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# Neither Here, Nor There: The experience of immigration, integration, and consciousness development among Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American college students

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**Neither Here, Nor There: The experience of immigration, integration, and  
consciousness development among Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American college  
students**

by

**Vijay Kanagala**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:  
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2011

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**DEDICATION**

*To my Pori- my Amma (my mother)*

*I know I can never thank you for what you have endured for me; instead, I place this at your feet as a humble offering for believing in me, and sustaining my spirit.*

&

*To all Generation 1.5 immigrant children*

*May your journeys be filled with adventures and let your light shine.*

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Go Cyclones!

## ABSTRACT

Invisible under the Asian American umbrella for the past four and half decades, Indian Americans have been increasingly gaining recognition as the impeccable “model minority” post dotcom boom at the turn of the 21st century. The success stories of a small percentage of Asian Indian Americans has lead researchers to believe that this racial and ethnic minority group tends to have better economic outcomes compared to their White counterparts, and as a result the entire United States population. This economic success has come with a price and has basically negated this community’s status as racial and ethnic minorities as people who also face issues of prejudice and discrimination based on race and has made them role models for all other communities of color. This has in many instances turned to be a negative consequence especially on college campuses where Asian Americans are no longer considered underrepresented groups.

This dissertation study explores the experience of immigration, integration and consciousness development among 11 Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American college students at a predominately White Midwestern institution. Living in two spaces – emotional and physical, these individuals narrate their stories how they navigate the maze of higher education as well as new immigrants to the United States. *Neither Here, Nor There* is a collection of their journeys.

Based on face-to-face intense reflective videotaped interviews, participant observations, artifact collection, and reflective journaling, this study attempted to understand the expectations, commitments and negotiations that these individuals make and live by. Generation 1.5 straddle between several conflicting and diverse worlds of

home vs. college, family vs. community and peers, and innumerable identities – some imposed by others and some self imposed. This study sought to understand how these wide arrays of experiences ultimately affect college access and success specifically among the Asian Indian American students attending predominantly White institutions.

## THE ESSENSE OF INDIANNESS

by

Bhavya Mohan

Through a small red dot, you can see the essence of my Indianness.

I have often wondered what it is like to be entirely One.

Not Two. One.

Sunday morning is temple morning.

Old Navy flannel pajamas. Colgate toothpaste. American Dove soap.

I still have one hour for my transformation.

My closet is sadly segregated. American.

Indian.

On the left, jeans, sweatshirts, T-shirts.

On the right, silk saris, cotton blouses, gold sari.

Today, I must choose from the latter . . .

A sari is a work of art.

Pleats of silk surround a cotton interior.

Folds of my American life surround the core of my Indian upbringing.

The sari is wrapped around me.

Yet, I am wrapped in feelings of hypocrisy.

I speak like an American. I look like an Indian.

I am Two. I am not One.

But, my transformation is not complete.

It is time to affix my bindi. A small dot painted at the center of my forehead.

Red. It matches with the border of my sari.

The symbol of beauty, which completes any Indian ensemble.

## EMBRACING THE JOURNEY

### *An Introduction to the Nuances, Problems and Challenges of Being Neither Here, Nor There*

**Neither Here, Nor There** while presented as a doctoral dissertation purely for academic reasons is truly a composition of mini-stories of 11 individuals who immigrated to the United States from India. It provides glimpses of their experiences immigrating, living, growing and finally attending college in our heartland – Ames, Iowa. In addition to those 11 stories is my own journey, and therefore this work is very personal.

This body of work is a culmination of student journeys that started in different locations in India, but reached a common destination unbeknown to each of us. Up until the moment these words were written in this dissertation, our stories were identical yet different, separate but connected. Almost all of us in this dissertation knew each other, and parts of our mini-stories but for the most part we have lived our lives in silos. No one understood our experiences and us. I do not even think we understood them ourselves. In fact, I doubt if we will ever understand our journeys completely. No one had connected the dots of our journeys for us; that is, until now.

I attempt in this dissertation to lend voice to the experiences of 12 students not only as individuals, who have their own distinctive identities, but also as a collective group of Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students attending a predominantly white institution. As Asian Indians, we came from different languages, cultures, castes, communities, values, belief systems, religions, heritages, cuisines, and socio-economic backgrounds, to name some of the most obvious differences that we can relate to immediately. Ironically, when our families and we immigrated to the United States of

America, all those very important differences were somehow overlooked, and we gained a new identity. We became Asian Indian Americans or Desi Americans. A non-Indian may be unaware of these intra- and inter-cultural differences native to the Asian Indian culture and identity, but within the Asian Indian American immigrant community, these are still salient identities that define who we are as individuals and determine our way of life and educational experiences.

In *Neither Here, Nor There*, as a researcher/participant, I endeavor to capture the essence of each participant's life and educational experiences before, after, and during immigration – as being Indian and becoming American – to better understand identity development of a Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American. In sharing our invisible experiences and telling our immigrant stories, I seek to fill the void that has long been missing in educational research. Further, this scholarly work adds to research on Asian American scholarship focusing on South Asian American identity development, to the broader knowledge and literature about college student development, and to inquiry on immigrant experiences and immigration studies.

It would be a total lie to say that I conducted this research purely for research purposes. After all, there was not a significant amount of educational research on South Asian American identity, Asian Indian American identity, and Generation 1.5 identity development. While the void in research was a motivating factor to do this work, I wanted to tell my story myself. In telling my story, I wanted to explore the possibility of answering questions about my own life journey and my own identity development.

In my journey at Iowa State University, I quite unexpectedly became a big brother to a lot of Indian and Indian American students. To some of my participants in this study,

I was *in loco parentis* during their educational journeys. So, when I started writing this dissertation, it became abundantly clear to me from the very beginning that I could not engage in this work as if I was an objective researcher. I was not. It was my story. It was our story. Suddenly, it was no longer a dissertation. It was a responsibility. It was my responsibility to tell our stories as authentically as possible.

Once again in my life, I could not follow a prescribed way to do things, in this case, writing a dissertation. To engage holistically with my research, I intentionally had to validate and adopt my own style of seeking, learning, knowing, and writing that was very informal and less constricting. Naturally, it took a lot of time and patience. I had to develop a relationship with my participants for them to open up their hearts and minds to my probing questions. In doing that, my scholarship engaged and embraced emotion. It allowed for me to have conversations – not interviews with my participants. I was no longer “just a researcher” and they were not “just my participants.” In those conversations, we shared, cried, laughed, got frustrated with each other, and revisited our lives; we asked questions of each other that had never felt our breaths or tasted our tongues. We cared for our feelings and for each other. Questions became music to our ears (and sometimes gave us headaches). Each story was a song. Some were painful but many were just plain confusing. We unraveled our lives in those conversations, one song at a time. We finally were able to sing our own song. That is the essence of *Neither Here, Nor There*.

Having discussed the nuances that this study engages, I offer readers a collection of 11 deeply personal mini-stories that in their unique way articulate the paradoxical position of being *Neither Here, Nor There*. The 11 students and I started our

conversations over five years ago, and while the “data” I share in this dissertation reflect these conversations, I hope I do justice to every other feeling and reflection that these individuals shared over these past few years. I begin with my own story, with my own way of situating myself in the paradoxical space of being Neither Here, Nor There.

### **Problem Statement**

Asian Indians comprise the largest number of international students in American Universities. In 2007-08, Indian students constituted 15% of total international students enrollment in the United States. These students are attracted to American campuses because of intellectual climate, lifestyle, opportunities and the perception of America as a free society. Some of these Asian Indians immigrate to this country with their families to adopt the American way of life. The students that were educated in India and then receive additional schooling in the U.S. are known as Generation 1.5 Students.

According to Oudenhoven (2006): “Generation 1.5 students are immigrant students who move to the United States at the age of 12 or older and enroll in middle school or high school in this country.” Masterson (n.d.) notes that: “The label comes from the group's special place as first-generation Americans who migrate to this country during childhood and feel strong identification with the United States, yet are native to another country.

This group has been identified by the National Academic Advising Association's ESL/International Student Commission as a group that is rapidly growing and in need of special advising consideration (National Academic Advising Association, n.d.).” These students face challenges such as culture clash, learning a new culture, and reconciling their native culture with the institutional culture and values (Torres, 2003). In a sense,

these students are caught in a liminal, in-between space marked by physical relocation and dislocation. Anyone caught in the in-between space of “neither here, nor there” faces complex challenges that are not well understood by education researchers and practitioners in American higher education. No solid research exists to document the experiences of Asian Indian Generation 1.5 students enrolled in American universities. This study is perhaps the first of its kind to explore the experience of immigration, integration and consciousness development of Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students.

My learning inquiry addresses the following problems:

- The dearth of literature on Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students.
- The lack of understanding of how Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students dislocate from their homeland to relocate to the United States.
- The lack of understanding of the experience of being in an in-between space of oppositional, yet complimentary consciousness.

### **The Purpose of My Learning Inquiry**

The central purpose of my study was to engage and better understand how a group of 11 Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students (who immigrated to the United States from India with their families) identified, negotiated, understood, and described their immigration, integration, consciousness development and educational experiences while attending a predominantly white institution in the U.S. heartland. Two research questions frame my inquiry:

1. What is the immigration and integration experience like for Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students?
2. What characterizes the in-between space of being neither here, nor there?

## CHAPTER 1

### TELLING MY STORY

#### *Neither Here, Nor There: Reflections of a Generation 1.5 student*

It's a cold January Saturday morning; spring time in India. It is the lunar month of *Dhanurmasa*. The sun is just peeking out to *M.S. Subbulakshmi's* rendering of the *Venkateswara Suprabatham* to awaken the Lord of Seven Hills from his *yoga nidra*, playing loud in the second-hand AKAI cassette player in the kitchen, one of my mother's prized possessions. The maid servant is sprinkling water in the front yard preparing the earthly canvas for the beautiful *kolam*, and the milk man beckons my mom to come see him milk the cow from across our house. I can smell the chicory coffee being brewed...and bam, the ten-dollar alarm clock from Wal-Mart goes off. It is loud. I awaken from my *nidra* from a Friday night sleepover party with my friends. *M.S.*, the *kolam*, the milkman...all of it was a dream. I shake it off. Sipping my poorly made Folgers instant coffee in a GE microwave for my caffeine-starved brain, I switch to CNN headline news. I so wish I was home.

Emotions, thoughts, questions, and possible answers represent just a few of many different cords that tug at each other in my heart and head as I try to answer the question "Who am I?" This is a question that has been a constant companion over the past few years of my life – strangely unanswered to my satisfaction despite long hours of contemplative solitude. It is as I began to write my dissertation that I realized that it is probably the single most important question that I have sought to answer in all these years growing up in a multitude of cultures and countries. My quest for my identity did not start now, not yesterday, but some 8,000 miles away in a place that I used to once

upon a time call home: Madras (now Chennai), India. The paradox of my being begins to situate itself as I struggle stepping in and out of two languages.

Growing up in Madras, I did not realize the complexity of my being. I was a confusion of sorts. My parents spoke Telugu at home, but people spoke Tamil outside and we, the children, could not mix that up. I remember my father getting angry at me for not using my Telugu vocabulary at the dinner table. My parents did not understand Tamil for a long time. In fact, my father did not speak it until after living in that city for over 15 years. My mother had to speak Tamil because she had to interact with domestic help. And, as children we had to learn the language in school by government mandate, my older brothers escaping this nightmarish experience. I could not. I failed my Tamil exams every year for three years. I was passed with a warning every year until fifth grade. I would have been the class topper but for that one subject. This was nightmarish because in an exam, an essay question required me to write about a domestic animal, and I had to choose between writing about a dog or a cat. I wrote about the cow because that was only thing I could remember, and it was a domestic animal. Funny now, but not so funny then. Not being able to fit in does something to a child psyche, not to mention the stigma of failing a language class – although it wasn't my fault. What kind of a human being was I? How could I not know my language? But my mother and father had told me that Telugu was my language. It was so confusing. In sixth grade when the first opportunity came, I took French as my foreign language of choice (like Tamil wasn't). That was 1986.

Maybe those developing years of my life had something to do with my identity, or lack thereof. As was a common practice among school children, I was nicknamed "Peter" for speaking to everybody in English. I was a Hindu and Peter was a "Christian" name. I

was also Peter because my peers perceived me as trying to be a *vellai kaaran* – a white man, referring to the not so distant colonial past of India. “Peter” was derogatory. It was cruel. It was my peers’ way of telling me I did not belong. My fellow classmates did not know what that label did do to me, but they did not mean any harm. I would converse sparingly in Tamil or Telugu when I spoke to people around me, but English became a safe haven. I embraced “othering” myself. It is still so today. Peter; Vijay – White; Indian – Neither Here, Nor There.

My departure to Russia to attend medical school, against the wishes of my father, after high school, was probably a time that I reflect back and sense that I understood the essence of being Indian, if that was an identity that I was supposed to have (if only partially). Away in a distant land, I understood how language and culture defined one. Even there, the Indian community chastised me for not knowing who I was. Never mind, I thought, and mastered the Russian language, a prerequisite before medical school, with so much passion and anger, more anger than passion, that I received a *pyatorki* (highest distinction) on my Russian writing, reading and speaking skills test. This was a very rare accomplishment, I learned later, for foreign students to achieve. I guess I wanted to be Russian. After all, the Indian students questioned me about my identity all the time.

After a couple of years of what one of my first cousin calls a super-long vacation in Russia and Azerbaijan, I went back to India to pursue my undergraduate degree at Pachaiyappa’s College for Men in Chennai (formerly Madras). I was in a way the prodigal son. I was not completely successful in accomplishing my educational goals in Russia. I discontinued medical school. I had brought disrepute to the family. I was a failure. While others thought I had to be salvaged, I only saw opportunity. I chose to

experiment. But by not conforming, I realized so many things and lost a few. My undergraduate college years at Pachaiyappa's were some of the best years of my life, and I am sure will remain so for a long time. I became the leader that I am today because of my experiences there.

It was the late 90s. My two brothers had relocated to America, actually to the United States of America. But Indians do not tend to distinguish between America and United States of America, as is the case with the rest of the world. Those two words are used synonymously. My brothers had moved for better opportunities in life, and to fulfill my father's own broken dream of attending college in the States. My oldest brother attended college at University of California, San Diego and settled with his family in New Jersey. My older brother attended University of Nevada, Las Vegas and moved to California for employment, where he now lives with his family.

When all this was happening, I was growing comfortable resettling and rediscovering myself in India. I had good friends in college, and I thought I had some semblance of sanity and stability in my life. After graduating from Pachaiyappa's with a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology, I was enrolled as a graduate student in the Biotechnology program at Loyola College in Chennai, India. Soon, all this was to change.

It was a bittersweet moment. It was sweet because I was finally going to the land of opportunities. I relocated to the United States to come live in Ames, IA. It was bitter because "that was the least I could do" my father said, to save the family honor, and to make something good out of myself. My mother, "settle down," she said. I try, but I understand neither.

In the American heartland, I found, a new country, a tumultuous graduate college experience, a change of educational path, a reevaluation of career goals, a deeply influential student affairs profession, and finally an educational journey with a new purpose and meaning in life. These are probably some of the key phases that come to mind to define my last 11 years in this country that I now call home. In some ways, I am now more here than there. Strangely, the real ocean that I used to live by has in a blink of an eye changed to ponds and lakes that people here call “beaches.” The rice paddy fields have grown into corn and soy fields. The hustle and bustle of big city life is now replaced by a foggy winter pace. Yes, Iowa is what I call home today. It feels perfect to be here. And it is real.

It is these complexities that have come to define me. Some were imposed on me; some I have taken upon myself. And in doing so, I realize that I have taken on a role of a community leader and a researcher. It is within my role as a community leader that my story begins to intersect with the issues that are dear to my heart, with the success of students who I work(ed) with primarily at Iowa State University.

It was a gradual change. I was just another international graduate student when I came to Iowa State University, and lived the typical life of a *Desi* student. I was an international *Desi* graduate student. Yes, that was a new identity that I was given when I came to this country. However, with this myriad of identities, I still had to negotiate several sub-identities. I had to distinguish myself as a South Indian *Desi*, a not so fluent native Telugu speaker, yet a not so fluent non-native Tamil speaker, and an Indian with his family in the United States. From this emerged the identity of who I am today, the Generation 1.5er, a student who straddles two cultures and two identities.

As years passed, I changed. My identity evolved. I developed an immigrant identity. I no longer “felt” Indian, and I “thought” like an American. However, I “looked” like an Indian, and I was not an “American” legally, at least. I have a love-hate relationship with my immigration. I have tried to assimilate, reject, and re-assimilate into this society that I now call mine. I wanted to just fit in. Deep reflection allowed me to understand that I am more acculturated than assimilated.

Heartbeats pause, and the word treason may be etched with laser precision in the minds of all Indians at community gatherings when they hear me say that I am both an Indian and an American. After all, in my opinion, I have benefitted from both those identities. For that specific reason, I tend to stay clear of questions of identity and nationality from others. In my experience, I have had to respond to four different groups of individuals regarding my identity. They are (1) international Indian students, (2) first-generation Indian immigrant families, (3) second-generation Indians, and (4) all non-Indian communities.

To the international Indian students, I am the quintessential “wannabee” American. I am The Indian who wants to distance myself from my own culture and become, remember, “Peter.” I have assimilated so much that I long lost my claim to be one of them – an Indian. I have a strong “American accent,” and I have limited verbal skills of my native language(s). To the first-generation Indian immigrant elders, who have been living in the United States for the past few years or decades, I am just another “confused” Indian kid. I am often cautioned about “losing” my Indian identity, and that I should work harder at preserving my “Indianness.”

Interestingly, I elicit an equal and opposite reaction from another distinctive group of “fellow” Indians, the second-generation Indian Americans, who were born in the United States. In their opinion, I fall plenty short to claim an identity that belongs exclusively to them. Since I emigrated from India, I am less of an American than them. I did not have their childhood experiences. And again, I have a “not so thick Indian accent” but I still do have an accent that’s different from their “American accent.”

As if life wasn’t complicated with the three different groups within the Asian Indian community I mentioned above, I have to deal with the larger community that I am part of – the different racial and ethnic groups that make up the American society on a daily basis. Be it fourth-generation Japanese Americans, fifth-generation German Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans or the first citizens of this land, the American Indians, I will always be Indian and never enough American. I am always a foreigner. Essentially, I am Neither Here, Nor There.

As a full-time student affairs professional serving in the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs at Iowa State University, I had the opportunity to interact with several students of color as well as white students. As with any student affairs position, I worked with a mix of students: many of these students were talented, sensitive, smart young individuals, but there were a few who needed special intervention – that extra push to make it through college. However, I also worked with a disadvantage of a unique kind. Obviously, I did not physically look like any of the students who would come to mind when we say Asian American students, stereotypically speaking. I was not considered “Asian American enough” to work with Asian American students. Both students and staff discounted my ability to reach out to that population on campus.

Sometimes it felt like our own ethnic boundaries were smudged as if there was no difference. I do not think anybody paused to think about this very simple fact that the countries, which made up the Indian sub-continent, were part of Asia. Therefore, people whose origins could be traced back to that part of the world would have to be considered or would self-identify as Asian American. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

My family still maintains its identity as Indian, as does majority of the immigrant Desi community, despite becoming naturalized citizens of the United States of America. [I have to mention that I am not a citizen, yet]. This was when I wondered about the Asian Indian (American) students I worked with at Iowa State University. Although to the rest of the campus community, students of Indian origin were all the same, I found that in reality three distinct groups coexisted. These included the international students from India, the Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students and the second-generation Asian Indian American students. I started to talk to students. I used every opportunity I could find to talk about issues that we faced at community events, classes that I taught, and social gatherings at my apartment. How did these students navigate the process of understanding who they were? This was my initial question that prompted and allowed me to enter this scholarship.

This was when I realized that students of Indian origin in particular and South Asian origin in general had no support systems in place at Iowa State University. On a much broader level, universities across the country seemed to be ignorant of the need for a support system for students like us. American educators viewed us as having families that consisted of parents who were usually very well educated, usually with engineering and medical backgrounds. These educators saw us as students who could easily navigate

the world of college and who were, for the most part, successful. And if students were not successful, their families intervened. It worked sometimes and sometimes it did not. Our success in college seemed to come at a cost.

I started trying to understand these phenomena from a research perspective. I scoured journal articles and books related to this subject matter in hopes of understanding this issue that had become so central to my identity. While there was very little research on international students, and some research on second-generation Asian American students (followed the traditional definitions of who were considered Asian American), there was no research on Indian American students. Research was just evolving on Generation 1.5 students. I disagreed with the definitions that were used to define Generation 1.5. The definition was not complete or as broad as I would like it to be defined as. Thus emerged my own quest to understand the definition and identity development of Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students at a predominantly white institution.

As I reflect back, I feel I have come a long way from being a quiet international student from India to an individual with a whole new identity that seems to reveal and paint a new streak of color to the rainbow of my identity. These past 11 years, I have evolved from being a member of the community to being a community leader. It has not been an easy journey.

And, once again, those emotions, and thoughts about “who I am” come back. I wonder how many other individuals have experienced what I have gone (and am going) through. Was it an easy process moving to a new country? Did others lose their old identity while gaining a new one? Or did those identities co-exist? Did they even have an

identity? What were their support systems? If they did have those support systems, where did they find them? How did they navigate college and society? How did they negotiate their multiple identities?

This realization of my own racial and ethnic identity was a gradual process, not so much because I wanted to know about my identity. I did not immigrate to the United States wanting to be a minority, a person of color, Asian, South Asian, Asian American or the other racial ethnic categories that I was eligible to be a member. The American society had racialized me naturally. Or was I naturally racialized? Knowing my ethnic identity allowed me to discover one aspect of who I am. It was and is a deeply emotional process. It is my own journey, a journey whose trails only I understand. Some trails were open and straight, some were convoluted and dark. I am still on this journey trying to understand who am I. I am still longing to resolve the multiplicity of my existence, to find the answer(s) to the time-honored question, who am I?

***Who am I?***

*Who am I? The spaces of my being.*

Ancient civilizations and the oldest democracy.

A billion some people and a salad bowl.

I don't know how many languages but I can speak a few.

The land that has its own ocean-the Indian Ocean and a place where puddles are called beaches.

*Who am I? The culture of my being.*

Where cuisines change by culture: curry chicken or hot wings.

Not only the spice land that Columbus wanted to discover but also from corncobs.

Where juicy mangoes and coconuts in summer; hot cider in winter.

The – Holy Cow! Or not so holy here!

*Who am I? The education of my being.*

A high school that has made me who I'm.

A college that has made me a leader in my community.

An educational journey that is transforming me.

Knowledge is power and we come to college not alone to prepare to make a living, but to learn to learn to live a life.

*Who am I? The family of my being.*

My teachers who always told me what I believe is the basic essence of life: maatha (mother), pithaa (father), guru (teacher), deivam (god).

My parents who always told me education and love are all that we can give you in life; the rest is what you make of it.

My two older brothers who not only tell me that I can do it but also believe I can.

My friends who have mentioned time and again that things happen for a reason.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Desi:** Desi is a pre-colonial term that is used by people of South Asian origin as a term of self-identification. It means “from the land” (from the word “desh,” which means “country”).

**Asian Americans:** An Asian American is generally defined as a person of Asian ancestry and American citizenship or permanent residency.

**South Asian Americans:** An Asian American who’s ancestry traces back to one of the countries in the Indian subcontinent namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan.

**ABCD:** Acronym used for "American Born Confused Desi" -- a slightly derogatory name that first-generation South Asians in the U.S. use to describe children who were born and brought up in America and are "confused" about their South Asian background.

**Kolam:** It is an artistic representation of an Indian mandala.

**M.S.Subbulakshmi:** An Indian female singer of great repute. She is considered the nightingale of India.

**Venkateswara Suprabatham:** A prayer that is chanted for Lord Venkateswara, who is considered an avatar of Vishnu and is prayed to by many Indians.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The label Asian American conjures certain images in the minds of an average person in the United States of America. Stereotypes associated to physical features such as “short,” “slanted eyes,” and “straight hair;” social stereotypes such as “poor communicators,” and “poor or non-English speakers;” educational stereotypes such as “overachievers,” “math and science wizards,” and “geeks and nerds” exist in our society (Lee, 1996). Stereotypes of racial streak associated with personality and behavioral characteristics are also common. “Submissive,” “want to be White,” “fresh of the boat (F.O.B.),” and “hang out in their own groups” are a few examples of such stereotypes. Unfortunately, these stereotypes and images are borderless and have been carried over into our educational systems and our school and college campuses. Thus two primary stereotypes have evolved over time: all Asian Americans are the same, and all Asian Americans are foreigners.

Unlike other ethnic groups, some of the stereotypes associated with Asian Americans are positive but are nevertheless detrimental to the Asian American community by forcing them to maintain and live the positive stereotypes. Hence, the term “model minority” has been attributed to Asian Americans. However, these stereotypes tend to reflect only part of the Asian American community who are categorized as Yellow people, in my opinion another stereotype, referring to East Asian Americans: Chinese Americans, Korean American and Japanese American.

South Asian Americans and South East Asian Americans have also been part of the Asian American community since the late 1700s but have been denied the Asian American identity (Bind, 1997). As a consequence, social scientists have referred to these ethnic groups as the “invisible minority” and “invisible Asian Americans.” However, recent economic and social upward mobility of the South Asian American community has brought some attention to this group. Sadly, South Asian Americans remain largely marginalized.

The dismantling of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 allowed the federal government to disband the national origin quotas, which were in place to limit the entry of Chinese immigrants and other Asian nationals to the United States of America. This action witnessed an increase the number of immigrants from Asian countries in the late sixties and early seventies. The Asian American population has increased significantly in the past four decades and is the second fastest growing population after Latino Americans (Census 2000).

Approximately 80 percent of Asian Americans are foreign-born and are either naturalized citizens or permanent residents of the United States. Several of these immigrants are very well educated from their home countries and come to the U.S. for work purposes and to lead a better life. Within the South Asian American community, the Asian Indian American community represents the single largest ethnic minority in the United States (Khandelwal, 2002), and are located in the big cities such as New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago. Primarily engaged in technical and professional careers with high paying salaries, individuals in these communities represent the new rich in the United States (Indian American Council, 2005). A meritocratic

attitude among the South Asian immigrant communities has allowed the community to segregate itself from the rest of the communities of color and have now become the most successful immigrant community in the country. Given the decline of number of U.S. educated graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, this foreign born and educated population has been able to readily fulfill the need in our society (Government Accountability Report, 2006).

As a result immigration for this community, which was considered one way in a traditional sense, has now in fact become multidirectional. Having ties with their home countries and cultures, and establishing residence in the United States is much easier compared to other ethnic minority groups seeking to immigrate to the United States. Another important outcome of this policy change has been that not only does the employed individual relocate to United States but also his/her immediate and extended families including spouses, parents and children.

While immigration is a very traumatic experience, families and elders are able to cope with the pressure of a new country and new society through the support of social networks and friends in the community. Several studies have demonstrated (need to talk about how identity of adult immigrants does not change much and are very much tied to their identities of their home countries). However, children who are in their early stages of their development adapt to their surrounding and tend to assimilate with the mainstream culture, mostly because of their influence in their K-12 educational settings. This is a very challenging environment for children to grown up in, with parents and families insisting on children retaining their native cultures and traditions, while the society around them requires them to assimilate. Children who are very young during

this transition are less likely to be affected by this struggle, and although they are not technically second generation U.S. born children but tend to have characteristics of second generation children born to first generation immigrant parents. Where as children who are entering the country and attend high school and go on to attend U.S. institutions of higher education face significant social and cultural assimilation problems. These children are therefore categorized as Generation 1.5, between generation one and generation two.

The demographics of our colleges are changing drastically today as the number of Generation 1.5 students enrolling in colleges continues to rise. These Generation 1.5 students are referred to as Generation 1.5 students because they have characteristics of both first- and second-generation immigrants (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) and because they do not fit into any of the traditional categories of nonnative English speakers enrolled in college writing courses. Many of these students are familiar with U.S. culture and schooling because they came to the U.S at a younger age. Some may have been born in the U.S., but may have grown up speaking a language other than English at home. Others may have come to the United States at a later age and may be more like a foreign student in terms of language and literacy, and less like an ESL student.

Roberge (2003) makes an interesting point when he states that the traditional definition of Generation 1.5 students needs to be expanded to include “in-migrants” such as those groups who migrate from U.S. territories like Puerto Rico, “parachute kids” who come to the U.S. to live with extended family members and attend K-12 schools, “native-born non-native speakers” who are U.S. born students from linguistics enclave communities, and “transitionals” who have complex patterns of back and forth migration.

The outcomes of these experiences are that in many cases, these students may become English dominant but without acquiring complete communicative range in English or they may become English dominant but not personally identify with English. In most cases these learners also have limited proficiency in their first language and have not acquired the academic register or academic writing styles of even their native language.

Thonus (2003) points out that many of these students are losing their home languages without having learned their writing systems or academic registers, unlike international students who have fully developed first language skills. Some may not even be able to communicate fully with their family members. Many of these students may become “dual nonnative speakers” because they are not fully proficient in either their native language or in English. Finally, while they may see themselves as native-English speakers because of their social and verbal skills, they are often less skilled in the academic skills necessary for college-level courses and the cognitive and linguistic demands of discipline-specific academic classes in English language institutions of higher learning.

However, for the purpose of this study, English as a language is not a problem with South Asian students. As a region that was colonized by the British for over 200 years, English is a predominant language within this community. As a result this study will examine the social and cultural experiences that shape the identity of generation 1.5 students.

Another important aspect of understanding the identity of generation 1.5 students is the aspect of religion. Several religious beliefs exist among the South Asian community. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, and Jainism are some of the major religions practiced by this community.

On college campuses, Generation 1.5 students are not considered international students because they are either U.S. citizens or permanent residents. At the same time, because of their lack of knowledge of several resources such as Multicultural Student Affairs offices, Asian American Centers, Asian American studies etc. that cater to the needs of the broader Asian American community and their own identity development or lack of, Generation 1.5 South Asian/Desi Americans have been a largely neglected group on college campuses. University programs tend to fall prey to the “model minority myth” and assume that these students are usually “smart” and do not need assistance to be successful in college. Besides academic issues and poor graduation rates, these students face social and cultural issues such as dating, sports, social interactions etc. while in college.

Generation 1.5 students in general and Generation 1.5 South Asian American students in particular have been a neglected section of student body. As immigration continues and the population of Asian immigrants entering the United States increases, our educational systems need to be proactive to identify needs of these “new” student genres that have unique needs.

Much discussion has taken place about identity development and student success for different student groups on college campuses. Theories have been put forth about African American student identity, Latino American student identity, White student

identity as well as Asian American student identity. Recent research has also dwelled into the identity formation of millennial students who have been on our college campuses in the past few years. However, very little to no research has been conducted to understand the needs and identity development of Generation 1.5 students. As I embarked on this study, I was surprised that there was a dearth for information on this topic, which was one of the reasons I decided to research this topic.

In all of my literature review, there was no mention of South Asian Americans and Generation 1.5 students. Yu Yu Danico (2004) in her research examines the identity development of Korean generation 1.5ers who live in Hawaii. She investigates the effect of family, the Korean connections and ethnic identity formation among these young students who immigrated to Hawaii from Korea.

Chan (2006) examines similar experiences among Vietnamese Generation 1.5 individuals who were forced to immigrate to the United States as a result of the Vietnam War and how this affected their identity. She argues that people who emigrated from another country undergo tremendous stress and as a result struggle between rejecting and retaining their culture. This dual identity causes enormous conflict not only on an individual level but also at a community level.

The studies that have been conducted thus far are related to South East Asian Americans. This is however not the experience of South Asian immigrants. While South Asians and South East Asian Americans are under the umbrella of Asian Americans, experiences and expectations are different. The path to citizenship is very different. South Asian Americans have, as I mentioned before, been very successful in gaining economic parity with Caucasians in the U.S. society. This success has therefore allowed the

generalization of all South Asians and has hindered the opportunity to assist people who have been marginalized within the South Asian community as well, namely recent immigrants. It is my hope that my research work will support future research projects as a corner stone in the identity development as well as success strategies that colleges and universities need to adopt for Generation 1.5 students.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In this study I illuminate the lived “neither here, nor there” experiences of Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students who attended a predominantly white institution in the U.S. heartland. I employed a qualitative research approach to investigate the nature of the students’ experiences capturing their early experiences in their homeland (India) and in the U.S. To frame my findings, I sought theories that could assist me in thinking more deeply about the experience of dislocation and relocation as well as occupying a space that serves as the interface between two or more cultures.

In the past there have been critiques about assimilation/acculturation processes when individuals move from one culture to another. Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936, p.149) as cited by Berry (1997) defined acculturation stating that: “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.” Essentially acculturation was previously framed to be a group phenomenon where both cultures changed as a result of contact. Berry argues that while this may be true in theory, in reality one group tends to change more than the other--usually the immigrant community.

Rendón, Jalomo and Nora (2000) cite problems with the theory of acculturation noting that the theory, prevalent during the 1960s, stereotyped minority individuals as engaged in a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and deprivation. The only way these individuals could be “saved” was if they became fully absorbed (assimilated) or adapted (acculturated) into the dominant culture (Hurado, 1997). In the 1970s and 1980s critics

contested the acculturation perspective because it employed mainstream norms as evaluative criteria and made erroneous assumptions and generalizations about minority cultures.

Historically, immigration models constructed acculturation as a unidirectional process that eventually resulted in assimilation (Gordon, 1964). However, these models only fit the early European immigrants and do not fully account or explain the intricacies of recent Asian and Latino immigrants. Consequently, research about immigration on these communities has identified acculturation as a much more selective, voluntary, multidimensional, and bidirectional process (Garza & Gallegos, 1985). Garza and Gallegos accounted for religion, economic structures, family and marital relationships, language, customs and physical appearance as important factors in the acculturation process.

Dasgupta (1989) broadened this understanding through ethnographic studies of Asian Indian immigrants and concluded that Asian Indians are among few immigrant groups that try maintain their native culture as well as incorporate an American way of life – thus creating a bicultural way of life. Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri (1996) noted that while Asian Indians have several individualistic traits such as strong emphasis towards higher education, individual success, and ambitiousness. They also exhibit collectivist traits such as maintaining traditional family values, emphasis on extended family and arranged marriages. This constant interaction between two different cultures results in conflict of identity among immigrants and their American-born children. Extending this understanding to Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students allowed me to understand their experiences.

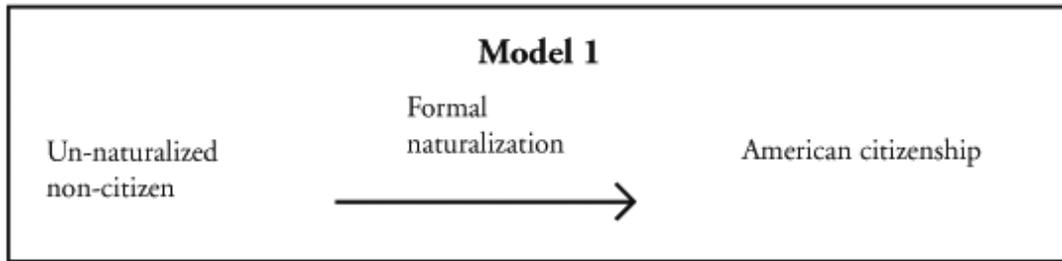
While acculturation has its naysayers, there are individuals and immigrant communities who do give up language, customs and belief systems to become accepted into a new culture. However, what is not well understood is the extent that people acculturate. To what extent do they relinquish their past lives? How do they negotiate a new culture? The answers to these questions necessitate a theoretical framework, and conceptual analysis for a specific group of individuals who experience dislocation and relocation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Immigration theory provides some clues as to how racial issues such as skin color, class, religion and language become interwoven in the process toward becoming accepted and granted social citizenship with rights and privileges in a particular culture.

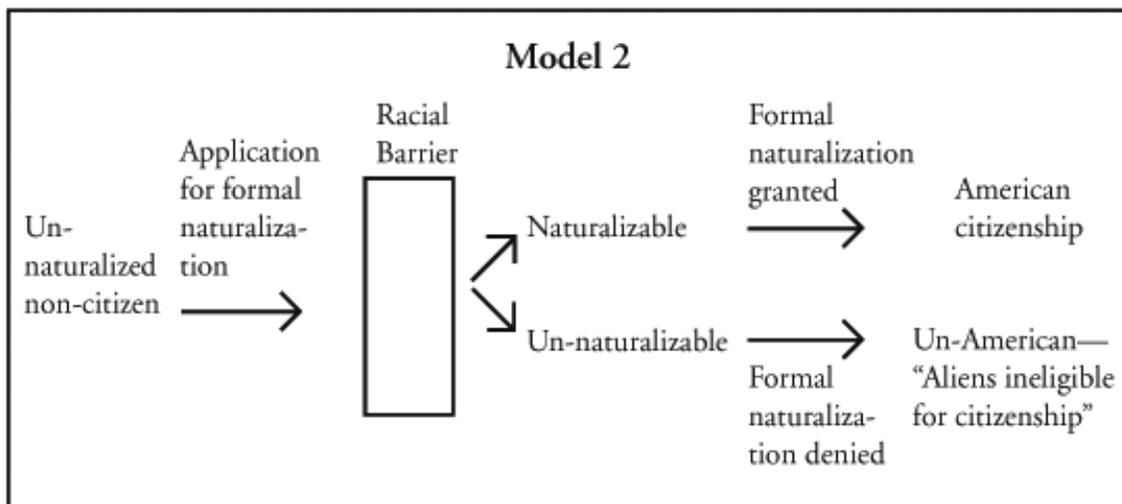
#### **Racial Naturalization Theory**

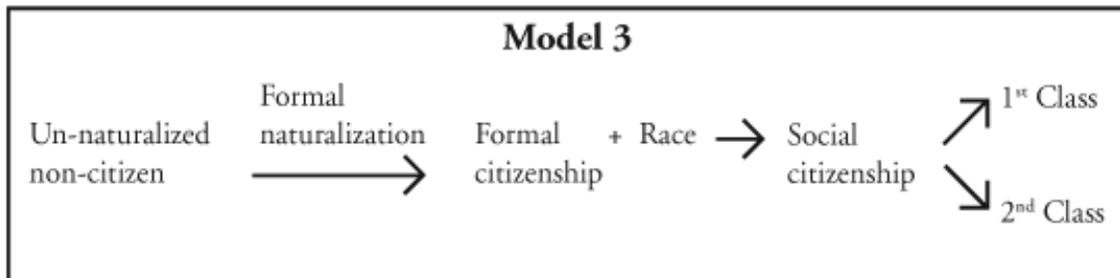
In this study I was conscious of how racial issues such as skin color, class, religion and language become interwoven in the process toward becoming accepted and granted social citizenship with rights and privileges in a particular culture. Carbado (2005) developed three models of naturalization, a process by which a non-citizen undergoes naturalization immigration processes to become a naturalized American citizen. In model 1, Carbado presented the simplest model of naturalization. He suggested that an immigrant moves from being an un-naturalized non-citizen to being an American citizen through a formal and bureaucratic naturalization process (p. 640).



Model 2 posited that legal borders of naturalization are racialized creating two trajectories: naturalizable (achieve American citizenship) and unnaturalizable (become ineligible for citizenship). Carbado elaborates:

“This is precisely the story of Asian naturalization. Racial naturalization laws moved Asian immigrants from *unnaturalized* noncitizens to *naturalizable* noncitizens. The juridical and ideological effect of this move was the production of all people of Asian ancestry as presumptively foreign and thus un-American. In other words, as a result of racial naturalization laws, people of Asian ancestry became un-American by law. This status helped to create the social and legal conditions of possibility for the interment of Japanese Americans (p.641).”





In Model 3, Carbado demonstrated how race is implicated in the naturalization process. Race determines not only who gets to be an American citizen. It also determines the kind of citizenship status one occupies—first or second-class social citizenship. Carbado elaborates:

“The model delineates two categories of social citizenship: first class and second class. The former signifies a privileged social position in society, the latter a marginal position. The fundamental ideal this model conveys is that naturalization occurs in a racial context, and this context shapes how citizenship is experienced. To make the point more concretely, while a white Frenchman and a black Ethiopian would, under formal citizenship, have the same formal rights and privileges, they would not necessarily have the same social citizenship (p. 641).”

### **Multi-Epistemic/Pluri-Verscal Cosmologies**

A number of scholars have written about the liminal, in-between space of being in the threshold between two different contextual spaces. These conceptualizations differ significantly from conventional and highly privileged Western ways of knowing.

Invoking Indigenous knowledge, Andreotti, Ahenakew and Cooper (forthcoming), posit that there are certain cosmologies where there are no contradictions.

They cite the story of a Maori grandmother who is asked if there are many Gods or just one God.

“She replied with reference to the bible: ‘There is only one God: our father who lives in heaven’. The grandmother is then asked: ‘What about the other Maori Gods?’ She responded: ‘And there are those as well!’ (p.1)”

In Western ways of knowing and thinking, this grandmother’s “wisdom” would be considered flawed reasoning and would be dismissed as absurd. However, these scholars argued that the above quote grounded in indigenous knowledge is true and inherently valid because of its multi-epistemic or pluri-versal truth, which allows competing and contradictory systems of meaning to exist in tension without having to come to a dialectical synthesis or resolution. In doing so, they recognized that an alternate way of thinking and knowing exists and needs to be understood outside the conceptualization of the binary forms of knowing that are often theorized. This scholarship allows us to understand that while the realities of “here” and “there” exist (in a binary worldview), the reality of “neither here, nor there” is also a possibility and needs to be understood.

White (1991) constructed a framework of *the middle ground*, which was situated in a colonial context. White’s work explored the relationship between the Native Americans (Algonquins) and their French colonizers. He surmised that the complex relationship between the colonized and the colonizer that went beyond non-human interactions (like treaties and colonial business) necessitated the creation of new spaces to

address new categories of people with bi-racial identities. White defined middle ground as:

the middle ground is the place in between: in-between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the nonstate world of villagers. It is a place where many of the North American subjects and allies of empires lived. It is the area between the historical foreground of European invasion and occupation. On the middle ground, diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient misunderstandings. (p.x)

This middle ground, White (1991) claimed, was a creative space that was a repository of both Native American and French social practices, and therefore allowed for new meanings to emerge from the clash of cultures, which he referenced as “expedient misunderstandings”.

An *indigeno* scholar, DeLeon (2010) expanded on White’s (1991) construct of the middle ground. In an autoethnographic paper, he argues that the middle ground is essentially a “go-between” space that captures “how, through assimilation, acculturation and negotiation, Latinos inhabited a new cultural and ontological space. Figuratively speaking, my feet were in both social worlds, and I also served as a middle person, or “go-between” (p.11).” He further examined the middle ground as a space that not only accounts for the social element of life, but also extends its influence into spaces of economic, linguistic, and institutional spaces. It is in these spaces that “go-between” experience emotions of alienation, discovery, transmission and cooperation, while dancing between two worlds.

Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura de Souza Santos (2007) introduced the belief system of “abyssal thinking” in the context of epistemological dominance. Santos (2007) defined abyssal thinking as a system that consists of visible and invisible distinctions established through a logic that defines social reality as either on “this side of the abyssal line” or on “the other side of the abyssal line.” He explained that the entrenched worldview on social issues tend to control and police the location, relocation and dislocation of the abyssal line, and that “this side of the line” determines the existence and positionality of “the other side of the line.” In essence, the co-presence of the two lines, i.e. two truths, are not allowed and do not exist.

This disacknowledgment of the co-existence of “this side of the abyssal line” and “the other side of the abyssal line”, Santos (2007) argued creates a reality where there is only “a single homogenous future,” and denies the richness of the past – the co-presence of two lines. Rather than denying their co-presence, Santos (2007) proposed a paradigm shift in thinking. He advocated for an “ecology of knowledges,” which recognized the existence of “plurality of heterogeneous knowledges,” and that there was “sustained and dynamic interconnections between them without compromising their autonomy” (p.11).

Andreotti, Ahenakew, Cooper (2011) advanced this paradigm shift to higher education and presented a framework that synthesized two individual ways of interpreting issues surrounding complexity, diversity and uncertainty and created a new lens that engaged with epistemological pluralism. In this framework (p.46), Andreotti et al. argued that the two lens on their own interpreted issues in isolation and did not allow or account for interaction of the issues. They posit that rather than situate issues in silos and isolation, higher education needs to become “(consciously) bi-or multi-epistemic or

operational in two or more ways of knowing, which involves understanding different social and historical dynamic processes of knowledge construction, their limitations *and* the social-historical relations of power that permeate knowledge production (p.48).” In doing, this framework allows for the negotiations of different experiences and co-existence of two or more ways of knowing, thinking and feeling.

These above scholarly works singularly and in combination afforded me the critical knowledge to understand the complexities of the identities and experiences of being “neither here, nor there,” and informed the theoretical basis on which this study was grounded.

### **My Methodological Spicebox**

In this section, which I call my methodological spicebox, I present the methodological underpinnings and methods that I employed to complete this doctoral study. I offer details about my interview process, and ethical considerations I faced.

#### **“Why do we do qualitative research?”**

This was a question that I often asked in my advanced research methodology and methods class in my second year of the doctoral program. As a novice researcher, I was excited about engaging in research. I wanted to study different issues and come up with solutions. I wanted to fix the world, right away. As I engaged with my peers, my faculty mentors and classes in the doctoral program, I learned a lot about research. How to conduct it? How to nurture an idea? How to work through the issues? How to study the problem? How to develop themes? What the do’s and don’ts were? However, the more deeply I engaged, I soon realized that while research had been conducted and solutions

had been offered, the issues still existed. I was disillusioned. I wanted change, and I wanted it now. I wanted all my questions to be answered. I was angry and I did not understand why then do scholars in higher education engage in research if little to no change resulted from their studies.

As I continued my doctoral apprenticeship, I realized slowly that research was not so much about finding a solution, although that was important; research was more about understanding and analyzing the problem. And by understanding the problem, higher education researchers and scholars attempt to offer solutions. It is that realization that guides me through this dissertation scholarship.

I decided to christen this chapter “Methodological Spice Box,” using a spice box, a key necessity in any Asian Indian kitchen, as a metaphor to demonstrate how I engaged in this study. My methodological spice box describes the purpose and the research questions that guided this study. Additionally, I offer my modes and tools for collecting, organizing and analyzing the voices of the Generation 1.5 students who participated in this study. I was personally invested in this research study, and it was difficult not to be connected and objective during the entire research study (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). After all, I was a researcher and a participant in my study. I did not enter my journey with a hypothesis or a point to prove; rather I wanted to answer several questions.

### **Qualitative Research Approach**

Esterberg (2002) and Merriam (2002) recognized that social situations and their environments allowed social scientists to make meaning out their interactions. In this doctoral dissertation, I investigated participants’ perspectives on their experiences in college and the meanings they ascribed to their immigration experiences. An interpretive

theoretical perspective was an appropriate framework for this study because this approach allowed me to better understand how the participants made meaning of their experiences in college. The epistemology of social constructionism was employed because it allowed participants to construct meaning and knowledge through their interactions with the world, and in light of particular cultural influences (Crotty, 1998).

### **Research Site**

I chose Iowa State University because I was most familiar with the university and student participants were readily accessible. Iowa State University is a predominantly white institution with an enrollment of about 28,000 students. Located in Ames, IA, 79.3% of Iowa State University students self-identified as White, 2.5% as Black, 2.6% as Asian American, 2.9% as Latino/a American. International students comprise approximately 11.6% of the student body.

### **Sampling Method**

A total of Eleven Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students at Iowa State University participated in this study. Participants were seven men (Ankit, Danny, Daya, Deepak, Dhruv, Jibril, Nishan and Vivek) and three women (Isha, Susan and Taqwa). Please see Table 1 for additional self-reported participant information.

The participants in this study were intentionally selected to participate in this study i.e. a purposeful sampling strategy was used to recruit my participants. This strategy allows the qualitative researcher to “intentionally sample research participants for the specific perspectives they may have” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 93). Purposeful selection was critical because the study’s primary objective was to understand the experiences of

Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students at Iowa State University; so accessing a wide range of experiences helped me achieve the stated purpose. Participants were also able to describe their pre-immigrant college experiences and more recent experiences to help investigate how they compare.

**Table 1. Participant Information**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Religion</b>
Ankit	22	Male	Gujarathi	Hindu
Danny	24	Male	Telugu	Christian
Daya	20	Male	Hindi	Hindu
Deepak	20	Male	Kannada	Hindu
Dhruv	23	Male	Sindhi/Hindi	Hindu
Isha	21	Female	Marathi	Hindu
Jibril	19	Male	Kashmiri	Muslim
Nishan	19	Male	Punjabi	Sikh
Susan	21	Female	Malayalam	Christian
Taqwa	25	Female	Kashmiri	Muslim
Vivek	26	Male	Gujarathi	Hindu

Because of my prior contact with the participants, I had explained to them my dissertation topic at many informal settings. However, to ensure that my participants fully understood their role and commitment to this project, I set up individual pre-orientation meetings with each of the interested individuals. This allowed me an opportunity to explain to them the expectations I had of them, the purpose of the study, their contributions (both time and participation) and to finally secure their willingness to participate in this study. I used this opportunity to secure their signatures on the IRB approved informed consent form (Appendix A). As noted above, 11 Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students agreed to participate in the study. Following the initial meeting the data collection process began through interviews and a limited number of observations.

### **Interview Protocol and the Relationship Between Researcher and Participants**

I developed an interview protocol that was approved by IRB through the appropriate modification request and review process. The broad interview topical questions (See Appendix B) were designed with immigration and acculturation processes in mind and included a focus on participants, their immigration stories, support systems relevant to the transition, and the strategies they adopted to assist them through the transition itself.

As I started framing and reframing my research questions, I began to ponder the criteria for selecting the participants for my study. The most obvious criterion was that the participants would have to have immigrated to the United States from India. Traditional definitions of Generation 1.5 in the immigration context used age as a way to

identify who was and who wasn't a Generation 1.5er. This, however, seemed very limiting to me. Don't experiences count? What is the difference between a two years old immigrant child and a 20 years old immigrant young adult? One would argue that the obvious difference would be that the former would have been socialized into the American society much more than the latter. I wasn't so sure. So I decided that while age could be a factor, it was not going to be a major consideration for who I was going to invite to be part of this study.

Before I mention, how I identified and selected my participants or how the participants chose to participate in the study, I want to acknowledge my relationship and role within the Indian/Indian American community at Iowa State University and Ames, Iowa. I have always been a student leader all my life. However, as I reflect back, when I moved to the United States to pursue graduate studies, I was more focused on developing a sense of *self*.

As I focused inward, I limited myself to being involved in the community just as a member, but not as a leader. This changed dramatically when I entered student affairs and embraced it as my profession. I had access to several administrators on campus, and this made me the go-to guy for all Indian/Indian American student problems. As my dear friend Dr. Penny Rice calls it, I had my own mini satellite student affairs office that exclusively catered to the needs of Indian students. My involvement within the Indian student community as I entered the world of doctoral studies made me very visible within the community. With this visibility came access to real people. One can call it either a blessing or a burden to be visible within a community that is so small and close knit.

## Interviewing Stages

A series of three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant.

### Stage 1: **Capturing *There*: Reconnecting With the Past.**

The first interview allowed the participants to talk about their lives in India – *Capturing there: Reconnecting with the past* in order to contextualize the participants' transition experiences (Seidman, 2006). I posed open-ended questions intentionally to allow students to share personal information only if they were comfortable answering them.

Following the first interview the participants were provided with a copy of their interview transcript and asked to check the transcript for accuracy and to provide any feedback they deemed necessary for clarification purposes. Participants were asked to clarify any points they (or I) deemed necessary and make corrections or additions to the transcripts themselves. The students did not offer any corrections. Minor changes that I had to include were spelling corrections and clarification of locations in India for some of the participants, but overall no substantive changes were required based on participants' reviews of their transcripts. None of the clarifications resulted in a change to the transcript itself.

### Stage 2. **Capturing *Here*: Forming a New Identity.**

During the second interview, my participants and I discussed about their lives in the United States. What experiences did they have moving to the United States? What was their first day like? When did they realize they had moved to another country? In essence, we captured their present. Their new identity as an "American."

Participants were again provided with interview transcripts to provide feedback. Clarifying questions were asked and answers noted.

### Stage 3. ***Journey In Between: Negotiating Identities.***

This interview was the toughest of the three interviews to conduct. It was a very emotional process because my participants and I were treading new pastures. No one had sought this space before. Depending on how much information my participants shared, I decided to gently probe deeper about how each negotiated their lives and identities- with or without knowing. To ensure that I had a common set of data responses, I was consistent in asking all my participants these following questions, (a) What does it mean to you to be an immigrant? (b) What does it mean to you to be a Generation 1.5 student? (c) What does it mean to you to be a Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American? (d) What has the process been like for you participating in this study?

Three semi-structured interviews with 11 participants each provided me the rich, descriptive data that I needed for my study. To ensure that all data I collected was accurate and preserved, I audio recorded and video recorded my interviews. Necessary permissions were secured during the initial participant recruitment phase through the consent forms.

### **Ethical Issues and Considerations**

Being a member of the community gave me “insider” knowledge, improved interviewing techniques, and allowed me to employ my well-honed human relations skills I had developed through years of interaction with the Iowa State Indian community. The participants knew that to a large extent my experience was their experience, and the

interhuman experience was a valuable asset to me as I conducted my study. These skills have been a major focus of my doctoral training and ongoing professional development. This strong foundation helped participants feel comfortable in interviewing situations and helped me listen more carefully to their responses and formulate appropriate follow up questions.

### **Limitations**

The scope of this study was confined to 11 Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students at one predominantly white institution. This might limit the experiences that the same population might have at HSI or a HBCU. No claims are made about generalizability to all Asian Indian American students in every kind of institution of higher education. Nonetheless, study findings may be quite useful to understand the dynamics of the lived experiences of these kinds of students.

## Student Profiles

In this section, I introduce to you my 11 participants – 3 women and 8 men in all. Ankit, Danny, Daya, Deepak, Dhruv, Isha, Jibril, Nishan, Susan, Taqwa and Vivek come from diverse backgrounds, cultures and languages in India. They all immigrated to the United States at different ages, experiencing many different things along the way but our journeys coincide in Ames, IA on Iowa State University's campus. The names in this study are the real first names of the participants. I did not mask the real identities of these individuals (with permission) because I felt we have for a long time been invisible. A pseudonym would have afforded us privacy while giving us a voice, but would have still left us invisible.

### **Ankit**

Ankit is a 22-years old Hindu, Gujarathi male, who I met when he was in 6th grade. We affectionately call each other *brothers from the other mother* because our families have been friends for over a decade. Ankit and his family immigrated to the United States in 1998 and his immediate family consists of his parents (now divorced) and his older brother.

As a high school student, I had known Ankit as a mellow, quite neighborhood kid who always played basketball in the evenings. I have seen Ankit grow into a confident young man, who has outgrown his shyness and very involved on campus as well as the Ames community. Ankit was the first person that came to mind as I started recruiting participants for my study. I asked Ankit in 2009 if he was interested in participating in my dissertation study. Over a two-hours conversation at a local coffee shop, I had to

introduce the identity of Generation 1.5 and explain the importance of the study to Ankit before he agreed to participate in the study. Ankit was curious and very excited about participating in the study.

As I engaged in the study and days went by, I was nervous to include Ankit in my study. Ankit was very close to my family and I, in fact too close to comfort. I was “scared” that he might not feel comfortable sharing his experiences or details with me when and if I had intrusive questions. I decided to give him an opportunity and then make a decision.

To my surprise, we actually got to know each other over the course of the three interviews. We discovered that we had a lot more things in common. While he knew that I was an integral part of his family, he was not aware of the level of friendship our two families shared over the years through several personal yet painful experiences. The conversations we had helped Ankit *heal* and open up about his struggles about his family.

Ankit’s parents had divorced not too long ago when he was still in high school, and I was very much involved with the divorce proceedings as a translator because Ankit’s mother could not read/write English. In essence I became the oldest son in the family. This came at an unfortunate time for the family. Ankit’s older brother, Piyush, was graduating from high school and was planning to go to college.

As recent immigrants, Ankit’s parents who were college educated in India were only able to find hourly jobs in Ames. They both worked in a local burger king, and were able to save very little after paying for their basic needs such as rent, food and clothes. They could not afford to fall sick because no one in their family had health insurance

much less pay for college education for two children. This was when I assisted Piyush and then a couple of years later, Ankit, secure full ride need based scholarships to attend Iowa State University. Since then, I have been very involved in the lives of both the siblings.

Ankit is now a graduate student in Computer Electrical Engineering and engages in stock trading in his free time. It was an emotional journey for both of us to engage with each other during this dissertation study.

### **Danny**

Danny was an undergraduate student pursuing a degree in psychology at Northwestern College in Iowa, and he was interested in pursuing a graduate degree in Higher Education/Student Affairs. On a trip to visit his brother Kiran who was a student at Iowa State University, Danny and I at Diwali night celebrations at Iowa State University in November 2007.

Danny is a 25-years old, bi-racial, Christian, Telugu Indian. Danny's mother is white Indian of American ancestry and his father is Indian. His mother's family immigrated to India from the United States as missionaries in the late 1940s. A very religious and devout Christian, Danny and I connected instantly. We call each other "Anna," which means older brother. Danny and I came to realize that we were born in the same region in India and share the same native language, Telugu. Danny is more fluent than I am in our language, which during friendly banter gets tricky to manage.

In fall 2008, after I guided him through the admissions process, Danny enrolled as a master's student in the same graduate program that I was pursuing my doctoral degree

at Iowa State University. As Danny took courses in the department and “grew” in the program, he and I found many opportunities to interact and get to know each other. His Christian faith and some of the social justice issues that we engaged with our department conflicted with each other. This was a time that I believe that Danny and I understood and embraced each other as friends.

The following spring, while Danny and I were having our routine once in a semester meet up for coffee meeting, I broached on the topic of Danny being a participant in my study. He and I had never openly talked about his mixed race identity. Danny opened up about his bi-racial identity and the story of his mother’s family. While it is common to see bi-racial children in the American society, it is very rare to see bi-racial children in India, especially in recent history since India gained independence.

Danny wanted time to think about the project and it’s implications for him, and I, too, was skeptical about inviting a bi-racial student because that would add another layer of complexity to my already complex study. For several months, we both avoided talking about the project in fears of committing our opinions. How was I going to tell Danny that I felt that his bi-racial identity was a “problem” for my study?

In spring 2010, I was the teaching assistant the Students in American Higher Education course. Danny was enrolled in the course and we enjoyed the semester together. The final project for the class required the construction of a *Cajita* – a sacred box that defined the course participants’ philosophy of student affairs. On the day of the presentation, to my utter surprise, Danny’s *cajita* resembled my own *cajita*. The artifacts he had used to represent and define him were no different than the artifacts that I had

used to construct my *cajita*. That's when all my doubts if Danny would be a good fit for my study vanished.

Danny graduated from Iowa State University in Spring 2010 and is now a student affairs professional in a southern university. Danny and I check on each other once a month to ensure that he is doing well as a new professional and if I am progressing well with my dissertation research. He is after all the only Indian at Iowa State University that understood what I did for a living. Ironically, Danny, just like me, is the youngest of three brothers.

## **Daya**

I met Daya in spring, 2007 in the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center in Madrid, Iowa. He had just arrived with his mother and two younger siblings a few days then from India to join his father, who is the priest at the temple. I was introduced to a severely jet lagged and uninterested Daya and siblings as the scholarship *bhaiya*. His father instructed him to talk to me so he can apply for college because I was familiar with the process.

Daya is a 20-years old, Hindu, North Indian from the Brahmin community. He immigrated to the United States in 2007 and attended junior and senior years of high school in Ames. When it was time for applying for college, his parents could not afford to send him to any other college because Daya was still in the process of gaining his permanent residency. Therefore his college going choices were limited to just Iowa State University.

At Daya's parents request, I was able to work with the university administration to reclassify Daya as a resident of Iowa so he could be eligible for in-state tuition.

Otherwise, Daya would have been considered an International student because he was yet to be a US permanent resident.

At first sight, Daya comes across as abrasive and arrogant. Initially, Daya had a very thick Indian accent when he spoke English, which he wasn't all that fluent in. Until that time, I always believed that language was never an issue for Generation 1.5 Asian Indians who immigrated to the United States. Daya made me pause and reexamine that belief. While Daya might have been fluent in English, his English preparation skills would not have been considered strong.

During one of my visits to the temple, I casually mentioned that I wanted Daya to be a participant in my study because of his experiences. When I explained to him what the study was about, Daya agreed to participate. I was however suspicious of his commitment to my project. In the past, Daya had not kept up his commitments with me and I wasn't sure he was going to do it now either. After a few meetings fell through, I decided not to invite Daya to participate. However, Daya's best friend Deepak who is also a participant in this study happened to mention to him that he had had a very emotional first interview with me. This piqued Daya's interest and he contacted me to reenroll as a participant.

Daya is now a junior in college, majoring in Biology. Until recently, Daya wanted to attend medical school but is revisiting that goal. He is by far the most devout cricketer in the entire state of Iowa and is the president of the Cricket Club on campus.

### **Deepak**

It was February 14, 2007. Deepak and his family arrived as guests to a common friend's two-year-old daughter's birthday. In a room full of elders, and college students,

Deepak and his younger sister stood out like a sore thumb. To make them feel comfortable, I struck up a conversation asking him which grade he was in and what he planned to do after. That was when our lives connected and we have kept in touch since.

Deepak is a 20-years old Hindu, Kannadiga South Indian. Deepak, his sister and mother immigrated to the United States in 2003 to join his father who works as a scientist in a plant pathology lab at Iowa State University. At that birthday party, Deepak informed me that he was going to graduate from high school the following summer. And when his parents got to know that I work with students and scholarships at Iowa State University, they immediately asked me to guide Deepak because they were not very clueful about college admissions process.

The following spring, when Deepak got his “green card,” his parents appealed for help to find Deepak a scholarship because they could not afford to send him to college if they had to pay. Again, I worked with the office of admissions and we were able to secure a need-based scholarship for Deepak. This was also a full ride for four years.

A timid and humble student, Deepak would often come by my office to ask questions about college. In one of our interactions, I had asked Deepak if he was interested in attending a conference on race and ethnicity in San Diego, California that was fully paid Iowa State University sponsored trip. After he had gone and come back, Deepak mentioned to me that this was his first trip outside of Ames that he had ever been on in the United States. This fact still holds true, today.

Since Deepak was exposed to race and ethnicity as well as issues around immigration at this conference, I decided to ask Deepak if he was interested in being a

participant in my study. Deepak was uber excited that I had invited him to be a participant in the study. I came to realize that he considered my invitation as a badge of honor, and my invitation validated that he was one of my close confidants.

Deepak has confided about his personal issues with me and considers me his father figure. During the semester, we often meet up to have coffee to talk about “new” developments in his life. We poke fun about his recent transformation from the “village boy” to a modern hip college student “city boy,” as soon as he started dating Susan, another participant in this study.

All three interviews were very emotional for Deepak. His family has endured some personal struggles, and he believes that while he appreciates having immigrated to the United States; they would have been better off living a quite sheltered life in India.

Deepak is now a junior in Biology and a premed student. He, too, like his best friend Daya, is not interested in medical school anymore. Following these interviews, Deepak decided that he should follow his heart and change his major to engineering. His parents were not very happy with his decision to change his major as a junior.

## **Dhruv**

I do not really recall when I exactly met Dhruv. We must have met at either a *Dandiya Night* or a *Diwali Night* on campus. But what I recall the most about him was the calm outlook about life he had as a first year student at Iowa State University. He was mature way beyond his 18-years of worldly experience. He could engage in deep conversations about life and death, the meaning of existence, what should one try to

achieve in life and so on. He stood out to me from the rest of the students he used to hang out with at that time.

I realized much about Dhruv's personality when I realized where he had grown up in the States. Dhruv grew up in Fairfield, Iowa, which is where the Maharishi Institute is located – one of the reasons why Dhruv's parents chose to move to Iowa in 1999. Dhruv, his parents and his younger sister immigrated to California in 1998 but did not like the city and the community that they lived in. So they decided to return to India. A year later, Dhruv's father happened to come across information about the Maharishi Institute, which is an institution guided by Hindu culture and Indian values and philosophy of life. After visiting Fairfield, Dhruv's family fell in love with the quite serene Iowa countryside and decided to immigrate to the United States.

As a 23 years old, Hindu, Sindhi/Marwari Indian, Dhruv enjoys conversing in Hindi than in English. He attributes that to the education he received in the Maharishi high school in Fairfield. His parents wanted him to pursue an engineering degree, which he reluctantly fulfilled last year.

I vividly recall the night I asked Dhruv to participate in my study. All of us had gathered at Dhruv's apartment to celebrate after hosting a successful *desi* event on campus and we wanted to make *paranths* – Indian tortillas stuffed with spicy potato curry. I remember this night for two reasons. It was the first time that almost all of my future participants in this study had gathered in one space but it was also the opportunity when Dhruv and I connected over *paranths*.

I shared my life experiences with Dhruv because he was going through a rough patch in his life and told him to trust his journey. Dhruv shared some of his experiences and since then we have kept in touch. I wouldn't call our relationship close but we know we can count on each other.

Dhruv's approach to this study was similar to his approach to life. He was calm and collected. He did not feel the need to be emotional and believed that life happens for a reason. Since graduation, Dhruv has been interested in training as an online stockbroker and is helping his father with the family business.

### **Isha**

Isha was the last participant I invited to my study but was the first one to complete all her interviews. I invited her last because I was not sure if Isha would "qualify" to be a Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American. After all, she was only two-years old when her family moved to Nebraska, where her two other siblings were born and grew up.

Isha claims she and I met in November 2006 but I only remember meeting her in November 2007, which is when the Indian Students Association hosts the annual *Diwali Night* celebrations on campus. Since I served as President of the organization in November 2006, I might have been introduced to Isha but with all that was going on that night might have easily forgotten. I recall the 2007 *Diwali Night* because Isha performed that evening to one of my favorite classic *Hindustani* song. I tease her about her performance every time we meet.

Isha is 21 years old Hindu, Marathi, Indian who graduated from Iowa State University in December 2010. I was one of two invitees to her graduation where she was

invited to present the graduation speech for her department. While Isha and I were good friends since we met, it was only after a very personal incident in her life that we became very close friends. I did not realize that Isha did not look up to me as an elder like all the other Indian students did, and that she did not completely trust me either.

Helping Isha through her tribulation gave me an opportunity to engage with her on a personal level. I realized that while I expected students that I interacted with to be open and trusting of me, I had never opened up to anyone about my life or experiences completely. Isha helped process incidents in my life with curiosity and care that only a little sister would have for an older brother. She helped me trust people even more.

As I mentioned earlier, Isha was the last participant I invited to this study. I wasn't sure how much she could really contribute to my research. However, I changed my opinion when in Spring 2010, Isha went on a study abroad to Singapore. She and I chatted often. She would update me about what was going on in her life there, her classes and her new friends. But she also started sharing emotions of not wanting to come back to the United States because Singapore felt like home and she had always felt trapped and an outsider in the Midwest. The more we engaged, I realized that while it was true that Isha had immigrated when she was two-years old, she was socialized very much like the others students in the study.

After graduation, Isha spent a two-months long vacation in India reconnecting with her past as a result of this study and is exploring her Indianness more. She is also looking for full time positions and wondering if she should shift her career to working in a non-profit organization.

## **Jibril**

Jibril is the most recent immigrant in my study. At the urging of his older sister, Taqwa, who is also a participant in this study, Jibril's parents allowed him to immigrate to the United States from Malaysia in March 2008. He immigrated a few months before his "green card's" validity was set to expire.

Although Taqwa lived in Ames, Jibril immigrated and decided to live on his own with a male roommate. He was 16 years old and attended Ames High for his senior year. A devout Kashmiri-Muslim, Jibril has lived in Indiana for a year when he was 10 years old and his family moved to Malaysia because of 9-11.

Given my close interactions with the Indian American students on campus, I was informed of Jibril's arrival in town. So, I went to greet Jibril and welcome him into the community. After dinner, Jibril wondered why everybody was calling me *Bapuji* – an affectionate nickname that is exclusively reserved for Mahatma Gandhi. I had to explain to him that it wasn't because I was a great soul like Gandhiji but more so because of my age in comparison to the rest of the students in the room. Jibril fell of the chair because he could not believe I was nearly twice his age, and apparently the age of his maternal uncle! Since that day, Jibril accords me much respect.

Since, Jibril and Taqwa's parents live in Malaysia, in the senior year of Jibril's high school, Taqwa asked me to help them with Jibril's application to Iowa State University. I helped them navigate the process and applying for financial aid. When I realized that Jibril would qualify for a scholarship, I recommended that he be awarded, which he was. In addition, I was worried about Jibril's readiness for college, so I

recommended that he consider an all paid for summer program that I used to coordinate at Iowa State University for first year students. Jibril applied and was accepted into that program.

During one of our community potluck events, Jibril with much reverence took the opportunity to thank me and for the support I had extended to him over the past few months. We chatted that evening and asked me what I do. When I explained to him that I was a doctoral student and was working on my dissertation, he was interested because his father holds a PhD degree and is a faculty member in Islamic Studies. He wanted to know more about the study and when I described it to him, he asked if I was looking for more participants. I said I was but that I would like to have a conversation with him soon.

Soon never came. I was concerned that Jibril might not have enough of an “American” experience to be part of study. It was after all only three years since he has been in the United States. He referred to himself as a “FOB.” But as time went by and I was ready to interview my participants, I met Jibril in the Multicultural Center on campus. We started chitchatting about our schedules and life in general. He, once again, inquired about my dissertation, and started explaining how difficult it had been for him to transition. He had just returned from a trip to Malaysia to visit his parents and felt like a stranger there, he said. The more I engaged with Jibril, I realized he was evolving through his experiences. I wanted to capture those experiences and therefore invited him to participate in my study.

Jibril is sophomore at Iowa State University and plans to declare his major this year. He is enjoying his transition to Iowa and wants to work in the community.

## Susan

Susan is a 21-years old Christian, Malayali female, who I had met several years ago when her brother Abe was applying to Iowa State University and she was probably finishing up middle school. I had seen her off and on when she decided to come to Iowa State University but did not really interact with her. That was until she got involved on campus and performed at the opening ceremonies for the Asian American Heritage Week Celebrations on campus. We recognized each other from when we met years ago, and decided to keep in touch. Of course, that did not pan out the way we wanted. Our busy college lives did not intersect despite being students in two departments that were in the same building.

In the meantime, Deepak, another participant in the study would hint that he was interested in a *desi* girl on campus. Of course he never revealed the name. He was scared that his parents or the community would come to know, and it would be stressful. Eventually, after much coaxing, he shared who his love interest was – Susan! I understood the sense of anxiety that he was going through because of the differences in language, religion, and ethnicity between Susan and he.

Susan and Deepak wanted to have dinner with me so that someone “older” to them could bless and validate their relationship. They rationalized that by doing that they would not feel as guilty about “hiding” it from their parents. In the course of the dinner conversation, Deepak mentioned to Susan that he was a participant in my dissertation study, and he exclaimed, “hey, you’re generation 1.5 too!”

Susan was born in Kerala, India and had immigrated to the United States when she was 10. She was in her 5th grade in elementary school in India. Her parents and her

older brother moved to Michigan to live with her mother's sister initially. After a few months, her parents relocated their family to Ottumwa, Iowa after her father found employment in that city. Susan and her family have lived in Ottumwa since then.

I invited Susan to participate in the study if she was willing to. We met again later in the semester when I went over the IRB requirements and answered questions about the study. A couple of days later, Susan agreed to participate. Our interview conversations were fascinating because Susan revealed during our first interview that she thought these interviews would be "easy." When asked to explain some of the finer experiences in her life, Susan found it difficult to articulate her feelings. Despite the frustration, she acknowledged that she did not she had to put so much effort to prepare for these very reflective interview conversations. "This is like, deep psychological kinda thing. I wasn't prepared for this. Not mentally prepared for this at all," Susan recognized midway through the first interview.

As a result of her first interview experience, Susan made it a point to prepare and ask several clarifying questions at the second and third interviews. Susan is a junior in early childhood education and plans to work either in a daycare or special education.

### **Taqwa**

A devout, *hijab* wearing, light skinned Kashmiri Muslim, Taqwa and I met the summer of 2008. My sister, Vrinda and I shared an apartment but that summer Vrinda wanted to be closer to campus and live with her friends, and moved in with Taqwa. As Vrinda settled into her new apartment, I used to visit her once in a while in the evening to just chill.

Taqwa would hang out with us but we rarely spoke much. She came across to me as a very strong willed woman who was set in her ways. With the presidential election campaign going on, we would often discuss politics. Taqwa was very opinionated, and I noticed that she would argue and debate about the issues she most cared about for however long it took to win her position! She was identified herself as a Kashmiri who believed that the governments of India and Pakistan were both oppressing her people. She wanted Kashmir to a free country and refused to be identified as an Indian – although she possessed an Indian passport. Obviously her opinion was controversial within the Indian community.

Over the summer, I also got to know to know more about Taqwa's family. Taqwa and her family had moved to the United States in 2005. Her uncle had sponsored for them to immigrate to the United States, and as an expert in Islamic studies, Taqwa's father was offered a faculty position in Indiana. After living in Indiana for a year, her family decided to move back to India and then to Malaysia leaving Taqwa behind in the U.S. because she had just enrolled at Iowa State University.

This was also the time I was framing my dissertation study and so I explored the idea of Taqwa participating in the research with her. She was reluctant to participate. It was about Indians, she said. She did not identify like them. She believed that her experiences were different. I clarified that while part of the study was about the Indian experience, the larger research question was about the immigration and integration experiences of immigrants such as she and I. After much convincing, Taqwa relented but dropped out on the day we scheduled our first interview.

Nearly a year passed and as she was getting ready to graduate, Taqwa inquired about my work. I shared that my interviews were very revealing and powerful, and that I found them to be healing. That evening, Taqwa called and asked if I would welcome her back if she would participate in my study. We agreed that she had to follow through with her word and that I would be sensitive to her not wanting to be called Indian.

My interview conversations with Taqwa were some of the most emotional ones. She shared some very personal details that although not too relevant to the research questions I set to inquire, allowed me to situate and understand the immigrant experiences from a Muslim woman's perspective.

Taqwa and I became very close friends as a result of these interview conversations. She graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Industrial Engineering and now works and lives in the South.

### **Nishan**

The King of Bhangra had arrived at Iowa State University. That was the chatter in the *desi* community about Nishan in fall 2010. As soon as he enrolled at Iowa State University, 18-years old Sikh, Punjabi, Nishan was a celebrity on campus. He was being recognized for his Indian dance moves and more so for his Bhangra – which is a form of Indian hip-hop. Vrinda, my sister was mentoring him on campus and one day informed me that Nishan was from Iowa City area but was born in India.

That not surprisingly piqued my interest about Nishan. A few weeks later, I received a facebook *add a friend* request from Nishan. We set up a time to meet for lunch but Nishan was a no show. I am not sure if he was embarrassed for forgetting to meet but he avoided meeting me on campus for the rest of the semester.

To break the ice, I decided to engage with Nishan and ask how he was doing in school at a potluck. We reconnected that day. At the potluck, since I had mentioned that I was nearly done interviewing and was transcribing my data, several of the guests asked me questions about my research and inquired about my preliminary findings. As the evening progressed, Nishan and I talked more about my work and I invited him to consider participating.

Nishan had immigrated to the United States as refugees when he was only five years old, 13-years ago. A Sikh, Punjabi Indian Nishan and his family had to leave India 15 years after the notorious 1984 riots in India, in which hundreds of thousands of members of the Sikh community were killed because of their faith. His father's family had immigrated to the Detroit area in Michigan a few years ago and helped them with the refugee paperwork. Nishan's parents did not have the opportunity to go to school because they were the oldest children and had to take care of the younger siblings. So Nishan is a first generation college student in addition to being a Generation 1.5 student. Nishan's family moved around the country quite a bit and finally settled in Iowa City, Iowa.

The week following the potluck, Nishan agreed to participate. Nishan had never explored so many of his experiences – being first generation college student, Generation 1.5 and being a refugee. We had some very somber and poignant moments in our conversations.

Nishan is a sophomore in Pre-Business and president of the Multicultural Business Network at Iowa State University. He started a Bhangra dance group in Spring 2011 to help disseminate a dance form he loves. Since his arrival in the United States, Nishan has never returned to India

**Vivek**

All the international Indian students in the apartment complex that my Indian post-doc friend, Satya, lived in were fascinated about a fellow desi who worked in a local grocery store, especially in the wine and spirits section. I wasn't fascinated but I was puzzled. This was only possible if the student was either a "green card" holder or a U.S. citizen because international students cannot work off-campus. But from what I gathered, this guy was as Indian as Indian can be. He spoke Hindi, cooked Indian food in the apartment, and was deeply spiritual.

My post-doc friend, Satya introduced me to his 25-years old Hindu, Gujarathi roommate, Vivek. He was what everybody had described him to be--a very thoughtful young man. And yes, he had a "green card," which allowed him to work off campus as well. Talking about the "green card," allowed us to relate to each other and began a great friendship.

Always ready for a deep, philosophical discussion or debate, Vivek and I often met over coffee to just chat. The more I interacted with Vivek, the more I realized how different he and I were, and in fact held polar opposite viewpoints about many contentious issues. Normally, it would have not been possible for us to be friends, but our experiences immigrating and finding ourselves in a new country is probably what allowed us to overlook our differences.

During one of our many coffee meet-ups, I mentioned my dissertation research topic to Vivek to seek his opinion about the issues that I wanted to explore. I hadn't thought of inviting Vivek to be a participant. Like me, Vivek was much older when he immigrated to the United States. I wasn't so sure if he would either identify as a

Generation 1.5 or with many of the issues that some of the other participants who immigrated at much younger ages experienced. To my surprise, Vivek opened up and shared his immigration journey.

Vivek immigrated with his family to Virginia when he was 20 after getting his “green card.” He attended a community college there while working fulltime in a neighborhood Walgreens. His cousin and aunt hosted him while he was adjusting to the “American” way of life. At the same time, his brother had found employment in Des Moines, Iowa and wanted Vivek to move in with him. Vivek relocated half the way across the country to be with his brother and enrolled at the Des Moines Area Community College. He chose to go to community colleges because he could not afford to pay tuition and had to work full time so he could be considered a resident of the state for financial aid purposes.

A few months after relocating to Iowa, Vivek’s brother moved to the West coast, and that was when Vivek decided to go to Iowa State University. He enrolled in Aerospace Engineering but dropped out of the program because he wasn’t interested in it after all. He picked up math as a major and then added economics as well.

During our interview conversations, Vivek would often go off on a tangential topic, and we would have really long conversations. However, his experiences were no different than mine and the other participants. Vivek will graduate in December 2011, and is considering graduate school.

## CHAPTER 4

### OUR COLLECTIVE YATRAS

Having explained the theoretical underpinnings and methods of this study, chapter 4, *our collective yatras (journeys)*, examines the research findings of this doctoral study. The central purpose of my study was to engage and better understand how 11 Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students identified, negotiated, understood, and described their immigration and integration experiences. The following research questions guided the study from its inception:

1. What characterizes the immigration and integration experiences of Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students?
2. What characterizes the position of being *Neither Here, Nor There* for Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students?

Several major themes evolved through data analysis. These major themes were composed of mini stories/incidents that the participants shared and formed the foundation of their life experiences. In the following pages, I offer broad thematic headings that recollect their experiences in India as well as in the United States. They also provide a foundation to understand the immigration and integration experiences of my participants in the United States.

As I conducted my interviews with my participants, I soon began to realize that this was the first time that these students were sharing their stories with anyone. It was also the first time that they were processing it for themselves. This was when our interviews turned into conversations that involved sharing our experiences with each other.

As my participants were reminiscing about their journeys, several themes emerged in the data analysis. These include, the value of family and friends in their lives, Indianness, religion, language, schooling in India, cricket, food, values and culture. In addition, they also remembered their experiences immigrating to the United States and the transitional experiences they faced in life and in their schools. They could sometimes in surprising detail mention the exact instant in time when they realized they were living two lives.

### **Centrality of Family and Friends**

Family and friends were central in the lives of all the participants. They expressed that their daily lives revolved around hanging out with family and friends.

Ankit recollected how close knit his family was by saying:

We used to be really close to my mom's side of the family. Our grandparents. Because a large part of my life I grew up stayed there. Used to go there very often. I remember eating mangoes a lot because my grandfather had; they owned a lot of land. They used to get a lot of mangoes. So, we used to go there and eat mangoes.

Similarly, Susan valued her family and friends because they were an integral part of her social life. She recalled the importance of her family in her life by sharing:

Spending time with family like there's so many weddings and baptisms, all those things to go to. So, it's just I would see my cousins all the time, and we would all be, we all know each other very well and umm, so, stuff like that.

While family played a significant role, siblings were a source of great emotional and moral support. All my participants expressed the sense of closeness they had for their siblings when they were young and lived in India. Their closeness to one another was demonstrated in different ways through acts of caring, sharing and loving. Talking about his relationship with his brother, Ankit said:

I remember that every time we got candy or something from school or someone we would always keep it and share it. That's one thing I remember about him. It was a mutual thing, so, if I got one candy, I would keep it until I saw him and then we eat half-half. And I mean we would fight a lot too doing playing around and stuff and we had a lot of the same common friends in the community so we hung out a lot.

This close bond between siblings also helped them develop unspoken support systems for each other and overcome events in their life that were stressful. Ankit acknowledged his brother's support by saying:

My mom and my dad probably did not get along too well. So, they used to fight a lot and me and my brother had to watch often them fight. So, it was sorta scary a young age but something we had to deal with.

While these were indeed unpleasant experiences in the lives of the participants and seemed to strike at the root of the idea that family was central to their existence, Ankit mentioned that his brother and he were able to make it through tough times by turning to their faith and keeping hope. *It is just a hope that we had that everything is going to work out.* He described how traumatic the arguments between his parents were at that time but did not feel he was emotionally affected now.

I am not sure how it has affected me in the long term but every time they would fight my heart would beat faster and faster. So it was sorta scary. And I remember at a young age, I would tell my dad to stop fighting and stuff. So, but. I don't know if it has affected me in the long term. By looking back at it.

Ankit hadn't really reflected on his relationship between his older brother and he. Our conversation attempted to engage in that and while he was initially unsure about how to relate to his brother, he eventually agreed that he was in fact much closer to his brother than he thought he was due to their shared experiences in India.

See, it probably did because then we really did not have anyone else to turn to because you do not want to often tell people of your family problems. So, we had each other to look up to and go to. Like, we did not directly talk about stuff that happened in the family but we both knew about it and understood that each other knew about it. I guess in a way, we kinda had that bond.

Susan felt that her parents and brother took care of her, and therefore she did not have to strain herself during the transition process. Her older brother, also a Generation 1.5er, was very important for her transition because he took care of his baby sister. Susan says,

I mean, I love my mom and dad and my brother. Like, they have helped me through a lot like with the transition stuff. I think that's why it wasn't as difficult as it could have been for my brother. I mean, I have never really talked to my brother about it but I am sure it was much more difficult [for him] but for me

since I am the baby, even my brother really took care of me and was always watching out for me. Looked after me. So, I didn't really have to struggle a whole lot.

During the interview process, I had to ask Susan to clarify what she meant by family. She defined the unit of a family in a much broader sense that included extended family members, who were important to her in her life. She expressed her emotion of yearning for her family by describing it as:

Indian family, I mean, it means you know your aunts, uncles and you know, grand parents, everyone really is your family basically. And I think that's what I miss.

That family. That definition of family.

### **Indianness**

As a preface to this dissertation, I introduced you to a poem by Bhavya Mohan. Bhavya's poem relates to the experiences of a second-generation Indian American child, but it also inspired me to seek how Generation 1.5 Asian Indian Americans identified, constructed and described Indianness.

Thoughts of Indianness mostly evoked passionate responses. However, it was a very difficult question to answer for almost all of my participants. They had never defined Indianness before and it was an abstract concept initially. The more we engaged in our conversations, a common theme for Indianness emerged that revolved around family, friends, education, food and culture. Ankit defined his Indianness as:

I guess, in a broad sense to me, Indianness is, when I think of that, I think of someone, or group who is family oriented so. Like from my experience, I saw like great immediate family love and affection. And,

also, affection towards relatives. Like you know, in India, we would always be very close to our community and our neighbors. We would go over to their place and they would come over. It just used to be really close community and also, I know in Indianness, the parents specially are very focused on kids getting a degree. So they are very education focused. And personally, I don't like that because I think there is more to a person than just getting a degree. There is more to a person's character and growth but that's one of the things I have noticed and also, culture and religion are very important. Umm. Because, when I was living in India, I remember we used to go to all religious activities and be involved. Everyone would be involved in participate in festivals like Holi and Diwali. And, also Uttrayan. But yeah, the whole community seemed very involved.

Susan who had the toughest time defining Indianness defined it in very simple terms:

I guess, the way I see it, it's just kinda living the Indian life as in having that Indian mindset while doing the things that I do normally.

Deepak initial reaction to explain the essence of Indianness was that it was a hard question to answer. He explained Indianness as:

I guess being an Indian is something that I am not right now. But is what I was before. So like the life I had in India, it's like the people around me, the cultures around me, not cultures, culture around me is what I guess being Indian means. So, like I was around a lot of people who shared the same cultural aspects like

views and family values. Tends to be like the family comes first and then everything else.

Elaborating on how Indianness had evolved after immigrating to the United States, Deepak says:

First, umm, like if I said family is first because this, this and this, I could give you a lot of reasons why family was first in India but it's hard for me to come up with reasons why family is first in the U.S. because family was first in India because we spent a lot of time together, spent time with other family members of the internal family members but here you can't do that, they are too far away so.

Deepak viewed that this lack of constant contact with his family resulted in a loss of Indianness. Having constant familial contact with his immediate family as well as extended family gave him his sense of identity as an Indian. Moving to Iowa where none of his relatives lived alienated him and he harbors a sense of loss.

Interestingly, all my Hindu participants (Ankit, Daya, Deepak, Dhruv, Isha and Vivek) attributed their religion to Indianness, where as my Muslim, Christian and Sikh (Jibril, Taqwa, Danny, Susan and Nishan) participants did not. They described that this was a very frustrating part of their experiences that generally people consider all Indians to be same and follow the same religion and faith. This was oppressive to their experiences.

### **Religion as an Identity**

Religion was not a dominant theme for my Hindu participants. As a son of priest, Daya explained it as a way of life and how living in a majority culture did not allow him

to recognize how many aspects of his day-to-day life was intertwined with religion. On the other hand, my Muslim, Christian and Sikh participants were very conscious of their minority status in the Indian culture. In fact Nishan explained that his family and he fled India and arrived in the United States as refugees to avoid religious persecution following the Sikh riots in 1984.

Being Hindu and Indian were twin identities for my participants who self-identified as Hindu. Also, as each of my Hindu participants were from different cultures, they all explained rituals that were unique to their identity of being a Hindu. Ankit relived his memories by recounting how religion and prayer were intricately a family affair and also allowed him to bond with his brother.

Swami Narayan temple. So, we had a Swami Narayan temple in Uttarsanda. So that was like a 15-20 minutes walk but sometimes we would go as a family or me and my brother would ride the bike there or walk there even. And, it just felt nice being in the temple.

### **English Medium Indian School and Native Language**

India is a multilingual country with a not so distant colonial past. Despite being a colonial language, English is considered an elite language and schools strive to differentiate themselves as progressive and Western by setting English as the medium of instruction. This helps in students practicing and improving their English speaking skills. However, when this happens, the students lose their native language as they are usually taught as second or third languages in elementary, middle and high schools. All of my participants except Isha learned to read their native language in school.

Describing their schooling experiences, my participants articulated that they attended English medium schools, if they attended schools in India. By doing that they distinguished and assigned a sense of pride and privilege to attending an English medium school. Susan noted that:

Our school was English medium. We were supposed to be speaking English all the time but I mean none of us really did but we did learn English. It was like one of the main things.

Ankit pointed out that when he went to elementary school in India, learning English took precedence over learning one's own native languages like Gujarati or Hindi. Consequently, at the age/grade that he left India, Ankit did not have the opportunity to learn his native language. While shares his experiences by saying,

Yeah, this was an English medium school, so, they taught classes in English, and they taught like Gujarati and Hindi classes, which I don't get to. I don't think I was that far up to Gujarati. I don't remember too closely about how they taught or how it was and stuff but I usually used to place first, second or third in my class. That's what I remember.

However, as a result of immigration and lack of reinforcement of the native language skills at home, my participants expressed a sense of loss and insecurity as they lost the ability to speak, read or write in their "mother tongue." Ankit chronicled the loss of his native language skill by reasoning:

I forgot how to read and write. I used to know and I guess in 4th grade when I was in India, I was in the process of learning and stuff and I left all

of sudden, I lost, I forgot how to read and write. I can still speak for the most part, just the talking in the regular.

They slowly recognized that soon they were becoming more fluent in English than in the language they spoke usually at home. This, Susan, explains forced her to create her own language – *Minglish*, which was *a combination of words in Malayalam and English*. Other such combinations include Tenglish, Tanglish, and Hinglish etc.

School beyond the experience of learning languages was also important in establishing a sense of belonging to their communities where they grew up. In Ankit's experiences, the ritual of walking to school was one of the few things he remembers about going to school. He explains:

I was, I moved here at a young age but I do have memories, a lot of memories of me being just young. Specifically some stuff that I remember are walking to school in the mornings. The school I went to was about 10-15 minutes drive. I mean 10-15 minutes walk. So I remember walking the path, it was a straight path from our house to the school. So, we used to walk there. Sometimes, I walk with friends or just alone. And sometimes in the morning, the rickshaw passing by, we would hop on it. And then just go there for free but...

In fact, after immigrating to the United States, on his maiden trip back to India in the summer of 2006, he expressed that the walk to the school was such an important feeling of being connected to India that he recreated that short walk to re-experience his childhood.

During our conversation, my participants often lapsed in to phases of comparative experiences. They would describe experiences in India and then compare them with similar experiences in the United States. And schooling in India seemed to be a popular comparative experience. They were unsure which experience was better. Sometimes the Indian schooling experience seemed challenging, and sometimes the experiences through the American school system were intimidating, explained Ankit. He added:

I remembered, well, in India like if you in classes if you talk or something, you interrupt a teacher, they usually punish you in different ways. So one of the punishment that I remember getting is everyone had to stand up and you would hold your hand out and they would take a steel ruler and just go around hitting on the hand as a punishment for interrupting or talking.

By sharing this Indian classroom etiquette, Ankit wanted to demonstrate how as a child he was socialized to just listen and he could not speak up in class. Respect for authority and elders were values that he was explicitly taught right from a young age. He acknowledged that these values caused him to struggle when he enrolled in elementary school in Ames, Iowa. Participation and free exchange of ideas were expected of students, and because Ankit was quite all the time, initially, his teachers feared that he was an introverted child.

As I mentioned earlier, Indian parents place immense value on education in the lives of their children. My participants reflected how they did not realize that getting good grades was weaved into the everyday fabric of their lives. The pressure to do well was magnified that much more if the participants' older siblings performed well in school. Ankit, too, shared his experience:

Yeah, like an unsaid expectation. Yeah, because my brother would always get first or second also in his class. So I had to keep up with him.

This *unsaid expectation* was communicated to the students in subtle ways. Usually situated in the philosophy of hard work, my participants were engaged by their parents to seek accomplishment and success as a means to happiness. Ankit echoed that philosophy:

Because, my parents never pushed me to like specifically told me to come first or second. But they would always tell me to do homework and focus on school. So in a way that was unsaid. And if they wanted me to accomplish and become on top of my class.

While discussing competition between siblings, all my participants did not think it was an *unfair expectation* of the parents to expect the younger sibling to do as well as if not better than the older sibling. Ankit viewed parental expectation as a desire of one's parents to see their children succeed in life, and it was their responsibility to oblige by working hard:

I, partially because my brother was, he is like a few grades ahead of me and he like I said, he always used to place first or second. So I think they had that expectation from me. I was ok with it.

### **Cricket – The Pulse of a Nation**

While cricket is a game and a sport in India, it also emerged as a significant theme for all my participants that situated and connected them their Indian heritage. This demonstrated the importance of the game in the Indian culture and experience.

Cricket reconnected all my participants to their childhood and being an Indian. Despite not having played the game or following it since immigrating to the United States, all my participants recalled how important cricket was to them to feel connected to their “motherland.” For example, Ankit stressed on the importance of cricket in framing his memories from India:

One of the most important memories I had was playing cricket. I used to do that a lot with friends. And so we would play cricket right outside our house. There was a field right next to the...we had a factory across our place and between there was a field, open field where we would play every evening. So that was really exciting. And then sometimes in the evenings, I played either card games or carom board with the family.

Another memory, I have is...there is a festival or holiday called Utrayan, which is in January, which is basically where you fly kites. And, so everybody plays kites from their Agassi, like an open roof. Those are the memories I remember from India.

When I probed further and inquired if they enjoyed the game anymore, they all replied in the negative except Daya. Daya is obsessed with the game, and dreams of returning back to India to play in the national cricket team.

Daya equated playing cricket to being Indian. Not playing cricket to him meant losing one's Indian identity. He justified that belief by saying that because he and his friends play cricket, he believes it defines his Indianness. When asked what defines his Indianness, Daya explains

And cricket would be one. Like, I always talk to people, if you don't like cricket; you're not Indian! Because most people I know, most people I have met they like cricket. I have always, that's the main sport I have played. All my friends play cricket. And even here in the US, I came to high school, like on the second day people asked me if I wanted to play cricket. They like cricket too. So, all people I have met like cricket. So it's in my head that if you're Indian, you like cricket obviously. Specially here.

Ankit explained he did not play cricket anymore because *it is not very famous here and I have played it before but it is not very common so I don't get the chance to play it very often*. Also, the lack of interest in the game was attributed to the fact that *it feels more homely to play in India than it is to play here because it is more famous there*. A *thrill* was associated with the game of cricket and its popularity was credited to the game being *very famous there and everyone follows cricket there*.

In some way, to not play cricket was construed as lacking authenticity of being Indian. Ankit explained the uniqueness of playing cricket in India and why it was one of their significant memories:

I think because those are the ones that I can most relate myself to India. I mean, I probably have memories, I can't think of but those memories are like, I can probably find something very similar I do in the US that relates to those memories but these specific memories relates me to India itself and not to anything else.

### **Realizing the American Dream**

The good ol' American Dream was probably the most compelling reason that all my participants' families immigrated to the United States. The belief that if they immigrated to the States, their children would have access to quality education and therefore a better future. Ankit shared that his parents' rationale for coming to the United States was to provide more options for his brother and he and they were willing to sacrifice all that they had in India to make that happen.

I think the main reason was education. For both mine and my brother's. They thought that coming to the US would be a...it would give us a better chance. I know especially for colleges, there's more options and more places you could go to. And I think they thought that coming to USA would be best for our education and growth.

While Vivek shares Ankit's opinion, he also shared there was another reason his family immigrated. His parents wanted to reunite with either their siblings or extended family. Some of my participants' extended families had immigrated decades ago and had sponsored my participants and their family to immigrate to the United States through the Family Reunification program. This program allowed families to sponsor their extended

families in other countries to immigrate to the United States if they fulfilled certain criteria and gain legal permanent residency (“green card”).

I think it was for our education. My parents probably just thought that coming to the US would give us a better education than there would have in India. I am not sure why, just had that thought. And also another reason was that most of my mom’s side at least, all of her sisters and brothers were in the US. And she has like six-seven siblings. So they were all in the US. Well, one of them is in Africa and so, I think that’s partially one of the reasons because they thought they had a strong support system in the US.

#### **Lack of Closure: No Goodbyes**

Another interesting sub theme that emerged during our conversations that neither the participants nor I could fully understand. Several of the participants expressed that they did not know they were immigrating to the United States till it actually happened. Deepak did not really have an opportunity to say goodbye to his friends, as were the experiences of Daya, Danny, Ankit and Vivek. Deepak says:

I know, I don’t remember specifically my parents talking about it but I know it was like, they sorta made it, I don’t know why, they kinda made it like a little secret, like we did not really tell our neighbors we are going. I am not sure if it had to do something with like my dad’s college not allowing him to go for some reason but I know we kept it sort off a secret and we just kinda went. And, eh, yeah, so, I did not get to say good

bye to my friends, for example, we kinda left but I am not exactly sure why.

While the students tried to rationalize this experience and unique behavior with their immigration, the emotion that struck me the most was the lack of a sense of closure. Their lives were disrupted and they did not understand why.

### **Transition Shock**

Coming to America was a dream come true for all of my participants (except Susan) and their families. In the pursuit of happiness, my participants expressed that their families took the challenges that came along the way as part of the transitioning process. All my participants' acknowledged that extended family members supported their families to settle down but while some had not so challenging transitions, other had very difficult and painful experiences. Asked if the extended family had any expectations from them for helping them immigrate, Nishan wasn't very sure. He explains his family's struggle negotiating familial relationships was tough.

I think, like the relatives that sponsored us from my mom's side. We lived there for three months in Nevada and I am not sure if they had expectations. I think they just. Yeah, I am not sure if they had expectations but they did not treat us very well. So, like often we would have to go whole day without food or something, at times. Because they own a business, laundry business, so we would be there the whole day helping with that or had to wait for them to come back and often we would go out and just eat pizza hut or something.

Taqwa and Jibril mentioned that they had felt degraded and disrespected by their extended family. They felt it was a result of accepting help from others that had placed their family in an awkward position. Taqwa who had more knowledge about this explained that this strain in relationship had caused their parents and siblings to leave the United States to return to India. Taqwa expressed:

I mean it hurt. Like seeing that a family member would do something, a relative would do something like that or treat us like that but yeah I had to be strong, so.

By being *strong*, Taqwa means she had to never to ask for anybody's help. This unfortunate experience with her extended family pushed Taqwa to develop a sense of self-sufficiency and pride. She *vowed* never to ask for help and to work things out on her own. *Because asking for help, equated it to surrendering one's honor and dignity.*

During the interview, Taqwa broke down recollecting the fact that she had asked me to help Jibril through the admissions process at Iowa State University. She explained it took a lot of persuasion from a mutual friend to muster the will to ask for my help. Taqwa expressed a sense of relief that not everybody who helps is a bad person.

Religion was definitely a major transition issue. Danny and Susan expressed happiness in having more opportunities to practice their Christian faith. Susan explained that she was unhappy that *Christianity had lost its Indianness* when she moved here. On the other hand, my Hindu and Muslim participants

expressed mixed opinions and feelings. Taqwa and Jibril expressed that 9-11 incidents caused *great harm to Muslims around the world but particularly in America*. They both suggested that *Muslims could not practice their faith freely anymore*. They frequently asked me to share my opinion if *America really tolerated religious diversity?*

Deepak, a Hindu, explained that he never felt that he had an *authentic religious experience* since his family and he moved to the States. As with most Hindus, his family recreated a temple at home to satisfy their spiritual needs but even that felt somewhat *unfulfilling*.

One thing would be fitting into the community, for example, when we first came here, there was no temple, the only temple we had was, we brought like make your temple thing, all the pieces together, you just construct it. So we have that at home. That was like the only temple we had when we first came. And in India, we used to have temples everywhere. It is just a nice feeling that gives you a chance to get out and walk, just walk to the temple if it is close. It just feels nice but here, I mean although they have a temple now in Madrid, it is still 40 minutes drive, so it is not very convenient and it just does not feel the same sometimes.

Even a fully functional temple in Madrid, Iowa, which is a half-hour drive from Ames, did not fulfill the spiritual needs of some of my participants. Vivek, however, disagreed with this observation. He theorized that *god is where the heart is* and he was very content with his spiritual needs. He mentioned that he

would often go to the temple in Madrid *to experience calmness and be surrounded by Indianness.*

Nishan, a Sikh, explained that following 9-11, his parents removed his turban and cut his long hair – *kesh*, a religious symbol mandated in Sikhism. He reflected by noting, *I thought we left India because of religious persecution but when it happened here, our family was devastated.* He said he became a *cut Sardar* and while he was in peace with his *new identity*, he often wonders *what it would mean to have a dastar in America.*

### **American Schooling**

The first few weeks in elementary school after coming to America were *interesting* is how my participants described their experiences. They laughed how they were such *FOBs* – fresh of the boat. Their memories seemed to awaken during our interview conversations and they seemed very embarrassed to share their experiences. After pleading with Susan, she finally relented and shared:

The other transition phase I had to go through was fitting in at school. For example, I still have some friends who used to tell me that I used to go to school wearing Indian clothes, fifth grade when I first started. So, they were like matching Indian clothes. Top bottom.

As if it was a rhetorical question, Susan asked me, *who does that?*

Nishan too echoed Susan's feelings. He said his parents, who did not have any school or college education, *did not have a clue* how to dress him up for school.

Nishan remarked:

It was like casual wear but it was like, it had designs like buttoned up shirt with a pocket here and some colored pants. Normally people here wear jeans and t-shirts and stuff like that. I don't remember this but I have friends who told me I used to wear this stuff and so I am pretty sure I got probably made people like laugh a lot in the back.

While he does not mind that he went to school in his Indian clothes, Nishan wish his parents had some *fashion sense*. Ankit and Deepak had similar experiences attending elementary and middle schools, respectively.

Another "American school" experience that my participants did not think was very serious was the pranks that their peers played on them. They very much enjoyed the pranks and took it as a sign of acceptance. Deepak fondly recalls how he was tricked during lunch in the school cafeteria. He attributes this experience to the lack of knowledge of American slang and culture. Deepak recalled:

Probably the English they taught us was different than the kind of language you speak here in front of people, kinda slang. So I probably had, I probably did not know all the slang words and stuff, so, and I think I did not have trouble picking it up since I had learned some English, so that made it easier for me to transition. But I still had that trouble at the beginning. For example, I remember once during lunch, a friend was poking fun at me. So we were in the lunchroom and he's like if you want more milk just hold up your hand with the middle finger up, ha ha, so I did that.

According to all of my participants, they welcomed and enjoyed these mini friendly pranks because as Danny reasoned, *you can only play pranks on your close friends*. However, these “friendly” pranks did not necessarily translate into friendships. Dhruv had a tough time adjusting and integrating into his middle school. He recounted how he had to change himself to fit in with his peers in middle school. Dhruv says:

Just making friends. So the culture here is very different, hmm, the life-style how people live. It was hard to connect with them because I came from a background where, I used to play cricket a lot, everyday. Here no one plays that or even has heard of it, sometimes. So, I kinda had to change myself around to fit with their life style...

As his peers could not relate to the things that he was used to doing, he gave up playing cricket. In his opinion, this was probably when Dhruv *started losing his Indianness* by stopping to play cricket and added:

...and first thing I did was I started playing basketball during recess. And now it has become one of my hobbies. Whereas cricket, I have almost forgot about it. I don't follow it much.

Daya, too, had a similar experience, an avid cricket player, he felt alienated in the one year he attended Ames high. Daya still feels the same even in college after four years of living in the United States. He explains:

I guess, here, I could not talk about the same stuff that I can talk about with my friends in India. Like we can talk about cricket or just religion or something like that. Here, you can't really talk about that kinda stuff. I

couldn't do that. I didn't have anything to talk about besides India when I first came because I did not know anything about America or basketball or sports or any other sports. So it is hard to connect with them.

If my participants demonstrated that they did not have the cultural capital to navigate an American school the first few weeks after coming here, Ankit revealed that his parents too did not possess the knowledge of how an American school functions. Although, Ankit laughed when he shared the next incident, which was one of his first memories after moving to Iowa, he realized that he and his family *barely made it*. Ankit shared:

...On Wednesdays, we used to get out early, but the first Wednesday, eh, I did not know that so the family we lived with here, the uncle would pick us up, pick me up, and the first Wednesday, umm, our classes got out early. And I was just kinda waiting there for him to come because we got out early. And he told me I should have called. Just called home and let him know that I was done. Those are one of the first memories I have.

### **American Dream and Higher Education: A Newness**

Some parents of my participants were highly educated, while others were not. The parental mix was diverse and ranged from an Islamic scholar and Chemist with PhDs to parents who did not possess a high school diploma. Transition, therefore, posed a much bigger challenge to the families, which lacked the educational capital to navigate a foreign land. This placed the burden of navigating not only their schools lives but also the lives outside of school on the tender shoulders of my some of participants at a very young age. Ankit remembers relying heavily on his neighbors to explain to his brother

and he what his parents had to do. They served as translator until such time their parents learned how to manage things on their own. Ankit says:

Often we would help them with any mail or something they got. My brother would look it over, or we would ask someone or neighbors if we had to, for help, as in what the mail is saying or what we had to do. So, we were able to get the help we needed from people but it was at the same time kinda hard for them too.

Ankit explained that as a result of this experience his brother and he become very responsible from a very young age. He believes that he *did not lose his childhood or youth but accepts that this is how life is, and deal with it.*

The emphasis that Indian parents place on their children's education was evident throughout my conversations with the participants. They very vividly recalled their experiences in kindergarten, elementary, middle and high schools depending on when they immigrated to the United States.

The words and the ways of the participants in this study bring into focus the immigration, integration and educational experiences of these Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students. Immigration and integration for each of these students involved negotiating and navigating different cultures, value systems, language and educational systems. It also involved developing coping mechanisms and a sense of resilience to ensure that each participant endured the pain and angst of leaving familiar surroundings and embracing the unfamiliar. Through the different themes and subthemes emerged the significance and value that my 11 participants assigned to their families, friends, Indian culture as well as their American way of life. The participants

demonstrated that as Generation 1.5 students, they adapted to a new way of life that valued their past experiences and embraced their current experiences. The future to them does not consist of just one “right” way but rather limitless possibilities and opportunities because that’s how they choose to view the world.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE JOURNEY OF AWAKENING TO A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

My quest to understand the immigration, integration and college experiences of Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students was indeed a very personal journey. As any novice researcher would feel embarking on this important educational journey, I was very overwhelmed with the issues that I had to examine. Where do I start? How do I frame my work? Who do I invite to participate? What were the issues? Were there any issues at all? I did not know what to expect when I wanted to develop my study that explored the experiences of this very unique student population.

In this study, I attempted to give voice to the nuances and complexities of experiences in the lives of 11 Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American students in the context of immigration, integration and educational experiences in the U.S. heartland, more specifically, at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. While many socially constructed identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity as well as socio-economic status would have been fascinating topics to address in this study; my participants led and guided me through this study. Therefore, it is their experiences that are at the center of my study.

My study focused on answering the following two key research questions:

1. What characterizes the immigration and integration experiences of Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students?
2. What characterizes the position of being *Neither Here, Nor There* for Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students?

## Transition and Consciousness

A classic rites of passage framework was provided by anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960), who was concerned with the transition of individuals from youth to adulthood. Van Gennep's transition theory has been employed by theorists such as Vincent Tinto (1975; 1987) to explore how students transition to college. Van Gennep included a three-stage process that involved separation, transition and incorporation.

Stage 1-Separation. Individual separates from past associations. There is a decline in the interactions with individuals from homeland.

Stage 2-Transition. Individual begins to interact in new ways to find membership or citizenship in the new culture.

Stage 3-Incorporation. Individual takes on new patterns of behaviors and interactions with new culture to establish competent membership and citizenship.

More recently, Gloria Anzaldua (1999) has articulated that as a result of living in the consciousness of what she terms, "borderlands," where there is a confluence of two or more cultures, individuals experience:

- Ambivalence from the culture clash
- "Psychic restlessness"
- "Mental nepantlism," an Aztec word for the in-between state of consciousness.

This space of contradiction, of operating in multiple cultures and entertaining multiple perspectives has been termed "differential consciousness" by Chela Sandoval, author of *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), and "epistemological pluralism" by Vanessa Andreotti, Cash Ahenakew and Garrick Cooper (2011).

## **The Journey**

Figure 1 depicts the journey of Indian Generation 1.5 students as they moved from their Indian homeland to America. The journey can be said to begin with a monocultural consciousness of being considered simply Indian and living in India. At this phase, there is an Indian (sub) consciousness where students found a form of citizenship and acceptance in their homeland. Despite the diversity of their homeland, here they were simply Indians living in India. The second phase is one of dislocation as the students experienced the trauma of separation from India. The third phase involved relocation as students learned to navigate a new American culture. To gain membership and citizenship that would include being accepted in American society, students (at different points in time) may be said to have acquired forms of consciousness that included: 1) uniconsciousness, 2) dual consciousness and 3) pluriconsciousness.

### **Phase 1: Indian (sub) Consciousness**

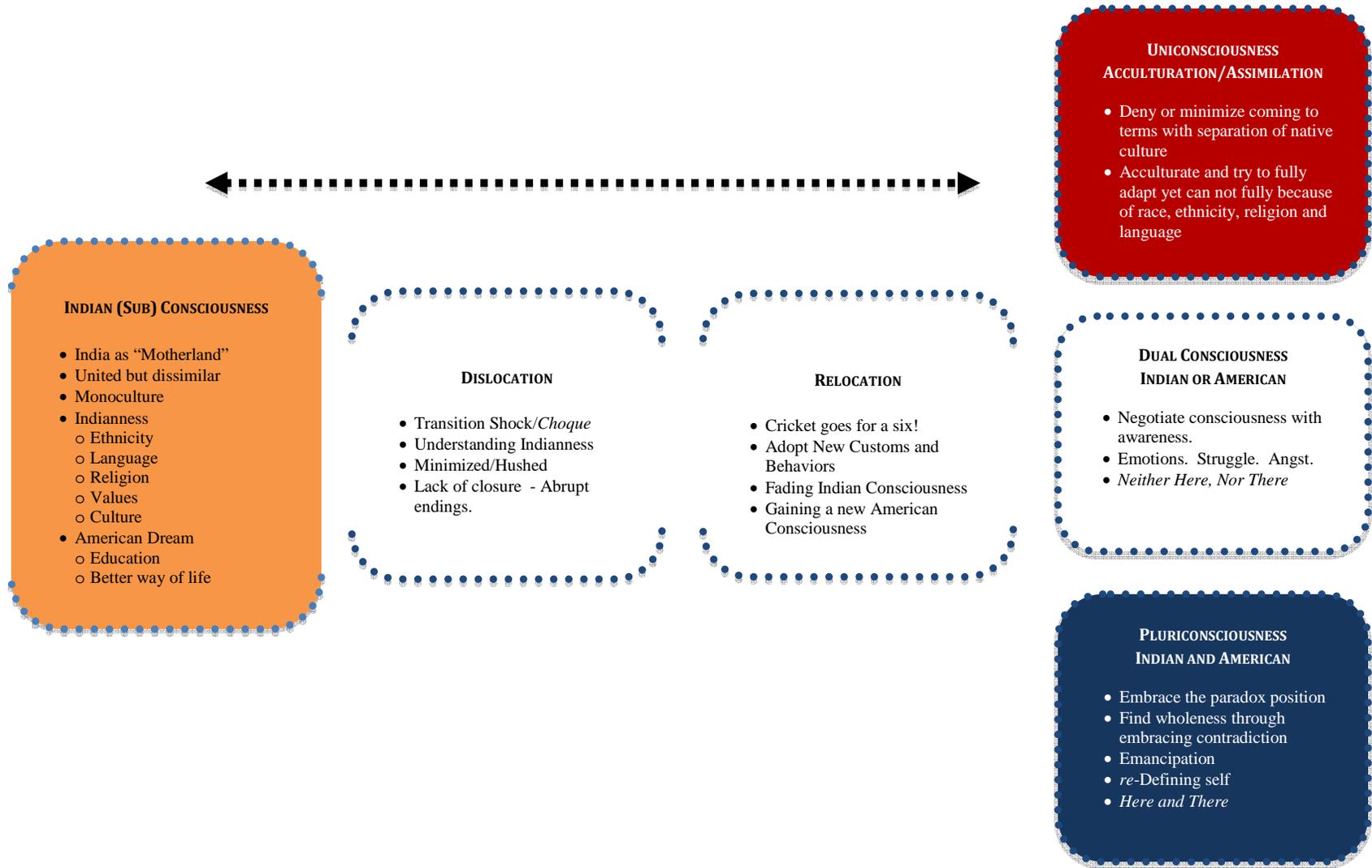
The Indian (sub) consciousness may be considered the base of the immigrant experience. India was the base culture from which students separated. Here, students were living as homogeneous people in a heterogeneous culture. The *Indian* identity was a concept connected to the immensely popular game of cricket, as in Indian cricket team. It was in relation to another entity that Indian could be defined. Beyond that, being Indian meant nothing.

As evidenced in Chapter 4, my participants defined Indianness in many different ways. Ankit, Danny, Deepak, Isha, Jibril, Nishan and Vivek had very elaborate, complex and personal constructions of Indianness, while Daya, Dhruv, and Susan had very simple, one size fits all kinds of definitions for Indianness. Irrespective of those distinctions,

Indianness encompassed identities related to ethnicity, language, religion, cultures and value. It was sum of all these interactions that informed their identity as Indian and therefore Indianness.

In addition to all of this, the Indian (sub) consciousness also survived on the idea of the American dream. Perhaps the most important factor that sustained the Indian (sub) consciousness was the idea and hope centered on the American dream, which participants and their families strongly believed could be achieved through education. Immigrating with a hope to have a better way of life allowed my participants to nurture that American dream and pursue that as an ultimate goal and measure of success.

**Figure 1: Immigration Consciousness Development Model**



## Phase 2: Dislocation

The point at which students began their immigration journey to the U.S. constitutes the beginning of the dislocation phase. In this phase, students experienced physical dislocation from their native cultures and homes in India. Leaving *home* for the first time in their lives, and arriving in another country, the United States, my participants experienced transition/culture shock, what Anzaldua (1999) has called, “*choque*.” The reason my participants experienced transition shock was because they had never had to deal with another culture other than their very own. They did not realize the value of their language, food, traditions, values, religion etc. until they were physically removed from the culture and environment that sustained their souls and Indianness. Once removed from their native culture, my participants realized the essence of their Indianness and became conscious of the reality of dislocation.

As students separated from India, there appeared to be no time for closure, not enough time to say goodbye, and students were totally unprepared for the immigration experience. Their families were unable to help their children to process the subtle but obvious realities of immigration such as experiencing a new culture, language and food among other things. This amplified the transition and culture shock that my participants experienced. With nobody to process this transitional phase in their lives, my participants had to learn and understand the process of dislocation on the go on their own. This at times meant their old culture (Indian) clashed with their new culture (American). Anzaldua (1999) referred to this collision of cultures as *un choque*, which she described as:

Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like other having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision (p.100).

The dislocation was further exacerbated by the fact that some of my participants had abrupt endings to their lives, as they knew it in India. While the student participants knew that they were moving to another country, they did not understand the consequences of such a shift. Unable to say “goodbye” to friends and family, my participants lacked a sense of closure that resulted in a very emotional and psychological sense of uncertainty in life – an experience that appeared to force them to develop a sense of resiliency and tolerance for ambiguity. This permitted them to navigate the new American culture while holding on to elements and aspects of their lives in India that were most salient to them when they were growing up in that country such as Indian values and traditions. Many of my participants had either gone back to visit India only once since immigrating to the United States or have never returned as yet. As a result of this separation from their native cultures, my participants developed a sense of tolerance for living in a space of contradictions and slowly adapted to their new ways of knowing and doing things.

### **Phase 3: Relocation**

*Cricket goes for a six!* Using cricket as a metaphor, my participants described losing their Indianness (in which “goes for a six” is a colloquial expression representing loss during a game of cricket). My Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 student participants expressed a sense of loss of identity. A loss of culture, citizenship and belonging occurred as they eventually settled into their lives and routines of their American dream. The very game that defined their identity and tied it to their “motherland” was no longer their preferred game of play. Basketball and American board games replaced past memories and provided a new sense of belonging. My participants expressed sadness that neither their families nor they realized that this was consequential to achieving their American dream. Several questioned why they had to endure the pain and clash of cultures. Why did they have to move? Why couldn’t they have just lived in India and not deal with this sense of loss?

As time passed, my participants adapted to a “new” sense of routine. They attempted to blend in by adapting to the ways of the dominant culture. All of my participants and their families moved into predominantly white communities, and therefore the dominant culture was viewed as the “American way of life.” They learned to integrate. While their families helped my participants maintain strong emotional ties to the “motherland” by retaining some old traditions, cultures and values; their peers at school and friends in the neighborhood “welcomed” them into their communities.

As a result of relocation, all of my participants learned to juggle their Indianness and Americanness. Neither did they abandon their Indianness nor did they reject their “Americanness.” They embraced both. They learned to operate in White’s (1991) *middle*

*ground* spaces and DeLeon's (2010) *go-between* spaces. However, as the years passed and families adapted to their not so new surroundings, my participants' Indian (sub) consciousness started fading because while Indian culture had a strong influence in their lives, it was no longer the core essence of their being. In adapting to the "American" culture, my participants were gaining a new American consciousness.

#### **Phase 4: Adapting to A New Consciousness**

Depending on where they were in the process of transition and gaining membership in the American society, these students could have entered one of at least three ways of negotiating the physical aspects of relocation (moving to new communities, enrolling in college, etc.) and the psycho-social aspects associated with becoming incorporated into American life (making new friends, acquiring new cultural perspectives, playing basketball, adapting to new customs, values and traditions, etc.). In essence, students were gaining a new *Desi/Indian American Generation 1.5 (sub) Consciousness* that may take one of three forms as described below.

*Unconsciousness.* In this space of acculturation a Generation 1.5er may deny or minimize coming to terms with separation from their native culture. In an effort to find membership and citizenship in the new culture, individuals may call themselves American as opposed to Indian Americans, and may adopt new customs and traditions to "forget" the old way of life and dissolve among their new culture. While acculturation is a goal for some individuals, it is likely that Indians, much like other people of color, can never (as hard as they may try) fully acculturate because they will always be externally viewed as the other, as an individual whose race, language, religion and culture are quite different from the dominant White culture.

*Dual Consciousness.* In this in-between space, a Generation 1.5er negotiates consciousness with awareness, and adapts to a *Neither Here, Nor There* identity. Anzaldua (1999) affirms the gaining of a consciousness marked by contradictions, which represent a blend/clash of races, cultures and viewpoints as she speaks of the new mestiza, herself a blend of Indian and Mexican ancestry:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity.... She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else.

Generation 1.5ers seek to navigate these contradictory spaces through deep emotional reflections that answer the question “who am I?” This space, for many Indian immigrants, is confusing, emotional and agonizing as they constantly struggle to determine and define a sense of belonging to a particular location or identity.

*Pluriconsciousness.* The state of pluriconsciousness is one that none of the students discussed as this consciousness requires a high level of maturity and wisdom. Perhaps students were not old enough to have gained this wisdom to take a contradictory state of mind, to embrace it, and ultimately use it to define selfhood. As a result of understanding and embracing this paradoxical position, emancipation can be achieved and the individual is able to *redefine self* through one’s own experiences. It is my belief that in doing so, a new identity is created that allows for the co-existence of many

identities and thus, *Here and There* becomes a truth and a reality not to fight but to embrace as part of one's life.

In my dissertation study, I found that my participants expressed all three stages of the *Desi/Indian American Generation 1.5 (sub) Consciousness*. As older participants in the study, Danny and Vivek, had experienced life more than the others and were entering the *pluriconsciousness*, where as Ankit, Deepak, Dhruv, Isha, Nishan, Susan and Taqwa were experiencing and navigating the state of *dual consciousness*. As two of the most recent immigrant students, Daya and Jibril were coming to terms with separation, and were "letting go" of their *uniconsciousness*. In doing so they were accepting and embracing the paradox of being Neither Here, Nor There.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

As a consequence of this study, several implications for practice for colleges and universities are identified that student affairs professionals can assist with the transition of Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American student to college campuses. The new conceptual framework allows students affairs professionals to understand the psychosocial impact of immigration, integration and consciousness development have on recent Generation 1.5 students of Asian Indian origin. This model may also be expanded and applied to students from other immigrant communities who experience dislocation and relocation phases in their journeys in pursuit of the American dream.

Navigating in-between spaces is difficult, and is a unique experience that Generation 1.5ers live. To assist them in negotiating and navigating college campuses, student affairs professionals in offices that serve international students as well as U.S. ethnic minority students need to collaborate. Asian Indian American Generation 1.5ers straddle both these worlds, and need assistance in recruitment, persistence, retention and their successful graduation. Effective programming should assist these students from feeling alienated or rejected and help develop a sense of community with their campus community.

In addition to working with Generation 1.5 students, it is important to evaluate the need to work with family members as well. As observed in the study, family and friends play a vital link to the immigration and integration of Generation 1.5 students into our communities and colleges. Educating parents and families about the American

educational system, if they are not knowledgeable about their options and opportunities, will empower them to take the best decisions for their families and children.

The experiences of Generation 1.5 students in general and Asian Indian American students in particular remain largely unknown on college campuses. It is important to educate our campus communities that these students exist amongst us, and students affairs professionals as well as university administrations need to create awareness program that highlight the issues that Generation 1.5 students face while or during transitioning to college.

The findings of this study could assist university administrators to examine the policies, procedures and practices that cater to the needs of this in-between student population. New programs can be designed and developed in collaboration with academic and student affairs offices across college campuses that support the success of this student population. For example, colleges must consider expanding their definitions of Asian American to include South Asian immigrants as well. Cultural centers that are often geared toward East Asian American students must develop programs that embrace the cultural diversity that South Asian Americans add to the Asian American umbrella.

Indian Americans are the third largest and fastest growing ethnic group among Asian Americans. A number of universities have started developing research centers that cater to understanding the experiences of this recent immigrant population.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Research**

There is a dearth of research about Generation 1.5 students on college campuses. This study examined the immigration, integration and consciousness development of

Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American college students. While some research has been conducted in the realm of bilingual education, other issues need to be addressed including (1) racial identity development among Generation 1.5 students of color, (2) college achievement gaps and success among Generation 1.5 students, (3) graduate Generation 1.5 students and their experiences attending college, (4) Generation 1.5 students belonging to other minoritized groups such as LGBTQ, differently able bodied, (5) psychological impact of immigration and integration of Generation 1.5 students, and (6) gender differences and experiences of Generation 1.5 students.

As noted earlier, this study is perhaps the first of its kind to address the experience of immigration, integration and consciousness development among Generation 1.5 students at a four-year institution. Given the increasing cost of higher education, immigrant communities will be attending community colleges across the country. It is important therefore to investigate the experiences of Generation 1.5 attending community colleges. Furthermore, research needs to address the needs of Generation 1.5 students who are in the U.S. K-12 education system. As future college students, it is imperative we understand the issues that immigrant students may be encountering in silence in their current settings.

## EPILOGUE

It's a foggy April Saturday morning; spring time in Iowa. The sun is peeking out to *M.S.Subbulakshmi's* rendering of the *Venkateswara Suprabatham*, playing loud on the home speaker system from my mom's iPod. I can hear her doing the dishes in the kitchen. She is probably getting ready to make my favorite Saturday breakfast – *chappatis* and *aloo kurma*. I am not asleep. This isn't a dream. I am wide-awake sipping my Folgers instant coffee – Indian style, reading Huffington Post while intermittently checking my friends' facebook status updates. I squint through the window blinds to see if the fog had cleared. It had, but it was beginning to snow. I am reminded of today's weather forecast: temperatures in the low 30s, light snow flurries with possible accumulation of less than an inch. I mumble, "Geez! I thought it was spring!" I draw the blinds up and open the windows expecting my actions would give the unwelcome winter the hint to move on. Instead, the cold Iowa winter draft from outside kisses my face. Suddenly everything feels *normal*.

*I am home.*

As I embrace my own *pluriconsciousness*, I reflect on my journey with these students who became so much a part of my life in Iowa. I am once again reminded of how blessed and very privileged I am to have the family I have and to be where I am today. It wasn't a smooth journey but I hope that the generations to come will always remember that this blessing came with a price—one that has seen our family split up and spread all over the world so that we can pursue our dreams. Immigrating to America has been a significant personal and family sacrifice that I am not sure I will ever be fully able

to wrap my head around. It is my hope that my sacrifice and those of other Generation 1.5 students will be worth it for future generations of immigrants who move to America to fulfill their hopes and dreams.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### **Neither Here, Nor There: The experience of immigration, integration, and consciousness development among Generation 1.5 Asian Indian American college students**

This form describes a research project. It has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Research studies include only people who choose to take part—your participation is completely voluntary. Please discuss any questions you have about the study or about this form with the project staff before deciding to participate.

#### **Who is conducting this study?**

Vijay Kanagala, fourth-year doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University, is conducting this study.

#### **Why am I invited to participate in this study?**

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a person of Indian origin (as in being born in India) and are either a naturalized citizen or a legal permanent resident of the United States of America above the age of 18. You should have been born in post colonial India, lived there for a while and moved to the United States with your family. You should not participate if you are a person of Indian origin (as in tracing your ancestry to India) but was born in the United States of America or any other part of the world (Indian Diaspora).

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to better understand the various issues and challenges that students who can be categorized as Generation 1.5 in general face at a predominantly white institution, and in particular Asian Indian American students. Generation 1.5 students are individuals who immigrated to the United States from another country. While reasons for immigrating may vary, these students could have moved when they were attending elementary, middle or high school, as well as during college years along with their families. As a result these students have experienced two or more different cultures and value systems growing up. Asian Indian Americans are people of Indian origin, who are now naturalized citizens of legal permanent residents of the United States of America.

In the past, research has mainly focused on Generation 1.5 students for their English speaking skills or the lack of and how that factor affected their development in the U.S. society and educational system. As is true of most recent immigrants, English may not be the primary language that is spoken at home by Generation 1.5 students. For the purpose of this study, I will be working with Asian Indian American students. In this population, while English is not the native language, I believe that language is not as much of a challenge compared to other immigrant groups. It is just piece of the puzzle. In my opinion, several cultural and social characteristics that are important to a Generation 1.5 student's overall development also need to be analyzed. These include academic preparation to attend college, social interactions with peers both in school and outside of school, familial expectations, cultural celebrations may be different from what one experienced at the first home country as well as activities such as sports. The study will examine how fifteen Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 students adapt to the U.S. society at such a young age through a series of one-on-one interviews, participant observations, artifact collection, and reflective writing

### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to engage in reflective thinking during each of our meetings. This research project that will last for approximately four months and will involve three two-hour interview sessions with you by me at a mutually convenient time. We will meet either at the ISU Parks Library or in an ELPS department conference room or a meeting facility on campus. To maximize interview time, I will provide questions via email ahead of time for you to think about.

The first session will attempt to gather data around the broad topic area “Capturing *there*: Reconnecting with the past.” You will be asked to reflect upon this topic ahead of time keeping in mind specific questions such as family background, what motivated your family to immigrate to the United States, what was life like in India.

The second session will focus on the broad topic are “Capturing *here*: Forming a new identity.” In this session, you will be asked to reflect on your current stage of identity development, the challenges/issues you may have had while adapting to the culture and society in the United States, academic and social issues in high school and college,

The third session will relate to the “Journey *in between*: Negotiating identities” and will provide you with an opportunity to discuss any specific opportunities and/or challenges that you have faced as a result of immigration. These would include cultural and social issues such as relationships with peers while attending high school and currently in college, language issues if English is not your first language and support networks at home (family) and outside (friends, peers, society).

You will be requested to bring along an artifact that has a sentimental value attached to you from your “home” country as well as from your “new home” country to each interview session. Artifacts could be pictures, documents such as “green card” or “certificate of citizenship” or “Indian/US passport” or any other thing, which you consider valuable. Confidential and personal identity information such as SSN, passport # etc. will not be photographed or videotaped.

You will be given a journal notebook at the beginning of the study. You will be expected to note down thoughts, feelings and experiences you have during the entire duration of the study about being Asian Indian American and a Generation 1.5er. This journal as well as the reflective writing entries will be used as artifacts and data to understand thoughts and feelings when not in an interview setting.

You may be photographed in social settings, one-on-one interviews, family gatherings etc. Photos from past interactions with researcher may also be used with appropriate consent. Photos may be created from digital video that will be taken during interview sessions. Photographs of artifacts/journals may also be taken as part of data collection to be included in the study. Extreme care and caution will be taken to mask all confidential identifiable such as social security number, green card id number etc. on any artifacts that the participants may bring to the interview sessions.

Additionally, I will use social settings such as dinners, Indian Students’ Association events, gatherings at other Indian/Indian American apartments/houses, cultural festivals on campus as well as off campus to observe (participant observation) how you interact with friends, family and people around you and vice versa. I might attend a class that you’re taking (with approval from the instructor) to understand classroom dynamics between you, the instructor and other students in the classroom.

**Please be advised that all three sessions will be audio as well as video recorded. The audio recording will be transcribed. The purpose of the video recording is explained under the section “how will the information I provide be used?” You will be provided with the opportunity to review all transcripts to eliminate any errors. This will conclude the initial process of collecting data. After the narrative is written, you will once again have an opportunity to review this document for accuracy and/or any misinterpretations of your thoughts. Please note that you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable during any interview session.**

Your participation will last for approximately four months and will involve three two-hour interview sessions. In addition, you will be required to review each of the transcribed tapes to eliminate any errors by the researcher (me). After the researcher has included the data in the narrative, you will be provided with an opportunity and will be

expected to review this document for accuracy and/or any misinterpretations of your thoughts by the researcher.

Here is a breakdown in time commitment required of you for this project:

Purpose	Hours of Participation	Number of Times	Time Commitment
<b>Interview w/ researcher</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Transcript Review</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Narrative Review</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
Total Time Commitment			18

### **What are the possible risks and benefits of my participation?**

Risks – The possible risks related to your participation in this research are **you may experience some emotional moments as a result of reflection (home sickness, missing childhood friends) and may make you feel uncomfortable, while reflecting on the questions that are asked during the three interview sessions. If you feel uncomfortable, you have the option not to respond to any question at any time. As I will be using the videotapes for educational purposes, I will not be using pseudonyms to mask your identity. Please know that this video will be used for future educational purposes at conferences and in classroom settings to educate students and communities about the experiences of Generation 1.5 children. If you're uncomfortable with videotaping our interview, because you do not like your opinions or experiences known to everybody, you must NOT sign this consent form. By signing this form, you are permitting the use of your pictures, video and audio in these interviews for future use by the researcher (me).**

Benefits – You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this. We hope that this research will benefit society by **allowing one to understand the various issues that Asian Indian American Generation 1.5 individuals face in society at large and specifically at educational institutions. This will provide much needed data as well as opportunities for upper level administrators to embrace diversity and ensure that programs that cater to the needs of these students are designed and implemented to provide a much more welcoming environment. In addition, this will expand the current literature and research on issues about Asian Indian Americans in particular and South Asian Americans in general in Higher Education.**

**How will the information I provide be used?**

The information you provide will be used for the following purposes:

1. To understand identity development among Asian Indian American Generation 1.5
2. A model of identity development for Generation 1.5 students will be developed based on this research and adds value to the understanding of issues that these students face on college campuses.
3. The video recording will be used for educational purposes and will be shown at future research conferences and presentation to educate researchers about Generation 1.5 students. Since the identity of Generation 1.5 is a relatively new and upcoming topic of research, you should know that this video will generate a lot of interest and will be used in many settings such as educational institutions for many years to understand how services can be improved for this specific and unique population.

**What measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data or to protect my privacy?**

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable laws and regulations. Records will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the ISU Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies with human subjects) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent allowed by law, the following measures will be taken. All electronic data such as transcripts will be secure on my office computer, which is password protected. All other data material such as notes, audio and video tapes, etc. will be carefully placed in a file cabinet, which will be locked at all times. I will be the only person who will possess a key. However, you should know that I will not be using pseudonyms to mask your identity, if the results are published, your identity will not remain confidential. I will also be using the video taped interview sessions for future use and therefore your identity will not be confidential as people will be able to see you in the video. Once the videos have been edited for their flow (not content), you will have an opportunity to view the video with the researcher to express any concerns or questions before it is released for educational purposes.

**WILL I INCUR ANY COSTS FROM PARTICIPATING OR WILL I BE COMPENSATED?**

You will not have any costs from participating in this. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**What are my rights as a human research participant?**

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

**Whom can I call if I have questions or problems?**

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study contact Vijay Kanagala, (515) 451 6265 or Dr. Laura I. Rendón or Dr. Dan C. Robinson, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, (515) 294 1241.
- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, [IRB@iastate.edu](mailto:IRB@iastate.edu), or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

**Consent and Authorization Provisions**

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT**

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### **Interview I.**

Capturing *there*: Reconnecting with the past.

1. What is the essence of Indianness for Asian Indians?
2. What do you remember about your life in India?
3. Tell me about the artifact you brought. How is this meaningful to you?
4. How does this represent you while you were in India?
5. Tell me about your family background?
6. When and why did your family decide to move to America?
7. What were the most difficult experiences you remember about making the transition from India to America?

#### **Interview II.**

Capturing *here*: Forming a new identity.

1. Who and what helped you the most to adapt to the culture of the U.S.?
2. Who or what helped you the most to adapt to academic and social life in high school?
3. Who or what helped you the most to adapt to academic and social life at ISU?
4. What issues have you confronted adapting to the social and academic life at ISU?
5. Tell me about the artifact you brought that represents who you are now. How is this meaningful to you?
6. How do you define yourself now?
7. How can higher education institutions foster greater success among Gen 1.5 students?

#### **Interview III.**

Journey *in between*: Negotiating identities.

1. Discuss any specific opportunities and/or challenges that you have faced as a result of immigration.
2. Do you face any cultural and social issues such as relationships with peers while you were attending high school and currently in college?
3. Do you consider that you have language issues if English is not your first language?
4. Do others consider you have a language problem?
5. Do you think you live in two worlds, so to speak?
6. Do you travel between these two worlds?
7. Do you prefer/negotiate one over the other?