

CRITICAL INCIDENTS  
IN THE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT  
OF SECOND-GENERATION SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN

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**Dedication**

To Shabnam, Hrittik, Jhumpa and Hashna...the *next* generation!

## **Abstract**

This qualitative study set out to describe the process of developing a more integrated bicultural identity for second-generation South Asian women as they transitioned from adolescence into adulthood in a Western, pluralistic culture. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher identified critical incidents that illuminated the participants' dual identities and caused them to think about their identities in a different way.

Analysis of the results illuminated four domains related to the bicultural identity development of second-generation South Asian women: (a) Feeling Different, (b) The Imposter Syndrome, (c) Family Connections, and (d) Finding Authenticity.

This exploratory study suggests that the journey toward an integrated, bicultural identity is not linear. That is, some incidents and relationships may cause one to feel more positively about how compatible one's cultures are, where another event may have a more negative impact. Also, a similar critical incident may impact two second-generation South Asian women quite differently, depending on where she was in her bicultural identity development at the time the incident occurred. This, then, seems to be the overarching theme of this research: second-generation South Asian women appear to be attempting to find an "authentic identity" that encompasses their Indian and American values.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

"Teleologically speaking, ABCDs are unable to answer the question, 'Where are you from?' " the sociologist on the panel declares. Gogol has never heard the term ABCD. He eventually gathers that it stands for "American-born confused deshi." In other words, him. He learns that the C could also stand for "conflicted." He knows that deshi, a generic word for "countryman," means "Indian," knows that his parents and all their friends always refer to India simply as desh. But Gogol never thinks of India as desh. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India. (*The Namesake*, p. 118)

In this quote from her first novel, Jhumpa Lahiri (2003), a child of Bengali Indian parents who was raised in Rhode Island, aptly describes the ambiguity and confusion experienced by her main character, Gogol Ganguli, a second-generation Indian immigrant. Indeed, first-generation immigrants to pluralistic cultures face unique challenges in forming coherent narratives that describe their multifaceted identities as they live as "strangers in a strange land." Social scientists, however, have paid relatively less attention to the journey their children take toward understanding and integrating their multiple identities (Portes, 2004; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). While we have gained considerable understanding of how the acculturation and ethnic identity development processes occur for the first generation of immigrants, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that "the process of ethnic self-identification of second-generation children is more complex and often entails the juggling of competing allegiances and attachments" (p. 150). This added complexity, they suggest, warrants deeper inquiry.

Monika Sharma, an American-born Indian psychologist, describes her own struggle to understand on which side of America's "race wars" she belongs through a

story from her clinical training. When pressed by her African-American and White adolescent clients to pick a racial allegiance, Sharma realized “that I had created my own version of a race war in my mind. I had divided the world into White and Other, and during my childhood I had made a choice about on which side I wished to belong” (Sharma, 2005). Lahiri refers to her choice to become a writer as “the desire to force the two worlds I occupied to mingle on the page as I was not brave enough, or mature enough, to allow in life” (Lahiri, 2006). Author Gish Jen also describes a similar rationale for choosing a career that would allow her to explore her own feelings about growing up Chinese-American: “In the beginning, you want acceptance. And then later on you want self realization” (“Becoming American: Personal Journeys Interview with Gish Jen,” 2003).

These personal accounts echo the stories of many children of immigrants as well as my own. As a second-generation Indian American, I also have felt conflicted and, at times, invisible in my own country. Having grown up in a predominately White, middle class Midwestern city, I remember feeling confused about how to fully embrace the individualistic American values I learned (and often cherished) in school without denying my allegiance to my Indian roots. This was especially true when I approached well-meaning counselors and advisers in high school about how to choose a career path. While no one blatantly criticized my desire to simultaneously pursue my own dreams and please my parents (difficult for a hopeful artist and musician), I did receive a subtle message that becoming an adult meant that my parents’ wishes were no longer relevant. I knew this advice did not fit for me, but

in high school, I did not understand why. This trend continued in college, and by then I sensed that few of my White friends were as worried as I was about how their choices were affecting their families. Moreover, I began to wonder if my relationship with my family was dysfunctional and enmeshed (a word I learned in my first-ever session with a college counselor).

In graduate school, studies and theories about ethnic identity development certainly helped me understand the evolution of my *Indian* identity. Still, I have not yet found a theory that has helped me understand the deep sense of conflict and ambivalence that accompanies the *bicultural* experience. I chose to do this study, then, because I wanted to better understand how second-generation immigrants like myself negotiate and possibly resolve the “American-born confusion” and ambiguity of their existence.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Evidence suggests that American-born children of immigrants face different challenges than their parents as they work to navigate between the values of their home culture with the values they experience at work, school, and in their personal lives (Agarwal, 1991). Second-generation immigrants are likely to have greater difficulty negotiating values conflicts when they arise, and may experience identity crises that hinder the development of healthy self-esteem and ethnic identity (Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995).

In her study of first- and second-generation South Asian women, Inman (2006) concluded that while the first-generation of South Asian female immigrants

faced conflicts around *maintaining* their culture, the second generation faced an added challenge of *learning* and maintaining their culture, usually second-hand through their parents. Ramisetty-Mikler (1993) concludes that the stress associated with the acculturation process for second-generation South Asian women in a pluralistic culture can lead to feelings of isolation, defensiveness, and feelings of inferiority.

Alternatively, living on the border between cultures may offer second-generation immigrants unique benefits (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Gardner, Gabriel, & Dean, 2004; J. P. Haritatos, 2006). Rather than solely being a source of conflict, identifying with two cultures that vary widely in their values systems may allow one greater freedom to create a hybrid, or integrated identity.

These studies have illuminated the complex and conflicted process second-generation South Asians experience as they attempt to define themselves in a pluralistic culture. At the very least, they reveal gaps in our knowledge about the identity development process of second-generation immigrants.

#### *Significance of the Problem*

Bouvier and Agresta (1985) estimated that the number of Asian Indians living in the United States would approach one million by the year 2000 and two million by 2050. In spite of this influx, few researchers have focused on understanding the unique psychological experience of this population of immigrants (Sheth, 1995; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987). It is true that South Asians share cultural

values with other Asian groups, but the subtle differences that distinguish South Asians from their other Asian peers warrants further attention (Frey & Roysircar, 2006).

The children, or second generation of South Asian immigrants to the United States offer social scientists a rare glimpse into the process of acculturation and development of bicultural identity. The historical circumstances of South Asians' immigration to the United States are significantly different than other Asian groups currently residing in this country, and this history distinguishes their children from other second-generation immigrants. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act included a special-skills provision, which allowed highly educated and highly skilled professionals from South Asia to immigrate more easily to the United States to accommodate the country's rising labor needs. Vijay Prashad (2000) describes this group of immigrants as a "skewed demographic" of South Asians whose economic success was a direct result of state-sponsored selection.

In addition to being highly educated and skilled, the post-1965 South Asians first-generation immigrants may have assimilated especially well to United States culture due to 200 years of British rule in India. British colonization exposed South Asians to Western values and the English language. developed a unique relationship with the Western world after achieving independence from the British in 1947. In the years after independence, the most common inspiration for leaving India was career advancement, the kind that India was not yet able to offer (Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). India's unique relationship with the United States also may be due to

India's status as the world's largest democracy, which distinguishes its immigrants from some other Asian populations. Immigrants from South Asia may share cultural and political values of individual achievement and equal opportunity with the United States, where these values may be less deeply rooted for other Asian immigrants. Others argue that Asian Indians have a strong history of adapting to and "reinventing" their culture in their new homelands, and this has allowed them to develop a bicultural framework more quickly than other Asian populations (Dasgupta, 1998).

Kurien (2005) describes the children of these post-1965 immigrants the "new second-generation" in that their significant numbers "will be pivotal in determining the racial and ethnic profile of the United States in the future (p. 436). Indeed, many immigration researchers are turning their attention to this cohort of second-generation immigrants precisely because their identity development as a group is likely to affect how American schools, workplaces, and social institutions adapt to a multiracial, multiethnic society (Kibria, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997).

The U.S. Department of Education (2008) reports that the percentage of American college students of color has increased from 15% in 1976, to 31% in 2005. This increase is due in large part to the growing Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander population in this country, but enrollments among all underrepresented groups is on the rise. The sheer increase in numbers of these students, combined with reduced stigma about accessing mental health services, suggests that more first generation

immigrants and their children will seek the help of a mental health professional at some point in their lives. Roysircar-Sodowsky and Frey (2003) also argue that the values conflicts between the first and second generation warrant attention from psychological researchers. They indicate that improving our understanding of how the second generation copes with values conflicts and the acculturation process would allow practitioners to improve the counseling process for second-generation children.

The question then becomes whether mental health professionals are prepared to work with these populations. While the field of counseling psychology has made great strides in understanding the mental health concerns of specific ethnic populations, the literature review in Chapter 2 will reveal that relatively little research has been conducted on the phenomenon of bicultural identity. That is, we know little about how an immigrant begins to develop an identity that integrates and honors the two cultures to which he or she belongs. Even less is known about how second-generation immigrants negotiate multiple ethnic and cultural identities.

#### *Rationale for the Study*

The rationale for this study is based in part on the results of a pilot study conducted by this researcher in 2001 in which four women of South Asian descent were interviewed to explore the nature of their bicultural experiences. The analysis of the interview data revealed that the path toward forging a bicultural identity for these women was fraught with conflict. Among the primary incidents that provoked an examination of their bicultural identity were those in which the participants were

required to be what Anne Fadiman (1998) calls “cultural brokers.” From the time they were able to understand that their parents were different than their White peers’, these four women indicated that they were expected to explain how and why their parents’ values and beliefs were so different from the mainstream. It seems that this process of trying to explain and, at times, justify their home culture left the women feeling as though they must choose their allegiance to either their South Asian or Western identities. In her “Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People,” Maria P. P. Root states that racially mixed people have the right “Not to be responsible for people’s discomfort with my racial ambiguity” (Root, 1996). The women in this pilot study seemed to assume responsibility for others’ discomfort with their *cultural* ambiguity. Without a bill of rights absolving them of this responsibility, the role of cultural broker became a burden when these women attempted to forge their own identities.

The participants in this 2001 study all seemed to agree that the paucity of second-generation South Asian female role models in popular culture made it difficult for them to understand how to forge a new, truly bicultural identity. Although the women all agreed that integrating meaningful aspects of their South Asian and Western identities was an ideal they aspired to achieve, they were universally unsure of what this integrated identity would “look like.”

### *Research Questions*

The limited but important work on bicultural identity integration and cultural frame switching (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, et al., 2002; J.

Haritatos & Benet-Martinez, 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000) helps us understand how individuals who believe their cultures are incompatible and those who believe they are compatible behave. Still, no studies illuminate how helpers might facilitate the *process* of integrating multiple cultural identities, moving an individual from one end of the incompatible-compatible continuum to the other. This is especially critical given the consistent evidence that second-generation immigrants who are able to integrate and view their identities as compatible fare better in terms of their self-esteem and well-being. This study, then, aims to focus on this process by way of illuminating the role of critical incidents in second-generation South Asian women's bicultural identity development.

The choice to focus on critical incidents developed after the researcher was exposed to the October 1988 issue of the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, edited by Skovholt and McCarthy (1988). In this issue, 24 counselors and therapists described life experiences that significantly impacted their practice, and Skovholt and McCarthy suggest that these events also tell a tale of counselor professional and personal development across the lifespan. In the introduction to this issue, Skovholt and McCarthy define "critical incidents" as "those events that stand out as significant markers in an individual's professional development" (p. 69). They also suggest that the process of developing a professional identity is intricately tied to one's personal experiences. After reviewing the results of the 2001 pilot study conducted by the researcher, the significance of critical incidents in the development of a *bicultural* identity also seemed evident. In the pilot study, each participant described specific

events that prompted them to think more deeply about their relationships with their South Asian heritage. It made sense, then, that critical incidents might play a role in facilitating the integration of one's South Asian and American identities. That is, a "significant life event" prompted the participants to re-examine their identity in a new way. For Skovholt and McCarthy, a "critical incident" included those events that impacted one's professional development. In this study, an event was considered critical if it impacted one's *personal* identity development.

The primary questions that will be explored in this study are: What are the critical incidents that impact second-generation South Asian women's understanding of their bicultural identity? How do second-generation South Asian women experience these incidents (i.e., what are some common affective responses to these incidents)? How do second-generation South Asian women interpret or make meaning of these incidents? What, if any critical incidents facilitate the positive integration of second-generation South Asian women's identities? It is the researcher's hope that exploring possible answers to these questions will clarify how second-generation South Asian women can come to integrate their dual identities.

#### *Definition of Terms*

A few terms used in this paper warrant special clarification. First, the term "South Asia" refers to the following countries: Bangladesh, British Indian Ocean Territory, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. The United Nations also considers Afghanistan and Iran a part of "Southern Asia." Also, the term

“majority culture” refers here to people of primarily European descent. The term “White” is also used synonymously with “majority culture.”

The term “first-generation immigrant” refers to the group of people who were not born in North America but immigrated after they reached adulthood (age 25 and older). In this study, this term generally refers to the participants’ parents, their parents’ immigrant peers, and their first-degree relatives who may or may not continue to live in their parents’ homeland. The term “second-generation” refers to the children of the first-generation of immigrants. Although this population typically refers to children who were born in North America, the literature also includes children who immigrated with their parents prior to adolescence (age 12 and younger) (Inman, 2006; Portes, 2004; Rumbaut, 2005). The assumption is that children who experience adolescence outside their natal community will likely adopt and adapt to their new environment with a trajectory similar to their North American-born peers.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to summarize the theory and research on bicultural identity development for second-generation immigrants. That is, what does the research on this population tell us about how second-generation immigrants learn to bridge the gap between their ancestral culture and the majority culture? This review will first identify why distinguishing the experience of first- and second-generation immigrants has emerged as a relevant issue in the research. Next, the review will summarize relevant literature on 1) acculturation and 2) ethnic and/or racial identity development in second-generation immigrants. Finally, the review will summarize the small body of research that focuses on the unique process of bicultural identity development.

#### *Importance of understanding the effect of generational status*

Until recently, researchers in the fields of personality and identity development have largely relied on studies of White, male populations to draw conclusions about how one develops a sense of self. As clinicians and researchers in pluralistic cultures can attest, applying knowledge gained from a limited sample will, at best, lead to bias and, at worst, racism in designing and implementing treatment protocols for clients from non-Western, non-White cultures (D. W. Sue, 2005; S. Sue, 1999). One can argue that similar risks arise when working with immigrants of different generations. Current research on different ethnic populations has broadened our understanding of differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and we have benefited from the models of ethnic identity development that have

sprung from this research (D. Sue, Sue, Root, Nishio, & Bilmes, 1993). Although clinicians are better prepared to work with multicultural populations, we continue to run the risk of introducing bias and unintentional prejudice when we generalize research findings on one generation of immigrants to subsequent generations. In short, it is not clear whether first- and second-generation immigrants experience similar trajectories in personality and identity formation. Indeed, several researchers have sounded the call to specifically examine generational differences in the three critical research domains of acculturation, ethnic identity, and acculturative stress (Ghuman, 2005; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Frey, 2003; Roysircar-Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000; Rumbaut, 2005; Tsai & Chentsova-Dutton, 2002). The following three empirical studies support the call to better understand the differences between immigrant generations.

Iwamasa (1996) empirically demonstrated that a difference between foreign- and U.S.-born individuals indeed exists. She conducted a study of 87 Asian American undergraduates at a large Midwestern university and used an Asian American self-identity acculturation scale to test whether differences existed between genders and foreign- vs. U.S.-born participants. Iwamasa found no gender differences in acculturation levels, but did find significant differences between first- and second-generation immigrants in level of acculturation. This early study confirmed that second-generation students differed from their peers in their acculturation process.

Meunier (1998) also observed differences between first- and second-generation Asian clients of an American university counseling center. The study examined differences within a group of 50 Asian students, comprised of both first- and second-generation immigrants. This group was subdivided into South Asian and “other Asian” populations, and each ethnic group was also compared to a sample of 50 White students (also clients of the counseling center). Data was collected by randomly sampling demographic, diagnostic, and nine treatment variables obtained from clinical records from one academic year. The independent variables were ethnicity and immigrant generation, and the data was analyzed using chi square, analysis of variance, and discriminant function tests. Meunier found greater statistically significant within group differences between international (i.e., first-generation) and second-generation South Asian students. Second-generation students were more likely to report greater distress on diagnostic measures than their first-generation peers. These measures included concerns about identity, autonomy, academic performance, perfectionism, procrastination, and physical health problems. Meunier hypothesized that first-generation South Asian students were more likely to minimize their levels of distress and somaticize their concerns than their second-generation peers. The clinical sample limits the generalizability of this study, but it provides evidence that a difference between the clinical presentations of first- and second-generation South Asian students may exist.

Inman, Ladany, Constantine, and Morano (2001) also demonstrated differences between first- and second-generation immigrants through the

development and validation of their Cultural Values Conflict Scale (CVCS) for South Asian women in the United States. The items on the measure focused on the process of acculturation for South Asian women and were designed to illuminate the relationship between the participants' South Asian and White cultures and values. The researchers administered the CVCS to 319 South Asian women (147 first-generation and 172 second-generation). Factor analysis of the items on the CVCS supported a two-factor model of cultural value conflict, those factors being intimate relations and sex role expectations. They demonstrated internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the instrument. They also observed a positive relationship between the CVCS and measure of anxiety and difficulty with cultural adjustment in both first- and second-generation South Asian women. A multivariate analysis of variance demonstrated a main effect of level of generation on the Intimate Relations (IR) and Sex Role Expectations (SRE) subscales, and a univariate analysis showed significance on the SRE subscale. That is, the results suggest that the second-generation women were experiencing greater sex-role conflicts than their first-generation peers. The authors noted that the two factors accounted for only 35.2% of the variance, therefore other factors not accounted for in the design (e.g., social desirability) are likely to contribute to values conflicts for this population. They also recognized that their upper middle class, highly educated sample limits generalizability.

These three studies provide evidence that the children of immigrants are experiencing an acculturation and identity development process that is unique to

their parents' or first-generation peers' experiences. Questions remain, however, as to the nature of this difference. Farver, Narang and Bhadha (2002) note that it is important to distinguish the acculturation process from the process of identity formation. While acculturation is generally associated with behaviors, ethnic identity is associated with values and attitudes. In the first-generation, behaviors have been found to change more rapidly than attitudes and values (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002; Moyerman & Forman, 1992), but it is not clear whether this is true in the second-generation. I will first focus on the literature on acculturation in the second-generation.

*Studies of second-generation acculturation experiences*

“Acculturation” in immigrant populations has come to be defined in terms of how an individual negotiates the border between one’s home and host cultures (Phinney, 1996). That is, acculturation occurs as one learns behaviors to adapt to the host culture while also maintaining behaviors appropriate for his or her ancestral culture. The model of acculturation proposed by Berry (1990, 2005a; Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988) suggests that immigrants learn to relate to their host cultures in four different ways: (a) they may assimilate and identify solely with the host culture; (b) they may marginalize themselves from both their ancestral and host cultures, (c) they may separate and identify solely with other immigrants from their ancestral culture and reject the host culture, or (d) they may selectively integrate elements of their ancestral and host cultures. This theory, however, was developed primarily with first-generation immigrants in mind. Roysircar (2003) notes that the second-

generation of immigrants may face conflict between maintaining “ethnic distinctiveness” and the desire to seek contact with people from other ethnic groups and the dominant culture.

In an exploratory study of Asian Indian immigrant families in the United States, Farver, Bhadha, and Narang (2002) set out to better understand how family factors contribute to adolescents’ acculturation style and psychological well-being. They used measures of self-esteem and academic performance to determine the psychological functioning of 85 American-born Asian Indian adolescents (ages 14-19 years). In addition, the adolescent participants completed an ethnic self-perception profile, and their acculturation styles (based on Berry’s model) were assessed. They also distributed questionnaires to one of the children’s parents (ages 36-65 years) to determine family demographics, ethnic self-identification, level of acculturation, and religiosity. Correlations between the dependent variables were determined using chi-square tests.

Results indicated that adolescents’ and parents’ religiosity scores were positively correlated. The family’s socio-economic status (SES) was positively correlated with the adolescents’ GPAs and four of the eight adolescent self-perception profile subscales. SES was negatively correlated, however, with parents’ religiosity. Chi-square tests also revealed that the female adolescents were more likely to identify as marginalized, where the males reported having a more integrated acculturation style. Interestingly, they found no significant relationship between acculturation and ethnic self-identification among the adolescents. They did find,

however, that the adolescents were more likely to identify as “Indian-American,” where their parents’ self-identification was linked to their religion. A multivariate analysis of variance test (MANOVA) for the families’ SES, religiosity scores, and parents’ years of residence in America revealed that adolescents who had assimilated or integrated acculturation styles were likely to be from families from higher SES groups, while adolescents with a separated acculturation style had higher religiosity scores than the other three acculturation style groups. The researchers indicated that low cell sizes prevented them from testing the interaction between parents’ and adolescents’ acculturation styles.

The authors’ hypothesis that acculturation style in the second-generation participants was related to psychological adjustment was confirmed. They concluded that “those who are bicultural tend to fare better” (Farver, Bhadha, et al., 2002). Again, this is consistent with findings in first-generation immigrants. The authors’ hypothesis that the adolescents’ ethnic self-identification would be associated with their acculturation style was not supported. They note that none of their participants, adolescents or parents, identified as solely “American,” and many adolescents’ strongly embraced their Indian ancestry. While this was expected of the Asian Indian parents, the authors admitted that they expected that the second-generation would identify more strongly as Americans based on the fact that they were born and raised in the United States. Although these authors were surprised by this result, it may reflect the ambiguity and multiple allegiances the second-generation faces as it forges its complex identity. Robinson (2005) notes that in England, second-

generation Indians who perceive themselves to be bicultural or “hyphenated” do not necessarily report an inherent conflict between their two identities. She also notes that due to racial tensions and ethnic discrimination, second-generation adolescents may embrace their ancestral identities as a protective factor as an act of solidarity with other Indians.

Farver, Narang and Bhadha (2002) pursued their interest in how parents’ acculturation styles might impact their children’s acculturation style, and the relationship between family conflict and acculturation. They surveyed 180 Asian Indian adolescents and their parents who were currently living in the Los Angeles area. The participants were recruited from Indian student clubs at local universities, religious organizations, and high schools with high populations of Asian Indian students. They note that in spite of their attempts to balance gender across the sample, more mothers completed the dependent measure than fathers. The authors collected information on demographics, social class, GPA, and self-identification. They also assessed level of ethnic identity, acculturation style, and level of family conflict for both the parents and adolescents. The adolescents’ level of anxiety and global self-esteem were also measured.

The authors examined whether an “acculturation gap” existed between generations by using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the adolescents’ and parents’ acculturation styles and reports of family conflict. Not surprising, adolescents reported higher self-esteem, less anxiety, and less family conflict when there was no acculturation gap detected (i.e., the parents and children had a similar

acculturation style). The authors suggest that the second generation's relationship with their ethnic identity was directly related to how the first generation related to their ancestral and host cultures.

Valentine (2001) examined the link between self-esteem, cultural identity, and acculturation in an Hispanic community. 418 participants were recruited from four higher education institutions in the southern and southwestern United States. They completed a questionnaire designed to assess social, health-related, and employment-based attitudes and beliefs. Self-esteem, acculturation, and cultural identity were also assessed. Because English levels varied, a bilingual survey administrator was available upon request. The author hypothesized that Hispanic acculturation is positively related to generation status and negatively related to Hispanic cultural identity.

Hierarchical linear regression revealed that self-esteem ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ) and generation status ( $r = .65, p < .01$ ) were positively correlated with acculturation. According to the author, this result implies that increased acculturation was associated with greater confidence and higher generation level. Cultural identity was negatively related to acculturation ( $r = -.29, p < .01$ ), implying that the more acculturated the individual, the less he/she identifies with the ancestral culture.

Based on this study, the author concluded that subsequent generations of Hispanic immigrants may experience a "dilution" of their ethnic identity in order to increase their connectedness to American culture. In other words, Hispanics may face a trade-off between remaining true to their ancestral culture and embracing

mainstream American culture. This finding seems consistent with other ethnic populations' conflict between choosing between their ancestral culture and the dominant culture. That said, Valentine's conclusion that greater acculturation leads to weaker identification with the ancestral culture seems inconsistent with other acculturation studies on the second generation. It is noteworthy that Valentine used an acculturation measure that was designed for use with an Hispanic population, not one based on Berry's taxonomy. It is possible, therefore, that high acculturation on the scale used by the author does not correspond with Berry's "integrated" acculturation style. If so, this may explain why greater acculturation was associated with weaker connections with the ancestral culture in Valentine's study.

A major contribution to the literature on the acculturation process of second-generation immigrants is the result of the longitudinal study co-directed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001). The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) was designed to illuminate the adaptation and acculturation process for second-generation immigrants. To participate in the study, participants were required to be born in the United States or have lived in the U.S. for at least five years, and they were required to have at least one foreign-born parent. A total of 5,262 eighth and ninth grade students from 49 schools in the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale areas of Florida and San Diego, California were first surveyed 1992 to obtain baseline demographic information on their language use, ethnic identity, and academic attainment. The participants represented 77 nations, although the sample was skewed toward immigrant populations heavily represented in the two areas. In Miami, immigrants

are mainly from the Caribbean, specifically Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Central America, Colombians, Venezuelans, and Brazil. In San Diego, migrants from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala dominate the immigrant population. San Diego is also a hub for Asian immigrants, especially Filipinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians, and also Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. The sample was evenly divided by sex, year in school (eighth or ninth grade), and birth status (U.S.-born vs. foreign-born).

The first follow-up surveys were given to these students three years later as the first of the students were about to graduate from high school. The purpose of the follow-up survey was to identify critical outcomes of cultural adaptation as they evolved throughout the adolescent years, namely language knowledge and preference, ethnic identity, self-esteem, and academic attainment. The authors were able to survey 4,288 (81.5%) of the original sample in the follow-up study. The researchers note that because the follow-up sample was comprised mostly of students who did not drop out of high school, there was some overrepresentation of higher socioeconomic status families at the three-year follow-up. In addition to surveying the students, data was collected from a random sample of the students' foreign-born parents. Most of these data were gathered through questionnaires that were translated into six different languages and face-to-face interviews. With these data, the researchers were able to correlate results between the students' and parents' responses and draw several conclusions.

Portes and Rumbaut reported the following observations based on their first survey: They noted that the vast majority of the second-generation immigrants represented in their sample had some knowledge of a non-English language, generally reporting high proficiency in their mother-tongues. They also noted that the educational expectations of the second-generation students were very high; most expected to attend and graduate from college. About two-thirds of these children lived in intact families (exceptions were Haitians and other West Indies immigrant students). They also reported that the majority of students reported feeling discriminated against by white student peers, teachers, and neighbors, but two-thirds were optimistic that attaining a high level of education would protect them from future discrimination.

After collecting data in their second survey, the authors developed a theory that guided their analysis. They hypothesized that today's second-generation is undergoing a process of *segmented assimilation* in which outcomes for second-generation immigrants vary significantly across immigrant groups. Portes and Rumbaut came to this hypothesis after noticing that some of the second-generation students continued to excel and achieve their academic goals, while others fell behind. The notable exceptions to the general pattern of success were the children of Mexican, Haitian, and West Indian immigrants.

Portes and Rumbaut first point to three key background factors that play a role in the success or failure of the second generation. First, how the first generation of a specific immigrant group is incorporated into the majority culture significantly

impacts the trajectory of subsequent generations. They note that the U.S. government has taken three basic stances toward immigration in the past fifty years: exclusion, passive acceptance, or active encouragement. For immigrant groups who are excluded (so-called “illegal” immigrants), the government denies these individuals basic rights and benefits. Immigrants who are passively accepted include refugee populations. Finally, immigrants may be actively recruited to come to the United States to fill gaps in supply of professional and technical workers. It is clear that the path that leads an immigrant from his or her home country to the United States can significantly impact the education and occupational skills he or she brings to the table. Portes and Rumbaut identify this human capital as a second key background factor that ultimately affects the second generation. Finally, the authors note that the structure and composition of the immigrant family can have a significant impact on outcomes, specifically the presence of two biological parents.

Based on the combination of background factors they identified, Portes and Rumbaut predicted that they would see three types of intergenerational patterns of acculturation. First, *dissonant acculturation* would occur when children’s mastery of the English language and American value system and simultaneous loss of their ancestral culture forces a role reversal between parents and children. That is, second-generation children experience dissonance when their parents rely on them for help in navigating the host culture. *Consonant acculturation* describes the opposite process. In this case, learning the host culture and letting go of the ancestral culture happens at a similar pace across generations. Portes and Rumbaut note that this

situation is more likely to occur when the first-generation parents' level of education and skills can match their children's evolution. The third pattern the authors describe is *selective acculturation* in which learning the new culture's language and values is modulated and slowed down by a co-ethnic community that allows for partial retention of the ancestral language and norms.

Portes and Rumbaut hypothesized different outcomes for the second generation based on the acculturation style they experienced. For example, individuals who experienced dissonant acculturation were expected to experience downward assimilation. In these cases, the second-generation students would assimilate to American culture, but to a lower socioeconomic class and downwardly mobile segment of the demographic. Individuals who experienced consonant acculturation would experience upward assimilation, although they were likely to experience some setbacks due to discrimination. Finally, those second-generation students who experienced selective acculturation would experience upward assimilation combined with a bicultural identity.

The findings of their longitudinal study supported Portes and Rumbaut's hypotheses. They concluded that selective acculturation is more likely to produce second-generation immigrants who are fluently bilingual, have higher self-esteem, and achieve their higher education and occupational goals:

Children who learn the language and culture of their new country without losing those of the old have a much better understanding of their place in the world. They need not clash with their parents as often or feel embarrassed by

them because they are able to bridge the gap across generations and value their elders' traditions and goals. (p.274)

Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller (2005) reported the results of the CILS-III, a third follow-up study conducted in 2001 and 2003. The original respondents had now reached an average age of 24 and were living in 30 different states throughout the U.S. and military bases overseas. They retrieved data from 84 percent of the original sample, and they also conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with 55 of the original respondents who were living in the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale area. They found that the children of Mexican immigrants and Laotian and Cambodian refugees suffered the greatest economic and educational disadvantages. They reported that although they were able to surpass their parents' economic and educational levels, they were not able to catch up their second-generation peers from other immigrant backgrounds.

The authors noted an interesting pattern in English language acquisition and transmission of one's ancestral language in the second generation. With the exception of West Indian and Filipino immigrants who preferred to raise their children in a monolingual environment, 68 percent of California and 82 percent of Miami/Ft. Lauderdale respondents preferred to raise their children in a bilingual home. The authors note that this result is not surprising given that English is the official language in the West Indies and the Philippines, and that they were probably raised as monolinguals themselves. (Portes, et al., 2005) concluded that the second-

generation immigrants in this sample understand the benefits of bilingualism as a means of transmitting their culture across generations.

The authors also reported that the income of the second-generation respondents varied across immigrant groups. They found that the California respondents' family incomes were lower on average than their Florida counterparts. They also found that Filipino Americans were the "richest" of the second-generation immigrants, followed by Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans. Again, Mexican, Laotian, and Cambodian Americans fell behind their second generation peers on earned income.

The results of the CILS-III also revealed patterns in childbearing for the second-generation. Three percent of the Cuban Americans and none of the Chinese American respondents had children of their own when the survey was conducted. Ten percent of the Vietnamese Americans, 15 percent of Colombian Americans and Filipinos, and 25 percent of Haitians, however, had children at the time of the survey. Mexican Americans had the largest percentage—41 percent—of respondents with children. The authors note that the second-generation immigrants who had the lowest educational achievement were also the most heavily burdened by the need to provide financially for young children.

Finally, the authors report statistics on incarceration rates of the second-generation respondents of the CILS-III. Zero percent of the original Chinese American respondents were incarcerated, compared to 11 percent of Mexican Americans. They noted that Laotian and Cambodian Americans in the study were not

incarcerated at high rates, suggesting that the poverty they experienced did not necessarily predict confrontations with the legal system.

Overall, the depth and breadth of the CILS offers important descriptive data of the second-generation American experience. Portes et al. concluded that the marked differences they observed across ethnic groups supported their theory of segmented assimilation. First-generation parents who had the human capital, community and government support, and family structure to promote success were more likely to produce a second generation who could also succeed. The authors noted, however, that although the overall trend was the converse for second-generation immigrants who did not experience as much educational and economic success, there were many exceptions to this pattern. Their theory of segmented assimilation explained this phenomenon, in part, by suggesting that how the first-generation helped their children overcome external obstacles to success was key in determining their well-being.

This study is clearly important in that it is the first longitudinal research on second-generation immigrants. The researchers took care to sample a cross-section of second-generation immigrants, and the descriptive data and resulting theory of how the second generation acculturates offers a strong framework for understanding the potential benefits and challenges of being the child of an immigrant. The study is limited, however, in that it focused on populations with similar immigration histories who were living in two distinct communities (Miami and Los Angeles) in the United States. Their conclusions, therefore, may not be applicable to other

immigrant populations whose level of education prior to arriving in the United States was higher than the populations they studied. Also, immigrants to areas of the country without an established community might also have a unique experience that Portes and Rumbaut did not observe.

*Studies of the identity development of second-generation immigrants*

A chief task of adolescence is the search for and development of one's identity (Marcia, 1966; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Where the process of acculturation is associated with learning and adopting *behaviors*, forming an identity involves a process of clarifying one's *values and beliefs*. This is undoubtedly a tricky process for many, but individuals straddling two cultures may feel compelled to choose the values and beliefs of one culture over another; integrating their two cultures' values may not be feasible or condoned by either the majority or ancestral cultures. The literature specifically on the identity development of second-generation immigrants is thin, but a few key studies offer some insight into how the attitudes and values of this population evolve.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) describe how the tensions surrounding the Proposition 187 debate in California's 1994 election proved to be a critical incident in many second-generation American's identity formation, and they illustrate how a threat to an ethnic group's well-being can deepen all of its members' ethnic identity. The legislation proposed that nondocumented immigrants and their children be denied social and nonemergency healthcare services. Mexican immigrant families were likely to suffer the deepest consequences of this legislation. Portes and

Rumbaut also note that second-generation Americans across ethnic groups (even those with low numbers of individuals who would be affected by the legislation) rallied against Proposition 187, claiming a sense of solidarity with their immigrant peers. Proposition 187 passed, receiving 59% of the state's votes, but the experience of fighting against this legislation proved to strengthen the second-generation's ties to their immigrant roots. Portes and Rumbaut describe how one individual's "...ethnic self-identity was 'thickened' in the process, a sense of belonging made more salient than ever as she came to define who she was and where she came from in opposition to who and what she was not" (p. 148).

Indeed, the theme of negative experiences as critical incidents in the process of forming one's cultural identity is not uncommon. Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, and Torino (2007) recently conducted a study on the impact of racial "microaggressions," or commonplace verbal, behavioral, and environmental aggressions that have a potentially harmful impact on Asian Americans. Although the authors did not specifically incorporate generational status into the design of this study, each of the ten participants was a second-generation Asian American, born and raised in the United States. The study used a qualitative, focus group methodology to identify microaggressions that occurred in the participants' lives, describe their impact, and to identify how the participants' coped with these experiences. Researchers used a semistructured interview protocol and analyzed transcripts using a modified consensual qualitative research (CQR) (Hill, et al., 2005) procedure. In this case, the unit of study was a focus group rather than an

individual. Nine themes were identified: (a) Alien in Own Land, (b) Ascription of Intelligence, (c) Denial of Racial Reality, (d) Exoticization of Asian American Women, (e) Invalidation of Interethnic Differences, (f) Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles, (g) Second Class Citizenship, (h) Invisibility, and (i) Undeveloped Incidents/Responses.

The authors report that the overarching conclusion of this study is that microaggressions are not minimally harmful. They note that the participants' consistently reported feeling invalidated and frustrated, and that even seemingly innocuous incidents in which their culture or heritage was belittled left them feeling invisible. While the methodology used here does not allow one to make generalizations, this study at least suggests that racial microaggressions may significantly impact the development of a second-generation immigrant's identity and self-concept.

For many second-generation immigrants, the issue of "being American" is also a source of confusion and contradiction. Devos and Banaji (2005) demonstrated that African and Asian Americans are less likely to be associated with the term "American" as their White counterparts. They concluded, therefore, that to be American is essentially equivalent to being White. It follows, then, that non-White immigrants of any generation might have reservations about identifying themselves as American. Tsai, Ying, and Lee (2000) observed such differences between the self-concepts and perceived identities of first- and second-generation Chinese immigrants. The authors examined how "being Chinese" and "being American"

varied across the generations. They hypothesized that being Chinese and being American would be uncorrelated constructs for the American-born Chinese (ABC), but negatively correlated for the first-generation immigrant populations. They also hypothesized that for more recent immigrants from China, being Chinese would be based on their level of engagement in both American and Chinese cultures. Being American, on the other hand, would be based solely on engagement in American culture. They also hypothesized that for early immigrants, the opposite would be true. That is, being Chinese would be influenced solely by their engagement in Chinese culture, and being American would be based on their engagement in both Chinese and American cultures. Finally, the authors hypothesized that the bases for being Chinese and being American would vary across immigrant groups. For example, for second-generation Chinese being Chinese would be based more on feelings of pride in the Chinese culture (i.e., attitudes and beliefs), where being American would be based upon participation in American activities (i.e., behaviors). Likewise, being American would be based on pride in American culture for the first-generation, but being Chinese would be based on participation in Chinese activities.

The authors administered a self-designed measure of cultural orientation, the General Ethnicity Questionnaire (GEQ), to 122 ABC immigrants, 119 Chinese immigrants who arrived in the United States at or before age 12, and 112 Chinese immigrants who arrived after age 12. The authors note that the GEQ differs from other measures of cultural orientation in that it was designed to measure both unidimensional and bidimensional models of acculturation (most measure one or the

other). To test their hypotheses, the authors calculated Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients for the participants' ratings of how Chinese and how American they were. The results were consistent with the authors' hypotheses: for ABC, being Chinese and being American were not correlated, and they were negatively correlated for recent and early first-generation immigrants. That is, being American and being Chinese were independent constructs for ABC. For first-generation immigrants, the more Chinese they were, the less American they were. No significant differences were found between the two first-generation immigrant groups.

The authors also conducted stepwise multiple regression analyses to determine whether being Chinese and being American were based on American cultural domains, Chinese cultural domains, or a combination of the two. Again, the results supported their hypotheses. For ABC, only Chinese cultural domains predicted being Chinese, and only American cultural domains predicted being American. For both immigrant groups, both American and Chinese cultural domains predicted levels of being Chinese and being American.

The authors conclude that one's cultural orientation and self-concept is influenced by generational status for Chinese Americans. That is, ABC and Chinese-born Americans attach different meanings to "being American." The authors suggest that for Chinese-born Americans, being American and participating in American activities may become a survival strategy. First-generation Chinese may behave like Americans in order to successfully acculturate, but American values and attitudes

have not been integrated into their self-concepts. They also suggest that exposure increases, so do feelings of being American.

While this study offers important insights into the factors that influence immigrant identity across generation, the authors focused most of their discussion on first-generation immigrants. Their results suggest that for second-generation Chinese, the two identities (Chinese and American) are more polarized than for first-generation immigrants. This may be connected to the conclusions of Devos and Banaji. That is, for second-generation Chinese, being American may be seen as an implicit rejection of their Chinese values and acceptance of White majority values. With their self-concepts more firmly rooted in Chinese culture, the first-generation may not feel similarly threatened by the term “American.” The common derogatory term “banana” to describe (primarily second-generation) Asian Americans who are “Yellow on the outside, but White on the inside” demonstrates the conflict some face in trying to integrate their identities.

Several studies support the findings of Tsai, et al. that ethnic identity in the second generation is developed through participation in ethnic activities. In a sociological case study of a Hindu Student Council (HSC) chapter at a Californian University, Kurien (2005) observed that religious institutions can play a critical role in second-generation South Asians’ identity development. She notes that for some immigrants, “religious institutions often become the means to create community and to transmit homeland culture and values to children and thus are critical sites shaping the identity construction processes of immigrants and their children” (p. 438). She

also notes that second-generation immigrants who feel racially marginalized may turn to radical forms of religion, a form of “reactive ethnicization” as described by Portes and Rumbaut (2001). Reactive ethnicity occurs when the home culture gains a heightened significance as a self-defense mechanism against discrimination. Ibrahim, Ohnishi, and Sandhu (1997) described this phenomenon in terms of returning to earlier stage racial identity development, for example, the Resistance and Immersion stage described by Sue (1989). In either form, this phenomenon may explain the surge of second-generation immigrant recruitment into fundamentalist Islamic organizations after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Stroink, 2007). Kurien found that within the HSC she studied, a strong rift had developed between a pro-Hindu faction and a more moderate group of students. She observed that the pro-Hindu faction devolved into a “platform for anti-Muslim hate speech and threats...” (p. 464). Kurien expresses her concern that the reactive ethnicization demonstrated in this population could foreshadow a disturbing trend in how second-generation South Asians come to internalize their ethnic identity.

Maira (1998) also observed how ethnic identity develops in second-generation South Asians in New York City by conducting intensive interviews with twenty-four second-generation Indian American college students and becoming a participant-observer in the Indian party subculture that emerged in New York in the 1990s. She observed that the second-generation students created a hierarchy of ethnic identity authenticity in which some were labeled as “authentically Indian,” where others were accused of a more hybridized, or “Americanized” identity. She

observed that the second-generation women embodied ethnic boundaries between “pure” and “hybridized” behavior through their sexual practices. That is, the perception of sexual promiscuity or activity forced a woman down the ladder from an “authentic” to “diluted” Indian identity. She also noted, however, that the popular Indian-American remix music culture offered a means of exploring a hybrid space in which the second-generation could define a new identity. Rather than viewing Indian remix dance music as a diluted version of Indian culture, it could be interpreted to be a profoundly creative approach to redefining second-generation Indian identity and integrating it into existing American popular culture (Maira, 1995).

Stroink (2006) also observed that identity conflict in the second-generation was strongly connected to a sense of ethnic “authenticity.” Rather than focusing on conflicts of values and expectations between cultures, Stroink studied this conflict through the lens of Social Identity Theory and defined bicultural conflict as a confusion of ingroup identity. “Identity conflict” was operationalized as the degree of difference one perceived as a member of the two cultures. That is, identity conflict occurs when one believes that he or she cannot fully embrace two cultures at once. Stroink conducted three studies of second-generation Chinese-Canadian immigrants to examine the relationship between bicultural identity conflict, well-being, and cultural identification. In all three studies suggested that bicultural conflict is more accurately conceptualized as a conflict of identity and not a confusion of norms and values. The author found that bicultural identity conflict predicted specific aspects of well-being and identification, and childhood experiences, language ability, and

personality characteristics all influenced the magnitude of this conflict. Stroink's findings suggest that the ability, or inability, to authentically identify with either the ancestral or majority cultures is directly linked to bicultural identity conflict.

Like Maira, Inman (2006) observed an intersection between culture and gender in her study of the ethnic identity development of first- and second-generation South Asian women. Inman administered the Cultural Values Conflict Scale (CVCS), the Person of Color (POC) Racial Identity Attitudes Scale, and the Internal and External Ethnic Identity Scale to 193 first- and second-generation South Asian women. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to study the effects of the independent variables of ethnic identity (internal or external), and racial identity status (conformity, dissonance, resistance, and awareness) on cultural value conflict in intimate relations (IR) and sex-role expectations (SRE), controlling for the effects of education and religious level. The results revealed that a woman's level of religiosity better predicted conflict in intimate relations for the second-generation participants than the first-generation women. Results also suggested that internal identity (one's pride and attachment to their Indian ethnic group) and external identity (ethnic behaviors and practices) both predicted intimate relations conflict for the second-generation, while internal ethnic identity alone predicted conflict for the first-generation. Finally, higher racial identity dissonance scores predicted greater conflict in sex-role expectations for the second-generation alone.

Inman explains some of these differences between the generations by the fact that second-generation South Asian women are growing up in a more racially

conscious environment. That is, second-generation women might be more likely to have experienced oppression on a racial rather than ethnic level. Inman also proposes that second-generation women might more acutely feel the tension between the sex-role expectations of the South Asian and mainstream communities in their dating relationships than the first-generation. Inman acknowledges that the small sample size makes it difficult to draw broad conclusions about these results. It would also be interesting to observe whether the choice of an Indian or non-Indian partner affects the magnitude of values conflict.

Inman, Howard, Beaumont, and Walker (2007) continued to study identity development in the second-generation by interviewing first-generation parents about how they promoted a sense of ethnic identity in their children. Through a process of consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology (Hill, et al., 2005), the data revealed that ethnic identity was retained through a system of engaging in cultural celebrations, emphasizing the importance of family ties and tradition, and actively rejecting Western values that were in conflict with South Asian values. A significant result of this study, however, contradicts the commonly held belief of many second-generation South Asians that their parents are unaware of or choose to minimize their children's bicultural struggle. Rather, the parents revealed that not only were they aware of their children's struggles, but they questioned whether placing the same restrictions that they had experienced "back home" was causing their children to experience excessive conflict in adapting to American culture. Also, the parents in this study indicated that adopting a more authoritative parenting style (rather than the

authoritarian style most of them experienced as children) allowed them to enjoy deeper connections with their children. Inman, et al. acknowledged that this was a small sample of Asian Indians who had recently immigrated, therefore their views and experiences may not necessarily reflect those of previous generations of immigrants. The authors also acknowledge that CQR might not have been the best methodology for analyzing the interdependent interview data of parenting couples. Still, this study seems an important step in understanding the role first-generation parents play in helping their children develop an ethnic identity.

*Studies of bicultural identity development of second-generation immigrants*

In reviewing the acculturation and identity development literature, it is evident that both the ancestral and majority cultures play a significant role in the identity of second-generation immigrants. A *bicultural* individual (second-generation or otherwise) has come to be defined as someone who has internalized two cultures in such a way that both cultures impact one's thoughts and feelings. This definition is noteworthy because it does not state that the bicultural individual's cultures necessarily have blended, nor does it state that one must lose or replace their ancestral identity in order to absorb a second culture.

Devos (2006) showed that some immigrants, both first- and second-generation, are able to successfully internalize two cultures. In this study, rather than utilizing self-reports to determine the extent to which the participants identified with their ancestral or host cultures, the Implicit Association Test (IAT) was used. The author notes that where self-reports are subject to the effects of social desirability,

the IAT is able to tap cognitive associations that are outside conscious control. Devos administered a series of paired word associations to assess the identification with American and Mexican cultures to 63 college undergraduates, 32 of whom were Mexican American and 31 European Americans. Of the Mexican Americans in this sample, 16% identified as first generation, 62% as second generation, and 22% as third generation (or more). All of the European-Americans indicated they were at least third generation immigrants. The author analyzed the variance of the response latencies for each group to determine the magnitude of identification with Mexican and American cultures. The data revealed that Mexican Americans strongly identified with both American and Mexican cultures. Moreover, the Mexican American participants did not display weaker attachments to American culture than their European-American peers.

Devos conducted an identical study with Asian Americans to determine whether another ethnic group would yield congruent findings. In the second study, 85 undergraduates participated, 51 Asian-Americans and 34 European-Americans. Of the Asian-American sample, 30% identified as first-generation, 58% as second-generation, and 12% identified as third generation or more. Again, all of the European-American participants identified themselves as at least third generation. Analysis of the data from the second study revealed similar results: the Asian-American students also identified with both Asian and American cultures. Devos concludes that the results of these two studies offers evidence that a bicultural identity that is not consciously controlled does exist in some immigrant individuals.

Unfortunately, the author did not compare generational groups in the analysis, so nuances in how the different generational groups might internalize their identities is not clear.

Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000) conducted a study on cultural frame-switching that also suggests that an unconscious process may occur as bicultural individuals move between different cultural frameworks. The authors demonstrated that Hong Kong and Chinese American bicultural individuals were able to independently activate East Asian and Western cultural meaning systems depending on their exposure to American or Chinese cultural primes. They found that biculturals who were exposed to American primes (e.g., pictures of an American flag, Superman, and Marilyn Monroe) typically made more internal attributions (a Western attribution style), while Chinese primes (e.g., pictures of a Chinese dragon, a Peking opera singer, and the Great Wall) prompted more external attributions (a typically East Asian attribution style). Hong et al. offer further evidence that bicultural individuals can develop competence in more than one culture, allowing them to switch cultural frameworks with relative ease. This supports the observation of LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1995) who, after reviewing the literature on bicultural identity, concluded that an individual can gain competence in one or more cultures without diluting one's ancestral identity. They also noted that such bicultural competence may protect an individual from the psychological distress of having to choose allegiances between cultures.

Haritatos and Benet-Martinez (2002) introduced the concept of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) to describe the continuum on which bicultural individuals organize their cultural identities. They noted that most of the research on the acculturation and identity development of immigrants fell into one of two camps: (a) immigrants either viewed their identities as “compatible,” or (b) they viewed them as “oppositional.” They theorized that those who viewed their identities as compatible would score high on a measure of BII, and those who viewed them as oppositional would score low on BII. Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee and Morris (2002) hypothesized that differences in BII would impact the process of cultural frame switching. They predicted that bicultural individuals who scored high on BII would engage in more fluid frame switching because they were not conflicted about their two cultural orientations. Those low on BII, however, would react to cultural cues in the opposite way due to chronic polarization of their two cultures.

They tested these hypothesis with a series of three studies of first-generation Chinese American undergraduates. Similar to the procedures used by Hong, et al. (2000), the participants in the first study (N=65) were exposed to East Asian or Western cultural primes. They were then asked to interpret an ambiguous social event and measured their attribution styles for this event. In the first study, this included viewing an animation of a single fish swimming in front of a group of fish. The participants were asked to interpret why the one fish was swimming separately using a 9-point Likert scale. Statements on the scale ranged from internal vs. external attributes (e.g., the fish is being influenced by some internal trait such as leadership

vs. the fish is being chased or teased by the other fish). BII was measured using a pilot version of the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale (BIIS-P). ANOVA of the 2 (cultural priming: American or Chinese) x 2 (bicultural type: low vs. high BII) design revealed nonsignificant main effects for cultural priming and bicultural type. The interaction between bicultural type and priming, however, was significant. Biculturals high on BII made stronger internal attributions in the American prime condition than in the Chinese prime condition. Those participants who were low on BII were prime-resistant in that they made weaker internal attributions in the American prime condition than the Chinese prime condition.

In the second study, the researchers addressed several of the limitations of the first study. Additional items and methods were used to measure attributions to address the limitations of using a single bipolar measure. Internal and external attributions were measured separately. The sample was also expanded to include high school students, and participants were recruited from outside the university setting (e.g., Chinese high schools and community centers). Other procedures were similar to Study 1. The dependent variables in this case were once again the participants' internal and external attributions of the fish animations, but attributions were measured using open- and closed-ended questions. MANOVA on the four dependent variables revealed no main effects for cultural priming or bicultural type. 2 x 2 ANOVAs of each of the four dependent variables revealed a significant interaction effect between bicultural type and cultural priming. As in the first study,

biculturals with high BII responded in a prime-consistent manner, and those with low BII behaved in a prime-resistant manner.

In Study 3, procedures were similar to the first two studies, but both high and low BII participants were shown culturally neutral primes. The authors predicted no differences in attributions due to the fact that neutral primes (e.g., primes of landscapes) should not impact perceptions of disparity between the cues. The sample in this study was 35 first-generation Chinese Americans recruited from a large West Coast university. As predicted, the high BII and low BII individuals exhibited no differences in their attributional behaviors.

The results of these three studies suggest that bicultural Chinese Americans do operate from separate American and Chinese schemas that are influenced by situational cues. The authors state that these findings support the “dynamic constructivist” perspective on culture which suggests that two cultural meaning systems can be integrated by an individual, and that these systems are dynamic and responsive to situational cues. Moreover, the authors confirmed that attributions are moderated by BII, a variable of individual difference.

In a follow-up study of first-generation Chinese Americans (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005), the authors also found that in addition to the “compatible vs. oppositional” continuum, variations in BII include perceptions of distance vs. overlap and conflict vs. harmony between one’s two cultural orientations. They argue that BII may not be a static construct, but a process in which cultural conflict and distance are important components. The authors also sought to identify the

personality factors (Big Five) and acculturation factors that predict BII. They found that perceptions of cultural conflict (i.e., low BII) were a product of neuroticism and acculturative stress associated with language and cultural barriers and discrimination.

Benet-Martinez, Haritatos, Hong and their colleagues have made significant contributions to our understanding of bicultural identity. Most important, they introduced the idea that bicultural identity develops along a continuum and is not an “all-or-nothing” phenomenon. Unfortunately, the first-generation samples prohibit us from making conclusions about BII in the second generation. Also, these studies were all conducted on Chinese and Chinese-American populations. It remains to be seen whether other immigrant populations demonstrate similar findings.

Gardner, Gabriel, and Dean (2004) did focus on second-generation immigrants in their study, specifically comparing the bicultural flexibility of monocultural (European-American) and bicultural (Asian-American) participants. The authors examined self-construals, values, and responses to social obligations in monocultural and bicultural samples. An independent self-construal describes a belief that the self is fundamentally separate from others, where an interdependent self-construal is a belief that there is a fundamental connection between the self and others. The authors predicted that situational accessibility of independent and interdependent self-construals would affect members of both the monocultural European-American sample, as well as the bicultural Asian-American sample based on research that showed the coexistence of independence and interdependence as a human universal. Based on research and theory of bicultural flexibility, however, the

authors also predicted that the bicultural Asian-Americans would respond more significantly to priming manipulation.

The sample for this study included twenty four European-American and twenty two Asian-American undergraduates (mean age: 18.9). The Asian-American group consisted of Korean-American (41%), Chinese-American (27%), and Japanese-American (23%) students who all indicated that they were born in the United States. Participants were primed with an independent or interdependent word search in which one paragraph contained first-person singular pronouns (e.g., I, me, mine), and the second contained only first-person plural pronouns (e.g., we, us, our). Participants were instructed to circle all of the pronouns in the respective paragraph, and then they completed three tasks: (a) a self-construal task (a twenty statements task), (b) a values inventory, and (c) a social obligation task in which the participants were asked to respond to questions about a situation in which the welfare of an individual was pitted against the welfare of the group.

A 2 (sample: European-American vs. Asian-American) x 2 (situational accessibility: independent prime vs. interdependent Prime) ANOVA of the twenty statements task revealed a main effect for situational accessibility. Also, a small sample x situational accessibility effect was observed. Planned comparisons of the samples revealed that the interdependent prime effect for Asian-Americans was larger than for the European-Americans. The groups did not differ, however, after independent priming. The authors concluded (as predicted) that the Asian-Americans

demonstrated greater flexibility after interdependent priming than the European-American participants.

A 2 (sample) x 2 (situational accessibility) x 2 (value set: individualist vs. collective) mixed model ANOVA was used to determine whether the participants' value endorsements shifted as a result of priming. The authors observed that the prime-induced shift in values was greater in the Asian-American participants than the European-Americans. Similar to the pattern of self-construals, the Asian-Americans seemed more sensitive to subtle situational changes.

Analysis of the third, social obligation task was also conducted using a 2 (sample) x 2 (situational accessibility) x 3 (response type: behavioral intention, desire to behave, perceived social approval) mixed modal ANOVA. The results revealed a main effect for response type as with situational accessibility. For the first time, a main effect for sample was also observed. The Asian-American participants were more likely to endorse social obligations over "selfish" ones. An interaction effect between sample and situational accessibility was observed, suggesting that Asian-Americans were more influenced by the priming procedure than their European-American peers. That is, after interdependence priming, the Asian-Americans endorsed more social obligations than the European-Americans.

Gardner, et al. concluded that their results refute both assimilation and fusion models of bicultural identity. That is, assimilated bicultural individuals' worldviews would not differ from monoculturals, and biculturals who had "fused" their identities would have been predicted to maintain a worldview that was slightly more

interdependent than monoculturals. Instead, the authors argue that the strong interaction effect between sample and prime condition suggest that the bicultural participants in this study engaged in frame-switching, or bicultural flexibility.

The authors acknowledge that the extremely small sample sizes of both the monocultural and bicultural groups, the use of college students in a college setting, and the lack of no-prime control group limit the interpretation of these results. That said, this study offers some insight into the possible benefits gained by a bicultural upbringing.

#### *Summary and Conclusions*

The purpose of this literature review was to gain a better understanding of the research on second-generation immigrants and their process of acculturation and identity development. The review also hoped to illuminate insights that researchers have gained about how (if at all) the second generation is developing a bicultural identity in which both aspects of their cultural identities remain alive.

The literature reviewed here suggests that second-generation immigrants who demonstrate a more integrated acculturation style appear to have an increased sense of well-being (Farver, Bhadha, et al., 2002). Conflict in immigrant families is also lower when the first-generation parents and their second-generation children share similar acculturation styles (Farver, Narang, et al., 2002), and it may be a myth (at least in some South Asian families) that first-generation parents are oblivious to their children's identity struggles (Inman, et al., 2007). In Hispanic cultures, acculturation generally increases across generations, but subsequent generations may

have to trade connection with their Hispanic roots for a connection with the dominant culture (Valentine, 2001). It is also apparent that all second-generation immigrant groups do not experience a similar trajectory on their acculturation paths (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Socio-economic status, length of stay in the dominant culture, and language acquisition each has a significant impact on the level of assimilation and/or acculturation an immigrant group experiences. Portes and Rumbaut also observed that fluency in the language and customs of both the ancestral and host cultures significantly impacted the development of healthy identity in second-generation immigrants.

The literature suggests, however, that developing a healthy sense of self may be more difficult for second-generation immigrants than their first-generation peers (Inman, 2006; Tsai, et al., 2000). Growing up in pluralistic societies may expose second-generation immigrants to greater incidence of microaggressions (D. W. Sue, et al., 2007), and negative experiences may lead to reactive ethnicization (Kurien, 2005). Furthermore, some second-generation immigrants may face judgment from their second-generation peers about the authenticity of their ethnic identities (Maira, 1995, 1998). While hybridization is clearly occurring, some second-generation immigrants are deeply ambivalent about whether their ancestral culture's values are compatible with the dominant culture's.

Studies of first-generation immigrants support the idea that integration of both the ancestral and host cultures promotes the greatest well-being and reduces the incidence of acculturative stress (Berry, 2005b, 2006). This finding appears to be

consistent in the second-generation, as well (Phinney, Berry, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). In their early review of bicultural identity literature, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1995) concluded that an individual can gain *competence* in one or more cultures without diluting one's ancestral identity. They state that such bicultural competence can protect an individual from the psychological distress of having to choose allegiances between cultures. Evidence suggests, therefore, that helpers who work with second-generation immigrants should promote the development of an integrated acculturation style.

The methodological limitations of the studies reviewed here stem primarily from the sample sizes and populations studied. Indeed, research on multicultural populations is difficult because so many parameters and variables make it difficult to clearly define the population studied. Identity and acculturation theories on Asian populations, for example, often attempt to describe the behaviors, attitudes and values of people from one hundred or more distinct nations. Also, the immigration history of a population must be considered carefully before drawing conclusions about the experiences these individuals have once they arrive in their host countries. This is especially true, for example, for South Asians who arrived in the United States prior to the Immigration Act of 1965. The special skills provisions of this act resulted in a wave of trained professional immigrants who were eager to pursue their own version of the American Dream. Vijay Prashad (2000) writes that this single law "fundamentally reconfigured the demography of South Asian America" (*The Karma of Brown Folk*, p. 4). While the studies reviewed here offer a good start to

understanding the unique experience of this population, more work needs to be done. We cannot assume that the acculturation and identity development of South Asian second-generation children parallel the experience of their Chinese-, Vietnamese-, or Hmong-American peers simply because their parents all immigrated from a vast swath of land called “Asia.”

What is sorely missing from this body of research is *how* one progresses from viewing one’s cultural identities as oppositional to viewing them as compatible. The limited but important work on bicultural identity integration and cultural frame switching (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, et al., 2002; J. Haritatos & Benet-Martinez, 2002; Hong, et al., 2000) helps us understand how individuals who are on either end of the oppositional-compatible continuum behave. Still, no studies reviewed here illuminated how helpers might facilitate the process of integrating multiple cultural identities. This is especially critical given the consistent evidence that second-generation immigrants who are able to integrate and view their identities as compatible fare better in terms of their self-esteem and well-being. Vivero and Jenkins (1999) discuss the “existential hazards” that many multicultural individuals bring to the counseling table, and they note that feelings of “cultural homelessness” may result when tensions between first-generation parents and their second-generation children. They suggest, however, that cultural homelessness may not necessarily foreshadow struggle and conflict. They posit that cultural homelessness and consistent frame shifting throughout a lifetime may give second-

generation individuals flexibility in negotiating their social and cognitive environments throughout their lifetime.

While Vivero and Jenkins put forth an interesting hypothesis about the benefits of cultural homelessness or a bicultural identity, and although their study was limited in scope, Gardner, et al. also offer some evidence that bicultural individuals enjoy a degree of flexibility that their monocultural peers do not. In general, few researchers have focused on these positive aspects of growing up bicultural. The field of positive psychology calls us to focus our research and clinical efforts equally on “repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This review suggests that researchers of second-generation acculturation processes and identity development have focused largely on the conflict and struggle individuals face and not on the benefits of being bicultural. If the aim of helpers is to promote well-being and life-satisfaction of second-generation immigrants, it follows that future research efforts on bicultural identity must work to better identify those factors that predict cultural integration and a sense of compatibility.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

A qualitative methodology was used for this study in order to gather rich, exploratory data on a relatively new area of inquiry. Indeed, Sue (1999) notes that qualitative research is not only appropriate, but necessary in order to deepen our understanding of psychological constructs and phenomena in different cultural groups. A qualitative method was especially valid here because there was no *a priori* hypothesis or theory to prove or disprove. Rather, the overarching goal was to explore a unique phenomenon.

In counseling, it is rarely productive to help a client determine “The Truth” of her past, or of a current situation that is causing her distress. Rather, it is more meaningful to help the client describe her *own* truth or understanding of the situation. Qualitative research methods are based on a similar philosophy. These methods reject the idea that there is one positivistic reality. Instead, qualitative research strives to understand the multiple realities and multiple truths that may exist for a given phenomenon. Although individuals may make sense of their experiences in different ways, this project also aimed to illuminate whether a group of second-generation South Asian women shared some common experiences, or whether they made sense of these experiences in a similar way.

In order to better understand the lived experience of second-generation South Asian women, face-to-face interviews were conducted with fifteen women. Similar to a counseling session, conducting face-to-face interviews offered the opportunity to

build rapport and trust with the participants, thereby allowing researcher and participant to delve more deeply into their experiences than a quantitative measure would have allowed. In this sense, the principal researcher was the primary instrument of data collection, a common and expected practice in qualitative research (Eisner, 1991; Merriam, 1998). Where other methods of inquiry might focus on gathering snapshots of an outcome of a process, qualitative inquiry was more appropriate here because it was the *process* of bicultural identity development itself that was the researcher's primary interest (Merriam, 1998).

#### *Issues of Validity and Researcher Bias*

Issues of reliability, validity and concerns about researcher bias are important to address for this study. The terms "reliability" and "validity" have distinctly different meanings in quantitative versus qualitative research. In qualitative research, reliability refers to how consistently a single researcher utilizes a protocol to collect data, as well how consistently a group of researchers implements a protocol. In terms of data analysis, reliability also refers to the level of consistency among researchers in how they conduct an analysis. That is, are all the researchers utilizing a protocol for analyzing the data in a consistent manner? The chief concern in this study was ensuring consistency in how codes were assigned to data. To do this, the meanings of the codes assigned to individual data points were continually reassessed. In order to do this, a log of definitions of the codes was developed throughout the analysis process as a reminder of the meaning of a specific code name. For example, when the code "Microaggression" was used for the first time, a definition of the term was

recorded in the log. Each time the code subsequently was used, the researcher referred to the original definition to confirm that the code was being assigned in a consistent manner. These procedures are among those that Gibbs (2007) recommends to enhance reliability.

For qualitative research, the issue of external validity—the ability to generalize findings to a wider population—is not a researcher’s chief objective. Rather, “validity” refers to the extent to which results are “accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In order to ensure validity of the research, three procedures were incorporated into the design and implementation of the study as recommended by Creswell (2009). First, rich descriptions were used to describe the findings. By incorporating full-length quotations from individual interviews, the objective was to let the data “speak for itself.” Rather than summarizing the interviewees’ thoughts and experiences, direct quotations were used to provide a realistic and rich description of the themes, thereby boosting the validity of the findings. Second, a doctoral-level colleague (heretofore called the “peer reviewer”) who worked as research assistant in the Center for Urban and Multicultural Education (CUME) at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) periodically reviewed interview transcripts. In this case, the principal researcher’s own proximity to the research topic may have increased the possibility of overlooking nuances in an interviewee’s story because they reflected her own experiences so closely. The peer reviewer, a European American who was minimally familiar with South Asian

culture, helped to identify moments in an interview when the researcher might have probed a participant further to clarify the significance or meaning of an incident. As a non-South Asian observer of the data, the peer reviewer was better able to identify moments in an interview that were not clear because she was not second-generation, or of South Asian descent. By probing more deeply in subsequent interviews, the principal researcher was able to ensure that the accounts received from the participants would resonate with a wider audience, thereby increasing validity. Finally, an external auditor reviewed the project during and at the completion of the data analysis. This auditor, a European American doctoral-level faculty member and Associate Director for Research at CUME at IUPUI, also teaches qualitative research methodology at the university, and has acted as a methodological consultant to several doctoral students. As an expert on qualitative methodology, the auditor reviewed the transcripts and made recommendations about those segments of an interview that warranted deeper analysis. She also offered feedback on how well the initial research questions related to the data. That is, did the interviews illuminate critical incidents in the identity development of second-generation South Asian women? Finally the auditor examined how accurately the interpretation of the data aligned with the analysis and offered suggestions for reinterpretation or further analysis when the data did not support the researcher's conclusions. These validity checks will be discussed further in this chapter.

The fact that the principal researcher is a second-generation South Asian woman studying second-generation South Asian women may be a concern for some.

As discussed earlier, the researcher's intimate relationship with this topic may have prevented her from identifying potential blindspots in both the interviewing and analysis processes. It is also possible that the interpretation of the data was unduly influenced by her own relationships and life experiences. As described earlier, the use of a peer reviewer and expert auditor aimed to minimize the potential risk of bias throughout this research process. Their relatively objective stance on this topic and extensive experience with qualitative research helped keep the risk of bias in check.

It also can be argued, however, that the researcher's proximity to this topic was a distinct advantage. The common background and experience of the researcher and participants facilitated quick rapport because the participants were able to talk about their bicultural experiences without having to explain every detail of their cultural backgrounds. Also, many of the participants indicated that there were things that they did not discuss with their White peers because they feared that they, their families, or their culture as a whole would be unfairly judged. The participants seemed willing to disclose some of their more painful or embarrassing experiences because the fear of judgment was ameliorated by talking to a fellow second-generation South Asian woman. With this deeper level of trust, the researcher was able to gather truly rich descriptions of their bicultural experiences. Research projects conducted within small communities also may limit participants' willingness to disclose too much for fear that the researcher will have personal relationships with prominent community members. In this case, the researcher was a newcomer to the Indianapolis metro area, therefore she had no prior connections with the community.

This, too, seemed to alleviate the participants' concerns about talking openly about their experiences.

Issues of reliability, validity, and bias are concerns for all researchers. By incorporating checks on these issues into the study design, the hope is that the trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of the final product was boosted.

#### *Recruitment and Selection of Participants*

To be eligible for this study, a participant was required to be a female between the ages of 18 and 40. In order to better understand the experience of a second-generation immigrant living in a Western, pluralistic culture, participants also were required to have been born in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom. Also, it was required that at least one of her parents was of South Asian descent.

Participants were recruited primarily from four educational institutions in the Indianapolis metro area where flyers advertising the study were posted at the colleges and universities around the city (see Appendix A). The majority of the participants, however, were recruited through a modified version of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is used when members of a specific group are sought, and key informants are asked to identify members (or "exemplars") of this group (Patton, 1990). While this research was not necessarily interested in identifying exemplars of second-generation South Asian women, it was important to recruit participants who were interested in the study, and who would be able to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the topic. At the conclusion of each successful

interview, therefore, the participant was asked to recommend other second-generation South Asian women they might know for the study. In this case, three participants referred a friend to the study, and two of those participants referred another friend. In three participants' case, the principal researcher personally approached them and asked if they would be interested in participating.

All of the women who participated in the study had Indian parentage (i.e., none had parents from other countries on the Indian subcontinent). Three participants did not meet strictly the eligibility requirements: One participant was adopted from India and raised by White parents in the Midwest, and two others were beyond the initial (and arbitrary) age cutoff of 40. After interviewing these women and ensuring that their stories did not lie outside the scope of the other participants', their data was incorporated into the analysis. Because the second-generation South Asian community is relatively small in Indianapolis, it seemed appropriate to keep these three women in the pool of participants rather than potentially lose their contribution. Moreover, it was clear that their unique stories were not anomalous to, but rather helped to flesh out the overall picture of second-generation South Asian women's bicultural identity development.

Thirteen of the fifteen participants were raised primarily in the Midwest of the United States; one was raised in a southern state, and one on the East Coast. Five of the fifteen women were married, nine were single, and one was divorced. Of the five women who were currently married, four were in interracial relationships with European-American men, and one was married to a fellow Indian (first-generation).

Four of the women had at least one child. All of the women were pursuing or had earned a higher education degree. Data was also collected on the participants' level of fluency with their parents' primary (Indian) language. Three women indicated that they could not understand their parents' mother tongues, but twelve indicated that they could at least understand their parents' language, if not carry on a simple conversation themselves. Five stated that they could speak their parents' Indian language fluently. A full summary of the participants' demographic data is outlined in Appendix D.

Upon making first contact with a participant, the eligibility criteria was reviewed over the phone or in person (see Appendix B for phone screen). Once her eligibility was confirmed, each participant was invited to meet for a one to two-hour interview (the average interview time was 86 minutes). The primary researcher met with participants at different locations throughout the Indianapolis metro area, usually at a coffee shop near the participants' home. By meeting with a participant in a venue of her choice, the researcher allowed her to choose a safe and natural environment for talking, and this set the stage for an informal and rich conversation on her terms. When we met, the Informed Consent form (see Appendix C) was reviewed, and the participant was asked if she had any questions prior to beginning the interview. At this point, each participant was given her compensation in the form of a \$20 gift card to a major department store.

The conversation with each participant began with an explanation of the purpose and rationale for the study, and by presenting a loose definition of "critical

incidents” that she might want to discuss. For the purposes of this study, the researcher indicated that a critical incident might include a significant relationship, a positive or negative event in which her ethnic identity was singled out, or the birth or death of a significant other. To further clarify the types of incidents that might be relevant, the researcher showed the participant a list of tentative interview questions designed to jog her memory about critical incidents or relationships that influenced her thinking about her Indian and/or American identities (see Appendix E for questions). The interview questions were designed to facilitate a conversation about the critical incidents these second-generation South Asian women may have faced, but the participants also were encouraged to elaborate beyond the structured questions. Again, this open-ended structure maximized the data gathered, reduced the possibility of pre-existing expectations guiding the interview, and helped to illuminate the “essence” of the participants’ experiences (Patton, 1990, 2002).

### *Analysis*

Prior to analyzing the data, digital recordings of the interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The primary researcher reviewed each transcript and errors were either corrected, or the original recording was referenced in order to fill in gaps. This process helped the primary researcher become more familiar with the data before beginning the more formal process of organizing and analyzing it. The data included in the analysis included 18.7 hours of recorded material, yielding 249 pages of written transcripts.

The data were analyzed using inductive analysis (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Patton, 1990) The inductive analysis process begins by recognizing specific observations in the interview data, then moving toward general patterns of observation. The smallest units of data (concepts) were organized into progressively broader themes, categories, and domains. While the researcher did not strictly follow Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methodology as described by Hill, et al. (1997), or the modified version of CQR described by McCarthy Veach, Bartels and LeRoy (2001), many of the principles of CQR were utilized. First, a team approach was utilized in that two additional qualitative researchers (the doctoral-level auditor and the doctoral-level peer reviewer) were consulted during the analysis process to code the data and interpret broader themes and patterns. This allowed the primary researcher to garner multiple perspectives on the data gathered (a key element of CQR). The primary researcher also consulted heavily with the auditor in order to “minimize the effects of groupthink,” as recommended by Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess and Ladany (2005, p. 196). Finally, the primary researcher, the auditor, and peer reviewer arrived at a consensus on the meaning of the data as domains and themes were identified. The primary researcher also contacted the study participants after a preliminary analysis and solicited feedback on the clarity and validity of the domains and themes.

To code the interviews, the researcher used Microsoft Word to organize the data. First, meaningful quotes and phrases were highlighted in a process referred to by Patton (2002) as “segmenting.” Each segment of data was assigned a code name

without paying particular attention to themes or groups at this point. After completing this process for all 15 interviews, approximately 500 unique codes had been identified. The codes were then organized into groups based on similarity of content, renaming codes when necessary to better capture the idea that was being expressed. Based on the number of quotes in each group, data was organized by theme. That is, if a group had relatively few quotes (fewer than three), it was collapsed into another group of similar quotes. In this manner, themes began to emerge in the types of critical incidents the women described, their affective responses to these incidents, and the process they experienced as they made sense of these incidents. Groups that consisted of one quote were discarded, not because they were not relevant to understanding the process of bicultural identity development, but because another participant did not reiterate this idea. It was determined, therefore, that the experience or feeling that the participant had expressed in this case possibly was unique to her. This process of organizing quotations into groups was repeated several times, collapsing and combining quotes until the primary researcher was satisfied that each quotation, or segment, was appropriately categorized.

At this point, two validity checks were conducted. First, the aforementioned auditor was consulted to confirm the validity of the themes. The auditor was asked to assign randomly picked quotations to the predetermined themes. Included in this group of quotations were some that had not been assigned to a specific group because they were believed to be or anomalous. The auditor concurred with the assignment of 30 of the 40 quotations presented to her, and we discussed at length

the disputed quotes. This conversation led to dividing one theme into two separate themes, and we reworded slightly another theme. Following this discussion, a list of the final categories and themes were sent to the study participants via electronic mail. They were asked to comment on the themes and verify or refute them, appropriately. Ten of the fifteen participants responded, and each of these women confirmed that the domains and themes seemed to capture the essence of their experience in that category. Two participants suggested slightly different descriptions of two of the themes to more succinctly describe their meanings. This feedback was incorporated into the final wording of the themes. Maintaining frequent contact between the auditor, peer researcher, and the study participant helped to ensure that consensus was gained in determining the final themes that would be reported here (Veach, et al., 2001).

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter the results of the inductive analysis of the interview data are presented. The categories and themes that emerged from the analysis will be presented, and direct quotes will be used to punctuate or illustrate the themes. While some clarification of the context of a quotation and explanation of why it met the criteria for a particular theme will be presented in this chapter, Chapter 5 will focus on interpreting the meaning of these results.

In order to describe the frequency of responses within a specific theme, Hill, et al. (1997) recommended that researchers use three terms. They suggest that a “general” result indicate that a theme applies to all of the cases, a “typical” result indicate that a theme applies to at least half the cases (here, at least seven cases), and a “variant” result indicate that a theme applies to fewer than half the cases (here, fewer than seven, but more than three cases). In their update to their original article, Hill et al. (2005) acknowledged that reporting frequencies in qualitative research has limited usefulness due to the difficulty that arises in comparing samples, but they recommend the continued use of this practice in order to “provide a common metric for communicating results” (2005). Results for this study, therefore, will be reported using these recommendations.

When participants were asked to recall “significant or critical incidents” throughout their lives, they described events both large and small. What was

apparent, however, was that all of these incidents momentarily stopped these women in their tracks and forced them to think about their Indian and American identities in a different way. As described in Chapter 3, over 500 codes were assigned to quotes or phrases in the interview transcripts that described a participants' unique experience, feeling, or reaction to a bicultural "event." Most of the events that the women recalled had happened directly to them (e.g. their own marriage), but some of the women also talked about events within the Indian community at large that affected them. For example, seeing how the larger Indian community reacted to a peer's divorce may have significantly impacted a participant's feelings about her own Indian identity. These events were considered to be "critical incidents" because the participant identified them as such.

After completing the final analysis, thirteen themes emerged, categorized within four domains.

### **Domain 1: Feeling Different**

*Theme 1: I've always felt different, and this will probably last for the rest of my life.*

The women generally talked about periods of time or specific incidents during which they felt different, or clearly outside the majority. For a typical number, these incidents occurred early in their lives, but had remained in their memories as notable moments when they realized they were different from their White peers. This sentiment typically came from comments White peers made, pointing out how they did not fit into American society. Sometimes, however, the

participants themselves made the assessment that they did not fit into the majority culture.

I think all the time I knew I didn't fit in...I think we were talking about religions or holidays or something, and one girl asked me what I was, and I said I was Hindu. She said if you are not Jewish or Christian, you are nothing.

My best friend since I was like four years old lived just one street over and I spent a lot of time with her family and I was very aware probably starting in like first grade how our families were different. What an Indian family was like versus an American family. It was definitely through elementary school and middle school and maybe even a part of high school, I was more embarrassed at how different my family was than I was okay with it.

No. I didn't have any Indian friends. There were two kids in my grade who were Indian. But probably because they were Indian, honestly, I probably didn't want to be their friends.

I think I feel really different. I think I can relate more to Americans—White people—than I can to second-generation people.

Another participant reflected on how earning her U.S. citizenship marked a symbolic end to feeling marginalized throughout her childhood. This participant, a practicing attorney, was born in India, but her family immigrated to the United States when she was very young.

I went to the swearing in [for my citizenship]. It was a really big deal. I went to the court where I practice as a lawyer, and I go in front of the magistrate, and there are all these people in the room. I was in front of all these people, and I walk in and he says, "Counselor, what are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I'm here for the ceremony." He's like, "You're not a citizen?" He didn't know. That was a really interesting experience. I think up to that point [prior to getting my American citizenship], I was always a foreigner, at least in my mind. Something changed. I really did feel a difference. I felt more like an American.

*Theme 2: It hurts when other people treat my Indian heritage like a "problem."*

Participants typically recalled incidents when their White peers (and sometimes adults) demonstrated pity for their situation, expressed their frustration that their second-generation South Asian friend did not have more lenient or simply “cooler” parents, or simply wished that their second-generation South Asian friend were more like them. Some described incidents in which White peers or adults blatantly criticized a participant’s parents, comparing them to American parents. The stories that the women described all seemed to reveal that addressing the “problem” of their Indian identity was a painful, but common part of their collective experience.

My good friends, they see how my parents treat me. And they have commented about how maybe that is part of my problem: that my parents are very involved in my life. I am, like...they are still my family, and I don’t need to go across the country to prove that I can be without them.

I mean, my parents had stricter rules for me than my friends’ parents. Like, my dad wouldn’t let me wear certain clothes, or I would have to come home earlier. And they had this accent that my friends would be like, ‘I don’t understand what your parents are saying.’ And at the time, I was just really annoyed by all of that...I didn’t really appreciate [my parents] until after I graduated from high school.

If my mom says something [negative] about America, I don’t care—I’m used to it. But if a friend would have said something about India to me, even though I probably don’t care, I would still feel the need to defend my culture.

I have never been treated differently because I was Indian. I am lucky to say that, because a lot of people get discriminated [against]. I mean, I guess like in joking amongst [White] friends, but nothing hurtful. I mean, “Oh, because she is Indian she can’t do this, she has to be home by 10 p.m. Because she is Indian.” You know what I mean? [Pauses] I guess that is discriminating.

*Theme 3: At some point, I had to acknowledge that I was not White.*

Participants typically acknowledged that in their efforts to fit in with their White peers, they had adopted behaviors and values that would allow them to blend

in with their White peers. The participants, whether it was an explicit event or a quiet revelation, typically acknowledged that they had to accept their person-of-color status.

Everyone [from the lacrosse team] went tanning together...I didn't go, and they were, like, pissed. I was like, "I am not White. I'm the only non-White person on this team!" At that time I started realizing that I was not White, and that was okay.

My freshman year was definitely my worst year. Then I kind of needed [sophomore year] to pull me in. From then on, I was getting 3.8s and 4.0s and started working really hard. I quit lacrosse. I stopped wanting to be this elite White girl.

It is a pretty famous racial integration program in the Boston area...[Because of this program] I kind of always knew that I wasn't White, but I also knew I wasn't Black.

It was me who was embarrassed, not [my parents]. I feel like it came more from my desire to be [White] like everyone else.

Growing up, my brother and I definitely did not want to be Indian. We were embarrassed by our parents. They wore weird clothes, and our house smelled weird. We just wanted to be like normal people. Now, as an adult, and now that I have friends, I am [aware] that there is this whole cultural heritage [that I have].

Another participant noted that it was a critical incident when she was studying abroad that made her accept that she was not a part of the American majority:

When I was in Morocco, the Moroccans called me 'India.' I told them I was American. They said it doesn't matter where you were born. It doesn't matter if [your family] has lived for generations somewhere else; I'm still Indian.

## **Domain 2: The Imposter Syndrome**

*Theme 4: I've often felt forced to be an expert on both of my cultures (American and Indian).*

Along with feeling “different,” the participants typically described incidents in which they were asked to represent the vast range of Indian culture, or be cultural brokers for both their parents, and for White peers and adults.

People always think I know everything about India. It is kind of a pain.

It is kind of weird. It was my nonwestern civilizations class because we had an entire term on India, and it just kind of brought up that fact that I was the only Indian in the class. It was kind of that realization that I have to embody [Indianness] for this class now because people are going to look to me to understand more about Indian culture, and I have been there. I had been ignoring it for a few years, ...but it was really something that I had to address. I guess that was one thing that I thought: “Oh no, this is either something I have to address, or be really embarrassed about, or be really okay with.”

The last Indian that was in [my nonwestern civilizations class] was an Indian guy. He definitely knew a lot more about India than I did. I definitely felt like [there was an] expectation that I would have to be like this guy who was incredibly intelligent and really aware of the culture.

I think the hardest thing that I have experienced living here and my parents being from India is the educational system. In college, I knew all of my friends’ parents would work on scholarships with their kids. My parents wanted me to go to a great college, write essays, finish [my] scholarship [applications], but I think I could have gotten into such a better school if I had the knowledge [my friends] had. And some of the support. I know they support me, but they grew up in India, so they don’t know how scholarships and all of that work. I think if they knew that, then they could help me.

*Theme 5: Sometimes I feel I have to choose one identity because I can’t integrate them.*

The participants generally described certain incidents in which they felt forced to choose whether they were Indian or American because values from one culture felt incompatible with the other.

Here the majority of my friends are Americans, but, to be honest, I feel a closer relationship with people who are Indian. Not like straight from India,

but like in the same position that I am in because you can relate to so many different things.

The other interesting thing about me [is that] growing up, I probably had two worlds. I had my Indian activities with all my Indian friends. Most of my parents' friends were Indian. Any weekend parties were all with my Indian friends. And then I played soccer and I swam, and I had American friends. When we had birthday parties, I always had two birthday parties growing up.

A lot of the people [my age] that I meet who are Indians, they are almost like, "I don't want [to be Indian]. But they are Indian when they want to be and American when they want to be. I don't really like that.

I think it has something do with, like, wanting to fit in, but then also acknowledging that it would be great to hear about [my Indian culture].

*Theme 6: I have felt like an imposter, as an Indian and an American*

Participants also typically reported that their efforts to explain Indian or American culture to others left them feeling like frauds. That is, their understanding of either culture did not feel authentic.

I would bring [friends] to Indian parties. It was like a novelty. Look how cool this is. I didn't really understand my culture so much, so I don't really feel like I had other people who supported my Indian culture besides my parents.

I grew up very accustomed to going to Indian parties. But to me, it was more of a dress up day rather than what I normally do. And I took Bharatanatyam lessons. But once again, it was like I was taking a special class. I didn't understand anything. I had no real understanding of what it was.

I don't know, I just feel comfortable with [my identity] now. [At my college], it is not really a big deal. If someone brings it up, then we talk about it. I will read books from an Indian immigrant perspective, but it's not something that I have had to address very much. I have addressed it with the Asian community there, hanging out with them a little bit. I just don't feel Indian enough [to talk with other Indian kids]. I don't feel like I know the Bollywood people. I guess feeling 'Indian enough'—and being American—is knowing pop culture.

I definitely did my part to be the expert. "This is why you have to take your shoes off when you come into my house." But I don't know if I ever really

understood what I was saying. You know? Even now, I don't care if I step on a book. I just know that my dad would have a heart attack.

...I understood [Hinduism] culturally, not necessarily as a religion, but as if it were like this story. A story. That is so weird, like how could I believe that type of thing?

I don't know if this is just my perspective that is completely skewed, but I guess I feel like there are a lot more second generation Indians who are way more into being Indian than I am. So I don't feel like I can necessarily connect with them as much as I can with second generation Indians who don't feel that much like they are Indian.

I think...people don't know what "Indian culture" is anymore. [Second-generation kids] think Indian culture is just strict parents and becoming an engineer. All of those stereotypes. I think second-generation kids are confused by that. And it is not their fault, either, because they live in America, and everyone stereotypes. But I think their idea of Indian culture is what Americans think Indian culture is.

### **Domain 3: Family Connections**

*Theme 7: I don't always feel connected to my Indian family or local Indian community. This has affected my ability to embrace my Indian identity.*

The participants typically noted that they had tenuous connections with their families in India or the local Indian community. Whether this was due to limited contact, a language barrier, or insurmountable cultural gaps, this poor bond impacted their ability to fully embrace their Indian identity.

[My parents' divorce] was actually kind of the moment of me breaking away from the Indian community...because the community here were kind of ruthless about it and really mean and lots of gossip and stuff. The whole ordeal just kind of made me think, 'No, I don't want to be Indian.'

I think that people really gossip a lot here. I mean, we have Indian friends, but we are not as close to them as we were back home [on the East Coast]. Everyone back home was like family. You know in the Indian culture you call everyone your aunt and uncle? Here it is not like that. I mean, I still call them that, but the relationship is not like that.

I just never felt any connection to these people. They are not like me. They don't wear the same clothes that I do. [India] is where I felt very different.

It's almost to the point where I don't like them, or I look down on them. That is terrible. It is a little embarrassing.

[After my father died], my mom had a lot of her extended family come. They were like my extended family. And they weren't people that were close to me. And I felt like my brother and I both felt like, "Why are these people coming to our house? Invading our life when we are trying to [grieve]?"

I do wonder, you know, what would be different if I had lived [in India] and had a support network.

*Theme 8: My parents sometimes hinder my ability to understand or embrace my Indian identity.*

The participants typically described critical incidents in which their parents' values, rituals, or customs conflicted with their own, or a critical incident involving their parents' choices made it difficult for them to understand their own relationship with the Indian community or culture. A variant number indicated that their parents' behaviors or beliefs caused them to move away from understanding their Indian identity.

My parents are actually divorced. Which is kind of unique for Indian people...It still comes up every time we go to India. All of our extended family is in India, but all my grandparents passed away when I was in elementary school. And so, there is not really as much of a tie going to India after they passed away. My parents probably wouldn't have gotten divorced if their parents were still alive.

I mean, I've been to the cities, but mainly everybody [in my family] lives in the village. And so my idea of India is dirty and poor and beggars and everything.

My parents made it very clear that they are here just for the Land of Opportunity.

*Theme 9: I'm also grateful for the ways my parents have helped me understand my Indian identity.*

In spite of the conflicts that participants typically had with their parents' values and ideas, they also typically responded that their parents allowed them to explore their Indian and American identities on their own terms, even if that meant that they struggled to reconcile these identities. A variant number of participants also noted that while the scrutiny of their parents and even extended family members could, at times, feel intense, this attention also helped them to feel connected to and supported by their Indian families.

They definitely wanted me to find my own way. I'm sure that's what makes me happy.

I think since I was 18 it has been a gradual [growing] appreciation of [the fact that] my parents had a life before I was born, and they had friends and family that they left behind. And they had this whole world, and they came here and had ungrateful kids who could care less about their lives and their family.

I know my parents are strict, but I don't blame them because the girls in India, you can't leave the house as soon as it gets dark because it isn't safe, ...especially in Dehli. It's like the #1 rape capital in all of India.

I think that, luckily, because my parents were strict about that whole sleeping over thing, I have never experimented with [drinking]. And I might be missing out according to some people, but I don't think I am.

I mean, from what I have experienced, my friends are good friends. They respect their parents and everything, no doubt about that. But I think growing up in an Indian culture, I respect my parents on a completely different level. I mean, my friends might say, "My mom is a bitch." But I think for me, I would never even think about saying that. It might come across [my] mind...but I would never say anything derogatory to her.

It is not the fact that they are mad at me, they are yelling at me. It is the fact that I disappointed them. I don't want to disappoint them...Because growing

up in an Indian family, when you are disappointing your parents, you are disappointing the entire family. There is not just your mom and dad. It is your uncle and cousins, and especially since we are the first that actually lived in the United States.

#### **Domain 4: Finding Authenticity**

*Theme 10: Dating, marriage, and having a family have caused me the most inner conflict, and the most growth when it comes to my identity*

The participants generally discussed the significant role romantic relationships had in understanding their bicultural identity and identifying their authentic values. All of the participants mentioned romantic relationships in their interviews, and they typically acknowledged that the values conflicts they had surrounding dating, marriage and having children were a part of their bicultural experience.

[My mom said,] ‘I know she’s not going to marry an Indian.’ She said it in true, nice, Indian racist fashion: ‘As long as they are not Black, and long as we approve, whatever.’ Well, I started dating a White, Jewish boy, and they were thrilled.”

Having somebody support you is really amazing...I’m getting him acclimated to my second world. He’s the first person that took part of my one world that also is now a part of the other world. Even just in terms of hanging out at my house and seeing what we do all the time. I had friends, but I hadn’t really had people who were so much a part of my house as he became.

[My White husband] understands, and the fact that he has been to India a couple of times helps. He is probably more interested in Indian culture than I am. In fact, he is always like, “Do you want to go the Asian Association [meeting]?” I’m like, “No.”

I want to marry an Indian guy, but not straight from India. I mean, I love India, but because I have been brought up in this [American] tradition, it wouldn’t work. I mean, it could, but we would just have so much not in common.

For me, it really came to a head when I had a baby. My baby doesn't look Indian. How did this happen? Will she have an Indian name? Will she speak Punjabi? And I was like, "Oh my god!" She looks American. There is really nothing Indian about her, and I do feel like in one generation we've lost the culture.

We wanted a small, simple ceremony, but my mom wanted a big, fancy Indian ceremony...At some point I realized it was more for her than for me. It was fun, and now I look back at it and think it was kind of neat. At the time, I was like, "I can't believe this."

I was like, "Mom, I'm not bringing a woman from India [to take care of my baby]. I have this little house. Where is she supposed to stay?" To this day, my mom will still say things, like some friend of hers will [know an Indian nanny], and she'll be like, "Oh, you can do that!"

*Theme 11: The more I am exposed to my Indian culture independent of my parents, the more positive feelings I have about my Indian identity.*

The participants typically described positive experiences when they traveled to India, became more proficient in their family language, or learned more about Indian culture and history when they were no longer living with their families. They also typically indicated that these critical incidents helped them embrace their Indian identity in a new, more authentic way.

My freshman year I took Religions of India, and I started getting accustomed to my identity.

[As part of a study abroad experience in India] We did great things and made awesome friends. We were speaking the language. Meanwhile, I developed my own relationship with the country. Made my own friends. I learned that so much of what my parents told me about India was not the case anymore.

I guess I feel more connected to my parents [since getting a language tutor], but I don't know if I feel more connected to my Indian identity. I feel like it is more of a bridge. Like, I go home and speak with them, and they are like, 'Oh!' They get excited.

That to me was it. I was called ‘Indian’ for six months. Then, for me to explore exactly what that meant is exactly what I did.

I love that I have a different identity.

I love the challenge.

I am really in touch with my culture. I love the fact that I am Indian.

It is so neat to be able to appreciate my culture [as an adult].

*Theme 12: Finding “allies” outside the Indian community has helped me understand my bicultural identity*

The participants also typically described positive relationships with adult or peer allies (generally White) whose genuine interest in their Indian culture helped them to explore their identities in a more authentic way.

It was kind of cool because the teacher in the class actually defended [Hinduism] more to a point where I could understand it better.

I think that my mom has a real good friend, and she’s not Indian. She is Greek. She taught me to value my own culture, whatever it was. She was somebody that I really liked.

(Of college) I think that was the first time—probably my freshman year in college—that I started to become more comfortable with who I was.

I’ve developed really my own identity amongst our large group of friends, professionally and in India. For the first time, I’ve found something incredibly different.

*Theme 13: Finding allies within the second-generation community has helped, too.*

Equally profound were the incidents the participants typically described in which they developed bonds with other bicultural, often second-generation peers.

The participants typically reported that sharing their experiences with other second-generation peers helped them feel more comfortable with their bicultural identity.

My best friend in high school was really, I don't know, she just kind of pushed me to watch more Bollywood and stuff like that. She is half Mexican-American and half White.

I was a little bit in between being [a 'normal' Indian kid and a 'super' Indian]. I still felt less Indian than most of the kids in the Indian community. And I didn't really feel bad about that. I was just kind of like, "Okay, I'm not really into...the Bollywood stuff."

If you got below a B or you got a bad grade, you either "Asian failed" the test, or you really failed the test.

One of my really good friends, she was Ukrainian and was just like I am. She was actually born in the Ukraine, and she came to the United States when she was five or six. Her parents fight, too, but they would never think about getting a divorce.

There is definitely [an Indian] community at [a private liberal arts college on the East coast]. I understand how people can get drawn into it and feel really, really welcome. I visited one of my really good friends there, and we were walking in her dorm and there were these two Indian kids watching a movie on their computer, and they were like, 'Hi!' They totally said 'Hi' to me and were really, really friendly. I felt very welcomed.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Discussion, and Implications

#### *Summary of the Findings*

This research explored the lived experience of second-generation South Asian women in the hopes of better understanding how these women navigated between their Indian and American identities. The study also aimed to explore how critical incidents in these women's lives did or did not facilitate the integration of their dual identities. The primary questions that were explored in this study were: What are the "critical incidents" that impact second-generation South Asian women's understanding of their bicultural identity? How do second-generation South Asian women experience these incidents (i.e., what are some common affective responses to these incidents)? How do second-generation South Asian women interpret or make meaning of these incidents? What, if any critical incidents facilitate the positive integration of second-generation South Asian women's identities? Four domains and 13 themes emerged from the 18.7 hours of interview data and 249 pages of transcribed data.

The first domain includes those themes that illustrate how these second-generation South Asian women have felt marginalized or simply excluded from mainstream America. The critical incidents they mentioned illustrate how subtle comments to explicit discrimination resulted in a pervasive sense of feeling different for the participants. The second domain includes critical incidents that contributed to the participants' collective experience of feeling like they did not fully embrace the

values and ideas of either their Indian or American identities. More important, the women described how their efforts to fit in over the years ultimately left them feeling like imposters in both their Indian and American worlds. The third domain encompasses themes surrounding the participants' relationships with their families, and how these relationships inhibited or enhanced their connection with their Indian identity. Finally, the fourth domain addresses the theme of authenticity. In this domain, the participants described how critical incidents helped them identify and clarify their authentic values, whether they were Indian, American, or a blend of the two.

### **Domain 1: Feeling Different**

Almost all of the participants acknowledged that they knew that they did not fit into majority culture from a very young age. For many of them, not belonging to the majority culture (or religion) left room for only negative feelings about being Indian. For example, the desire to fit in sometimes led to an active effort to avoid Indian peers, hoping, instead, to leave more room for friendships and alliances with children in the majority group. For several of the participants, the sense of feeling "different" is something that they carried into adulthood. Several indicated that they were able to mediate the feelings that "different" was equivalent to "bad," but many acknowledged that after years of consciously or unconsciously separating themselves from their Indian peers in an effort to achieve a sense of belonging, they had come to more closely identify with American values and culture. One participant admitted that she was surprised, and somewhat envious, that other second-generation students

she met in college who came from larger Indian communities seemed to feel a deeper connection with their Indian heritage. Growing up in a smaller Indian community in the Midwest, she did not experience this sense of community or camaraderie with her Indian peers.

A few participants admitted that they were happy that they could “pass” as an American (i.e., she had no accent, and her mannerisms were thoroughly “American”) even though others might consider them “foreigners.” For example, the participant who earned her American citizenship as an adult acknowledged that the judge’s comment on her Indian citizenship reminded her why she had worked hard to hide her citizenship throughout her childhood: many would view her Indian citizenship as a flaw or liability. These incidents all represent a common experience in the participants’ lives: In spite of their strong identification with American culture and efforts to fit into this culture, they each experienced a distinct feeling that they did not fully fit in with their White peers.

Several participants acknowledged that they struggled with their parents’ authoritarian parenting style, but what hurt more was having to defend or explain to their peers that their seemingly overprotective, unreasonable parents would be considered “normal” in India, and that it was well understood that their actions were in their children’s best interest. Several participants also described the frustration they felt when their White peers interacted with their parents. While their friends were not universally critical of their parents, the moments in which they felt compelled to defend their parents became critical incidents that affected their

relationship with their Indian identity. Usually these incidents left the participants feeling like their parents were somehow subpar when compared to their White peers' parents. When asked to reflect on specific incidents of discrimination, most of the participants initially indicated that they had not experienced blatant racism, and many even expressed gratitude that they were held up as the "model minority" by many of their teachers. Upon deeper reflection, however, several of the women acknowledged incidents in which their Indian identity was treated as a "problem" that needed to be solved. These incidents may have been subtle, but they seemed to have a lasting impact on the participants' identity development.

The final theme in this domain describes a turning point that almost all of the women experienced: acknowledging that they were not White. All of the women grew up in predominately White communities, and many admitted that they enjoyed the benefits of being a member of a "model minority." For each of them, however, a critical incident or relationship made it clear to them that they were different than their majority peers, and that this difference was not always interpreted positively. Exposure to African-Americans or other people-of-color, whether it was first in early childhood or as young adults, forced these women to examine themselves on the continuum of color. As one participant began to make meaning of her experience, she realized that her attempts to blend into White culture provoked negative feelings about her family because she realized that because of their existence, she would never fully belong to mainstream America. On the other end of the continuum, another participant acknowledged that after she had graduated from high school, her

desire to embrace her cultural heritage had helped her to worry less about fitting into the majority, relieving an insidious pressure she had felt most of her life. This participant finally made the connection that because of her cultural heritage, she never could fit into the majority. For many of the participants, this revelation came when they realized that most of the world still believes American = White, and that they had to decide to which camp they belonged.

### **Domain 2: The Imposter Syndrome**

Many of the participants recounted incidents when White peers or educators made genuinely well-meaning attempts to include or acknowledge their Indian heritage, but their comments left them feeling exposed as frauds or imposters. The participants acknowledged that these incidents yet again reminded them that they were different, and it also revealed (in their minds) their own limited knowledge of their culture. One participant admitted she felt pressure to perform for her class and teacher, especially when she realized that she would be compared to her other Indian peers. This pressure to perform and not reveal oneself as being a “bad Indian” was a common experience for the participants.

Several participants recounted the common experience of needing to be a translator and cultural broker for her parents. In this way, the participants acknowledged that they had to become cultural brokers for their own parents. One participant described feeling like a first-generation college student in spite of the fact that her parents were college-educated in India. While this participant repeatedly stated that her parents were “very supportive,” she echoed the sentiments of several

of the other participants that it was difficult to confide in her parents when she was confused or overwhelmed by the American system. Feigning expertise was necessary, she believed, in order to protect her parents from feeling inadequate or ineffectual.

The imposter syndrome that many of the women described eventually affected their ability to cultivate authentic relationships with White or Indian peers, therefore they felt forced to choose one world over the other. In one case, the participant acknowledged that she related more closely to American values, but the effort required to “manage” her Indian identity sometimes felt too burdensome. That is, constantly having to explain her family’s culture or values to White friends led her to believe that it would be easier to simply choose friendships with other second-generation South Asians, even though she did not entirely connect with them, either. Another acknowledged that her parents’ values seemed too rigid to integrate with her American values, but she could not simply reject one or the other. The resultant confusion and frustration clearly impacted her sense of autonomy and self-worth.

A majority of the participants acknowledged that feeling like they had to choose an identity created a reality in which they were forced to live two separate lives. Most described having two sets of friends—Indian and White—and rarely did these groups come together. A few participants acknowledged that living in two worlds was common for their second-generation peers, but they seemed frustrated by this norm. These women indicated their belief that cultural frame-switching, while common, was not an appealing way to live their lives. Sodowsky, et al. (1995)

suggest that the central internal conflict for second-generation Asian Indians is the pressure they feel to choose either their American or “foreign” identity, and their refusal to make this choice. The stories of these fifteen women are certainly consistent with this assertion.

### **Domain 3: Family Connections**

Several of the women reported feeling deeply wounded and angry about the apparent hypocrisy within the local Indian community and from some of their family members. Although there was a public display of support and acceptance from family or community members, some participants felt they were also quick to gossip or judge when their own family experienced difficulty. These perceived double standards and duplicity made several of the participants reject their Indian community. In fact, some believed that two-facedness seemed to be an Indian cultural norm, and they admitted that they could not embrace such a culture. The participants explained that the issue boiled down to trust for them: they could not trust people whom they had seen turn on others so quickly.

Nearly all of the participants mentioned how their weak relationships with their cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents in India was a source of sadness at best, and shame at worst. They acknowledged that this shame was deeply rooted in the value their parents placed on filial piety, and yet they still could not feel the deep and genuine affection for their family that was expected of them. Some of the women noted that the disconnect between their family’s values and their genuine feelings caused them to feel defensive when their parents scolded them for not showing

proper respect for family. Others noted that they heard little about their families in India due to the distance, but they were expected to embrace them with open arms and unconditionally. One participant noted that this was especially painful after her father's sudden death. She noted that during this critical incident, she was confused about what she was feeling and how to grieve, but she knew that the rites and rituals that were surrounding her father's death did not resonate with her. She acknowledged that this critical moment made it clear that in life's most personal and intimate moments, she did not embrace her family's culture.

Some participants acknowledged that their parents' consistent complaints about America made it difficult for them to understand why they had immigrated in the first place. A few participants admitted that they tended to take their parents' criticism of Americans personally, because they were American. This "us and them" mentality proved to be painful for several of the women. Most admitted that they had grown up learning that to be American was bad. Again, this was a confusing message that they had to carry within them as they struggled to understand how to live in both worlds.

In the same breath that the participants described their frustration with their parents' apparent greediness and rigid adherence to Indian values and norms, many also expressed appreciation for their parents' efforts to help them fit in. Some acknowledged that their own parents were mavericks, and even though they wanted their own children to respect Indian values, they themselves had bucked the system. Whether it was a shared love of adventure or that their parents secretly embraced

American values after all, many of the participants acknowledged that they began to relate to their parents on a less superficial level after they had moved out of their houses. For others, recognizing the sacrifices their parents, especially their mothers, made in order to begin a new life in America became a source of inspiration. The participants also noted that because their parents were trying to raise children in a culture that was so foreign to them, they could forgive them on some level for being anxious and cautious. Indeed, in spite of the many conflicts these women described having with their parents, the fear of disappointing them often curbed their desire to assert their independence completely. One participant hypothesized that this was due to the knowledge that she would potentially be disappointing her extended family, too. While this was sometimes a source of tremendous pressure, this participant also noted that it was comforting to know that she had an invisible extended family keeping her in check.

#### **Domain 4: Finding Authenticity**

For these women, the issue of moving toward an authentic, genuine identity was something that became more and more important to them with age. All of them mentioned that they experienced the most significant inner conflict about what they truly believed when confronted with the issues of dating, romantic relationships, and raising their own families. Every participant spoke at length about how finding a life partner was a source of anxiety, whether it had already happened, or they were just beginning to think about long-term relationships. One participant who had married a White man indicated that this relationship shed new light on her Indian identity. She

indicated that seeing her family's culture through her then boyfriend's eyes helped her realize that some White people would not judge her family so negatively as she had experienced in grade school. Moreover, his genuine interest in India opened a door to learning more about her culture. Another participant who had married a White man admitted that she first hoped this relationship would solidify her membership in the majority community. When this did not pan out, the marriage dissolved, but leaving the participant room to examine her feelings about her Indian identity in a less black-and-white manner. Some participants expressed sadness that if they married a White man, they would lose their Indian culture. They agreed that because they had seen so few models of mixed marriages that embraced equally the two cultures, they assumed that such a marriage did not exist.

One participant noted that the critical incident of having her first child forced her to confront her own feelings about growing up bicultural. She admitted that because of her own painful childhood memories of feeling ostracized, she thought she was fine with her daughter identifying solely with her White identity. She admitted that she realizes that she might be depriving her daughter of positive experiences associated with being half-Indian, but is still unsure how to help her integrate these two identities. She agreed, however, that she felt a greater sense of urgency to better understand her own bicultural identity now that she had a child who would soon look to her for guidance about her values and beliefs.

It seemed clear that whenever the participants had an opportunity to explore their Indian identity independent of their parents, they were able to lower their

defenses and learn more from these experiences. For example, taking a college course on Indian history or traveling to India without their parents allowed some participants the freedom they needed to make mistakes, or reveal their own ignorance about their culture. Many of the participants agreed that by the time they had reached college, they had let go of their need to perform or be an expert. In short, their desire to be authentic now trumped their desire to fit in. Indeed, several of the women identified college as one long critical incident simply due to the fact that it was the first time they felt free to explore their culture on their own terms. From seeking out language classes to being exposed to a larger group of second-generation peers, the women agreed that college was a place where their horizons began to expand beyond their parents' interpretation of Indian values and culture.

Several of the women also spoke about being significantly impacted by people outside the Indian community who did not just exoticize their culture, but asked them poignant questions that forced them to clarify their own beliefs. That is, these allies did not settle for simplistic explanations of why Indian culture was better or worse than American culture. Rather, they asked the participants to consider what they believed to be true. Some of these significant figures were teachers, but others were friends' parents or other adults in the community, perhaps immigrants from other countries. These critical relationships gave many of the participants permission to explore their authentic selves, some for the first time.

Several participants also recounted friendships they developed with other second-generation, whether their families were from India or other countries. One

participant indicated that her friendships with other Asian-American students helped her find humor in the rigidly high academic standards they fought hard to reject, but ultimately embraced. Others stated that their friendships with their second-generation peers validated their own lack of knowledge and sometimes interest in Indian culture. The camaraderie that they experienced was comforting and buffered them from the sense of isolation they may have faced earlier in their lives. Moreover, these friendships allowed them to be themselves without feeling like they were rejecting one culture over the other.

### *Discussion*

The original intent of this study was to identify those critical incidents that impact second-generation South Asian women's bicultural identity development. Also, how do these women affectively experience these incidents and how do they make meaning of them? Finally, the study sought to clarify how a critical incident might facilitate a more integrated identity. Upon reviewing and interpreting the data, the short answer to all of these questions is: It depends.

The environments in which most of these women grew up were very similar, and the range of critical incidents they described was relatively small. That is, it was evident that many of them experienced similar conflicts and successes in their personal, academic, and professional lives. What is clear, however, is that each of these women interpreted the meaning of these incidents somewhat differently. For one participant, her marriage to a White man was the critical incident that allowed her to explore her Indian identity in a more positive way. For another, the same

incident seemed to pull her further away from her Indian roots. This result may be connected to the findings of Farver, Narang and Bhadha (2002) who noted that a second-generation child's acculturation style may be directly related to her parents' acculturation style. If, for example, the first and second generations experience similar acculturation styles, there is likely to be less conflict between child and parent, and between American and South Asian values. In this study, some of the women acknowledged that because their parents seemed unable to integrate their American and Indian values, they also felt that the conflict between these two cultures was too great to overcome. This was especially true during critical events such as weddings or the birth of a child: if an acculturation gap existed between parent and child

The interview data also suggests that one critical incident did not necessarily move a participant along the incompatible-compatible continuum of bicultural identity development in a linear fashion. That is, a significant event such as a death may arouse feelings of genuine closeness to one's Indian heritage at some points during the grieving process, but ultimately a second-generation woman may realize that she cannot integrate her parents' religious rites and rituals into her own belief system. In other words, this one incident may evoke feelings of cultural compatibility *and* incompatibility.

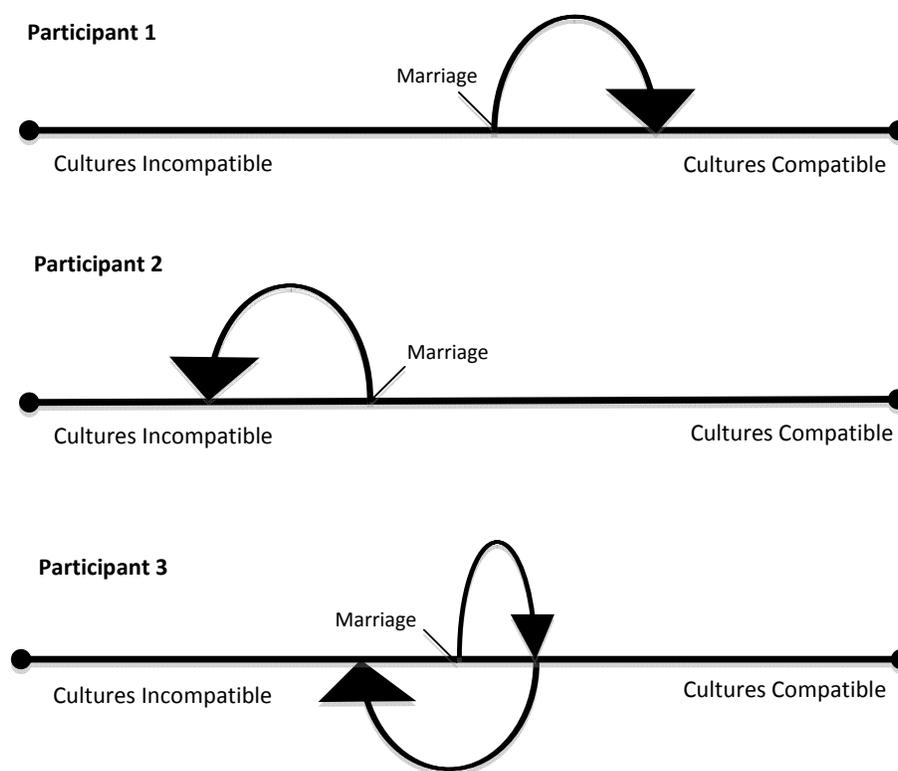
One explanation for why there is inconsistency in how second-generation South Asian women interpret a similar critical incident may be related to the level of a specific individual's bicultural awareness and identity. If a specific individual

believes her Indian and American cultures were relatively incompatible, a critical incident might be more likely to reinforce this idea. Another woman who believes her cultures are well-integrated might feel more comfortable drawing from both cultures to help her cope with a negative incident. In short, where a woman falls on the incompatible-compatible continuum before the critical incident occurs may impact how she makes meaning of this incident. This might be related to the concept of *selective acculturation* described by Portes and Rumbaut (2001). Selective acculturation occurs when the larger co-ethnic community modulates the pace at which the second-generation adapts to the dominant culture. In this study, several participants described close relationships with second-generation peers and the larger Indian community. Others acknowledged that the lack of exposure to Indian culture or Indian peers made it difficult for them to develop a connection with their Indian identity. It makes sense, then, that the women who experienced selective acculturation had more opportunities to explore their Indian identities throughout their lives, thereby leading to greater awareness of her Indian values. For those women who did not experience this type of acculturation, it is possible that they experienced their Indian and American identities as incompatible well before a critical incident occurred.

Figure 1 illustrates these major findings: (a) that a similar critical incident may impact different second-generation South Asian women's bicultural identity development in dramatically different ways, (b) that a critical incident may move a second-generation woman toward integration of her identities, but not in a linear

manner, and (c) that depending on where a woman falls on the incompatible-compatible continuum at the moment a critical incident occurs impacts how she interprets the incident, and whether it facilitates further integration of her identities.

The affective responses of the women in this study suggest that balancing one's dual identities is challenging, indeed. Many of the women described feelings of anger or disappointment in others for not understanding the complexity of their



**Figure 1.** A similar critical incident can affect three second-generation women differently. The level of bicultural identity integration at the time of the critical incident may or may not facilitate further integration, and this process may not be linear.

identity development, and others acknowledged that repeatedly having to defend their culture or family's value system took a toll on their self-esteem. What seems

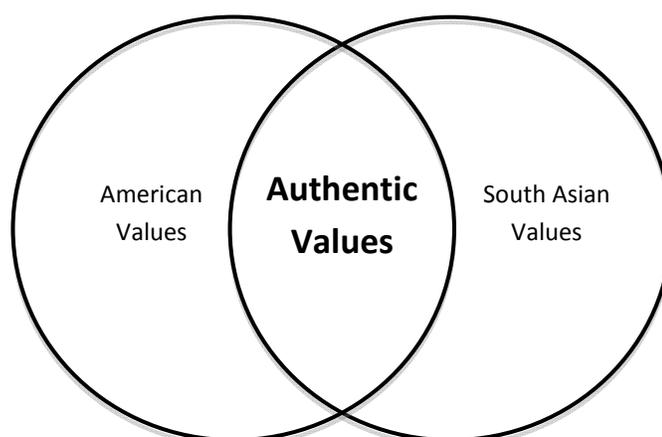
more striking, however, is that most of these women had not processed these feelings with others in depth. Most of the women in this study indicated that participating in this interview was possibly the first time they had reflected on their bicultural identity because they had admittedly been in “survival mode” for most of their lives. That is, when they did experience a microaggression or other critical incident, they did not think to process the event with another person. This is consistent with the findings of Sue (2007). In his study of racial microaggressions, Sue noted that many of the Asian participants in this study had not fully acknowledged the painful emotional impact of microaggressive events until they were surrounded by other Asian allies. Without having their feelings validated or concerns addressed, many of the women in this study also may have minimized the impact of these events. The fact that all of the interviewees had achieved academic and professional success speaks to the resilience of second-generation South Asian women. That said, many of the women acknowledged that their own bicultural confusion had a significant and negative impact on their intimate relationships. It was in this realm that the women struggled most to understand how to integrate their identities, and how to communicate with their partners about their confusion.

The theme that emerged consistently across all of the interviews was that these second-generation South Asian women were making an effort, consciously or not, to clarify their authentic values—the values that truly represented their individual beliefs and ideals. Based on the results of this study, the term, “American Born Confused Desi” might be more aptly renamed “American Born Contemplating

Desi.” In other words, most of the interviewees seemed to understand well the source of their confusion: they were living in two worlds, and they wanted to honor both, but they were unsure how to do so with integrity. This is very closely linked to the work of Maria P.P. Root (1992) on biracial identity development. Root suggests that confusion and ambivalence define many biracial individual’s experiences, in large part due to the anxiety and discomfort their multiracial heritage provokes in others. That is, biracial children often alleviate the discomfort others’ feel with their racial/ethnic heritage by choosing one race/ethnicity over the other. Many of the items on Root’s *Bill of Rights for People of Mixed Heritage* (1996) specifically address a biracial person’s right to identify oneself as one chooses, even if these definitions are fluid and seemingly contradictory.

Similar to the biracial experience, confusion is clearly a hallmark of the bicultural experience. It seems, however, that these women were hopeful that they could someday clarify their own authentic values within the American and South Asian values they learned from others (see Figure 2). The critical incidents they faced in these cases did not necessarily move them toward greater integration of their cultural identities, but each incident did provide an opportunity to think about their cultural values in a new way.

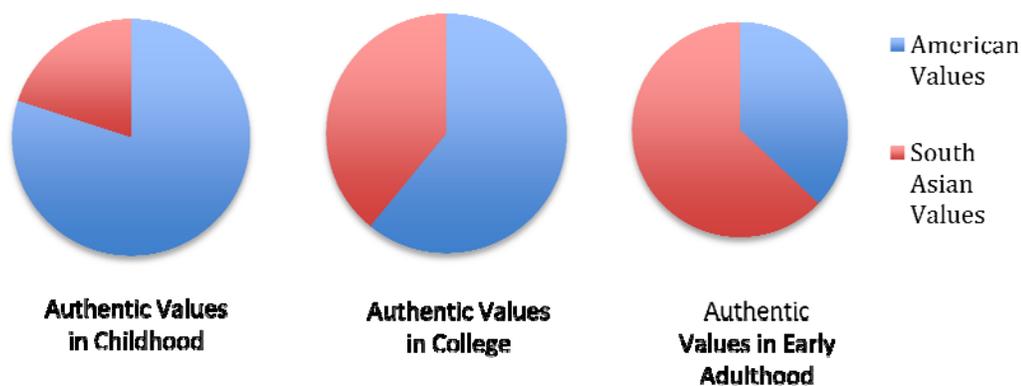
In addition to identifying their authentic values, these women also indicated that their beliefs might change depending on the circumstances of their lives at a given time. Most of the women were reticent to adhere dogmatically to



**Figure 2.** Second-generation South Asian women’s authentic values are likely to be a combination of their American and South Asian beliefs and ideas.

a set of beliefs of principals during a critical event. For example, most of the women indicated that they wanted to incorporate elements of both of their cultures’ rites and rituals when it came to marriage, but they were less clear whether they felt as close to their Indian roots when raising their children. This suggests that throughout their lives, these women may have to re-examine their values in the context of their cultures, and they may find that different events evoke a different sense of allegiance to their American and Indian cultures. In short, the idea of values and identity may be more fluid for a second-generation South Asian woman than her monocultural, or dominant culture peers (see Figure 3 for an illustration of this phenomenon). Again, this is consistent with Root’s suggestion that people who are living between two worlds require an identity development model that accounts for the variability of experience across the lifespan.

To summarize, the process of bicultural identity development for second-generation South Asian women is clearly not a linear path, and certain critical incidents do not facilitate bicultural identity integration. These findings seem to build on the work of Haritatos and Benet-Martinez (2002). These results seem to confirm that women did exist on the compatible-incompatible continuum of bicultural identity integration, but the interviews also shed light on the *process* of bicultural identity development. Second-generation South Asian women may experience confusion and anxiety about their values, but these feelings actually may be the red flags these women need to remind them to stop and clarify their authentic values. In other words, the discomfort they feel with the ambiguity of their bicultural existence may be the catalyst required to move them toward finding support necessary to help them tolerate this ambiguity.



**Figure 3. A second-generation woman's authentic values may consist of different proportions of American and South Asian values throughout her lifetime.**

*Implications for Counselors*

Sue and Sue (2003) suggest that culturally competent healers must (a) develop their awareness of their own cultural heritage, values, and biases, (b) actively increase their knowledge about the groups with which they are working, and (c) develop the skills to work with specific populations appropriately. The primary purpose of this research was to begin to fill in the gaps of knowledge that counseling psychologists may have in working with second-generation immigrants, specifically second-generation South Asian women. I also hope that this research will speak to other second-generation mental health practitioners and help them better understand their own processes of bicultural identity development. Finally, while this research does not focus on skill development, I will offer suggestions that mental health practitioners may incorporate into their work with second-generation immigrants.

The women in this study were clearly eager to talk about their experiences, but many had never done so in a therapeutic or deeply reflective way. Mental health practitioners can offer a great service to this population by simply helping a second-generation client to identify an event as a critical incident. For many of the women in this study, microaggressions and other events may have been overlooked by other helpers, therefore the women also minimized their impact on their identity development. Helping this population acknowledge an event as a critical moment may be therapeutic in and of itself.

It also no doubt would be helpful to identify and validate the feelings associated with a critical incident. Again, many of the women in this study were apt

to use humor or intellectualization to minimize the effect of a painful event they had experienced. These coping tools were probably adaptive in navigating through their worlds, even a source of strength and resilience that helped them to achieve success. While it is important for helpers to frame this adaptation as a positive one, it is also important to help this population explore and experience the full range of emotions that these critical incidents may have evoked.

The participants suggested that cultivating relationships with second-generation peers and other bicultural individuals was critical in helping them develop a more positive relationship with their Indian heritage. These relationships also may offer the support and validation a young second-generation immigrant needs to begin to integrate her two cultures. Helpers also could recommend opportunities for second-generation clients to explore their ethnic heritages on their own terms, outside the watchful eyes of their parents or larger immigrant communities. These opportunities might include formal study abroad experiences, or more informal peer connections through book clubs or support groups. Language fluency also seems to be a critical factor in how easily a second-generation immigrant can move between her cultures (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Indeed, the few participants in this study who spoke their family's language fluently were more likely to have close connections with their first-generation relatives and second-generation peers. Helpers could encourage this population to develop their language skills through university courses or private tutoring.

Finally, this population is likely to benefit from guided activities that help them clarify their authentic values. Generic values card sort exercises might be a useful place to begin to help this population understand what values are and how one might use this type of exercise to clarify one's values, but it may also be important to allow the second-generation client to identify specific American and South Asian values that are in conflict. By engaging in a process of eliminating and accepting specific values as her own, the client may begin to identify her authentic values. Many of the women in this study expressed their frustration that they did not have role models of second-generation women who had integrated their identities. It may be important, therefore, to help this population visualize their own ideal of an integrated bicultural identity. That is, how might they incorporate their Indian values into their professional or personal relationships, and what might be the pitfalls or obstacles in living such an existence? This conversation would allow a second-generation client to move beyond simple frame-switching behavior, and more toward an integrated, authentic self.

#### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

The phenomenological approach to this study generated a rich data set that provided a clearer picture of the process of bicultural identity development. There are, however, several limitations that must be addressed.

First, all but one of the participants were raised in relatively small Midwestern communities, and they all shared similar environments in terms of living in predominantly White, upper middle class communities. This same study may have

revealed dramatically different results if had it been conducted in New Jersey or Chicago, Illinois, where the Indian population is larger. In a larger second-generation South Asian community, the sense of isolation and disconnection that some of the participants described may not have been as prominent. Future iterations of this study should include second-generation South Asian women who have had greater exposure to and connection with the Indian community at large.

The women in this study represented a wide range of ages. Analysis of the data suggested some generational differences in how this particular group of women interpreted the critical incidents they experienced. The women who were over 30, for example, were raised by parents who came to the United States as a part of the post-1965 immigration wave. Their parents were more likely to be professionals, and they were less likely to have other Indian peers to help them raise their second-generation children. The younger participants' parents were more likely to have a close-knit group of Indian friends, and this may have impacted how they coped with their children's adjustment to American culture. For this reason, future research may benefit from more focused age restrictions to better understand the unique experience of different generations of second-generation Americans.

The length of the interviews also proved problematic at times. Most of the interviews were capped at one hour, but sometimes this was not a sufficient amount of time to build rapport, clarify the scope of the study, and hear stories of specific incidents. For some of the participants, memories of critical incidents began to flow at the 45-minute mark. While the time cutoff was arbitrary, it was established to

respect the time of the participant. In future iterations, a series of two or three interviews rather than one isolated session might allow the participant to identify the most significant critical incidents in their lives to date, or reflect on their meaning prior to the interview process. While the spontaneity of this study's method was also a strength (the participants did not attempt to censor incidents that seemed less important to them), a collection of interviews might have provided a more complete picture of their lives.

This study also hoped to shed light on the process of bicultural identity integration. Unfortunately, it is difficult to describe a process after one interview. Ideally, a longitudinal study would better capture how second-generation South Asian women's perspective changes over time.

#### *Final comments*

Pulitzer prize-winning author and second-generation Indian Jhumpa Lahiri describes her own bicultural experience growing up in the United States as “a rich but imperfect thing” (Lahiri, 2006). Indeed, the “imperfection” of the bicultural experience may exacerbate the conflicts that most adolescents face as they develop their identities. With continued exploratory study of the bicultural experience, however, it is hoped that counselors will be better able to help their second-generation clients tap the richness that permeates their lives. The goal of this research, then, was to offer insight into the benefits and challenges of a bicultural existence and provide a clearer lens through which helpers may view their second-generation South Asian clients.

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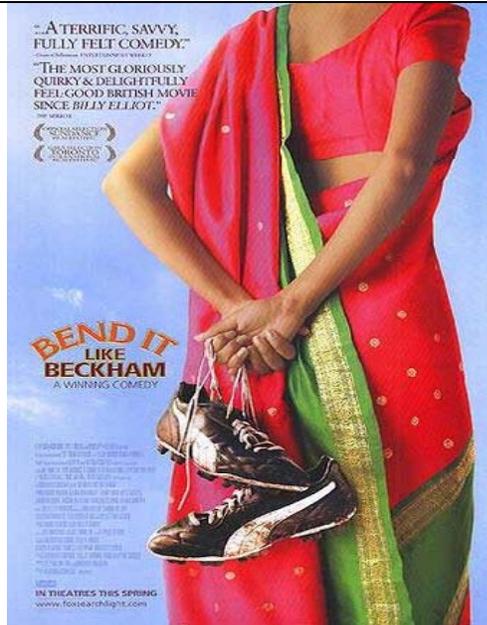
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## Appendix A: Recruitment Poster



Are you a  
**South Asian woman?**

1. Are your parents from **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka?**
2. Were you **born in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom?**

If yes, you might qualify for a qualitative study of bicultural identity development!  
 Participants who complete the study  
 will receive a

**\$20 Target gift card!**

For more information, please call **[phone]**,  
 or e-mail at **[e-mail]**

## Appendix B: Phone Screen

Thank you for your interest in this study! The purpose of this research project is to explore and better understand the experience of second generation South Asian women. By second generation we mean those individuals who were born in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom, but whose parents immigrated from the Indian subcontinent. If you qualify and choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer some questions about your experiences growing up as a South Asian woman. Although we do not expect participants to experience any adverse effects from this study, you should know that you might experience some embarrassment or discomfort talking about your own life. Possible benefits to you include having a conversation with another second generation South Asian woman (the researcher) about your unique experience, and possibly gaining some insight about your own culture and identity. Does this sound okay to you?

*If yes, ask the following questions:*

1. Are you a woman over 18 years of age?
2. Are your parents or ancestors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka?
3. Were you born in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom?

*If answer to all questions is “yes,” notify participant that she will be contacted within one week with details about the study time and location.*

## Appendix C: Informed Consent form

## Consent Form

### A Qualitative Study of 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation South Asian Women's Identity Development

You are invited to be in a research study of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation South Asian women's experience growing up in a Western society. You were selected as a possible participant because your parents are originally from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka, and you born in either the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Devjani (Juni) Banerjee-Stevens, a Ph.D. student in Counseling and Student Personnel Psychology Program (CSPP) in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to describe the process of South Asian women's identity development as they transition from adolescence into adulthood in a Western, pluralistic culture. You will be asked to describe your own experiences surrounding your bicultural identity. Specifically, what critical events or relationships helped you to better understand your South Asian and Western identities?

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Engage in a semistructured interview with the researcher in which you are asked several questions about your experiences growing up as a South Asian woman in a Western culture.

After 1-1/2 to 2 hours of discussion, you will be dismissed.

The entire procedure will last no more than 3 hours. Participants may be contacted after the initial interview to follow-up on questions the researcher may have, or to ensure that accurate interpretation of the analysis has occurred.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study**

The study has few risks, but it is possible that discussing personal information about your family of origin may evoke some negative emotions such as sadness, anger, or embarrassment.

The risks of this study should be minimal, and the likelihood that you will experience any significant psychological distress is low. If at any time during the study you wish to terminate your participation because you feel uncomfortable, you may do so without suffering any penalty or consequence.

There are also possible benefits to participation. You may find that discussing your experiences with the researcher will give you deeper insight into your own ethnic and cultural identity.

#### **Compensation:**

You will receive a \$20 gift card for your participation in this study. Participation is entirely voluntary.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The interview will be taped using a tape recorder. This data will be transcribed and stored electronically on a personal computer which is protected by a password that only the researcher knows.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time with out affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Devjani (Juni) Banerjee-Stevens. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Juni at [phone], or via e-mail at [e-mail]. You may also contact my academic adviser, Dr. Michael Goh, at [phone] if you have any questions.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 624-1650.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

## Appendix D: Summary of Participant Demographics

<b>Age</b>	<b>Region of primary childhood hometown in the United States</b>	<b>Region of parents' primary hometown</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Highest Education/Career Path</b>	<b>Primary Language Spoken at Home</b>	<b>Indian Language facility</b>
18	Midwest	England/West India	Single	High School/ In college	English	Cannot speak, read or write
18	Midwest	Plains of India	Single	High School/ In college	Family language	Can speak only, moderate fluency
20	Midwest	West India (adopted)	Single	High School/ In college	English	Cannot speak, read or write
21	Midwest	South India	Single	High School/ In college	English	Can speak only, moderate fluency
25	Midwest	South India	Single	M.S./Deciding	English, parents use family language	Can speak only, moderate fluency
25	South	South	Single	B.A./ In medical school	English and family language	Can speak, read and write fluently
25	Midwest	East	Single	B.A./ In medical school	Family language	Can speak fluently, reading and writing fluency moderate
28	Midwest	West India	Married	M.A./Educator	English	Can speak only, moderate fluency
29	East Coast	West India	Married	M.A./Ph.D. candidate in Education	English and Family language	Can speak, read and write fluently
29	Midwest	Africa	Single	J.D./Attorney	English	Can speak only, moderate fluency
31	Midwest	South India	Married	M.D./Physician	Family language	Speaks fluently, cannot read or write
35	Midwest	Plains of India	Married	J.D./Attorney	English	Can speak fluently, but uses infrequently
37	Midwest	East India	Divorced	J.D./Attorney	English	Can speak only, moderate fluency
42	Midwest	South and Plains of India	Married	B.A./Realtor	English	Cannot speak, read or write
42	Midwest	Plains of India	Single	Ph.D./Clinical Psychologist	English	Can speak only, moderate fluency

## Appendix E: Tentative Interview Questions

### **1) Transitions**

- What was the transition between high school and college like for you?
- How has being a South Asian woman affected your relationship with your peers in college?
- What would you say are the most positive aspects of being a South Asian college student?

### **2) Peer Relationships**

- Can you describe your most significant friendship(s) when you were growing up?
- How did being South Asian influence these relationships?
- How would you say being South Asian positively influenced your relationships with friends?

### **3) Travel or Study Abroad**

- Have you traveled to South Asia to visit family or spent significant time there otherwise? Could you describe any incidents or memories that stand out for you?
- How (if at all) did traveling to South Asia help you better understand your South Asian background?

### **4) Academic relationships**

- Can you describe your relationships with counselors and/or teachers while growing up?
- Do you recall any significant events or critical interactions with your counselors/teachers?
- How (if at all) did your South Asian background impact your relationship with counselors/teachers?

### **5) Significant life events**

- Sometimes significant events like a marriage, the birth of children, or a death of a loved one can expose us to aspects of our culture that were previously unfamiliar. Have any of these types of events helped you understand your South Asian identity in a different way?

**6) Other critical incidents**

- Are there any other relationships or significant life events that we have not discussed that somehow changed how you felt about your South Asian identity?

## Appendix F: Domains and Themes

### **Domain 1: Feeling different**

*Theme 1: I've always felt different, and this will probably last for the rest of my life.*

*Theme 2: It hurts when other people treat my Indian heritage like a "problem."*

*Theme 3: At some point, I had to acknowledge that I was not White.*

### **Domain 2: Feeling like an imposter**

*Theme 4: I've often felt forced to be an expert on both of my cultures (American and Indian).*

*Theme 5: I have felt like an imposter, as an Indian and an American*

*Theme 6: Sometimes I feel I have to choose one identity because I can't integrate them.*

### **Domain 3: Family connections**

*Theme 7: I don't always feel connected to my Indian family or local Indian community. This has affected my ability to embrace my Indian identity.*

*Theme 8: My parents sometimes hinder my ability to understand or embrace my Indian identity.*

*Theme 9: I'm also grateful for the ways my parents have helped me understand my Indian identity.*

### **Domain 4: Finding authenticity**

*Theme 10: Dating, marriage, and having a family have caused me the most inner conflict, and the most growth when it comes to my identity*

*Theme 11: The more I am exposed to my Indian culture independent of my parents, the more positive feelings I have about my Indian identity.*

*Theme 12: Finding "allies" outside the Indian community has helped me understand my bicultural identity*

*Theme 13: Finding allies within the second-generation community has helped, too.*

Appendix F: Political Map of Modern India

