heavy weight of preserving family honor or *izzat* (Urdu word for honor)” (p. 46). The close monitoring ensures that the actions of the women are constantly aligned with traditional cultural values and practices.

Mehrotra (2012) studied how South Asian womanhood is linked to marriage and marriageability. A consensus amongst the participants interviewed revealed, “To be a South Asian woman is to be marriageable and to get married” (p. 121). Study participants revealed that gender, sexuality, and kinship are inextricably linked and central to producing South Asian womanhood. The participants voiced that they understood from an early age that marriage was an expectation. Other familial and community expectations including doing well in school, completing household chores, and adhering to curfews were not common amongst their brothers or male cousins. One participant in particular expressed feeling pressure to both do well in school and be a “perfect girl” by ascribing to practices such as “cooking” and being “conservative” and “traditional”.

In the same discourse of marriageability, meeting a certain beauty standard was critical criteria to be considered marriageable. Participants communicated the need to be lighter skinned and fair as acceptable standards of physical beauty. Women who were considered *ugly* were pressured to excel educationally in order to be more attractive to a potential heterosexual partner. Expectations were mainly articulated in familial settings. The consensus amongst the participants were high expectations to perform well in school and once they marry to complete household tasks. Meeting these expectations results in receiving approval from their parents and in-laws. The participants also shared how these

expectations and perhaps not meeting them resulted in such feelings of pressure, guilt, and tension (Mehrotra, 2012).

Manohar (2008) found differences in the perspectives of first and second-generation women in regard to marriage. For the first-generation women, marriage is seen as a result of a relationship between two families rather than two individuals. However, for second-generation women, the view of love and marriage is aligned with that of American culture. Mehrotra (2012) also analyzed the way in which South Asian women identified themselves racially and ethnically. The researcher found differences in how the participants identified themselves based on race and ethnicity and discussed these differences from a generational perspective. First-generation South Asian women were more likely to identify themselves on the basis of ethnicity, specific national origin, or religion in contrast to assigning themselves to a group outside of the White dominant culture, such as “South Asian” – a construct created in the United States. In contrast, the second-generation participants emphasized race or ethnicity with regard to the manner in which they self-identified. The participants of second-generation status also utilized linguistic descriptors in line with United States’ terminology by using terms such as “South Asian”, “South Asian American”, “person of color”, and “Brown”.

Upon arriving in the United States, women from the South Asia diaspora were essentially pigeonholed by expectations that are *typical* of being Indian such as cooking curries and wearing or being able to do henna. The second-generation participants expressed that they were expected to *be* South Asian. It was through the former experience where participants recalled being asked where they were *really from*

following the identification of themselves as “American”. The experiences of the second-generation participants demonstrated the racialization of those outside of the dominant culture in the United States. Additionally, the idea of being *other* was more salient in the experiences of the second-generation participants than those of the first. Overall, Mehrotra (2012) learned that the self-identification of South Asian women was either ambiguous or ambivalent. The way in which the women self-identified based on race and/or ethnicity was unique to their context within the United States.

Perspectives and attitudes surrounding the position of women in Indian society is diverse. Some may view Indian women as oppressed with such evidence as only one percent of Indian women have obtained a bachelor’s degree compared to three percent of men (Velkoff, 1998) or the fact that almost 50 percent of women in India are married before the age of 18 (UNICEF India, n.d.). Despite these facts, women in some geographical areas of India outnumber men in regard to college attainment and even occupy upper levels of political administration (Patel & Crocco, 2003). Still, certain practices, oftentimes a result of cultural and religious beliefs, jeopardize the basic rights of women (Patel & Crocco, 2003).

The role of women in South India is complex. Several factors such as caste position and geographical location (rural versus urban) may affect home, education, and/or work experiences of women living in South India. In particular, a family’s position within the caste system could mean a dire or privileged existence in Indian society. The use of the caste system, a hierarchical social system to which you are born, dates back over 3,000 years (BBC News, 2017).

Asian American Pacific Islander Americans in Higher Education

Asian American Pacific Islander Americans (AAPIA) educational attainment in the United States is impressive. Over half of AAPIA individuals over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree, which is significantly higher than Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Of the AAPIA sub-groups, Indians Americans have the highest rate of bachelor's or higher degree holders with a rate of 75.7 percent (United States Department of Labor, 2015). Despite these figures, AAPIAs remain invisible and marginalized in higher education settings (Musues & Maramba, 2011).

One major reason why AAPIAs are invisible and understudied in scholarship is that they are perceived as the model minority (Sue, Bucci, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007a). Simplified, this term is attributed to a minority who is perceived to have achieved educational and economic success. According to Patel (2010), the model minority stereotype perpetuates the notion that Asian Pacific Americans have “made it” (p. 74) and overcome all racial barriers. Additionally, the stereotype contributes to the assumption that Asian Pacific Americans are politically passive and submissive to authority (Cho, 1997). Seethaler (2013) points out that the stereotype “expects people of Asian descent to assimilate easily into American culture, to be well-off and intelligent, and self-reliant and uncomplaining” (p. 117).

According to a brief on students of color at predominately-White institutions (PWIs), Caplan and Ford (2014) stated in their mixed methods (qualitative/quantitative) study that in contrast to Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans, stereotypes about Asian Americans as the model minority are intensely positive. As an outcome of this

pervasive stereotype the challenges and experiences of Asian Americans in a variety of contexts have often been ignored or if in contrast of the stereotype, treated as anomalies (Museus & Maramba, 2011; Nguyen, et al., 2016). Caplan and Ford (2014) also reported that Asian Americans are more likely to report positive stereotypes about their ethnic groups compared to other minorities. However, the participants also pointed out that these stereotypes often set standards that are difficult to meet, such as always being smart, and are therefore burdensome.

Nguyen, et al. (2016) discovered that the AAPIA population may face college related challenges such as language barriers, lack of health insurance, affordable housing, educational quality, and access to financial aid. They also face negative experiences related to race such as bullying and exclusion. In Caplan and Ford's (2014) study, an Asian American student reported insensitivity regarding race issues by some of the school personnel (i.e. faculty, advisors, and graduate student instructors) in that the faculty they interacted with seemed to reject the participant's place of origin. The participant recalled that when faculty asked her where she was from, she named the United States city where she was raised, and they nevertheless persisted, asking from where were her parents. The participant went on to state that "once they know that her parents are from the Philippines...they believe they thereby have learned important things about her, rather than getting to know her individually" (p.48). In another example, a student of Vietnamese heritage reported being asked if she "speaks Asian?"(p. 42) and when replying that Asian is not a language being asked "Don't you all speak Chinese?" (p. 42).

Nguyen, et al. (2016) reported that previous research regarding AAPIA's has either presented them as highly satisfied with their college experiences by only highlighting a few sub-groups of AAPIA's or has completely ignored their experiences. There are over 48 ethnicities within the AAPIA population and each contain a diversity of educational and economic statuses. Because of the diversity of Asian American sub-groups in their educational and economic statuses, scholars have called for the disaggregation of data in order to gain a clearer understanding of AAPIA's (Nguyen, et al., 2016; Patel, 2010).

Asian American Women in Higher Education

In Caplan and Ford's (2014) study, Asian American women reported that they sometimes feel out of place in their classes because their majors (Physics or Engineering) have few women in them. They also reported that they feared not being taken seriously or confirming the stereotype that women do not belong in those types of majors. A quarter of the participants in the study revealed that their race usually impeded their success in college. One Asian American stated that it could be intimidating if there were "no other student your own race in class" (p. 45). The participant went on to state it "makes you feel weird" and the participant felt that maybe they should not be taking the class. Other participants of color reported that racial/ethnic student organizations as well as university programs for students of color were helpful. A student of South Asian descent mentioned that people have made *jokes* alleging that she is a terrorist. In response, the participant commented "...I kind of looked at him and I was like, 'Shut up, don't say that,' and he was like, 'You know I'm just joking'" (p. 40).

In a study on the career paths of Asian American leaders in community colleges, Irely (2013) discovered that Asian American women frequently felt misunderstood and disfranchised. Additionally, “Asian Americans are not only invalidated as non-whites, but they are also not considered minorities who bring added values of diversity to a committee” (p. 34). Molina (2008) concluded that too often, Asian American women and “women of color feel marginalized, silenced, invisible, or tokenized in institutions of higher education” (p. 10). A participant in Caplan and Ford’s (2014) study revealed that she was reserved about participating (in class) because she feared “being wrong, saying something trivial, and not being able to articulate it well” (p. 54). Two other Asian American women from the study shared that they “stay silent” when they are not sure they are right or if they feel like they cannot express their idea well. Some of the participants also discussed experiencing or hearing stories from other students about sexual aggression and assault. To this, the researchers mentioned that victims are “weighted with shame and fear being blamed, demonized, and re-victimized if they report the incidents that the victims keep the mistreatment a secret or only tell a trusted friend on the premise that they will not tell anyone else” (p. 54). The participants reported that the racist and sexist treatment caused “confusion, sadness, self-doubt, anxiety, and frustration and drained their energy and attention” (p. 40). Some participants reported examples of sex discrimination in the classroom where professors would talk to male students more than female students and take the former’s opinions more seriously than theirs (Caplan & Ford, 2014). One female Asian American student described an experience where she was the target of both sex and raced based aggression. As the

participant walked home, two White male college students yelled from their balcony “Look, an Asian girl” (p. 43). When the participant became upset and ultimately gave the males the finger they replied, “Well fuck you, too! Fucking bitch! Fucking 8-year-old figure” (p. 43). The participant revealed that this incident made her extremely upset. The researchers noted, “sexism is more likely to be considered a less serious problem than racism” (p. 54) which in turn makes the targets fearful about speaking up as they feel this will lead to dismissive treatment (Caplan & Ford, 2014).

South Asian/Indian Americans in Higher Education

With regard to South Asian women, Mehrotra (2012) shared how second-generation participants’ racial and ethnic identity was affected by their collegial experiences. One participant shared how taking a *South Asian Studies* course provoked her to use the term “South Asian” to identify herself. Another study highlighted that involvement in cultural organizations in college was also a powerful way participants maintained and enhanced their cultural identity (Ruzicka, 2011).

Accapadi (2005) explored the factors that motivated South Asian women to join a South Asian interest sorority and how their involvement influenced their identity as South Asian American women. Several themes emerged from this qualitative ethnographic case study including “Leadership/Professional Development”, “Positive Self Image/Pride of Self”, “Breaking Stereotypes/Changing Perceptions”, “Sense of Belonging”, and “Ownership of a South Asian Identity” (p. 83). While this study focused on factors not directly related to intersectionality, I believe it provides helpful information in regard to how being involved on campus helped the participants to change their perceptions and

challenge stereotypes placed on South Asian American women. One participant expressed “South Asian women are supposed to be quiet and shy and submissive, you know, they are not supposed to go out and have fun. They are not supposed to have their own organization and run things on campus...” (Accapadi, 2005, p. 90). Accapadi (2005) stated that the “recurring perception of South Asian women as shy, quiet, submissive was a common point of concern and internal struggle” (p.90) among participants. Another participant mentioned that South Asian American women may sometimes be seen as “innocent, naïve, and sometimes ignorant” (p. 91). In addition, they endured being seen as a “perpetual foreigner” (p. 31) and being seen as “bitches” (p.92) by South Asian men because they were counteracting the expectation of being “submissive” (p. 92). The participants shared that they felt it was their personal responsibility to combat such stereotypes and labels and that involvement in the sorority and the interaction it provided empowered them to do so.

Nakiboglu (2005), in a qualitative study, explored the effects of the model minority stereotype on the college experiences of Indian American students at the University of Pennsylvania. One study participant explained that being perceived as an expert at math by his classmates contributed to both feelings of resentment and anxiety. Other participants showed ambivalence about how the myth affected them chose to stay under the radar in order to protect their sense of security on campus, others, meanwhile expressed frustration about being “typecasted” (p. 148) as well as discomfort, bitterness and attempted to counter the “brand of damaging propaganda” (p. 227). Nakiboglu’s (2005) study also presented the notion that Indian American students may sometimes

counter the stereotype by lying to professors, plagiarizing, and cheating as a “direct result of having to live up to the high standards these students are held to by their families, ethnic communities, and the larger American society” (p. 149).

Nakiboglu (2005) also discovered that the events of September 11th and its aftermath contributed too many participants feeling “conflicted and more marginalized” (p. 226) than before. While coping strategies varied, most of the Indian American students seemed reluctant to speak out against campus and community-based racism and intolerance. Still, for the participants’ college seemed to be a place where many of the students rediscovered as well as reoriented themselves as Indian Americans. The study noted that for higher education professionals it is crucial for them to understand the pressure that some children of immigrants face. Additionally, it is important that the students be allowed to come into their own by exploring careers and areas that they are interested and strong in and not the ones that are expected of them. Finally, performances, recitals, and other forms of production that emphasize ethnicity and culture help “youth collective sense of identity” (p. 230).

Although Deng’s (2015) open-ended interview and grounded theory study focused on Chinese working-class women, Deng (2015) noted that Chinese women might have a greater responsibility to take care of the family, which can affect their ability to further their education. He concluded that if Asian women want to pursue higher education they must find a balance between their family and studies. In addition, Deng (2015) found that while Chinese immigrant women recognize the importance of

education, it is important that they gain family and community support in order to attain it.

Stereotypes

The development of a stereotype, whether racial or ethnic may be more complex than generally perceived. According to Martin, Hutchison, Slessor, Urquhart, Cunningham, and Smith (2014) stereotypes help to ease the cognitive burden of processing social information by “providing a system of easily learnable, simplified, highly structured relationships, whereby group membership indicates the possession of a relatively small number of associated attributes” (p.1777). Martin et al. (2014) learned that as information is transmitted it is transformed from complex to a more simplified nature. In regard to the formation of cultural stereotypes, the researchers found that “the process of repeatedly passing social information from person to person can result in the unintentional and spontaneous formation of cultural stereotypes” (p. 1783). Through the repeated process of information transmission, the task of remembering specific attributes becomes increasingly simplified until it is systematically categorical. When this process occurs over the course of generations almost all specific attributes are lost and categorical features is then used to make inferences.

Stereotypes can contribute to false assumptions and discrimination of certain groups (Aapolloni, 2016). The threat of confirming a stereotype can manifest itself and interfere with the intellectual functioning of the student especially on a standardized test (Steele & Aronson, 1995). When considering the various stereotypes surrounding the AAPIA population the salient example is the model minority stereotype and for AAPIA

women, the oriental fantasy. According to Bai (2011), media portrayals of a certain social group, particularly an ethnic minority group, have significant bearing on how mainstream society views and treats members in the group. Media representation of groups has been found to have a significant impact on society and self-identification of minorities.

The Model Minority: A Racialized Experience

The term “model minority” was first coined during the feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960’s. The term originated in United States society in a 1966 *Time* magazine article written by William Peterson (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2016). The media further perpetuated the model minority stereotype. One such instance being a *Time* magazine article entitled “Those Asian American Whiz Kids” which featured a group of Asian American teens accompanied by textbooks and computers on the cover. A later article by the same publication stated that the images in the first article “...codified hurtful beliefs that Asians and Asian-Americans were one-dimensional: that they were robots of success, worshippers of the alphabet's first letter, study mules branded with their signature eyes” (Linshi, 2014, para. 1). Sadly, when members within the Asian American population do not fit the model minority mold they are seen as anomalies and are not given the proper concern and investigation that they deserve.

The model minority stereotype results in Asian Americans being excluded from discussions of diversity (Linshi, 2014). With specific regard to South Asian women, Ruzicka (2011) found that the model minority stereotype resulted in immense pressure placed on the children of first-generation immigrants. The participants internalized the stories of their parents “overcoming adversity” (p. 198) and thus creating a need to

perform well in order to “repay their parents for their sacrifices and challenges” (p. 198). Still, some of the participants shared that these internal pressures resulted in feelings of “inadequacy or hopelessness” (p. 199) in regard to being able to fulfill standards.

The Exotic Submissive Sex Kitten: A Gendered Experience

The modern stereotypes attributed to Asian American women are the result of historical immigration practices. The Immigration Act of 1917 banned immigration from Asia to the United States. This prohibition was mainly geared toward individuals from Japan and was a direct result of United States and Japanese conflict. As American men had either met and fell in love with or married Japanese women, attempts were made to permit Asian women to immigrate; however, the attempts were unsuccessful (Suzuki, Muninder, Ahluwalia, & Alimchandani, 2012).

Later, when Asian women did immigrate to the United States, limited economic opportunities relegated those who had to work outside the home to petty traders, bar girls, laundresses, house cleaners, and prostitutes (Seller, 1994). Conversely, higher-class Asian women found work as teletype operators or opened knitting factories (Seller, 1994). For lower-class Asian women the path to economic stability was dependent on “Americanization” with English lessons being a means of achieving it. English lessons, however, were initially only available to men. Women were deliberately barred based on the argument that only men worked outside of the home, although this was not the norm for all Asian families.

According to Bai (2011), “lotus blossom” and “dragon lady” are the two most used categories that characterize Asian female images in a gendered and racialized

manner. The notion of the lotus blossom paints Asian women as sexually submissive objects simply around for White males. According to McMahon (2014), if an Asian woman *triggers* the lotus blossom stereotype she may have to provide evidence that she is as competent as White women or Asian American men, despite the model minority stereotype. According to Cheong (2006), the “dragon lady” stereotype portrays Asian women as both dangerous and seductive. These contrasting traits in turn create women who may be treated as degrading figures. Liang and Peters-Hawkins (2016) also noted that in addition to being stereotyped as docile, yet sexually capable, over driven Asian women may be stereotyped as “tiger moms”.

Pyke and Johnson (2003) discovered in a qualitative study that women in Vietnam and Korea found their gender constrained. The women described having little authority to make their own decisions, not having their own individual identity, and it being emphasized that their primary role is to be of service to men. Immigration to the United States, however, and the resulting dependence on women to bring in income changes this dynamic. It is through this process that Asian women immigrants find themselves in more power to make decisions, receiving more assistance with housework, and more autonomy. Still, this dynamic is not absolute and male dominance is still present in family hierarchal systems, where daughters are expected to be home and perform household chores when they are out of school while sons are not.

Stereotypes of South Asian Women

While there is a paucity of research on the specific gendered stereotypes against Indian or South Asian women, Murray and Nadeau (2016) focused on how the

Bollywood film industry in India continues to perpetuate gendered stereotypes of Indian or South Asian women. According to the authors, 21st-century Hindi films continue to present and portray women in stereotypical roles as either “damsels in distress who need to be rescued by knights in shining armor or the ideal devoted wives, self-sacrificing mothers, loyal sisters, or dutiful daughters in law” (p. 135). Murray and Nadeau (2016) go on the note that unlike the roles of some men who in some cases may be willful, women conversely are expected to be ideal and uphold values and morals even in the event that they are physically or emotionally abused. Even at the blockbuster level, the roles of women in Bollywood films reinforce stereotypes of women as “young, beautiful, obedient” (p. 135) and “always placing their families before themselves” (p.136).

In addition to these patterns of thought, Murray and Nadeau (2016) also underscore that the films produced by Bollywood posit, “only marriage and motherhood gives them any substance and makes them worthy of respect” (p.135). Building on the previous perceptions held by others of South Asian women, Bannerji (1993) observed in a similar manner that the dominant narrative of South Asian women has typically included descriptors such as “passivity, docility, silence, illiteracy, uncleanness, smell of curry and fertility...” (p.147). Inman (2006) argues that second-generation South Asian American women confront some significant challenges as they are expected to serve as the primary transmitter of their cultural values and traditions as well as face the stereotype of the model minority who excels academically and professionally.

Racial Microaggressions

According to Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, and Esquilin (2007b), “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (p. 271). These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being “innocuous” (p. 273). Racial microaggressions can cause individuals of color to feel inferior or invalidated and contribute to mental health issues such as depression (Mukkamala, 2015; Williams, Phillips, & Hall, 2014).

Portman, Bui, Ogaz, and Trevino (2013) presented several examples of microaggressions that students may face in the classroom on part of faculty. Notable examples of the microaggressions that faculty may inflict on students include, singling out students in class because of their backgrounds, for example, calling on an Asian student to share their opinions on a topic concerning Japan. Another example could be assuming that all African Americans have knowledge about poverty and the *ghetto* by asking them to speak on their experiences in class (Portman, Bui, Ogaz & Trevino, 2013, para. 6). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) found that racial microaggressions create negative climates for African Americans and often lead to emotions such as self-doubt and isolation (p. 69).

Sue, et al. (2007a) defined three forms of microaggressions in their qualitative study. The three forms include “microassault”, “microinsult”, and “microinvalidations” (p. 73). Microassaults are explicit forms of racism that may be in the form of racial

epithets, behavior discrimination, or offensive visual displays such as cartoons.

Microinsults are behavioral actions or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, or demeans a person's racial identity or heritage. Microinvalidations are actions that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experience of a person of color.

In Sue, et al.'s (2007a) study of the racial microaggressions experienced by Asian Americans, several themes emerged, such as participants feeling like "perpetual foreigners" (p.73). Participants were credited with intelligence particularly in math and science, which contributes to feeling trapped, pressured, and in competition with other people of color. Participants felt that their racial reality had been denied which contributed to feeling that their experiences with racism and discrimination were non-existent. Additionally, in the same study, the "exoticization of Asian American women" contributes to feelings that they are needed for nothing more than the pleasure of White men. Moreover, the "invalidation of interethnic differences" contributed to the participants feeling like *aggressors* believe that all Asians look alike. Furthermore, the "pathologizing of cultural values/communication styles" (p. 76) contributed to participants feeling disadvantaged in classrooms settings when verbal communication is valued and contrasts with their cultural norms such as silence. The reduction to "second-class citizenship" (p. 95) contributed to participants feeling like they were not as deserving and are lesser than their White counterparts are. The "feeling of invisibility" (p. 77) contributed to participants feeling like they do not fit into discussions regarding race issues. "Undeveloped instances/responses" (p. 96) were somewhat difficult for the

researchers in the study to name. An example noted in the study pertained to a female participant being pulled over despite her belief that she was within the designated speed range. This experience caused the participant to feel that she was intentionally pulled over because of the stereotype that Asians are bad drivers.

Sue, et al. (2007a) emphasized that while the *aggressor* may see some of these assumptions and corresponding statements or behaviors as compliments to Asian Americans, especially in the case of the model minority stereotype; these seemingly unconscious experiences are harmful to Asian Americans. In addition, Thompson and Neville (1999) (as cited in Sue, et al., 2007a) stressed the importance of understanding the ways in which racism is manifested in an effort to provide positive interventions to counteract their effects.

Gender Microaggressions

Similar to microaggressions based on race, women may also experience negative *slights* from others based on their gender. Barthelemy, McCormick and Henderson (2016) discovered several types of gender microaggressions in their independent study. The microaggressions discovered in the study build on the work regarding microaggressions researched by Sue (2010) the examples include, “sexual objectification”, “second-class citizenship”, “sexist language”, “assumption of inferiority”, “restrictive gender roles”, “denial of the reality of sexism”, “invisibility”, and “sexist jokes” (p. 4).

Vaccaro (2010) discussed several examples of the previously mentioned gender microaggressions in the context of higher education. For example, restrictive gender roles

may include the praise of a women for “engaging in domestic tasks such as decorating for homecoming weekend, cleaning up after extracurricular events, or cooking for roommates” (para. 8). Sexual objectification may include behaviors that range from innuendos, catcalling, and/or sexual violence. For example, when a woman is called a “hottie” they are being objectified (para. 5).

The researcher noted several ways in which college campuses can *warm* chilly environments for women. Key ideas presented for praxis include focusing on the intersectionality of women in regard to the diversity of their races, religion, sexuality, and ability. The formation of groups such as “lesbians of color” (para. 30) or “associations for women with disabilities” (para. 30) support women from different backgrounds by providing them with safe spaces.

Hom (2015) conducted a phenomenological study with four Asian American women who discussed three main areas where they felt they faced challenges and stereotypes as a woman. The areas discussed were social, academic, and professional. In one example, one participant informed her family that she wanted to pursue engineering in college, but because her family viewed the career as more suitable for a man, the participant ultimately chose to become a doctor, which supported her family’s view that women were better suited for helping careers. The researcher also noted that while multiple participants in the study were affected by sexism these experiences did not motivate them to take action or connect with communities that focused on gender identity.

Williams, et al. (2014), conducted a mixed-methods study on diverse women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields and discovered several patterns of gender bias. “Prove it again” was the first bias, which causes women to feel the need to provide more evidence of their competence than White males. The second bias, “The tightrope” causes women to be deemed either *too feminine* or *too masculine*. The third bias, “The maternal wall”, suggests that once a woman in the workplace becomes a mother both her competence and commitment is questioned. The final bias, “Tug of war” (p.3), suggests that when women experience sexism in the workplace it in turns fuels conflict among women. Although it was not included as a bias, the White participants reported higher incidences of sexual harassment in the workplace followed by Asian women.

The Asian American women in the survey reported feeling more pressure to play traditional feminine roles in the workplace compared to White, Latina, and Black women. It was also discovered that Asian American women are subject to several other patterns such as “the perpetual foreigner” which is the assumption that Asian Americans cannot be from America, but have to be from somewhere else. In addition to isolation, demeaning comments, and accent discrimination the participants also reported receiving backlash for being assertive or self-promoting, which is viewed as qualities more associated with men (Williams, et al., 2014).

Sexism against Asian American women may take several forms such as sexual objectification, second-class citizens, and the use of sexist language. For example, sexual objectification is when women are reduced to their physical attributes or sexuality and

her worthiness based on her appearance. Second-class citizenship is the belief that women do not deserve the same opportunities or privileges as men. Sexist language may be displayed by using non-gender-neutral terms such as “mankind” in discussions regarding the human race (Sue, 2010). An additional theme is the belief that women are inferior to men in regard to intellect, temperament, and physical abilities. Conversely, in a piece focused on successful Indian women in the technology industry the women shared that they believe “nothing can stand in a woman’s way if she is competent and not meek” (Devi, 2002, p. 4421). It is believed by the participants that if Indian women do not make it to the top of the information technology industry it is no one else’s fault, but their own (Devi, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter explored relevant literature regarding Indian Americans including their immigration history and race relations. It also discussed the college experience of Asian Americans, Asian American women, and how South Asian women experience womanhood. Furthermore, it discussed the formation of stereotypes and the two salient ones that are applied to Asian Americans and Asian American women and racial and gender microaggressions that have been historically and contemporarily applied to Asian Americans and women. This chapter aimed to create a context into the race and gender-related mistreatment that Asian Americans, women, and other marginalized groups receive on their college campus.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design given that the goal of this research study was to capture the depth and complexity of the participants' experiences. This study used a phenomenological approach in an effort to understand the lived experience of being an Indian or Indian American woman in a collegiate setting. Phenomenologists study the analytical and descriptive experience of phenomena by individuals in their everyday world or "lived world" (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). According to Eddles-Hirsch (2015) phenomenologists "are more concerned with first hand descriptions of a phenomenon than they are in resolving why participants experience life the way they do" (p. 251). Moreover, Eddles-Hirsch (2015) states that "The phenomenon being studied is not measured or defined through the lens of its accepted reality; rather an understanding is sought of how the participants make sense of their everyday world" (p. 251).

This study used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which was first identified in 1996 by Smith. IPA has several theoretical roots including phenomenology and hermeneutics. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the focus is on the participant's description of the phenomenon as well as the meaning of the experience. In IPA, "participants are experts on their own experience and are recruited because of their expertise in the phenomenon being explored" (Allan & Eatough, 2016, p. 407). Additionally, IPA has several key elements, including an inductive approach. This approach calls for the researcher to be flexible in both the data collection and analysis stages of the study. During the data collection stage, the researcher does not attempt to

verify or negate any specific hypotheses that have been established by existing literature, but instead constructs broad research questions that allow for the collection of expansive data. The researcher also allows for unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during the analysis stage (Smith, 2004).

Theoretically, IPA is phenomenological in that it seeks to explore the lived experiences of the participants in-depth and how the participant makes sense of those experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA is further influenced by idiography, which refers to an “in-depth analysis of single cases and examining individual perspectives of study participants, in their unique contexts” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, IPA p. 8). The authors go on to state that “the fundamental principle behind the idiographic approach is to explore every single case, before producing any general statements” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 8). According to Smith (2004), only when each case has been examined in detail and has reached some degree of conclusion does the researcher attempt to conduct a cross-case analysis.

The decision to utilize a qualitative approach opposed to a quantitative one was mainly because of the dearth of knowledge of this nature surrounding Indian Americans and Indian American women in particular. The IPA approach allowed the collection of rich data about each participant’s lived experience and thoroughly explored the collegiate environment Indian and Indian American women navigate on their path to college completion.

Researcher's Connection to the Work

This study was birthed out of my deep interest in the role of education in socio-economic mobility and educational disparities in school readiness, school achievement, college access, and college success with specific regard to factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic class. Regarding race/ethnicity, I am specifically interested in the disparities between Whites and Asian Americans compared to Hispanics and Blacks. I deeply wonder what it is about the Asian American population that is and has been driving such high levels of educational attainment and economic success from the newly arrived to those of third-generation status. While this study will focus on Indian Americans, in general I have a deep desire to know what factors contribute to the upward mobility of an individual regardless of their gender, socio-economic class, or race/ethnicity. Additionally, although many individuals have achieved socio-economic upward mobility I wonder how having a higher economic status in the United States affects their experiences, especially in the case of minorities.

From my viewpoint as being both a Black person and a woman, I feel personally burdened with several stereotypes that have been placed on my particular gender and racial group. The most salient ones being lazy, unintelligent, masculine and aggressive (Windsor, Dunlap, & Golub, 2010). Because of these stereotypes, I feel that I encounter negative experiences, which I admit do have an effect on me. Some examples include people assuming I am un-educated, a struggling single mom, or that I am a food service worker when I attend work-related functions. I feel that as a Black woman I have to work harder than my Asian American, White, and Hispanic peers in order to combat these

stereotypes and prove my worth. It is an insecurity that travels on my back everywhere that I go.

It is through these experiences that my desire grew to study the experiences of Indian American women. While they share a similar status in regard to being considered a minority in the United States and being a woman, I wonder if they experience similar gendered and racialized experiences in various contexts such as myself or if they have been insulated under the model minority stereotype.

Participant Selection

This study used purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allows the participants to speak directly to the phenomenon being experienced. According to Allan and Eatough (2016) the idiographic nature of IPA research calls for smaller sample sizes. Four first and second-generation Indian American women were chosen as the study participants. Participants were recruited through the researcher's personal network. In addition, the researcher worked with individuals within their personal network to identify potential participants for this study.

All potential participants were given a screening questionnaire during the recruitment stage to ensure that they fit the criteria to be a participant. The criteria to be a participant in this study was: (a) identifying as a woman; (b) identifying as being of Indian descent; (c) confirming birth in the United States to parents of Indian descent or having immigrated as a child, or was born in India and immigrated at age 25 or after; (d) having completed a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university in the United States; (e) having completed a bachelor's degree or higher beginning in the

year 2000 and after. Following selection, participants included in the study were given information that explained the purpose of the study and the research question. Each participant was given an informed consent form prior to being interviewed.

Data Collection

The data for this study was acquired through one semi-structured, individual, in-person interview with each participant; this aligns with a phenomenological approach to conducting a qualitative research study. The interviews took place in a location that was public, convenient for the participants, and conducive for conducting an interview. The participants completed a demographic questionnaire prior to the interview. The semi-structured interview questions focused on the research question and allowed the participants the latitude to address the questions in their own voice. According to IPA, interview questions are prepared so that they are “open, expansive, and participants are encouraged to talk at length” (Allan & Eatough, 2016, p. 410).

The interview questions focused on the experiences of the participants on their college campus in regard to their race/ethnicity and gender. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Prior to the interview, each participant completed a demographic questionnaire. The researcher also collected field notes during the interview. The notes served as an additional data source. According to Taylor, Bogdan, and Devault (2015) a researcher should “strive to write the most complete and comprehensive field notes as possible” (p. 81). The authors also state that the field notes should include “descriptions of people, events, conversations as well as the observer’s actions, feelings, and hunches or working hypotheses” (p. 81). Each participant interview lasted approximately one to

two hours depending on how much each participant decided to share. No follow-up interviews were completed for this study.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis of themes and codes. The analysis of the data occurred in a sequential manner beginning with each individual transcript. Following the individual data analysis, the data was analyzed on a group level.

Individual Analysis

Each transcript was coded by hand for emerging themes. Each line was analyzed to code the participants' experiences that was based on the research question. The codes were then organized into inductive themes. The themes collected in the analysis of each participants' transcript was organized into categories and operationally defined with support from quotes. Each subsequent participant's data was analyzed in the same manner as the first until the data from all participants was analyzed and coded for themes.

Group Level Analysis

All of the themes that were coded from each participant's individual transcript were listed and analyzed with the goal of combining similar themes until four to five themes were discovered. Subthemes, which were to be placed under the high-order themes were also examined during this process. To ensure that the quotes collected during the individual analysis state fit into the new themes each quote was additionally analyzed.

Validity and reliability

Data were triangulated to promote validity, fairness, and accuracy of the findings. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher printed out the transcripts. Each individual transcript was analyzed line-by-line and coded by hand for emerging themes. Each woman's transcript was analyzed in its entirety before the researcher analyzed any subsequent transcripts. The emerging themes collected were organized into categories and operationally defined with support from quotes.

Following the individual analysis of each woman's transcript. All of the collected themes were listed and analyzed; similar themes were combined until four high-order themes emerged. During the group analysis process, subthemes were also examined. Following the group analysis process, the quotes collected during the individual analysis process were re-examined to ensure that they fit within the new themes and subthemes. Once the themes, subthemes, and supporting quotes were discovered, the researcher sent them to the women. The women were asked to review the final themes, subthemes, and a sample of their corresponding statements discovered during the data analysis stage. The use of triangulation in this manner ensured that the themes faithfully and accurately represented the perspectives and experiences of the women.

Of the four women who participated in the study, three women provided feedback regarding the themes, subthemes, how they were defined, and the sample of their statements that supported the themes. From the feedback provided by the three women the researcher was specifically looking for areas of agreement and/or divergence from what was discovered during the data analysis stage of the study.

Once the feedback was received from the three women the researcher analyzed their statements thoroughly. Through the use of data triangulation, the researcher found that all of the women who provided feedback were in agreement with the themes and subthemes, the way in which they were defined by the researcher, and the sample of their statements that supported the themes.

Table 3.1:

Themes

Themes
Growing where I am planted
Parents as the passport to cultural knowledge
Show me who your friends are and I will show you who you are
Navigating <i>their</i> ignorance: Responding to Microaggressions

Significance of the Study

This study added to the research of Asian Americans in a manner that both disaggregated data pertaining to their educational experiences and offered an in-depth, intersectional perspective into how the multiple identities of Indian and Indian American women affected their college experiences. The data that was collected in the study supports higher education institutions by providing information that may contribute to a campus climate that is inclusive regardless of which category Indian American women may or may not *fit* into.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided insights into the college experiences of four Indian and Indian American women. Specifically, the study focused on a small sample of women; three second-generation Indian Americans and one first-generation Indian. Given the significant amount of United States college graduates considered AAPIA and Indian American, these experiences in no way reflect the experiences of all Indian or Indian American women who have attended college and completed a degree.

Another limitation of this study is that it focused on intersectionality, in particular race, ethnicity, and gender. While the theoretical framework of intersectionality was appropriate for this study other relevant factors, such as parental income levels, religion, and age of immigration or parental immigration to the United States may have also played a role in how the women described their college experience.

Another limitation of the study is that the women homogenously described their parental income levels as middle class. Each of the women had at least one parent who possessed a college level degree and was or is currently employed in a professional field; three engineers and one medical doctor. This may have had an effect on how the women described their college experience. An additional limitation of the study is that all of the women began attending college between the late 1980's and the early 2000's, thus the experiences of the women are limited to this specific time-frame in United States history.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research design selected by the researcher for this study. Specifically, it discussed the research design, the researcher's connection to the study, participant selection, a profile of each participant, data collection and analysis, validity of the study, significance of the study, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a presentation and discussion of the findings of this study. The intention of this interpretive phenomenological analysis study was to understand how four Indian and Indian American women described their college experience regarding their ethnic/racial and gendered identities. The objective for this chapter is to share the story of the Indian and Indian American women through their voices as participants in this study. Likewise, this study sought to highlight the lived experiences relating to the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender. The research question that guided this study was:

What are the lived experiences relating to the intersection of ethnic/racial and gendered identities of Indian American women who have obtained a college degree?

This chapter is organized into one primary section that incorporates two components (a) findings and (b) the analytical discussion of each theme. Each finding that emerged from the data is presented along with supporting quotes from the women, and literature and theoretical underpinnings, when applicable. Following the presentation of each theme an analytical discussion of the theme is provided along with literature and theoretical underpinnings, when applicable. In addition, this chapter includes a profile of each participant and other relevant data pertaining to the manner in which the data was analyzed.

Participant Profiles

Four Indian and Indian American women were interviewed for this study. Information about each woman's background was collected through a demographic questionnaire provided to them prior to their interview. The researcher chose to utilize a demographic questionnaire as a means of additional data collection in order to gain deeper insight into the personal background of the women and how certain factors such as parental level of education and family economic background may have factored into their college experience.

Table 4.1:

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Birthplace	Regional location where raised	Self-described socio-economic status	Regional location of college or university
Michelle	40	Carteret, NJ	New Jersey	Middle-class	Houghton, NY
Sonia	34	Staten Island, NY	New York	Upper-class	Haverford, PA
Roxanne	50	Rotterdam, The Netherlands	Houston	Middle -class	Houston, TX
Rani	37	Rourkela, Orissa, India	India	Middle-class	College Station, TX

Michelle (pseudonym)

Michelle, age 40, is a second-generation Indian American woman. She was born in New Jersey and both of her parents received at least a bachelor's degree; her father is an Engineer. Both of her parents were educated in India and she has two siblings. She described her family's economic background as middle class. She attended a small, private, Christian, liberal arts college in New York State and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1999. She graduated with a master's degree from a different college in 2001.

Sonia (pseudonym)

Sonia, age 34, is a second-generation Indian American woman and she was born in New York City. Both of her parents received at least a bachelor's degree and her father is a medical doctor. Both of her parents were educated in India. She has two siblings and described her family's economic background as upper class. She attended a small, private, co-educational liberal arts college in Pennsylvania, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 2005.

Roxanne (pseudonym)

Roxanne, age 50, is a second-generation Indian American woman. She was born in The Netherlands and immigrated to the United States when she was 4 years old and was raised in a large metro area in Texas. Her father was an Engineer, received at least a bachelor's degree and was educated in the United States. While her mother completed three years of higher education. She has one sibling and described her family's economic background as middle class. She attended a community college, a large, public university,

and a medium-sized, public university in a large metro area in Texas and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 2000.

Rani (pseudonym)

Rani, age 37, is a first-generation Indian woman. She was born in India and immigrated to the United States when she was 22 years old. Both of her parents earned at least a bachelor's degree and her father is an Engineer. She has two siblings and she described her family's economic background as middle class. She received her undergraduate degree in India and her master's degree in the United States. For her master's degree she attended a large, public, university in Texas. She graduated with her master's degree in 2002.

Findings

The findings of this study are presented under four major themes: (a) growing where I am planted (b) parents as the passport to cultural knowledge (c) show me who your friends are and I will show you who you are, and (d) navigating *their* ignorance: responding to microaggressions. The first theme, growing where I am planted, illustrates how the upbringing of each woman shapes the way in which they self-identify, which would later have an impact on their college experience in a social capacity. This theme also highlights the significance of the racial and ethnic diversity of where the women lived and how this factor affects their self-identity and their college experience.

The second theme, parents as the passport to cultural knowledge highlights an important phenomenon in the case of the second-generation women where their parents serve as a primary link between the women and their Indian heritage and as the primary

transmitter of Indian cultural knowledge. This phenomenon is critical to the study and the findings because the second-generation women all grew up in areas that were not significantly diverse, which affected their college experience later in life. Because of this lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the regional areas where the women lived, this may have contributed to the second-generation women not deeply connecting with being Indian until later in the lives.

The third theme, show me who your friends are and I will show you who you are describes how the way in which the women perceived or saw themselves affected whom they forged connections with, in a social context during their college years. This theme highlights the intersection of race, ethnicity, national origin, immigrant status, and generational status and how those identities influenced the social networks the women were a part of in college. In addition, the upbringing of the women, specifically how racially and ethnically diverse their neighborhoods were and to what extent they were exposed to their Indian culture again emerges a salient factor in the collegiate experiences of the women. The final theme, navigating *their* ignorance; responding to microaggressions, focuses on how the women navigated the distinctiveness of five of their salient identities, race, ethnicity, national origin, immigrant status, and gender within various networks during the time the women attended college.

Growing where I am planted

Throughout the course of the interviews with each woman, the concept of self-identity emerged as a salient point of the interview and consideration for the study. The upbringing of the women is significant to this study because all of the second-generation women grew up in areas that were predominately Caucasian, which had an impact on their college experience as young women later in life and the cultivation of their self-identity. Moreover, their upbringing contributed to cultural differences between themselves and Indians of first-generation status, which would also emerge during their college experiences later in life. Michelle grew up in New Jersey and later moved to Delaware when she was in high school, in which she encountered a significantly more diverse population than when living in New Jersey:

I grew up in pretty much an all-White town...there were three of us who were colored – it was extremely, extremely, a white town so I never grew up with people of different skin until I moved to Delaware – then it was a very diverse – city...

When asked how she identified herself Michelle's response highlighted the importance of her nationality to her self-identity:

... I guess it would depend on who is asking...the first thing that comes out of my mouth is that I am American because I was born and raised here...if someone who is from India asks me...I make of the comment of my parents are Indian, but I was born and raised here, so I think it depends on the audience I am around or who is asking...

Sonia feels that at times she may answer this same question *incorrectly*:

That question is so loaded, so I don't even know. I think it depends on who I'm with and who's asking me. They are sort of problematic like, "where are you from?" And then I will say like – and then even that question, sometimes I don't always answer the right way.

Sonia went on to state that if she is in New York she will usually state that she is from "Houston". However, if she is in Houston, she will often state that she is from "New York" or "Philly" (where she also lived at one point in her life). Sonia acknowledged that she has an understanding or impression, rather, that the answer she provides is usually not the one the asker of the question is truly seeking. Although, Sonia has a specific view of herself in terms of who she is, this view is not shared by others who she has come in contact with previously. Sonia shared:

...but then we sort of lived in this world where for as long as I can remember, That's not the question people are asking. They'd be like "where are you from really?" And I'd be like "Are you asking if my parents are from India because my parents were born in India?" And at this age, that's usually my response because there is a distinction. I'm not from India.

Sonia's sense of self-identity, as the case with Michelle was significantly influenced by her national origin and where she was raised. Sonia also discussed what it was like growing up in her conservative neighborhood and how her Indian heritage played a role in her upbringing:

...we are from Staten Island which is the most conservative borough of the five boroughs that sort of makeup New York City. It is super white, it is super Republican. I mean I think in the context of what it was like to grow up Indian there, I felt like I was this sort of typical cranky teenager where I felt like my parents had a lot of like rules that my White friends didn't have.

Roxanne stated that she viewed herself as a Texan and an American. Her response was intriguing, given the fact that she was born in the Netherlands and immigrated to Texas at the age of four. Nonetheless, the fact the Roxanne immigrated to the United States at such young age contributed to her self-identity as an American and Texan. Rani, who was born and raised in India and immigrated to the United States at the age of twenty-two, identifies as Indian. Similar to the second-generation women, Rani's response highlights the impact of regional location during one's upbringing on self-identity and life experiences.

Summary

Each woman displayed a strong sense of unshakable confidence in the response that they provided to the question "How do you identify yourself?" From this initial question the salience of generational identity, national origin, nationality, and regional location, particularly during upbringing emerged as an important concept to the research study.

Regional location, generational identity, national origin, nationality, and ethnicity intersected to formulate the responses in the case of the women. Race or gender did not appear in any of the responses of the women. This may have been because it was

apparent that they were all women, in the case of incorporating gender into their response. However, it is interesting that none of the women identify themselves as Asian or Asian American or included race in their response to the question.

These differences in self-identity also appeared in the study by Mehrotra (2012) who found differences in how the participants identified themselves based on race and ethnicity. Mehrotra (2012) discussed these differences from a generational perspective. In the study, first-generation South Asian women were more likely to identify themselves based on ethnicity, specific national origin, or religion. In contrast, the second-generation participants emphasized race or ethnicity with regard to the manner in which they self-identified. In this study however, while the generational differences in identification were present, the manner of identification amongst the second-generation women emphasized regional location or national origin opposed to race or ethnicity.

With the exception of Roxanne, the second-generation women revealed that they have ties to India (through their parents), but other than the mention of their parents being from India they do not connect India directly to themselves. It could be determined that the regions in which the women have been socialized and assimilated into during their formative years affects which particular identity the women connect with.

Michelle and Sonia's responses illustrate that despite how people of color may see themselves, to the greater United States society there is an additional divide between them and other populations, in particular individuals who belong to the Caucasian population. In the case of Michelle and Sonia and their responses, the "perpetual foreigner" concept as highlighted by previous researchers (Accapadi, 2005; Sue, et al.,

2007a; Williams, et al., 2014) presents itself as Michelle explains that she is American, but that her ethnic heritage is Indian via her parents, perhaps in defense of presenting herself as American; and for Sonia, when she is asked where she is really from, as if she cannot simply be a New Yorker or a Houstonian.

The complexity of Michelle and Sonia's self-purported identity is consistent with the literature where Mehrotra (2012) found that second-generation South Asian women were asked where they are *really* from upon identifying themselves as "American". Their responses also corroborate with the fact that South Asian women may encounter many challenges related to their multiple identities on a daily basis; with the first being the duality of their "Eastern/Southern Asian identity" (Accapadi, 2005, p. 57) vs. their "Western/American identity" (Accapadi, 2005, p. 57). Because Michelle and Sonia are perceived as Indian, it is not enough for them to simply tell people that they are "American" or a "New Yorker". Instead, they must tie themselves to India or their ethnic heritage to satisfy the individual/s who ask the question of them.

What is striking are the differences in self-identity between the women even though they all share the same ethnic and racial heritage. This finding reflects the complexity of self-identity even within the same ethnic group. The multiple identities along with their nationality intersect to create a self-identity unique to the way in which each woman presents their identity to others.

Parents as the passport to cultural knowledge

The first-generation parents of the second-generation women appear to have served as a main transmitter of the Indian culture to the women during their upbringing.

The nature of the transmission in and of itself proves to be diverse and complex again highlighting regional location as a potential influence of what is transmitted to the women, in what context, and why.

Michelle did not learn a language from her ethnic culture, although her parents spoke another language. In this aspect, Michelle's ethnic and racial identity is more central to her social interactions (at least in college) than her self-ascribed identity and nationality. In college, she was often asked about her ability to speak a language native to her ethnic culture:

... my response was always, you know, my parents back then they thought if they taught their kids a different language when they're learning English it would actually hurt them in school and now we know that's not true, but back then they didn't want us to be behind because we're trying to figure out two different languages, so they only spoke English at home and then they only spoke our language, my parents only spoke it to each other – that was it. So, I usually told people my parents just never, they never taught us...

Sonia shared that when her parents immigrated to the United States they were pushed to assimilate and specifically “lose the accent” and “pass like white”. She went on to say that the experiences of her parents may have had an effect on her upbringing:

...My sisters and I, I would say, we didn't connect with really being Indian until later in our lives...we would eat Indian food at home and go to temple sometimes...a lot of activities were very distinct, like they happened just as a family or with other Indian people...me and my social circle sort of more assimilated into

my day-to day life... it's sort of easier to just assimilate and try to pass than it was to be distinct in a very homogenous place.

Despite being of Indian descent, Roxanne echoed Michelle and Sonia's sentiments in that maintaining ethnic culture and traditions was not a critical piece of her upbringing:

I wasn't ever forced growing up to participate in any religious activities or cultural activities. It was something mom and dad just said, "If you want to do this, you can do this. But you don't have to." ...I was basically just a normal American kid, growing up celebrating Christmas and all these things that normal Indian families wouldn't celebrate...

Rani is the only first-generation woman who participated in the study. She immigrated to the United States at the age of twenty-two and did not have much knowledge of American culture such as with communication styles once she arrived. Rani did not discuss the role her parents played in transmitting various aspects of the Indian culture, which is understandable given that she was raised in India and thus had a direct connection to the Indian culture. When describing her experience when she arrived to United States she shared that, in particular it was harder to communicate with those from United States compared to those from India.

Summary

Dasgupta (1998) stated that traditional second-generation South Asian women bear the responsibility of transmitting cultural values. In this study, it appears that the second-generation women did not feel particularly responsible for upholding cultural

values or at least this expectation was not communicated to them from their parents during their upbringing.

As previously mentioned, the second-generation women all revealed that they were raised in primarily Caucasian neighborhoods. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity geographically may have contributed to which aspects of Indian culture the parents transmitted to the participants. In addition, if the second-generation women had grown up in more diverse neighborhoods and neighborhoods that had a significant Indian population, would their connections to their Indian heritage have been deeper and perhaps had a stronger influence on their upbringing and self-identity? Nonetheless, because the second-generation women were not raised in neighborhoods that were significantly diverse this likely had a significant impact on the later experiences of the women, the way in which they have come to self-identify, and their overall worldview.

It is worth noting that today, Asian Americans are more likely than other racial groups to live in racially mixed neighborhoods (Pew Research Center, 2013). There was a time, however, when Asian American were highly concentrated into enclaves, some which came to be known as “Chinatowns” as example (Pew Research Center, 2013). Eleven percent of Asian Americans today live in areas where Asian Americans are the majority (Pew Research Center, 2013). In contrast, this same figure is forty-one percent for African Americans, forty-three percent for Hispanics, and ninety percent for Caucasians (Pew Research Center, 2013). Still, readers are cautioned to bear in mind that the other groups are larger than Asian Americans are, thus there is more potential for racial enclaves to occur within the non-Asian American racial groups.

Although the information previously mentioned does not address the living patterns of ethnic groups within the Asian American race or living patterns at the start of immigration from Asia to the United States, the information helps to illustrate how factors such as where immigrants settle affects the depth of assimilation into the United States' culture, how much of their ethnic heritage is retained and passed along to their children, and the cultivation of self-identity of their children. Parents seem to be a major force that link the second-generation women to the Indian culture. Thus, if this link is weakened or broken in any way during the formative years it may have a significant bearing on how connected one is to their race or ethnicity, how they react to instances of racism, who they form social relationships with, and other aspects that make a person who they are.

The fact that the second-generation women were raised in predominately-Caucasian neighborhoods highlight another important factor in the upbringing of the women, socio-economic class. According to Zong and Batalova (2015), many immigrants to the United States from India arrived as international students or via the H-1B visa program in which the applicants already possess a Bachelor's degree. This was the case in this study; amongst the second-generation women, their fathers are/were either an engineer or a medical doctor. Zong and Batalova (2015) go on to state that many immigrants are able to settle into middle-class lifestyles and thus prepare their own children to achieve high-levels of educational success in the United States. All of the second-generation women were raised in middle-class households, this factor may have affected them and their families' assimilation into United States' culture and the

second-generation women's self-identity.

Show me who your friends are and I will show you who you are

The previous themes highlight how factors such as the level of cultural knowledge transmitted by parents during upbringing, nationality, national origin, generational status, and the level of diversity of the neighborhood in which the women were raised influenced the self-identity of the women. In the interviews with the women, these factors appear to impact their college experiences, significantly in a social capacity.

Each of the women expressed a desire to meet new people and find connections with others in college. However, for Michelle and Sonia that did not translate into seeking connections with other students who were Indian. For Rani, this was a shared sentiment as her desire to meet new people did not ultimately end with her befriending students who were not Indian.

Roxanne, appeared to be an outlier, this is because she was the only second-generation woman who shared that she had a desire to build relationships with others who shared her ethnic heritage, regardless of generational status. This finding again could point to the significance of the level of diversity within a regional location such as the college attended. Roxanne and Rani attended campuses they considered diverse while Sonia and Michelle who attended small, private colleges in the Northeast United States shared that their campuses were not largely diverse. For comparative purposes, Roxanne and Rani attended large universities in Texas. Roxanne and Rani's campus diversity may have influenced how connected they were to the Indian culture as young women attending college.

When reflecting on whom she connected with in college and her stance in terms of seeking connections with other students who were of Indian descent, Michelle shared that she hung out primarily with international students, but not as much with Indian students. According to Michelle, this was intentional as she believes that Indians sometimes carry a stigma and bad reputation. Michelle also shared some self-observed tendencies of Indians that bothered her, such as going into a store and having the Indian clerk or cashier change the price of an item to get more money from the customer:

I think it was intentional...I – accept who I am, I know that I am Indian, but I also know some of the bad stigma and rep. [reputation] that goes along with being Indian...they just associate you with everyone else and I wanted to separate myself from them because some of their pet peeves really did or some of the things they were about drive me even crazy so I really did not want to associate with them...

Michelle's revelation is surprising because her awareness of the stereotyping of Indians in the United States directly affected who she befriended in college. Although she did not go into detail as to why Indians may be given a bad stigma or reputation, previous researchers have explored the topic. For example, in a qualitative study conducted by Poolokasingham, Kleiman, Spanierman, and Houshmand (2014) on South Asian Canadian female and male undergraduates and their experiences with racial microaggressions eight themes were discovered. One prominent theme included the participants being perceived as fresh off the boat or a FOB under this particular theme participants described others assuming that they lacked English proficiency, were too

cultural oriented, and are of low social class status. Another eye-opening theme that emerged was “assumption of ties to terrorism” (p. 201). Under this theme, the male participants discussed being stereotyped as terrorists and being perceived as a threat to society. The male participants shared that having this stereotype placed on them made them angry as well as afraid of the potential consequences of this negative stereotype; such as losing a job or others viewing their involvement in student cultural organizations as a front for terrorism. Additionally, given that Michelle grew up in the United States and primarily amongst Caucasians, she may be more cognizant of how different she is from other Indians which may have affected her desire to build social connections with them during college. For Sonia, when it came to building social connections in college, fitting in and being accepted by Caucasian people was important. Her revelation begs the question if her desire to be accepted by Caucasian people was a result of making these same strides as a youth in order to fit in despite being a person of color?:

I think I spent a lot of time trying to assimilate. My social circle at college and after, I was often, in my like closer social circle, I was the only person of color...I think, I didn't, this wasn't a conscious thing at the time, but I think it became important to me in this like subconscious way...to be like a person of color that was accepted by white people.

Sonia's statements demonstrate how factors such as the diversity of the regional location, at this point, of the college, national origin, immigrant status, and generational status may shape one's experiences and interactions:

I think as an international student, I think that was a distinction...all my friends were white because I grew up here, I was American...I think I spent a lot time in that period of my life where I was like “Oh cool” like “Southeast Asian students were like tabling”, [setting up a table to promote an organization or club] but “I don’t care”, that’s like, “I’m not part of this group”...I was like, my whole social circle is white, I was basically passing as white...

In college, Sonia felt that she was in a place where she had to identify as either Indian or American. Sonia spoke about forging connections with Indians who were raised in India and how she felt insecure about doing this because she believed that she would be asked questions about where her family origins in India; in which she may have been unable to answer. Sonia’s sentiments connect back to the role of parents in the process of transmitting cultural knowledge to their children, a process once again that appears to be influenced on how diverse the regional location is surrounding them. Perhaps the more cultural knowledge that is transmitted and how this cultural knowledge is transmitted has an impact on who second-generation individuals go on to forge connections with later in life and how comfortable they feel with forging those connections. Sonia continued:

I think I felt a lot of insecurity with international students because I didn’t feel quite Indian enough. Or like I feel I didn’t know enough about my own sort of background and I didn’t really know where I stood.

Roxanne, as previously mentioned, appeared to be an outlier amongst the other second-generation women in the study. She was the only second-generation woman who intentionally sought out building connections with others who were of Indian descent

while in college despite her own national origin, where she grew up and how diverse it was, or her generational status. Roxanne said:

I hung out with a lot of Indian people, but a lot of them – well, some of them – my actual – my roommate was from India. So, she was an international student. So, I got to participate in a lot of international student events and so I got to meet people from all around the world really...

Roxanne displayed a sense of excitement and gratitude at this ability to connect with being Indian as a young woman. Although this was not a desire she held while growing up, Roxanne may have been influenced by the diversity of the college she attended. Her roommate was an international student from India which facilitated a cultural link between Roxanne and India. Had Roxanne's university been located in less diverse region this link to India may not have formed:

I wanted to reconnect with my culture...in a university setting, they actually had an Indian Students Association that I became a part of and it was just a way for me to learn about my culture and where I came from and be proud of that... I got to learn those things and it's not that my parents didn't teach me, I just never asked the questions. I wasn't interested.

Roxanne pointed out how she went about seeking people who were of South Asian or Indian descent while attending college:

Just attending functions, speaking to people that were actual international students from India, that grew up there and just asking questions and everybody was so open and helpful. And they understood I grew up here...I wasn't even born in

India. So, they expected that I didn't know too much, because my parents didn't force that on us and wanted us to be more American than Indian.

Rani reflected on the demographics of the social relationships she formed while in college. It was during this reflection that she realized that most of her friendships in college were with Indian students such as herself. Rani's realization that most of her friends in college were first-generation Indians is telling because she unconsciously may have gravitated towards individuals she felt the most comfortable with; adding further to her social exclusion and isolation as an international student of color at her college:

Oh, yes, I had a lot of friends. But, now when I think about it, it was mostly Indians... There were a few Americans and other ethnicities with the projects... But, the communication with – most of the interaction with them was mostly school – limited to school...

When asked if she *desired* to not to socialize with students from other ethnicities or nationalities or if she believed there was barrier that caused her and the students from other ethnicities or nationalities to not spend time together, she shared:

If they would have approached, I have... I would have spent time with them. But, I didn't approach them and they didn't approach me. I think there was a fear of the differences, or, you know, language and understanding and everything... But, I think, yeah, there was that slight hesitation in reaching out if it wasn't required... On my part.

Rani's experiences have a running theme of exclusion and isolation mainly attributed to communication and cultural differences. Not only did these cultural and communication

differences play a role in who she befriended in college, but they also affected her social involvement as a student while attending college:

...there were these events, which they had, like the student associations and things like that. And I never – I did not attend many of those, because I felt, okay, what am I going to do there? What will I say? I have nothing to say or whatever, right, because of this whole communication accent thing...

Summary

The social relationships of each woman while in college sheds light on how upbringing, generational identity, national origin, immigrant status, and the diversity of the regional locations during both upbringing and of college influenced who the women built connections with in college. Despite the shared racial and ethnic heritage between immigrants and later generations, for all of the women, there was a clearly defined distinction between being second-generation and first-generation. This phenomenon appears before the women enter college. If anything, this phenomenon continues to manifest itself while the women are in college.

Roxanne stood out as she was the only second-generation woman who specifically desired to build social relationships in college that included multi-generational Indians at the first institution that she attended (she later attends and graduates from another university in an urban area in Texas). This desire was driven by Roxanne's aspiration to gain more knowledge about the Indian culture.

College seems to be a place where many students rediscover as well as reorient themselves as Indian Americans (Nakiboglu, 2005) and where involvement in cultural

organizations in college is a powerful way to maintain and enhance their cultural identity (Ruzicka, 2011). The colleges and universities that the women attended recognized diversity in some way or another. Michelle's college hosted an event in which students could bring a cultural dish. Sonia's college would feature ethnic cuisine in the campus dining facility. Roxanne's university had an Indian's Students Association, and Rani's university had an organization for international students. In terms of using these student engagement resources as an opportunity to specifically connect to other Indian students on campus Roxanne appeared to be the only second-generation woman who took advantage of these resources while attending college.

Navigating *their* ignorance: Responding to microaggressions

Each of the women revealed that at some point in their lives, including college they were placed in a position in which they have to react to racial microaggressions and racial and ethnic stereotypes imparted on them by others. For the second-generation women bearing the burden of the microaggressions and racist incidences begin as early as kindergarten. The racial microaggressions occur based on several reasons including the model minority stereotype (Patel, 2010) and the assumption of being a person of Middle Eastern descent. Two of the women had experiences or knew of negative experiences that pertained to food typically eaten by people of Indian descent.

Ruzicka (2011) found that the model minority stereotype when placed on South Asian women results in immense pressure placed on the children of first-generation immigrants. While the women in this study of either generation did not state that they were any more than conscious of and perhaps annoyed by the premise of the model

minority myth being imparted on them; It's sheer presence in the data emerged as a salient characteristic of the women's racial and ethnic identity. The women were racialized as Asian Americans and *ethnicized* as Indians.

The second-generation women also shared how these same racial and ethnic stereotypes held by those outside of their personal network were internalized by people they knew within their personal network, including their parents and then imparted on them. This finding of unconscious internalization of racial and/or ethnic stereotypes hints to the presence of stereotype threat (Aapolloni, 2016) which for Asian Americans may work to their benefit as, for example, they are positively stereotyped as being good at math. Conversely, although being stereotyped as skilled at math may be perceived as a benefit, the idea may also put those of Asian American descent under pressure to meet certain expectations or they may be overlooked for any needed assistance because of this assumption of being skilled at math.

Before Michelle arrived to college, she was aware of how her ascribed Indian culture may be negatively perceived by others who do not share her same ethnic heritage. For instance, Michelle recalled that when her sister was in college, their mother brought her Indian food. Her sister's college roommate, stated "Oh my gosh, it smells like dog food, please do not bring this in here". This statement impacted Michelle so much that she was leery of having her parents bring her Indian food when she started college:

When I went to college my parents would bring me Indian food and I would freeze it or whatever and I would be afraid to pull it out because I'm like okay is someone going to say "Oh my gosh it smells like dog food", but no one ever did.

Michelle later shared how racial and ethnic stereotypes, such as Indian Americans or Asian Americans pursuing academic fields such as medicine and technology in college was expected of her from those outside of her personal network, but also internalized by those within her personal network. These stereotypes and expectations appeared to leave Michelle feeling confined in terms of her choice of college major:

I already knew what my major was going in – I knew I was either going to be elementary ed. [education] or psychology...when people heard that they were like “Well aren’t you supposed to be a doctor? Aren’t you supposed to be an engineer? Aren’t you supposed to be computers?” And I’m like first of all – I don’t really like IT computer stuff, eww blood and guts, no thank you, like engineer no...But, I did get that I did get a lot of like “Really? Are you sure that’s what you want to do?” Even when I was in college and talking to family or I went home and – I don’t know, my parents’ friends were asking me “Oh, well you don’t want to be this?” And I’m like, nope, nope, this is what I want to be, so it was just that perception of this, these are the fields you are allowed to be.

When asked if she felt any pressure as an Indian American woman and specifically concerning being regarded as a model minority, she noted:

...I mean people tend to associate Indians as being like super, super, smart that’s why they’re all doctors or engineers and I – gro – growing up I was not like that, I have to severely work for my grades, like, I worked extremely hard to get the grades that I got and so – I know that it used to be – I mean – not really a joke, but it used to be “Oh, you don’t have to study, you’re Indian.” And I’m like, no, I got

here because I would study eight hours a day...I would have to explain, I'm not naturally smart...I really did have to work hard for my grade – and everything and I guess that, they, some of them, they just couldn't see that.

Gender did not emerge as a salient identity that affected the women during their upbringing or while attending college. However, when reflecting on how her gender influenced her status on campus and how having organizations that specifically aimed to build the confidence of women on campus would have been beneficial to her, Michelle mentioned:

...I think that would have helped me maybe even step out because I was the meek girl on campus because that's how I was raised...

She also discussed that it was with the help of her older sister that she was able to go to college out of the state instead of commute like her brother did. Her desire to follow her sister's path showed her willingness to break away from racial and cultural traditions:

I wanted to have that campus life. I wanted to have the campus experience...So my sister helped push that for my parents because she got to go away for school – so it was a little different because even growing up with our family, well our culture – girls didn't go away – well, I'm just speaking specifically in like our extended family, like people we knew – the girls didn't go away to college. They lived at home and then commuted in from somewhere...but, I didn't want that...it was just a different mindset of – for us culturally because girls didn't – they didn't do that.

Sonia shared her experience with being the recipient of racial and ethnic stereotypes while in college where she was expected to be good at math. She also shared that she was the brunt of racial and ethnic microaggressions that were communicated to her as a joke by her friends while in college:

...Like I think I spent a lot of time again in this sort of period from like college to like a few years out of it like laughing – sort of laughing off the like stupid jokes that were like, “...I’m just making a joke.” ... you know, people would do like stupid accents and like my mom’s a particularly good cook and they’d be like “Oh, but doesn’t she cook Indian food?” And it’s like it’s just stupid like low-key stuff that like my friends did plenty of...there’s like microaggressions that are just like, it’s – and it’s happened through my whole life and so like...

Although she laughed off these racial and ethnic microaggressions disguised as jokes, she revealed that they did influence her. Mainly she felt annoyed, but at the time of the occurrences she wanted to portray the image of a “cool girl” who could let such comments “roll” off her back. Sue, et al. (2007a) described microaggressions as being so automatic that they can potentially be glossed over as innocuous. Because microaggressions may be delivered as jokes this idea is further detrimental to women, minorities, and those perceived as other as such incidences may leave these recipients defenseless. Because the perpetrator stating the microaggression believes their intention is to *poke a little fun*, a serious or angry reaction by the recipient makes them stand out even more and may potentially cause them more racism or prejudice from the aggressor in other forms. Additionally, because the recipients are not left with any recourse the

aggressor may believe that their *jokes* are well received or even funny. Sonia went into more depth regarding her reaction to racial and ethnic microaggressions:

I think my desire was like always come off as the cool girl, to come off as the person who could let it roll off their back and just roll their eyes and move on with the situation... just brush it off with, sort of the way that I was – the way that I saw being functional. Because I didn't want to be sort of like angry woman that's like angry person of color that was constantly calling people out on their shit...I think I pushed to sort of come off as the cool girl. The girl that didn't let anything bother her, but it did bother me, of course.

Sonia began attending college two weeks before the events of September 11th. These events had an impact on her in terms of traveling with her friends. Sonia recalled being singled out from her friends at the airport, being asked “weird” questions and getting her passport checked more than her friends. The events also affected how her friends and other peers at her college interacted with her. Her friends and peers *appeared* to show concern about her well-being as a “brown person” during that time, however Sonia now views this concern as masked “liberal white guilt”:

....and I mean yeah, I'm happy that this was comfortable by [but] also wonder like how much this was again this sort of like white liberal guilt like I went to a school where everyone was like “Oh my God, what does it feel like being a brown person in America right now?” And it's like I sort of like, I think at the time I would have answered that question and saw it as caring and thoughtful and fifteen years out of this or ten, twelve years out this educational experiment like my

attitude now is probably like I don't really owe you that answer like figure it out, like I mean, it's just not like, I don't like to sort of explain my existence to you.

Sonia's experience regarding September 11th and how she now perceives the concern shown by her peers show at this stage in her life how her worldview has changed. In addition, perhaps how much more aware she is of potential racial and ethnic microaggressions. It is unclear if this change came with maturity, life experience, or for another reason, but nonetheless, even if the person asking was attempting to be sincere, tasking Sonia with the responsibility of speaking to the experience of all "brown" people is microaggressive. Sonia, who was born in America and was raised in Staten Island is not in the position to speak for all "brown" people. Additionally, now and at the time it was clear that the perpetrators of 9/11 were from the Middle East and not of Indian descent like Sonia. Regardless of if Sonia was experiencing stereotyping or prejudice at the airport, associating her with any group of color is ignorant and microaggressive.

Roxanne also shared her experience with being targeted specifically following the events of 9/11. The events that Roxanne experienced occurred off-campus and were the result of others outside of her social network assuming that she was a person of Middle Eastern descent. These experiences in which she was singled out both racially and ethnically made her uncomfortable:

... So yeah, I got called some names. There were some fights, not physical fights, but verbal...It was strange because for those people who did not know that I was Indian and not Middle Eastern or Pakistani or Muslim, assumed because of my skin color that I was, I had some incidents when I was out and this is as an adult,

thirty-three years old. When I was out with friends at this sports bar, people drinking, got called some names, and so, not for myself, you know, I'm Texan, I'm not Muslim...there were some incidents and it was uncomfortable.

Roxanne also experienced racial and ethnic stereotypes directly relating to the stereotypes that Asians are smart and that Indians tend to dominant fields such as medicine and engineering. Because of these stereotypes, Roxanne feels that she does not fit the mold of a *typical* Indian. While she did not state it outright, it would be understandable how pursuing non-technical fields in college could result in backlash, criticism, and pressure from multiple sources including family and peers for women like Roxanne who are classified as Asian and/or Indian American:

...I guess everyone thought I should be smarter than I was or have a different major than what I did. Be business, or pre-med. [pre-medicine], or engineering or something like that and that wasn't my interest at all...So, I'm very different from the normal concept of what an Indian or Asian person should be or should aspire to be...they expected more from me, because I was Asian. I don't ever think being a woman really came into play. But, definitely being Asian that I should be making straight A's and I should want to do this and this and not be an English teacher. And just be a lot more – or do a lot more than what I was doing...

Roxanne believes that these stereotypes were imparted on her because of the wildly held assumption that Asian people are smarter and excel in technical areas such as engineering and medicine. When asked about her experience with being the recipient of any stereotypes or expectations specifically because of the model minority stereotype, Rani,

unfamiliar with the term “model minority” was provided with examples to illustrate the concept. Following the provided examples, she realized that she did have experience being on the receiving end of the model minority stereotype:

Math, yes, they did...Nobody said it to me directly, but I think in between all of us, the student, the colleagues itself, the students themselves, I think they expected us to be good at math maybe...math and computer science, you know, logic, anything analytical. There was that a little bit.

When asked if she would have felt comfortable wearing a Sari bringing a cultural dish to a cultural celebration organized by the university, or displaying her Indian culture in a direct way while on campus she noted:

Not so much, maybe...I mean, I would have, but I don't know. I just feel like if it was only Indians, yeah. But, if it was all the student, the entire mix, then I don't know. I feel like there is a certain – all the foods, right, every cuisine has its smell...right? There is a fragrance to it which you think its fragrance, but for someone else it's like “Oh, my God”.

Further expanding on the concept of how certain aspects of the Indian culture such as food may not be welcomed by those outside of the Indian culture, Rani shared an experience she and her Indian friends had when they invited an American peer to go have an Indian meal with them. When the American peer learned that they would be eating Indian food their distaste of the idea of eating with his hands was apparent to Rani and her friends:

He was like, “Oh my God. Indian food, I cannot eat with my hands and I don’t know.” And he just made me feel like, okay, he doesn’t like how typically Indians eat with hand back then. Nobody eats with their hands here...But I guess he said it makes him sick. The food makes him sick though. Like – he said that he cannot eat with his hands and all of that so”.

While it appears that Rani understood the American peer’s reservations to eating with their hands what potentially made the experience memorable for Rani was the fact that the American peer was so blatant in their disgust of the idea of eating with their hands; A custom traditionally practiced by those of Indian descent.

Summary

The previous theme captures the complexity of the various identities of the women intersecting while they attended college. Most notably race, ethnicity, and in the case of Rani, national origin and immigrant status. Gender did not emerge as a salient identity that had a significant bearing on the college experiences of the women. The racialization and ethnicization of the women occurred primarily based on the model minority myth. According to Nakiboglu (2005), the model minority myth may leave second-generation Indians feeling typecast and frustrated. All of the women in study shared this same sentiment in some way during their interview. Although Rani was not as familiar with the term “model minority” as the second-generation women were, she was also a recipient of the stereotype during her college years.

For the second-generation women, the model minority myth appeared to be fueled by the fact that all majored in the social science/liberal arts and/or education fields.

Additionally, they also experienced the model minority stereotype internalization within their own ethnic group, including parents and family friends who expected that they would or should major in technical fields such as engineering or medicine. In addition to being racialized and *ethnicized* based on the model minority stereotype some of the women also endured stereotypes and negative experiences that were connected to customs traditionally present within the Indian culture such as cooking with distinct spices and eating with their hands.

As previously mentioned, gender did not emerge as a salient identity that affected the collegiate experience of all of the women. Still, Michelle discussed her experience that involved her gendered identity primarily in the context of family. Juan, Syed, and Azmitia (2016) mentioned, “for women of color, gender norms may be more apparent in personal contexts. In particular, personal experiences with race/ethnicity and gender occur frequently within the family sphere, as the family is the first space in which one observes the practices of race/ethnicity and gender” (p. 227). Furthermore, Michelle’s gendered experience mirrors the findings of Juan et al., (2016) which include “...for women of color, their most proximal social systems may be the most influential in gaining understanding about gender dynamics within their racial/ethnic groups” (p. 235).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to share the women’s’ responses as they are related to the research question. Each theme was described, presented evidence, and contextualized within existing literature when applicable.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to expand empirical research and scholarship on the college experience of Indian and Indian American women who have earned a college degree, specifically with regard to their ethnic/racial and gendered identities. The findings led to the following implications for practice and future research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of the ethnic/racial and gendered identities of Indian and Indian American women who have earned a college degree. The findings of this study are intended to inform institutional practices, policies, and procedures from the perspectives of four Indian and Indian American women. Data were gathered through individual, in-person interviews, a demographic questionnaire, field notes, and if necessary, individual e-mail correspondence. The following research question guided this study:

What are the lived experiences relating to the intersection of ethnic/racial and gendered identities of Indian American women who have obtained a college degree?

Analytical Discussion of the Research Question

The four women in this study provided valuable insights into how college is experienced concerning the racial/ethnic and gendered identities of Indian and Indian American women. The findings in this study were congruent with the literature in that race and ethnicity as well as other identities, such as generational status, national origin, and immigrant status affected the college experiences of the four women. In addition, the role of the women's upbringing and how it continued to affect them as they grew older

was also important. It is crucial to note the importance of parents and the role they played in transmitting cultural knowledge to the women during their upbringing. In addition, the racial and ethnic diversity of the regional location where the women were raised is also a critical factor to consider.

The theoretical framework that served as the foundation of this study, intersectionality was supported based on the data provided by the women. Contrary to the literature, gender did not emerge as a salient identity that affected the college experience of all of the women in a pronounced manner. The theory of intersectionality posits that the experiences of an individual in a given context are influenced by the simultaneous interaction of their multiple social group memberships (Hankivsky, 2014). This proved to be the case of all of the women in this study. The data presented by the women in the study also suggested that regardless of a shared racial or ethnic heritage other identities affected the experiences of the women in a complex manner given the influence of other factors such as their upbringing.

Intersectionality also purports that oppression cannot be viewed based on race, gender, or socio-economic class alone, but of all these and other social group memberships working interactively (Hankivsky, 2014). The data in this study revealed that generational identity, immigrant status, and national origin along with upbringing may prove to be a marginalizing factor, regardless of a shared identity such as race or ethnicity. For immigrant students, generational identity and national origin may escalate into an oppressive force in conjunction with language barriers, if it impedes the learning process and perhaps opportunities for sustainable and beneficial social relationships with

others on the college campus. This notion is paramount especially if they arrived to the United States later in their lives.

Being an immigrant, as well as an ethnic and racial minority may deepen the degree of marginalization for immigrants in educational settings. While immigrant status, race, and ethnicity may marginalize these students from Americans and other minorities and non-minorities it is critical to realize that generational-status and national origin may further exclude and isolate a person even within their own ethnic group.

The data also reflected that generational identity, national origin, and immigrant status had a profound impact on how college was experienced by the women in this study. The generational distinction between the participants in college resulted in distinct worldviews between the second-generation women and first-generation woman and provided a new lens to view the college experience of both first and second-generation Indian and Indian American women.

In this study, generational identity and national origin emerged as salient identities that affected the women's college experience along with their racial and ethnic identity. The racialization of Asians and Asian Americans and the ethnicization of Indians and Indian Americans particularly based on the model minority stereotype is *still* occurring at least within the educational sphere and is being delivered from a variety of networks including family and peers as evidenced by the women in this study.

The data also confirmed the presence of gender expectations salient in the Asian/Indian culture, which were placed on one of the second-generation women from within their familial networks as she worked to manage the duality of their Asian/Indian

and American identities and their gender identity. Additionally, this study reflected the literature in that ethnic minorities may also bear the burden of ethnic stereotypes or be *ethnicized* within a variety of contexts including social and familial.

The data also revealed a potential gap in the literature as regional location and the corresponding racial demographics appeared to have an effect on the depth of assimilation of the women into the United States culture in interaction with their generational status and national origin. Regional location as well as the corresponding demographics of the area during upbringing appeared to influence the self-identity of the women. Additionally, regional location and the corresponding diversity of the college or university in which the women attended may also have had an effect on how connected they were to their ethnic heritage and who they form social connections with.

The generational identity, national origin of the women, the racial and ethnic diversity of where the women grew up, and how much exposure to the Indian culture they received from their parents may have also had an effect on how connected they were to their ethnic identity. Moreover, once the women began college, these same undercurrents may have had an effect on the demographics of their social relationships and how connected they were to their ethnic identity.

Despite the commonality of the ethnic and racial identity of the women, the women proved to be divided, at least in a social context across immigrant, national origin, nationality, and generational lines. With the influence of generational identity, opportunities for cross-generational and cross-national origin peer interactions within the same race and ethnicity were limited for Michelle, Sonia, and Rani. Generational status

and national origin proved to be a marginalizing factor in the college experiences of the women in an intra-racial/ethnic aspect. Generational identity, national origin, immigrant status, gender, race, and ethnicity appeared to interact in unison to cultivate the college experiences of the women in the study.

Overall Summary of the Study

The women's responses to the research question that guided this study provided evidence that supports the theory of intersectionality. In this study, the salient identities of the women that emerged in regard to their influence on their overall college experiences were generational identity, national origin, immigrant status, racial identity, ethnic identity, and in the case of one of the women, gender identity. The influence of these factors did not emerge once the women began college, but seemed to be rooted in the upbringing of the women where neighborhood diversity and parents are an important force in linking the women their Indian ethnic culture.

The data also revealed that despite having a shared cultural heritage the upbringing, generational identity and national origin of the women had a primary influence on their overall college experience in conjunction with the previously mentioned identities. This intra-generational divide proved to be a marginalizing force for the women in terms of their social relationships and their interactions with students, including Indians who were born outside of the United States while attending college.

Additionally, the data revealed a potential gap in the literature, as the regional location in which immigrants settle and the diversity or lack thereof of the area may

affect the depth of assimilation into the United States culture. This finding may have an effect on the worldview and development of self-identity within their children.

Regional location and the corresponding demographics whether during upbringing or the college years may also influence how connected an immigrant or ethnic minority is to their culture, how pronounced their ethnic or racial identity is, and once in an educational context the demographic make-up of their social relationships. These factors have not been explored in depth in previous literature.

Implications for Practice

Colleges cannot do much to mediate the differences in upbringing amongst their students; however, the data revealed that when it comes to students of color colleges ought to be cognizant of how upbringing may affect their students in a social capacity while attending the college. This is especially critical for international students who may face internal and external barriers that prevent them from connecting with other races, ethnicities, and generally, individuals who have more experience with the American culture than they do. Colleges should be aware of the intra-racial or intra-ethnic differences that may exist between populations. Essentially, because a group of students may all be of Indian descent, does not negate how the complexity of their other identities such as generational status or socio-economic class may oppress or privilege them in an educational setting. As such, colleges should be mindful as they create multicultural services and programs aimed at fostering student connectedness, engagement, belonging, and success. Colleges should be aware of who their multicultural resources, programs, and services are intended for, as second-generation students and higher may not broadly

identify as a minority, person of color, or as someone who is international, regardless of their own, their parents,' or grandparents' national origin, race, or ethnicity. Similar to the recommendation of Vaccaro (2010) colleges may want to consider developing programs from an intersectional perspective. For example, colleges may want to consider creating organizations for specific and diverse groups such as “Women of Color”, “International Women of Color”, or mentorship and student support programs for “Men of Color”. With this information, colleges should ensure that their multicultural resources, programs, and services are inviting and accessible to a myriad of students, with generational status, racial, gender, and ethnic differences being considered. Colleges should also consider seeking state and federal funding to scale-up their diversity initiatives on campus or create diversity initiatives and support programs and resources on their campus.

Some of the women shared that at almost all the colleges or universities that they attended, opportunities, especially in regard to building confidence and leadership amongst the female students was severely lacking or non-existent. Although gender did not emerge as a salient identity in the college experience of the women the presence of gender identity was noticeable in all of the interviews. In light of this, colleges would be wise to consider the scope of their programming for women. While sororities may be available for women to join other viable alternatives may include mentorship programs for female students, safe spaces on campus for women, and the development of leadership conferences, lectures from guest speakers, and other forums for women on campus, including women faculty, staff, and students. Such programs would provide all

women on the campus the opportunity to develop personally and professionally while attending or working at the college or university.

First-generation and immigrant students in college may need additional guidance as they navigate college in the United States. Colleges, therefore, should provide opportunities for cross-racial, cross-generational, and cross-national origin interactions amongst students as certain resources, programs, services, and even campus living quarters designed to enhance the experiences of international students or immigrants and foster connectedness amongst them may prove to be additionally marginalizing to them.

Social resources and engagement opportunities proved to be a salient topic of discussion in the interviews with the women. Thus, colleges should consider the nature and scope of the social resources and engagement opportunities that they offer on campus and consider if these opportunities are inclusive of all students that they are intended for on the campus.

Finally, although colleges alone cannot make their entire student, staff, or faculty population exercise social justice and racial and ethnic tolerance. In response colleges should strive to implement diversity training programs and resources to students, faculty, and staff given the ever-increasing diversity of college campuses. Specific training programs reach deeper levels than mentions of diversity in college values and mission statements. Implementing diversity training programs sets the tone of the college, defines the college culture, and communicates to the campus community what will and will not be tolerated.

Implications for Future Research

Although the data in this study corroborated with previous literature and supported the theory of intersectionality, additional studies are needed to investigate intra-racial/ethnic differences across other minority groups and how these differences may be manifested in college settings. Upbringing emerged as a salient phenomenon in understanding how self-identity as well as worldview is formed during one's early experiences. Future research should aim to understand the differences in how a minority or ethnic culture develops a connection to their culture with the racial and ethnic diversity of the regional areas that they grow up in taken into account.

In this study, the parents of the second-generation women emerged as a salient factor in the upbringing of the women and how their self-identity was formed. An ethnographic study would also be appropriate in the future to understand how first-generation parents are transmitting their ethnic culture to their children and the role that other individuals in the child's network such as grandparents may play in transmitting cultural knowledge to the children.

This study revealed that the racial and ethnic diversity or lack thereof in the neighborhoods in which second-generation individuals are located may be a potential gap in the literature. Future studies may want to also explore how the racial or ethnic diversity or lack there-of in the areas where the college or university is located affects the identity of the students as they progress through college and how connected they are to their race or ethnicity while in college. Future studies may also want to examine the number of American colleges that offer diversity initiatives whether in the form of mentorship

programs or trainings, if these initiatives are of quality, and if these initiatives are effective in achieving their goals of supporting students, faculty, and staff.

Finally, future studies should also focus on the experiences of ethnic minorities attending college in times that are more recent. Data collected from current students and college graduates within this cohort may be exceptionally compelling given that these students attended college at the time when the first United States President of African American descent, Barak Obama took office or when the country came under the unconventional leadership of Donald Trump.

Conclusion

This study was unique in that it focused on four women who were all of Indian descent and also included first and second-generation women of Indian descent. Despite having a shared heritage, the women's experiences revealed diversity and complexity. This finding is striking because shared identities can mask truly detrimental barriers and differences faced by members of the same ethnic group. Colleges, scholars, researchers, and society can no longer continue to address the challenges faced by diverse students with one-size-fits all initiatives such as a men's support group, mentorship programs, or an international student organization. Colleges can no longer afford to view their student population in categories such as "White" and "People of color". Instead, colleges need to approach all of their operations with an intersectional framework in mind by taking other factors such as ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic class, and generational status into account. Additionally, colleges cannot afford to state that they value diversity and inclusivity, but must make deep efforts to model both diversity and inclusivity, starting

with their most senior administrative and faculty levels on down. This is the only way to ensure transparent and equitable support for all college populations no matter where the students, faculty, or staff start from or where they are going.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: I'm Not Who You Think I am: The Intersectional Collegiate Experience of Indian American Women

Principal Investigator(s): Alexis Alexander, BA

Student Investigator(s): Alexis Alexander, BA

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michele Kahn

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this project is to explore and understand the lived experiences of Indian American women who have completed a college degree. The guiding question for this project is: "What are the lived experiences relating to the intersection of ethnic/racial and gendered identities of Indian American women who have obtained a college degree?" Furthermore, the goal of this project is to understand how race/ethnicity and gender affect the college experience of Indian American women and their ability to earn a degree.

PROCEDURES

Participants will be asked to participate in one individual, in-person interview(s) in a public and convenient location at a time that is suitable for them between November 2017 and May 2018. The interview(s) will last one to two hours and will be recorded. Participants may be asked to participate in additional follow-up interviews for the purpose of further explanation or clarification. Any additional follow-up interviews will be recorded. Participants will be asked to select a public and comfortable location off-campus for their interview(s) to take place. Prior to the interview(s) participants will be asked to complete an informed consent form and a brief demographic questionnaire regarding their family and educational background.

Participants will be asked to review the final themes discovered during the data analysis stage to ensure that the themes represent their perspective and experience accurately. Participants will be able to clarify as well as redact any statements that they are not comfortable having shared.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated duration of the study will be approximately eight months. Participants can be expected to contribute at least one to two hours of their time for the first interview with potential follow up interviews. Additionally, participants will be asked to review the final themes discovered during the data analysis stage to ensure that the themes represent their perspective and experience accurately. Participants will be able to clarify as well as redact any statements that they are not comfortable having shared.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

The foreseeable risk of involvement in the research project may include emotional discomfort and/or psychological distress given that the research questions require the participants to recount possibly embarrassing, hurtful, or traumatic experiences related to their college experience. The participants' identities may be deduced as the interview(s) will be conducted off-campus in which the participant may be subjected to damage to their reputation. Your name, other data that you may be identified by, and the school(s) you attended will not be included in any reports. Participants may withdraw from the research project at point in time. During the interviews(s) participants will be able to skip any questions that they are not comfortable with answering.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand the college experience of Indian American women, and how race/ethnicity and gender issues affect the college experience of Indian American women. Participants may benefit knowing that their college experience may serve as a benefit to current or future college students who share similarities with them.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The following measures will be taken:

- The data that will be collected (informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, recording(s), field notes, and transcripts) will only be accessible to the principal researcher, student researcher, and faculty advisor.
- Any data identifying information (i.e. your name, the name of the college institution(s) you attended, the names of teachers/faculty/instructors, staff, students, etc. revealed by you will be withheld and not included in the transcripts or final project.
- During the project, the audio files and electronic data will be stored on a thumb drive that only the researcher will have access to. When the thumb drive is not in use it will be placed in a safe located in a secure location.
- Only the researcher as well as the faculty advisor (if necessary) will have access to the data and participant's identifiers.

- The researcher will only utilize computers that are password-protected.
- All audio files will be erased after they have been transcribed.

Following the conclusion of the project the data will remain in a locked safe at the researcher's residence. Only the researcher will have access to the safe.

The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. Additionally, UHCL, the CPHS, and federal and state agencies reserve the right the copy or inspect the documents at any point.

For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by Alexis Alexander for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

Full disclosure of confidential records may occur if there is any suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect or harm to others.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Faculty Sponsor, Michelle Kahn, Ph.D., at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Student Researcher, Alexis Alexander, at phone number [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. The Faculty Sponsor Michelle Kahn, Ph.D., may be contacted at phone number [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]

SIGNATURES:

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's printed

name: _____

Signature of Subject: _____

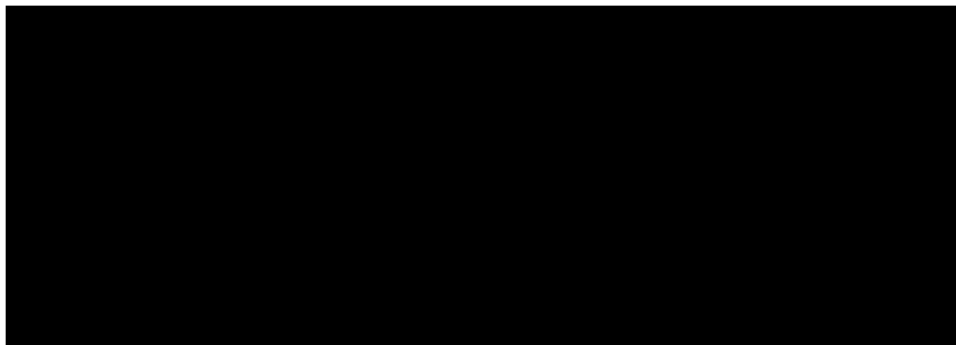
Date: _____

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title _____

Signature of Person Obtaining
Consent: _____

Date: _____



APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

This e-mail is adapted from: Participant E-mail Recruitment Tips, 2009

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Alexis Alexander and I am a student from the college of education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the college experience of Indian American women who have graduated from a college or university in the United States with at least a bachelor's degree. You're eligible to be in this study because you are an Indian American woman who has completed at least a bachelor's degree in 2000 or after at an accredited college or university in the United States. I obtained your contact information from [*describe source*].

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an informed consent form, a demographic questionnaire, and participate in at least one, individual, in-person interview(s) lasting between one to two hours in a public location that is convenient time for you. You may also be asked to participate in additional follow-up interviews for the purpose of further explanation or clarification of your statements. Additionally, you will be asked to review the final themes discovered during the data analysis stage to ensure that the themes represent their perspective and experience accurately. During this time, you will be able to clarify as well as redact any statements that they are not comfortable having shared. I would like to record all of your interviews and then use the information for my thesis for my graduate degree.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. You can also withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Potential risks from participation that may incur include emotional discomfort or psychological distress given that you will be asked questions about your college experience. Additionally, your identity may be deduced as the interview(s) will occur off-campus which may cause damage to your reputation. If you would like to participate please complete the following information and send it to me via e-mail at least two weeks in advance in order to schedule your interview between November 2017 and February 2017:

Possible Days of the Week:

Possible Dates:

Anytime between _____ and _____

Public location (i.e. library):

Remember, that the interview may last at least one and up to two hours. I will send you a follow-up message prior to your interview.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED]
or [REDACTED] If you do not want to participate, please send me a
reply e-mail saying 'No thanks.'

Thank you for your time.

Alexis Alexander

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

This script and questions are adapted from: Bivens, 2016

Researcher's Script:

Thank you for your participation with this research project. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your overall experience at the college or university you graduated from. During the interview you have the right to decline to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with. This conversation will be recorded using an electronic recording device for the purpose of generating data for this research project. Your responses are confidential and I will use a pseudonym for the report to protect your identity. At this time are there any questions that I can answer?

Background Questions:

1. How do you identify or describe yourself racially and ethnically?
2. Please tell me more about your family? Such as who you grew up with in your household, what your parents did for work, if you grew in a large city or in a more rural area?
3. What was it like growing up in your family?
4. How old were you when you and your family immigrated to the U.S.?
5. How did you and your family immigrate to the U.S.?
6. Why did you and your family decide to leave your home country for the U.S.?
7. How did you feel having to leave or deciding to leave your home country?
8. Where did you live once you came to the U.S.?
9. What did you know or think about the U.S. before you arrived?
10. What impression did you have about the U.S. when you first arrived?
11. How did your life change once you began living in the U.S.?
12. How was your life in the U.S. different or the same compared to your home country?
13. What was the best aspect of living in the U.S.?
14. What did you miss most about your home country?
15. Did you ever have any experiences that made you aware of your race/ethnicity or gender or that your race/ethnicity or gender was not accepted?
16. How do you think non-Indians or those of South Asian descent in the U.S. view Indians or Indian Americans?
17. Do you think Indian Americans are stereotyped in the U.S. in any way? In what ways?
18. How often do you go back to your home country? Is your experience there different in any ways because you immigrated or were born in the U.S.?
19. Would you consider yourself a minority?

20. As an Indian American woman do you think your experiences in the U.S. are the same or different than other minorities in the U.S.?
21. Where do you or have you felt the most accepted? And the least?

College Experience Questions:

1. What year did you first go to college?
2. What year did you receive your bachelor's degree?
3. What made you choose the college that you attended?
4. What was your major(s) in college?
5. Did you ever live on the campus? Please describe your experience living on the campus.
6. Were you involved in any student organizations or clubs? Which ones? Please describe your experience with your involvement in the organizations or clubs you mentioned?
7. How would you describe the college campus in regards to the staff, faculty, and student body? Were most men or women, was mostly one race/ethnicity?
8. Describe your experience as an Indian American woman on the campus? Please share any stories that further illustrate your experiences.
9. Did you feel welcomed by the staff, faculty, and other students on the campus? Please describe what made you feel welcomed or unwelcomed.
10. Were there any individuals or groups on the campus that you feel were favored, prioritized, or received any preferential treatment? Please describe why you feel they were favored or prioritized and how they were favored, prioritized, or received preferential treatment.
11. Did you have any negative or positive interactions with staff, faculty, or students during your college experience that you thought related to your race/ethnicity or gender?
12. Did you ever feel that you were treated differently or seen as different in class or by staff or faculty because of your race/ethnicity or gender? Please describe these experiences. Other than race/ethnicity or gender did you feel that any other factors may have contributed to your campus experience? Please describe why?
13. During your college experience did you ever feel privileged in any way because of your race or gender?
14. Do you feel that those of Indian descent are stereotyped by the general public? Please describe the stereotypes you believe are held by others about those of Indian descent? Do you believe any of the stereotypes you mentioned negatively or positively affected you during your college experience? Please describe how.
15. Did you ever feel that anyone in the campus community expected certain actions or behaviors from you because of your race/ethnicity or gender? Please share any

- stories to illustrate your experiences. How did these expectations make you feel? How did you cope?
16. Did you ever have challenges during your college experience that you believed were related to your race/ethnicity and/or gender? Did you seek any assistance with addressing these challenges? How? From who? What were the results?
 17. Did you ever feel excluded or uncomfortable by staff, faculty, or students during your college career because of your race or gender?
 18. Were you ever discriminated against because of your race/ethnicity or gender on campus?
 19. Describe any experiences with students, faculty or staff that made you as an Indian American woman feel valued, welcomed, accepted, and equal on campus?
 20. While attending college were there any times that you felt you could not be yourself?
 21. Did you ever encounter any experiences that made you feel that you were not welcome on campus because of your race or gender?
 22. Who did you hang out or spend time with on campus? Looking back, what was it about this individual or group that made you connect with them?
 23. Did the groups or individuals you spent time with ever share any issues that may have had on campus because of their race or gender?
 24. How often did you interact with people who were a different race/ethnicity or gender from you?
 25. What experiences did you have interacting with students who were a different gender or race/ethnicity from you?
 26. What experiences did you have interacting with staff and faculty who were a different gender or race/ethnicity from you?
 27. Did you encounter any faculty or staff members that shared your same race/ethnicity? Were your experiences with them different in any way?
 28. Do you feel that your college experience was affected in any way because you are an Indian woman?

Persistence

29. Do you feel that the campus you attended valued and accepted people from diverse backgrounds? Please explain why you believe that they did or did not.
30. What resources were available for you to use on campus? Did you feel limited from utilizing any available campus resources because of your race/ethnicity or gender? What resources were the most helpful to you during your college experience? Were there any campus resources that specially addressed your needs as a woman and/or person of color?
31. Who or what (department or organization) supported you on the campus during your college experience?

32. Who or what (department or organization) motivated you to complete your degree at this college?
33. Did you ever consider transferring to another college? Why? Please describe what stopped you from transferring?
34. Do you or did you ever regret your decision to attend this college? Please explain why.
35. What was your best experience on this campus?
36. What was your worst experience on this campus?

Going Forward

37. Would you recommend other women of Indian descent to attend this college? Please describe why or why not.
38. Describe what you feel the college can do to make the campus more welcoming and a better experience for Indian American women?
39. What advice would you give to other women of Indian descent who are currently enrolled or planning to enroll in college?

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is adapted from: Bivens, 2016

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Name: _____
2. Chosen Name for Research Project:

3. What is your age? _____
4. Do you identify as a woman? _____
5. Do you identify as an individual of South Asian Indian descent?

6. What is your city, state, and country of birth?

7. Did you immigrate to the United States?

8. If yes to question 6, please indicate what year and age at the time of arrival in the United States?

9. If no to question 6, please indicate which parent(s) was born in India?

10. Describe your family's economic background:

11. Did you complete a bachelor's degree in the United States?

12. What college or university did you attend?

13. Which college or university did you graduate from?

14. What year did you complete your bachelor's degree?

15. What major/program did you graduate under?

16. Describe your current economic background:

17. What is your current occupation?

18. Are you married?

19. Do you have children?

20. What is the highest education level of your mother?

21. What college or university did she graduate from and where was it located?

22. What is the highest education level of your father?

23. What college or university did he graduate from and where was it located?

Please list the name of the college(s) you have attended, the year(s) you were enrolled, and the major(s) you were under.

Name of College

Year(s) Attended

Major

Please list any clubs/organizations you are a member of and your position (e.g., president, member, etc.).

Name of organization

Position

Please list any offices/resources on campus (e.g., Academic Success Center, student counseling, library) that you used and found essential to staying in college:
