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**Indian American Identity Formation as Conceptualized Through
Interactions in the Schooling Space**

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Interactions in the Schooling Space**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my family – both in the U.S. and India. for their endless support at all times. This project is also dedicated to everyone I've known who has had a hand in shaping who I am today, whether this relationship was a brief conversation or a life-long relationship. Perhaps most importantly, this dissertation is dedicated to every educator I had from pre-school to graduate school, as well as every coach, for their interest in my betterment and informing me of my ability to succeed.

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Indian American Identity Formation as Conceptualized Through Interactions in the Schooling Space

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This dissertation presents a six-month study using critical case studies to gain insights into how the schooling experiences of five Indian American students inform and shape their self-conceptualizations of their Indian racial and cultural identities. The research questions focus on aspects of identity related to schooling interactions with educators, peers and curricula, and how participants resist schooling mandates and prescribed ways of being particular to school culture when self-authoring their identities. To this end, this study uses a multilayered theoretical framework incorporating postcolonialism, bodies of color as “space invaders” in institutional spaces, cultural identity in diaspora, and youth agency/resistance.

Data was collected through interviews and classroom/school observations to understand participants’ perceptions of their schooling experiences and gain first-hand observations of classroom contexts. The findings are presented in three chapters. Chapter four presents participants’ social lives at Cresthill High School (CHS). As CHS contains a student population composed of mostly Asian and White students, a dual-tiered social hierarchy emerged where achieving and Whitewashed students were placed at the top and

all remaining groups relegated to the bottom. The borders around being Indian/Indianness were used to form social groups, position students within the social hierarchy, and contained heavy links to achievement. Chapter five presents key findings from interactions in formal educative spaces with teachers, peers and pedagogy, demonstrating how pedagogical contexts solidified/destabilized participants' Indianness related to achievement, how achievement itself became a racializing device, and how Orientalized curricula made it difficult for Indian American students to see themselves positively in classroom contexts and learning activities. Chapter six presents participants' home contexts and the different ways their Indian racial and cultural identities were informed through diasporic networks, parental expectations around achievement and dating, consuming transnational media, and the consuming and production of Indian culture through food and native language practices. General conclusions include the flexibility of Indian/Indianness as a positioning device requiring the need to carefully self-regulate one's outward displays of Indianness to mitigate difference, and how interactions in home and community underpinned participants' formation of hybridized identities that were time-, place- and space-specific.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

**

I always remember feeling ‘off’ in schools – like something was wrong with me. While I was the only child of Indian descent in most of my early classes growing up, that changed in secondary settings. What did not change was the feeling of ‘offness’, of trying to belong but ultimately not, of being different for whatever reason(s). I remember during history courses, subconsciously ‘looking for myself’ in the textbook, looking for India or Indians, thinking that would help ease this ‘feeling’, that I would be ‘found’. India and myself were minimally seen. If depicted, it was the former portrayed in static, removed forms. My feelings of being ‘off’ were cemented when told that I ‘smelled’, that my lunch ‘looked’ weird, ‘smelled weird’. That hurt. It’s like that sudden rush of warmth you feel when something happens, you feel it in your face, in your body. I felt embarrassment, I looked around at everyone to see if they were paying attention. Why was my initial feeling embarrassment, what was there to feel embarrassed about? When older I dyed my hair various colors, I bought ‘name brand’ clothing, all in an attempt to assuage this feeling – still it did not work. I felt off at the center of my being. Why? What was wrong with me? I later joined a ‘club’ that met after school, the ‘Asian Alliance’. Perhaps membership here would help mitigate this feeling. I did not know what we were organized to do together, but I recall an array of individuals being present with my first thought ‘What am I doing here, I belong here?’ I was well liked, but my interactions with educators, peers, the schooling space, and all of these facets’ interactions with the community at large, continued to make me feel at a deficit...but why?

**

BACKGROUND

‘Asian’ and ‘Asian American’ are terms with heavy traction in positioning, making sense of, and racializing¹ bodies of the ‘East’² in America. Shankar and Srikanth (1998) call attention to the term Asian American as an early form of redress, moving away from pejorative perceptions of Asian individuals and claiming a right to belong. While attempting to claim a space of belonging, this term became essentializing in nature, lumping different cultures and ethnicities together in static portrayals of individuals, ignoring socio-historical contexts and global migratory movements. Still,

delving deeper, the convoluted nature of Asian American indicates the “lack of an adequate language [to describe] Asian American racializations,” especially those racializations ingrained within constructs of power and hegemony, ultimately dictating and reinscribing these individuals as Others (Brandzel & Desai, 2013, p.83-84).

In an attempt to forge a language that begins to speak to Asian American racializations and further differentiate between the individuals included under the Asian umbrella, Shankar (1998) incorporates two additional categories: East/Southeast Asians and South Asians. East/Southeast Asians claim origins in China, Taiwan, the Koreas, Japan, Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines, and Cambodia, while South Asia encompasses India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. The East/Southeast Asian countries maintain distinct socio-historical foundations, political foundations, and dynamics with America when compared to South Asian countries. East/Southeast relations with America encompass exploitation and migration, with the movement of colonial subjects or refugees of war (Shankar, 1998). The economic dynamics of South Asian countries with the U.S., and India specifically, have only expanded within the last twenty years (Prashad, 2012), with migratory movements associated with the “Brain Drain” of highly skilled individuals relocating to obtain coveted occupations in the American labor structure since 1965 (Sahay, 2009).

The maintenance of distinct international dynamics with America, coupled with earlier migrations than their South Asian counterparts, leads East/Southeast Asians to “envelop” South Asians. The historical need for labor brought more Southeast Asians (and Hawaiians) beginning in 1839 than South Asians who entered legally after 1965

(Bald, 2013a; Prashad, 2000; Takaki, 1998). These patterns, in tandem with xenophobic sociopolitical and historical contexts, produced specific knowledge about Asians, giving way to exclusionary acts and “yellow peril” that associated Asian with a specific body (Shankar, 1998; Takaki, 1998). Contemporarily, when Asian or Asian American is uttered, a phenotypic association is made with East/Southeast Asians, silencing South Asian voices. As such, South Asians remain largely marginalized from the Asian American grouping, as evidenced in absences from Ethnic Studies programs and scholarly literature (Bahri, 1998; Shankar, 1998).

Working towards recognition requires South Asians to seek their own platform of representation and political attention towards raising, discussing, and addressing the community’s own needs which may vary by locality. The election of political figures like Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley would suggest that South Asians are inching towards the desired representation in America. However, in an interesting (read: institutional) shift, these political figures adopted Christianity to win support in the South (Joshi & Desai, 2013). While there are Christian Indians, the number is less than those practicing other religions (e.g., Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism). Thus, these politicians may not have their South Asian constituency in mind given their renunciation of potentially fundamental ideological stances, values, beliefs, and notions of culture. There is also the emergence of South Asian entertainers like Aziz Ansari, Mindy Kaling, and Padma Lakshmi, or cartoons like *Sanjay and Craig*. While these instances would indicate a move towards voice, representation, and inclusion, they (problematically) continue to

reify notions of American meritocracy, the model minority stereotype, and the deeply entrenched tropes cemented to Brown bodies³.

An impetus for a proprietary platform to voice sociopolitical concerns and carve a space of (political) representation and belonging is closely tied to redressing the problematic tropes used to portray, conceptualize, and position South Asians in America contemporarily. These images are popularized by various media depictions and reified through daily interactions vis-à-vis the power of discourse (Foucault, 1977). The portrayals are numerous: a computer whiz; studious; gas station owners/attendants; taxi drivers; involved in business; and most interestingly, a foreigner who is unable to interact and succeed with women (courtesy of HBO's *Silicon Valley*). These tropes of "dirty," "thick accented," and the "unfit," inassimilable nature of South Asians/South Asian Americans within the United States are the product of histories of imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism, culminating in the United States and becoming solidified as positioning devices through immigration policy and the subsequent migrants. Distinct migratory movements into the U.S., coupled with historical contingencies, gave way to/reified the dirty nature of some South Asians, the smart and talented nature of others, and the in-between status of still yet Others remaining.

A principal, overarching way Brown becomes known relies on discursively produced, historically contingent tropes. However, another site where meanings are made and negotiated on a daily basis is the school space. Schools represent a principal node of intersection between larger societal discourses, historical processes, and the cultural domains that individuals bring to schools on a daily basis. Here, cultural domains

embody a struggle between the production, transmission, and consumption of knowledge presented and created in the home space, in/by television, film, video games, music, and the media (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Cultural domains and the knowledge brought to the schooling space can be conceptualized as various forms of capital that interact with school culture, educator dispositions, and “official” knowledge and curricula to sort, categorize, and stratify bodies with distinct educational tracks influencing future career possibilities (Apple, 2004; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; Giroux, 2005).

In these ways, the school space becomes a State space, reifying larger institutionalized discourses and ways of being, as well as ways to position and make sense of individuals from different cultural backgrounds navigating the school space. The State dictates material to be covered and learned through mandated curricula, providing students a specific instantiation of the world. The cultural domains, dispositions, and various forms of capital fluidly floating within the school space, in tandem with dizzying media depictions informing individuals’ own ways of being and how they make sense of (Other) individuals, make schools a key site for creating specific identities with valued ways of being, dispositions, compartments, attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies (Apple, 2004b; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; Giroux, 2005). Simultaneously, schools can be spaces of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), inculcating critical thinking processes and an awareness to the layered and tiered systems that encompass and structure daily life. Thus, while schools cope with bureaucratic processes and standardized testing, they also become spaces that reify larger discursive messages (e.g., how to conceptualize/position South Asian/South Asian American bodies) while, at times, encouraging the challenging

of these beliefs and ways of being. Thus, depending upon a school's balance between these facets (and others), schools become critical sites that impact individuals' identities in distinct ways.

Thus far, I have conceptualized schools as a nexus for larger discursive notions of power that impact student identity. Simultaneously, schools also inform individuals of social positions through racializing students and impacting students' self-conceptualizations. This racialization transpires through overt curricula, hidden curricula, and the culture that permeates schooling spaces. Very often, official school curricula are assimilationist, containing false representations of men, women, and subaltern groups portrayed through Eurocentric, masculinist lenses that create an 'unequal curriculum' (McCarthy, 1998; Pinar, 2000; Taubman, 1993; Zimmerman, 2002). The hidden curriculum embodies representations of power with the social norms, values, and beliefs that students internalize through linguistic interactions and bodily dispositions with educators and peers (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; De Lissovoy, 2012; Giroux, 2001; Lee, 2009). The ill effects of educator ideologies become paramount as the overt curriculum (Eurocentric, deficit framed depictions of various cultural groups) reinscribes the hidden curriculum (racial relations and hierarchies evidenced through peer groups and socialization practices), leaving individuals without the proper forms of capital positioned for non-college tracks, leading to social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Moreover, with White middle-class culture reified in schools, White middle-class students have social and economic advantage over students from subaltern groups (Apple, 2004; McCarthy, 1998). Students from diverse

racial/cultural backgrounds are othered and racialized given their lack of adherence to the White norm, with additional color painted onto them due to their inability to grasp the “proper” capital(s) or preferred languages that have traction in the school space. The identities they construct can at times align with notions of inferiority, leading to increased academic engagement, or a lack thereof, as a means to mitigate Otherness. In these ways, both the larger discursive processes of power and students’ interactions with/in the schooling space become critical to informing the identities constructed.

**

I had friends and close friends in high school. But something always bothered me – I would see peers in school, and a reciprocal acknowledgment of existence, perhaps a head nod, or a quick greeting, would ensue. I felt great, valued, like I existed in these moments. Soon after, I would see the same peer outside of school (given we live in adjacent neighborhoods), and no such acknowledgement would occur. Still, with others, I would see them in the schooling space, or even share a space with them on a sports team, but once we left those ‘schooling’ like spaces, our interactions would halt. While I could have been positioning myself at a deficit in these instances, I truly felt that I made my desire to spend time with individuals outside of the schooling space known, but it was to no avail. That created this quandary for me – why am I ‘acceptable’ in one space, but not in another? Then I had several teachers, whom, despite my greatest efforts, did not consider me to be equal with my peers in classes. My first year English teacher would speak to me in certain ways that, upon reflection, placed me at a disadvantage with fellow classmates. Moreover, I would turn in equal work with my peers, and receive a lower grade. This reoccurred my junior year, with my English teacher telling me that, upon receiving an A on a quiz, to place it on my fridge because I would never receive that grade again in her class – and she was correct. After a group project when my classmates told me how well I performed, I received the lowest grade in my group. I was furious. I tried to speak to the instructor about this grade and why it was not higher, and she would not budge. I walked out of the classroom without saying a word. These experiences with peers and teachers made something clear: I was different, for various reasons, and did not need/require/demand the same respect and treatment as my other classmates. While there were numerous factors at work in creating these dispositions of my peers and educators, I had an even more difficult time coming to know myself, my surroundings, and where I fit in relation to the world.

**

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There exists a body of work that examines notions of South Asian/South Asian Americanness and identity, and how individuals born both in India and the U.S. make sense of daily realities in America. This work addresses engagement in civic life and provides insights into choices, and how they are made/informed by past and present sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and spatiotemporal contingencies. The ultimate hope of this work is to redress some of the troubling portrayals of South Asians (e.g., Leonard, 1997; Prashad, 2000, 2012). While some scholars address aspects of schooling in passing in their analyses (e.g., Purkayastha, 2005; Bhatia, 2007), other scholars have focused on aspects of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and class in school, and how they impact the lives of South Asian youth (e.g., Asher, 2002; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). However, some of these analyses are historical and require updating while country and place heavily influence others. In these ways, a study has yet to be conducted that specifically examines Indian Americans in the South, and in these ways, an analysis of schools as sites of intersecting discourses towards understanding South Asian Americans and their experiences remains incomplete.

At the same time, this is not to say that little is known about South Asians in the U.S. We know the problematic understandings and stereotyped, essentialized ways that South Asian bodies continue to permeate in larger society, and consequently, schooling spaces. We are aware that some of these problems are associated with Indian being absorbed into the East/Southeast category, and the sheer numbers of East/Southeast Asians drowning out South Asian voices (Shankar, 1998). We are conscious of the

problems of knowing and making sense of South Asian bodies as stemming from Orientalist positionings of Indians (Said, 1978), with Indians belonging to a nation of spirituality and exoticness – a pre-modern land (Bhatia, 2007; Leonard, 1997; Prashad, 2000, 2012). We are also aware of the inassimilability and foreign status of South Asians in the U.S. that facilitates a questioning of belonging and patriotism, especially in the post 9/11 era (Bhatia, 2007; Lee, 2009; Prashad, 2000, 2012). And, we are also aware, contemporarily, of the global flux of capital and India's position as a provider of cheap goods, services, and labor, reifying Brown³ as a model minority that academically achieves while adding new tropes of hardworking, studious, industrious, and socially elite to compete with pejorative positionings (Sahay, 2009).

Various scholars shed light onto the schooling experiences of Asian youth (e.g., Kao, 1995; Lee, 1994, 2009; Ng & Lee, 2007). More specifically, this work focuses on Southeast Asian youth and how they come to negotiate notions of race and difference, the model minority discourse, and differing cultural dynamics that inform notions of efficacy and identity. What remains unknown is how the schooling space serves as a medium for dynamics and interactions that inform individuals what being South Asian in American schools and American society signifies on a daily basis. Individuals (both South Asian and non-South Asian) make sense of South Asian bodies in schools through interactions, observations, and socialization processes with/among South Asians. Sense making processes also entail observations of South Asians in extra curricular activities or classroom environments when navigating the schooling space. These dynamics occur daily in schooling spaces, helping to solidify the ways non-South Asian individuals make

sense of South Asians, with these very dynamics influencing how South Asians negotiate and make sense of the schooling space. In these ways, overarching concerns regarding how the schooling space informs the ways Brown bodies come to know themselves and the world around become paramount to understanding how South Asians Americans form their identities.

Fundamental to deeper understandings of South Asians, and in particular, Indian/Indian American youth, is understanding how they negotiate notions of race, their peer selection/socialization practices, the impetus behind selecting certain courses, their interactions with educators in classroom spaces, and their interactions with curricula and representations of India/Indians they encounter that work to inform their identities. Furthermore, how the schooling space functions as a site for converging discourses involving Orientalism, the model minority, inferiority, Otherness, and colonial pasts and ways of knowing/being also warrants attention. Of particular interest is the school space's intersection with the barrage of contemporary media images that coalesce to impact Indian American youth, their identity formation, and how they come to know themselves and the world.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This investigation is aimed at providing insights and analyses that speak to the racialization processes of Indian American youth while recognizing the center of gravity of the schooling space within these processes. Conceptualizing the school as a space where interactions between historical and contemporary discourses attributed to being Indian, problems with identity, and the essentializations and tropes positioned onto

Brown bodies occurs provides insights into how the school functions in creating, producing, reifying and altering the identities of Indian American students. By focusing on Indian/Indian American students and their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, this study aims to expand the literature and understandings of Brown individuals with a direct focus on *schooling spaces*, and in turn, re-think the ways South Asians are named, positioned, and conceptualized with a focus on the South Asian category and moving towards an Indian/Indian American nomenclature of representation and belonging.

The focus on a subaltern group provides deeper understandings of the cultural dynamics that transpire and govern the schooling space, working towards re-conceptualizing the naming and knowing of Brown individuals while also re-writing/re-working received notions of race. This investigation aims to provide new understandings particular to the Asian American category and its individuals while simultaneously (re)creating the category of Indian/Indian American to work against essentializing terms like Asian and South Asian towards representation in sociopolitical and academic discourses. Thus far, Asian American and South Asian American have been used to name and identify Indian Americans. This points to the complexity in situating these individuals in larger society with the spectrum of identifications (of dirty yet intelligent) and multiplicity of existences (from doctors to gas station attendants) that “Asian American” and “South Asian American” entail. Moreover, these multiple identifying terms speak to the anxiety involved when positioning these individuals, given the close phenotypic associations to the global threat of terror in the post 9/11 era.

Engaging an underexplored group of color complicates the prevalent conceptions of race and racial dynamics of schools through destabilizing the Black/White narrative that dominates contemporary positionings and sense-making processes of all individuals. With Indian/Indian American bodies raced in schools, deeper understandings of how race is conceptualized and operates in schooling spaces on students from non-Black/non-White/non-Latina/o histories become realizable. Closely examining Indian/Indian American students in schools may help to re-write and re-draw racial logics and lines towards deepening our understandings of schooling contexts, race, and the various dynamics that govern schooling interactions. Researching Indian/Indian American students and their ideas/experiences of being raced provides further insights into the multiplicity of racial formations, pushing back against traditional positioning dualities while simultaneously examining the schooling spaces' implication within these processes.

The central implications of this project aim to enrich understandings of Asian Americans, deepen the understandings of Indians/Indian Americans, re-conceptualize racial logics, and understand how the school functions as a place where these different facets are at play. Going further, this project works to problematize Orientalist positionings of Indians/Indian Americans, as individuals speak back to the tropes and static ways of knowing and being, with new accounts of how Indians/Indian Americans come to know themselves and their positions in the world. Moreover, this project also seeks to destabilize the traditional narratives of Brown bodies as a model minority to

provide narratives of the numerous effects of this discourse on Indian American students, and speak to the realities of living under the moniker.

This scope of this investigation becomes far-reaching and critical. By pushing the Asian American umbrella in new ways, re-writing and re-conceptualizing notions of race, and shedding light onto the schooling space and its role in these various processes, insights into a traditionally marginalized group are attainable. Through participant voice, this project aims to gain deep understandings of how Indian Americans conceptualize race while also cataloguing their feelings/sentiments/emotions that speak to being Indian in American schools. In these ways, I seek to explore the thoughts, decisions, and choices Indian/Indian American students make in order to navigate the schooling space, including their patterns of social interaction with peers and educators. Moreover, I aim to shed light on how Indian bodies negotiate classroom spaces and dynamics, as well as balance academic/social/familial responsibilities. Of critical importance will be understanding how Indian American students negotiate various curricula, how India/Indians are represented, and how this informs senses of self while simultaneously impacting classroom dynamics, school dynamics, and social interactions. Also important, and not to be forgotten, is the creation of a space where marginalized voices have the ability to speak, to relate a story, to have someone listen, and delve deeper into what being Indian/Indian American in schools *means* with *tangible* consequences. More importantly, it also allows for a re-conceptualization of how leaders/educators interact and position these individuals, while also allowing for a deeper understanding of the contexts and

processes that influence students' dynamics of engagement on a daily basis. With these thoughts in mind, the following questions will guide this research investigation:

1. How do Indian/Indian American youth self-conceptualize their racial and cultural identities? What are the identities they construct/come into/perform/produce for themselves?
2. How does the spectrum of essentializing tropes, from racial "Otherness," foreignness, and inassimilability on the one hand, to hard-working, industrious, and intelligent on the other, manifest itself and operate in schools?
3. How does the school space impact/influence how Indian/Indian American students come to know themselves and the world around them?
4. How do Indian/Indian American students resist dominant positionings and ways of being and undertake conscious agentic decisions and actions that recreate their interactions in the schooling space?

Through these guiding questions, this investigation aims to create a space for voices to be heard, disrupt traditional positionings, and focus on the school as a point of intersection (e.g., identities, popular discourse, media) to understand how the school functions, in tandem with the home space and community space, in forging identities of Indians/Indian Americans.

This investigation aims to take a step forward towards representation for Indians/Indian Americans in popular discourse, literature, and academia. This project aspires to provide a clear glimpse into how Indian American students negotiate racialized

identities evidenced through their interactions with peers, educators, and curricula that inform senses of self. Moreover, participant voices will also speak to larger experiences beyond the schooling space that provide insights into being Indian American in larger society, informing identity driven processes while also situating the similarities and differences between Indians and other marginalized groups. Thus, from the knowledge and insights to be gained from this investigation, we may be better able to engage all students in more culturally relevant and culturally responsive ways (Gay, 2010), working towards positively affirming cultural groups and their positions in the social world, with a particular focus on Indian Americans and their ways of being as evidenced through daily negotiations.

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Enlarging the 'Asian American' scope while speaking to Indian/Indian American bodies in schools and troubling notions of race are of critical importance. So too is providing a space to speak for those who have not necessarily had the opportunity to do so. Hidden in the various layers of this project is the possibility of 'healing'. Engaging in this research thus far has allowed me to further hone my positionality, tracing my parents' migration through historical processes. I've begun to heal my fragmented self, slowly encountering which edges and curves align, piecing and fastening them as such. While not nearly complete, the possibility of this project to 'heal', or better said 'help' the individuals taking part, provides a great sense of joy. Being in high school was difficult – social aspects, academic aspects, familial aspects. Creating a space where individuals can discuss what transpires in schools from their own viewpoints contains the potential to help them as they continue their schooling process. Maybe this help takes the form of study tips, of speaking about school and getting something off their minds, or maybe of knowing other individuals who share the same schooling space and experiences. Whether or not they feel helped or healed, this investigation creates a space for dialogue, which in itself is paramount in making connections and creating community.

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Notes:

1. The term “racialization” refers to the ways in which individuals are positioned through visibility (Bhattacharayya, 1998). Racialization here encompasses notions of phenotype, semiotic mediations, and language, used in tandem to race and position individuals. Additionally, processes of racialization may involve aspects of coloring or de-coloring, depending upon context and situation. Coloring and de-coloring align with ideas of blackening, tied to the historically perpetuated notion that the darker one is, the more inferior. Additionally, a nuanced ‘blackening’ can entail language use, not simply phenotype, that contributes to the darkening of an individual.
2. Said (1978) and Bhattacharayya (1998) intimate the complicated and problematic construction of the ‘East’ by the ‘West’. In these ways, these terms are engulfed in apostrophes to indicate the socially constructed nature of both ‘East’ and ‘West’ and the non-static nature of these terms. While ‘East’ and ‘West’ are useful for making theoretical claims and arguments, these terms are themselves social constructions and it is critical to be aware of these constructions.
3. Using the term “Brown” here as a signifier requires unpacking. The term “Brown” originally emerged from Latinxs, and Mexican Americans, attempting to carve out a racio-political identity in the United States used towards recognition, representation, and equal rights. For example, the use of slogans like “we’re Brown” were used during protests to secure better schooling conditions. In these moments of the early- to middle-twentieth century Texas, Mexican American students were transported to attend schools with African Americans, even though they were considered part of the “White” racial category (San Miguel, 2001). Brown was transformed into a raciopolitical identity and used as a platform to call attention to the social and political standing of this ethnic group by merging aspects of a Mexican and Chicano identity towards improving social and educational conditions. My use of Brown here acknowledges this enduring history and legacy of activism towards sociopolitical and economic recognition/improvement, and in some ways seeks to build from these histories and enlarge this categorization to include Indian Americans towards a new instantiation of this term in the current moment. There has been an emergence of Indians/South Asians in the United States in media and politics, especially in the post-9/11 context. Due to this increased presence, and awareness to the potential danger posed by Indians/South Asians, I use the term Brown as an identifier/marker to note the contemporary moment and increased awareness, representation, and media presence of Indian bodies, as Brown becomes used as a way to categorize, sort, position, and even mark difference onto South Asians/Indians in America.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

INTRODUCTION

This section will explore how the literature conceptualizes, positions, treats, and engages South Asians and South Asian Americans in schools and larger society, examining how interactions and negotiations within the school impact dynamics within the community and home. As noted in the first chapter, South Asians include Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalese, Bhutanese, and Sri Lankans. This approach will help elucidate the relational, contextual, and fluid nature of identity formation processes, with these positionings having distinct implications for how South Asian American teens' form their identities. Scholars have spoken to South Asians and the construction of a global diaspora. Work in Britain examines the South Asian diaspora vis-à-vis notions of ethnicity, authenticity, religion, immigration, political status, cultural norms, or economic implications (Anwar, 1990; Bachu, 1995; Ballard, 1990; Dusenbery, 1995; Veer, 1995; Vertovec, 1995; Westwood, 1995). Other scholars investigate some of these themes in the West Indies (Kale, 1995; Vertovec, 1990), the South Pacific and Fiji (Kelly, 1995; Lal, 1990), Africa (Lemon, 1990; Twaddle, 1990), as well as Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana (Kahn, 1995; Kale, 1995). Other scholars address identity in diaspora (Maxwell, 2006; Robinson, 2005), with still others focusing on adolescent identity formation informed by gender (Dwyer, 2000; Talbani & Hasalani, 2000).

To be included in this review, the literature met certain criteria connected to my study. The work must analyze Canadian, British, or U.S. contexts, as these countries share similar sociocultural and sociopolitical climates, as well as similar arrival patterns,

restrictions, and admissions of South Asians. The other countries and spaces with South Asian diasporans do not share similar sociopolitical/cultural contexts. Additionally, the work I include needed to be scholarly research, qualitative or quantitative in nature, and focus on school or identity. The scholarly work that examines Indian Americans in schools is thin in comparison to African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other minority groups. Some scholars speak to South Asians and their schooling experiences and impacts on identity directly (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008), while others indirectly address school and identity when analyzing aspects of diaspora and belonging (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Jain, 2011). Both types of literature are included in this review. Indians and Indian Americans are subsumed under the category of Asian, Asian American, or South Asian American. I will use South Asian to denote individuals who are from South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka), unless their nationality is otherwise specified. I will use South Asian American, South Asian Canadian, Indian American, Pakistani American, or Bangladeshi American to denote children of South Asian migrants born in North America. I will also use the term Desi, Hindi for countryman (Shankar, 2008), to describe the children of South Asians born in Canada, America and Britain. These terms will help provide clarity and variety while avoiding repetition.

These criteria allow for a fluid understanding of how aspects of school, community and family work in tandem as Desi teens negotiate the schooling space. These criteria also allow for insights into how the field conceptualizes Desi teens' negotiations of their identities including aspects of racial difference and otherness, tropes of the model

minority and terrorist, interactions with educators, and their modes of resistance. These knowledges help situate the current study, with the potential for this investigation to add additional layers to existing scholarship by specifically engaging the school and its impact in the negotiations between community and home for Desi youth.

Following this line of thought, this literature review will be organized in the following manner: I will begin by highlighting migratory movements and their creation of a diaspora; Next, I will speak to community negotiations and interactions as informing South Asian American youths' identities; After, I will speak to negotiations and interactions in the schooling space that work to inform South Asian American youths' identities; and I will conclude by speaking to negotiations and interactions in the home space that inform South Asian American teens' identities. Historical migrations and patterns of South Asian arrival to America and the Southern U.S. impact the ways that youth in this study come to know themselves and the community in which they live. Examining these historical processes, discourses, and migrations provides a background to the interactions between community, school, and home that frame the lives of Desi students in this study. Moreover, the dynamics and interactions of Desi teens' community, school, and home impart lessons and inculcate worldviews that impact respondents' identities and how they navigate the world. As such, these themes situate the Desi teens of this study within the immediate systems of their life that work with/against each other to inform their identities. After highlighting the aforementioned processes, dynamics, and interactions, this literature review will conclude with an explanation of the theoretical framework that centers this investigation.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS: BROWN BODIES AND THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA IN THE U.S.

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) describe the difficulties in (im)migrating, with the stress of leaving behind family and abandoning personal networks, as well as the unfamiliarity, tension, and an uneasiness associated with moving to a new country. The migration of Asian Indian bodies to America transpired in three distinct waves based on socio-historic and socio-political contexts in the U.S. and India, giving way to a particular diaspora that negotiates its transnational existence in different ways. The term diaspora allows for a treatment or analysis of the individuals contained within. However, it can also be a reductionist term, treating members as fixed and static in their ways of knowing and being that align them with their origins. Here, diaspora entails diverse groups of individuals and communities voluntarily or involuntarily displaced and traversing the globe (Brazier & Mannur, 2003). Engaging the sociohistorical contexts that greeted migrants, and the political and economic changes occurring over time, allows for insights into the changing status of South Asian American students in the U.S., and how historical contexts inform how Desi teens are positioned contemporarily.

The Initial Wave: Punjabi Sikhs

The colonial context in India in the late 1800s set the stage for the earliest migratory movements. The British Empire constricted markets in India for Indian made goods, creating a demand for cheaper factory-made textiles from Britain and other parts of the world (Bald, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). As economic conditions tightened, citizens' economic situations worsened, with individual families rebuilding wealth every

generation rather than accruing generational wealth over time due to the sociocultural systems in place (Gibson, 1988). As such, these on-going processes, coupled with the increased subdivision of land, rural debt, and increasing population, spurred some to look to a new land, a new place to begin again (Gibson, 1988; Leonard, 1997). When Sikh soldiers serving in the British army returned from Canada speaking of opportunities to grow economically and escape oppressive living situations, early migratory movements began (Bald, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).

Before the 20th century, less than one thousand South Asians made the long, arduous, months long journey from India to Hong Kong, then across the Pacific to reach Vancouver (Sheth, 2001). However, with economic hardship and the possibility of opportunity on the horizon, almost seven thousand Indians made the journey to the United States between 1900 and 1920 to increase their status (Gibson, 1988). Punjabi Sikhs (Bald, 2013a; Leonard, 1997; Prashad, 2000) comprised the early immigrants from India to Canada and the United States, arriving in Canada and working in lumberyards and sawmills in British Columbia (Handa, 2003). The thrall of racism welcomed these sojourners, as they were victims of violence and attacks (Gupta, 2006). Seeking escape, they moved through Washington and Oregon in western America. They worked with lumber, built railroads, and harvested fruits like apricots and cherries (Sheth, 2001). However, after being forced out of Washington during a violent riot, they eventually settled in California (Bald, 2013a), with some migrants later becoming part of the Ghadar movement, an anti-colonial group that sought Indian freedom from British rule (Bald, 2013a; Leonard, 1997).

While some of the first migrants may have settled in parts of Washington and Oregon, many of the Punjabi immigrants settled in California; they had been illiterate farmers and agricultural workers in their homeland (Gibson, 1988; Leonard 1997). They engaged in the same work in a new context. As these new Asian Indians arrived, the U.S. was still attempting to make sense of the large numbers of Chinese and Japanese immigrants already present conducting work on railroads and farmland. Consequently, nativist and traditionalist sentiments confronting the Asian menace were becoming deeply embedded into the fabric of the American nation, and greeted new Asian Indians with the same racism and violence that welcomed them in Canada and the Northwestern U.S. (Gibson, 1988; Leonard, 1997; Prashad, 2000).

At this historical moment, all individuals from India were named and positioned as 'Hindoo,' with this term taking on a derogatory connotation (Leonard, 1997; Gibson, 1988). Working as laborers on farms, Punjabi peasants contended for their space among the lowest rung in the occupational hierarchy (Leonard, 1997). However, while driven from Canada and the Northwest, this Punjabi group was able to sustain itself, earn income, and build community alliances with other ethnic groups, helping to solidify their place in the U.S. and obtain a sense of belonging. It should also be stated here that the majority of the initial immigrants who made their way through Canada and the Western U.S. were men, as women hardly made the trip due to cultural gender roles and immigration policy restrictions. Through tight-knit community groups with other Punjabis and Mexicans, these pioneers found wives, married into Mexican families, and led as normal a life as possible. Moreover, through these alliances, they were able to

secure their own land holdings (on leases after much contestation) and work for themselves (Leonard 1997), becoming successful farmers and creating connections and networks with other Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus. Scholars highlight that, while disliked by the majority, these Punjabi Sikhs' rugged work ethic saw them earn a modicum of respect from their white counterparts (Bhatia, 2007; Leonard, 1997; Sheth, 2001).

However, these South Asians posed a threat to the community by obtaining their own land holdings and no longer working for others. As such, various news outlets reported Indians as a menace. Soon after, a critical mass of political interest led to anti-Asian immigration laws in the *Immigration Act of 1917* (Asiatic Barred Zone Act) and the *Immigration Act of 1924* (Johnson-Reed Act). These laws made it illegal for any immigrants from Asiatic countries to enter the United States (Leonard, 1997; Prashad, 2000; Sahay, 2009; Sheth, 2001). More specifically, the *Immigration Act of 1924* froze all immigration from Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Asia with the *Natural Origins Formula*, capping immigration and excluding "laborers from Asiatic nations" (Sahay, 2009, p.88).

Up until these moments of the early twentieth century, it was possible for Punjabi Sikhs and their families to claim citizenship through naturalization acts. The onslaught of legislation aimed at shoring up and policing borders provides insight into the deeply entrenched necessity to save and protect America from undesirables. The 1923 case of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* dictated that while South Asians were part of larger Caucasia laying claims to an Aryan history, they did not embody what White had come to mean in this time and were inassimilable non-Whites (Lee & Bean, 2007). Thind was

denied citizenship and the status of other immigrants was rescinded. While South Asian Indians were able to work here, they would never be citizens, nor attain White status with the *Immigration Act of 1924* solidifying borders and making new entry and migrations a difficult task. The initial migrants suffered loneliness (Sheth, 2001), in addition to navigating the heavily racist and xenophobic context of the U.S.

Lost Histories of South Asian Migrants: The Second Secretive Wave

Immigration policies and the *Thind* case solidified the temporary and contingent existence of South Asians in America. The ability of migrants to leave and return to India with money was stymied, and bringing relatives and loved ones to America an even further impossibility. It would appear as though all migrations from South Asia to the U.S. halted given the passage of various immigration acts. However, Bald's work (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) specifically addresses the lost histories of migrants during this period, piecing together the interactions, movements, and lives of South Asian immigrants who moved around the globe during this difficult time.

Bald highlights how various Indians and Bengalis boarded British sea vessels performing menial work beginning in the late nineteenth century, continuing to the mid-twentieth century. Upon reaching various ports, some of these individuals jumped ship looking for better work on other ships or jobs onshore in factories and restaurants. When passing through immigration, they claimed an Aunt or an Uncle in a loose way. This is customary in South Asian culture as a sense of closeness or likeness is shared with all with family friends considered Aunts or Uncles (Bald, 2013a, 2013b; Handa, 2003). After arriving in New York and New Jersey, South Asian peddled Oriental wares from India

along the New Jersey shoreline during the summer months, visiting cities like Asbury Park and Atlantic City. In these ways, the Northeast, and New York City specifically, became a hotbed for South Asian migrants. They were able to find others who made the same trip and found work in restaurants or other service based industries. Of particular interest was the use of the U.S. as a politically free space, with some individuals spreading anti-British sentiment and even sending arms back to India to help spur revolution (Bald, 2013a).

Bald (2013a, 2013b) describes how other Indians and Bengalis began to settle in areas surrounding New York, with some Indians going as far west as Detroit. While many would return home, those who did not return immediately ventured farther south. These Indians went to cities like Charleston or New Orleans, as these cities had their own Indian ethnic enclaves and immigrants were successful in peddling Indian silks or furs (Bald, 2013a, p.44). Their economic success and ability to survive speaks to how Asian Americans were interpellated in the South, embodying an in-between status when finding a space of belonging within the Black/White binary. While these Indian and Bengali individuals were othered upon their arrival, they were able to traverse the South with efficacy given their liminal status (Joshi & Desai, 2013).

These migrations continued and the networks in these cities grew as migrants crowded into homes. Previous migrants who had established themselves in cities would temporarily house newer migrants and find them spouses and jobs in the local economy (Bald, Personal Communication, September 25 2014). Once making it to Charleston, or to a major hub like New Orleans, Indian migrants settled into neighborhoods and married

African Americans and other locals, starting families, and living as normal a life as possible. As the summer months approached, some individuals made the trip back up north to continue selling wares, some returned to India to complete another cycle of this trip, and others settled in working-class African American neighborhoods in New Orleans.

Much like the Punjabi migrants that first settled in Southern California, these new Indian and Bengali migrants also formed community bonds with other racial groups. Those Indian and Bengali migrants who settled in New York married into Puerto Rican and African American families. Those who arrived in New Orleans and Charleston married into African American, Creole, and Caribbean communities. The intermingling of races and communities was a contested affair as each group sought belonging, with intermingling seen as detrimental to this cause. Due to the extreme prejudice and racism of the time, Indians and Bengalis were at times resented for their ability to move about in society while others were unable to share in the same freedoms. However, one shared characteristic among many of these individuals was their low class status. With very little capital, members of these different communities realized their marginalized status and lack of inclusion in the national polity and sought to forge bonds amongst each other in order to mitigate senses of isolation (Bald, 2013a). In these ways, while these histories have been found, it becomes clear that immigration policy did not halt Asian Indian bodies from American shores, and in fact, these individuals were cunning and secretive, resisting norms and finding ways to embed themselves in society.

Migrations from 1965 and Contemporary Movements

The migrations that Bald highlights began in the late nineteenth century and ended by the middle of the twentieth century. Indian seamen were continually moving about the globe, jumping on ships at various ports given the reach of the British empire, with these movements slowing down once Britain lost its hold on India and other colonies. South Asian migrants utilized preexisting networks to find work and spouses. As such, areas like New York and New Jersey became hotbeds for Indian and Bengali migrants, with this trend continuing today. In 1946, the U.S. opened immigration quotas and allowed a small number of Indian migrants, and very few made the journey (Prashad, 2000). These quotas were opened to bring in manual agricultural laborers. Instead, America relied on laborers from Mexico and the Caribbean through the Bracero program (1942-1964) for agricultural needs and relied on Black workers migrating north to fill the need for industrial labor. As such, there was little need for Asian labor given the vast amount of cheap labor readily available (Prashad, 2000). With the relative small number of Punjabis, Bengalis, and Indians in America through the 1950s, what spurred the sudden explosion of Asiatic migration to the U.S.?

It was 1965, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, and the global movements of South Asians remained restricted (Sheth, 2001). Expanding global capital and technological advances, as well as the space race with Russia and the Cold War, created a new need for labor in the United States. The confluence of these historical contingencies created the nexus from which *The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965*, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, emerged. This act eradicated previous quotas

against Asian migrants, with preferences given to those with relatives in the U.S., specific occupational qualifications, or other official documentation (Portes & Rambaut, 2006; Sahay, 2009). An important difference in the movements of the 1960s and 1970s was the inclusion of women, as these migrants tended to move as entire family units with women almost equal in number to men (Leonard, 1997; Sahay, 2009).

Scholars indicate that the Indian migrants who comprised the post-1965 generation were highly skilled doctors, scientists, engineers, professors, and upper-level graduate students in fields of chemistry, math, physics, biology, and medicine (Bhatia, 2007; Jain, 2011; Leonard, 1997; Prashad, 2000). Given their vast training, they arrived from middle-class backgrounds in India with human capital, monetary capital, and linguistic capital. The State dictated the immigrants desired for specific economic needs, and excluded low-class workers who did not have the educational qualifications or money to migrate. In these ways, the State was heavily influential in creating the parameters that later formed the South Asian diaspora in America. These forms of capital, in tandem with a positive work ethic, placed these individuals in an “elite segment of U.S. society” (Bhatia, 2007, p.19; Portes & Rambaut, 2006; Prashad, 2000). They were inserted into white-collar jobs and found residence in middle-class neighborhoods, seemingly attaining the status of the American Dream (Purkayastha, 2005; Shankar, 2008). The *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965* led to a reconceptualization of Indians in the United States, moving from marginal to elite status (Bhatia, 2007). This moment in migration, often called the “brain drain” (Bhatia, 2007, p.4; Sahay, 2009), changed the landscape of South Asian America between 1966 and

1977, as “20,000 scientists with PhD’s, 40,000 engineers, and 25,000 doctors” entered the country (Prashad, 2000, p.75).

The U.S. changed its immigration policy and implemented immigration changes similar to Britain beginning in 1976. Britain restricted entry to immigrants from the Subcontinent due to nativist and white supremacist sentiments, calling for “racial preservation” (Prashad, 2000, p.77). The United States restricted the entry of migrants from the Subcontinent in the *Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1976* under the same pretenses as Britain. This act did not limit the individuals who entered through family reunification provisions, but it did limit the number of technical workers who entered by adding the need for official job offers or proof of employment before immigrating (Prashad, 2000). Many waves of immigrants in the post-1965 generation used student visas as a platform to later obtain green cards and hope for citizenship. The patterns of immigrants shifted over time, and in the 1980s, many of the family members of the original post-1965 generation arrived and sought work. In this way, fewer managerial and professional job seekers arrived, as taxi drivers and shopkeepers complemented the highly skilled labor of doctors, engineers, and scientists (Bald 2013a; Leonard, 1997; Prashad 2000).

Contemporarily, the H-1B visa, materializing during the early 1990s, now governed movements of South Asians and Indians. The visa permits professionals from foreign countries to temporarily enter the U.S. and work. As an additional filter for immigrants, the H-1B seeks out temporary highly trained labor in high-tech or computer related fields, with Indian immigrants who obtained college degrees totaling more than

the next fifteen nations given these visas (Bhatia 2007; Leonard 1997; Portes & Rambaut, 2006; Prashad, 2000; Purkayastha, 2005). Transnational corporations bring in these highly skilled individuals to work for three years and then send them back for a new crop, as the shelf life of knowledge in these fields becomes defunct after three years (Prashad, 2000; Sahay, 2009). Going further, these high-tech migrant-field workers, or “techno-braceros” (Rudrappa, 2008), do not have access to benefits like health care, social security, and earn smaller salaries compared to their American counterparts, with a large portion of their salaries sent back to India in the form of remittances (Prashad, 2000; Sahay, 2009). Global companies dangle the H-1B visa and the chance of opportunity to entice highly technical individuals to migrate, draining foreign individuals’ knowledge, shipping them back, and pressing repeat (Sahay, 2009).

These historical and contemporary movements created a distinct diaspora of South Asians in America. South Asian communities are spread throughout the country in various towns and cities. With the tech-boom of the 1990s and early 2000s, many South Asians live in California and the Silicon Valley. Others who work in finance and business live in New York/New Jersey with doctors and lawyers scattered about the country. In these ways, the type of labor performed, historically and contemporarily, dictates where many migrants settle, with different economic realities for differently skilled groups. Some South Asians with capital inserted themselves into high-paying jobs to reap the benefits of living in desirable neighborhoods, often having White neighbors. Other South Asians that came through family reunification provisions did not have economic wealth and worked dogged hours in convenience stores in order to earn a living. South Asians’

disparities in economic standing lead them to have different sociopolitical realities of belonging. Those who work in the tech industry are highly revered for their work and status, and their economic capital allows them access to institutions and resources, both cultural and economic, that provide them a liminal acceptability through embodying White middle-class or upper-middle-class culture. However, those South Asians that work as taxi cab drivers or in gas stations are seen as forever foreign and inassimilable. With their lack of economic capital, their ability to access institutions and other resources are stymied, further complicating their possibilities of finding belonging. Having situated the historical movements of South Asian bodies, this review will now examine notions of community and its impact on South Asian American identities.

THE COMMUNITY: NOTIONS OF BELONGING, COMMUNITY CAPITAL, AND DIASPORICALLY NEGOTIATING THE AMERICAN CONTEXT

The community where one lives is of critical importance when growing up and coming to know oneself and the world. The place where individuals grow, and the community's evolution in relation to economic development, can lead to exposure to elements that cause poor health (Beck, 1992). Moreover, the space in which one lives is critically important for growth, opportunities in the future, and access to public resources for development. The community also inculcates specific ways to interpret the world and make meaning from actions, as well as aiding in developing certain ideologies, values, and beliefs. In all of these ways, place and locality matter (Massey & Denton, 1998; Orfield, 2002).

In general, the literature describes the diasporic communities in America, Britain, and Canada as monitoring Desi youth with the intention of preserving culture and ethnicity (Bhatia, 2007; Dwyer, 2000; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Here, culture and ethnicity are symbiotic in nature, working with and against each other. While ethnic labeling may be racially based, an individual's culture, values, and semiotics can also contribute to how they are ethnically positioned. Both culture and ethnicity are fluid, relational, and context dependent (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008), and include aspects of clothing, language use, customs, values, beliefs, ideologies, and certain ways of navigating different spaces (Bhatia, 2007; Hall, 2003; Prashad, 2000; Rudrappa, 2004). Following this light, this section will situate notions of South Asian community, and how the community encourages cultural preservation through community navigation, community networks, community surveillance, and aspects of belonging seen through consumption and attainment of the American Dream. Situating the community and its prescribed lessons, narratives, and expectations of Desi youth provides insights into the contexts and the material realities that Desi teens experience when growing up and maturing. Moreover, by garnering details into the dynamics of interaction and socialization, and the activities or linguistic and cultural expectations that the community favors over others, insights into the choices, and the decisions behind choices, that Desi teens make when navigating the school and home space that impact their identity formation become attainable.

Cultural/Ethnic Preservation through Community Navigation and Networks

The migrations of individuals highlighted earlier further enlarged the South Asian diaspora and formed distinct communities that use region, religion, caste, historical background, and language to structure organizations and interactions (Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Prashad, 2002, 2012; Shankar, 2008). Upon arrival, these individuals settled within *already existing* communities.

Official work permits, H-1B visas, and student visas continue to bring South Asian bodies to America contemporarily, especially with the current success of tech-field oriented businesses. As these bodies arrive with different economic skill sets, they filter into different communities and neighborhoods scattered about the U.S., with some neighborhoods more welcoming than others. Often times, the community in which immigrants implant themselves takes deficit perspectives towards South Asian bodies, exhibiting xenophobic, nativist, and traditionalist sentiments, with White as the favored culture and ethnicity. Scholars indicate how, at times, these communities discriminate against bodies from the Subcontinent through racial, class, and gender based frames (Aptekar, 2009; Dhingra, 2010; Shankar, 2008). The ‘typical Indian’ is constructed along stereotyped lines (Handa, 2003), and derision quickly increases with narratives spread of collecting welfare checks, buying up existing land with vast riches, smelling bad, behaving savagely in grocery stores, and being generally unintelligent (Gibson, 1988; Ocejo & Tonnelat, 2014). These narratives are inaccurate and discursively produced, as many Indians do not have sufficient capital to purchase lands immediately. In one instance, a South Asian American girl at a neighbor’s house was asked to leave – kicked

out – because of her difference (Handa, 2003). As such, these White ideals impact how South Asian American youth make sense of themselves, and how they feel they are perceived (Zine, 2001). The post 9/11 context also influences the ways that South Asians are positioned in their communities. With their different skin color and semiotics, including the hijab or turban, South Asians are treated with suspicion, further typified as strangers (Kawash, 1998), and othered in their communities, embodying a negative racialization and inassimilable nature due to cultural, ethnic, and religious reasons (Ajrouch, 2007; Haddad, 2007; Handa, 2003; Jackson, 2010; Pasha-Zaidi, 2014; Subramanian, 2013).

Given the harsh realities of Western living, one hurdle, or fear, of South Asian immigrants is a concern with losing one's culture and ethnic ways of being. A major concern of individuals within the South Asian community is the preservation of customs in the new country, and passing cultural knowledge onto children. The fear of the community is that children will succumb to the problematic ways of Western society. These perceived ills of Western society include socializing with members of the opposite sex, engaging in behaviors like drinking and smoking, and wearing inappropriate clothing. Because offspring are considered inheritors and transmitters of culture, South Asian communities in the U.S. and abroad seek to protect them from acting in ways that are unbecoming of being Indian (Bhatia, 2007; Dwyer, 2000; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008).

In all of these ways, distinct efforts are made to maintain a group's cultural and ethnic ways of being within their community. One way in which these communities

negotiate the American context is by turning inward and looking to each other for support. Very often, South Asians migrate and settle down without economic resources. Gibson (1988) describes how, after settling in specific neighborhoods and areas, solidarities with other community members are built through sharing knowledges that include “skills, money, community institutions,” as well as “a set of values that promote socioeconomic success in a new setting” (Gibson, 1988, p.35). Through these relations, information is exchanged regarding day-to-day living and access to resources and institutions (Brettel, 2005; George & Chaze, 2009). Forms of cultural capital are interchanged, not only facilitating a sense of belonging, but also helping families build community relationships and increase their ability to navigate the space of America through social and economic support.

South Asian American youth are situated within these community networks and relationships between families and neighbors. While the community turns to each other for support, another avenue to preserve culture and ethnicity in the community is within houses of worship or membership in regional organizations. Religious spaces and regional associations offer a space of belonging, as well as a space in which to build community networks and relations in the new American context (Aptekar, 2009; Brettel, 2005; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014). Youth from South Asian families attend spaces of worship, with their school peers sometimes also present (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Desi youth become normalized to these spaces, interacting with peers and older adults alike, and have their native language use validated outside the home (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Regional Hindu or Indian organizations provide a

space in which to re-connect to the homeland, practice language, build contacts, and increase exposure to South Asian culture, religion, and language for children (Brettel, 2005).

An additional avenue to preserve culture and ethnicity within the community is through family and community get togethers. These events take place at an individual's home within communities both domestic and abroad, allowing moments to indulge in food, drink, and conversation (Das Dasgupta, 1998; Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002; Prashad, 2012; Shankar, 2008). South Asian youth converse with fellow youth, school mates, and other family friends and networks of kinship, sharing various knowledges of what they find as “cool,” “tight,” and “FOBby” (Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008). Conversations in these spaces discuss news from the Subcontinent, the latest trends in India, as well as the latest Bollywood movies. Moreover, interactions at these community gatherings involve speaking in native languages, sharing knowledge of how to navigate the American context, and allow moments to be Indian without having negative feelings attached (Bhatia, 2007; Handa, 2003; Prashad, 2000; Shankar, 2008).

The community that South Asian youth share with elders and one another is of critical importance to how youth form their identities. The community of South Asians in the U.S. and Canada stresses the importance of education for obtaining high paying jobs (Asher, 2002; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014; Gibson, 1988; Ngo, 2006; Shankar, 2008). At times, these communities reach across racial lines and develop alliances with other racial groups. However, Shankar (2008) highlights how these racial alliances are formed along class lines, much like many of the interactions within these communities. While upper-

middle-class individuals may seek to develop alliances with upwardly mobile racial groups, other South Asians will seek out relationships with individuals who share similar academic, economic, and social experiences. In many cases, South Asian Indian communities wish to project good images of themselves which at times entails avoiding confrontation and attempting to get along with the dominant group (Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008).

Cultural Preservation through Community Surveillance

As mentioned earlier, an important concern for community members is the erosion of South Asian knowledges and ways of being in favor of Western ways of being. This erosion is due to South Asian spaces being deemed innocent and pure, while outside society is considered impure (Handa, 2003; Prashad, 2000). This project of purity versus impurity, or non-West versus West, is closely linked with modernity and the female form, with scholars speaking to females positioned as cultural preservers. The fears associated with social progress and change, coupled with unbridled freedom, facilitates a context in which diasporic South Asian females and youth suffer moral and social disintegration. South Asian women become the embodiment of cultural preservation, the pure versus the impurity of the outside world, and as such, are responsible for upholding and living the norms and values of ethnic identity (Das Gupta & Dasgupta, 1998; Gupta, 2006; Handa, 2003; Purkayastha, 2005; Roy, 1998; Rudrappa, 2002).

The community of South Asians collaboratively engages in the surveillance of youth. Women are discouraged from dating, from socializing with certain peers, and from drinking or smoking. As these behaviors are associated with the West, women as cultural

preservers need to be South Asian at all times (Grewal, 2005; Handa, 2003; Maira, 1999; Purkayastha, 2005; Rudrappa, 2002; Subramanian, 2013). The community attempts to regulate female sexuality, with women central to ethnic and cultural preservation. Indian American male youth are given much more freedom and do not have the same restrictions placed upon them. Various scholars describe how regulation occurs through gossip (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008; Subramanian, 2013). Gossip involves community members sharing information about South Asian American youth, especially women, pertaining to their interactions in school or interactions with individuals of any racial group within the larger community. If youth engage in transgressions, whether partying, socializing with other individuals with whom parents are not in agreement with, wearing clothes considered inappropriate, or speaking to and engaging youth of the opposite sex in spaces like the mall (Shankar, 2008), the community engages in a type of regulation whereby parents are notified, and children are punished accordingly as they bring shame to themselves and their family (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Thus, the imminent threat of community gossip impacts youth in their actions, making them, at times, think twice before engaging in behavior that may not align with being traditionally Indian. (South Asian youth's resistance to the pressures of community surveillance and gossip are addressed later.)

Community Consumption and the American Dream

As noted earlier, the areas where South Asian communities settle are not the most welcoming at times. This, however, does little to dissuade these communities from trying to find a sense of belonging. Thus far, I have described how South Asians seek belonging

through community functions and get together in religious or cultural spaces. However, closely tied to narratives of belonging is attainment of the American Dream (Prashad, 2012; Shankar, 2008).

To this end, the South Asian community consumes products and cultural productions to build connections amongst one another, solidify a place of belonging in America, and obtain the American Dream. At times, a movie theater within the community shows Bollywood movies, with this event having “droves” of Indian attendees (Shankar, 2008, p.60). The consumption of these movies not only further preserves cultural and ethnic ways of being by displaying movies in native languages, but also speaks to themes that youth identify with, including rebelling against parents or contact with the opposite sex. Moreover, at these events, community members take in samosas and chai during intermissions, reproducing Indian ways of being in American public spaces, exchanging news and knowledge about India, purchasing CDs and DVDs, and demonstrating to youth the importance of maintaining community and enacting India in America (Shankar, 2008).

While the community consumes Bollywood together, there is also the pursuit of status in certain spaces. The pursuit of status is a classed affair. While many individuals desire status and wealth, their inability to consume makes the demonstration of status a competitive and envy-producing endeavor. Those who are unable to consume and attain status on their own do so through other South Asians in the community. Individuals within the community use language that intimates a collective ownership – everyone has made it. After an individual obtains “Desi bling” like cars and electronics (Shankar,

2008), items that have meaning situated within the context of the community, it is not so much “theirs” as it “ours,” and in this naming, individuals in the community whether bonded by family relations or not, use this status to catapult themselves into the American imaginary as belonging, as having a piece of the American Dream. This sense of attainment helps facilitate feelings of belonging and mitigates feelings of otherness within the community. Having situated aspects of the community, I will now address the schooling contexts in the community that students socialize within and inform their identities.

THE SCHOOLING SPACE: NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES THROUGH CAPITALS, CLASS, CULTURE AND THE MODEL MINORITY

Broadly, scholars have spoken to the impact of race in schooling contexts as shaping schooling experiences of minority and ethnic youth. In some cases, qualitative studies indicated how aspects of race become “colormute,” with race surfacing and important when positioning students and/or dynamics between students, yet absent or “mute” when related to student to adult relations (Pollock, 2004). Other scholars have linked learning to identity and informing one another, with learning transpiring through participation in a practice (inside our outside of school), and a racialized identity surfacing when membership in a particular racial/ethnic group is considered an important facet of who one is (Nasir, 2012). These racialized identities then take on different forms contingent upon the ways “the meaning of this membership is defined” (Nasir, 2012, p.94).

In my examination of the literature on schooling contexts and interactions, notions of difference surfaced as paramount and central to interactions between Desi teens, their peers, and their educators. As such, with their dark skin, and especially the White culture that permeates the school space (Apple, 2004; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; Giroux, 2001, 2005), South Asian bodies are positioned as different. This positioning can make fitting in difficult. Moreover, if Desi teens do not adhere to the prescribed ways in which popular discourse has positioned them, they are made different once again. Shankar (2008) notes how South Asian American teens negotiate their difference, with some difference “cool” in school spaces, but “too much” difference that challenges the normative culture of the school as egregious and further marginalizing. In order to engage how South Asian American youth navigate the schooling space as described by the existing literature, this section will treat the schooling context in two formations: formal academic positionings, settings, and negotiations, and informal academic positionings, settings, and negotiations. This categorization allows for the multiplicity and fluidity of interactions between race, class, culture, and gender as they manifest themselves in schooling spaces and impact Desi youth identity formation. Here, formal academic positionings, settings, and negotiations include the thoughts, values, and beliefs of educators, South Asian American youths’ interactions with these individuals, classrooms interactions, as well as school curricula and other formal school materials. Informal academic positionings, settings, and negotiations include actions/interactions in hallways, the cafeteria, other open spaces in the school, as well as interactions amongst peers.

Formal Academic Settings: Educators, Faculty, and Classrooms

Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination

In formal educative spaces, aspects of race, class, culture, gender, religion, and language operate in converging and diverging ways. South Asian students are positioned as different and experience racism and discrimination, often times linked to their unique cultural and linguistic capital. Within the classroom space, educator beliefs are closely tied to the ways in which Desi bodies are positioned in the community. While some Desi teens report positively about their schooling experiences (Frey & Roysircar, 2004; Dunning-Lozano, 2016), other Desi teens in America, Canada and Britain and Australia intimate how teachers patronize students in classrooms through religious, racial, or cultural frames (e.g., Basit, 1997; Bhatti, 1999; Ghuman, 2001; Gillborn, 1997; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Zine's (2001) work with South Asians in Canada notes how teachers speaks to South Asians in slow English and look at female Pakistani students as if to say "oh wow, they let you out of the house" (p.409). In these instances, students' religion, gender and culture become associated with racial and cultural difference, with the treatment of women in Islamic culture considered to be backwards and positioning these students as inferior and not valuing education in formal classroom spaces. Other educators mispronounce names, a racial microaggression, with no care to learn the correct pronunciation of students' names (Kohli & Solóranzo, 2012).

Scholars have also uncovered the ways that South Asian communities' cultural ways of being involve a need to defer to elders, to show respect, and thus, remain quiet in the presence of elders in the U.S. and Canada (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Maira, 2002). In their

classroom interactions, some South Asian students are not vocal, and respond to educators with factual information when faced with a direct question. Moreover, some students grow uncomfortable when faced with certain tasks like brainstorming, and remain quiet when expected to voice and share their own ideas. In these instances, students' culture is positioned as racial difference, with these differences framing interactions in formal schooling contexts both domestically (e.g., Shankar, 2008), as well as Britain and Canada (e.g., Abbas, 2002; Zine, 2001). As such, these students are seen as lacking the appropriate cultural values that garner academic and social success in formal academic spaces, are considered culturally inferior, with these sentiments inculcating a self-conceptualized sense of lack.

Scholars have also noted how deficit narratives propagate within different communities particular to South Asian bodies. Gibson's (1988) study found that some educators believe Punjabi students smell bad in their classrooms. Other scholars highlighted how some Southeast and South Asian American students were positioned as gangsters and discriminated against by teachers and staff (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003; Ngo, 2006). Even more appalling are some educators' interactions in the post-9/11 context, calling students terrorists, or positioning them as others by asking them if they are going to blow-up certain structures (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Maira, 2004a, 2004b). These interactions make it difficult for South Asian students to see themselves as belonging through aspects of their ethnicity, culture and religion. While some educators hold these beliefs, other educators attempt to shield South Asian American/Canadian students from the racial jibes of peers (Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008). However, when other individuals

make racial or discriminatory comments (Raby, 2004), some educators do not step in, supporting the wrongdoers in their comments, or worse yet, punishing students who receive the derisive commentary rather than the perpetrators (Zine, 2001). When parents of Desi children enter the schooling space for disciplinary reasons relating to their children, some parents feel the discriminatory gaze from faculty and staff (Shankar, 2008). As such, South Asian American/Canadian students' racial difference is solidified in formal academic spaces through educators' deficit framed beliefs.

The ways that educators position and treat South Asian students is similar to how guidance counselors conceive of, position, and track these students. Scholars depict how guidance counselors posit the culture behind the Islamic faith as not valuing education (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012, 2014; Zine, 2001). Gender and culture intersect in the marginalization of Islamic Desi women as they are thought not to value education and "pitied" because their culture does not value women both in America and Britain (Dwyer, 2000; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012, p.46). Zine (2001) notes how several students of South Asian descent in a Canadian high school felt they were placed in lower tracks because of guidance counselors' low expectations of them, causing students to hold contempt for guidance counselors as students feel that counselors work against youths' best interests. Ghaffar-Kucher's (2014) work with Pakistani American students shows how their school creates a formal space for Desi teen youth to learn Urdu. While this class begins as bilingual, it is not to teach Urdu so much as it is to teach students of Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani descent the norms of American culture. Guidance counselors use this class as a holding classroom for Desi teen youth, tracking, segregating, and containing them

from their peers under the guise of inclusion. In these ways, guidance counselors and school leadership view students with different cultural backgrounds through deficit perspectives and discriminate against them through their daily interactions and tracking practices.

While students receive racial jibes and discriminatory jeers from educators, the formal curriculum does not aid students in finding a stable ground from which to launch themselves in formal schooling spaces. Many times South Asian faces, voices, stories, and migratory movements are absent from curricula (Asher, 2008; Handa, 2003; Skerret, 2011; Zine, 2001), or contain inaccurate Eurocentric representations in curricula and library books at school (Kurien, 2005). In these ways, students are unable to conceptualize how they fit within the sociocultural and historical landscape and are not shown how South Asians' labor contributes contemporarily. This makes finding belonging in the school space more difficult. Moreover, as other students are not exposed to a valuing presentation of South Asian American/Canadian students with whom they share spaces, Desi teens and their culture are further othered and positioned as different in the schooling space. Kurien (2005) notes how some students are not bothered by these representations and continue with their daily lives, while other students respond to these inaccuracies by seeking out their own literature, doing their own “digging,” and ignoring what they are told from educators in order to draw their own conclusions about India and Indian history (p.444).

Culture and Language as a Positioning Device

Thus far, I have described how educators and faculty members embody racist and discriminatory attitudes, and deficit ideologies, when interacting with South Asian American/Canadian students, with formal curricula misrepresenting or excluding South Asia and South Asians. Absent from my analysis are notions of language and how linguistic capital positions students in formal schooling contexts. Of particular interest is how language use is taken up within aspects of culture and class. Class here entails socioeconomic standing and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Scholars speak to the level of English proficiency and age as impacting academic achievement when Desi students enter American schools (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2001). There are students who do not have a firm grasp on English, and consequently, get placed in ESL and other non-collect-track classes domestically, and in Britain and Canada (Gibson, 1988; Gillborn, 1997; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2001), even though many students *do* know and command English but are tracked into remedial English programs nonetheless (Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2001).

In some studies in the U.S. and Canada, administrators overheard students speaking in native languages and exercised increased vigilance as these students may cause trouble, more than likely an additional consequence of the post-9/11 context (e.g., Shankar, 2008). Within these aspects of linguistic capital arise notions of class and culture with language used to mark racial and cultural difference. It may be considered a class and cultural issue that some Desi teens use their native languages in school while others use English in formal academic spaces. Middle-class and upper-middle-class Desi

teens do not use their native language in school while newly immigrated, or lower-class, “FOBby” peers do use native languages (e.g., Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Some educators and faculty conceptualize language use as a cultural issue, as students in different cultural groups speak in native languages rather than English and do not have the proper culture to interact in the schooling space. Their native language use consequently justifies their placement in ESL programs. Shankar’s (2008) and Handa’s (2003) work demonstrates how students’ language preferences are used as a marker of cultural difference in America and Canada as these students do not have the appropriate cultural aptitudes that are required in the schooling space for social and academic success.

While educators and administrators discriminate against South Asian students in their classrooms and schools using students’ language and culture, another formal space created by the school is cultural celebration days. These celebratory days allow students a chance to express cultural and ancestral heritages that may not align with the dominant culture of the school. Handa’s (2003) study of South Asian Canadian youth includes a celebratory day that had a karaoke machine from Japan, belly dancers and glass walkers, as well as Indian women performing classical Indian dance. In Shankar’s (2008) study of Indian American and Pakistani American teens, the week of celebration included cultural performances with intense preparation and rehearsals. One performance had students remix dances that incorporate aspects of traditional Bollywood dance with bhangra or hip-hop music. Most telling about these days is the consumption of foods from different countries, in tandem with authentic clothing, that further adds to the spectacle of the

performative atmosphere (Handa, 2003; Ngo, 2010; Shankar, 2008). From a formal academic perspective, these celebratory days become a proxy for the school – a tacit acknowledging of the different cultures present in school but glossed over or excluded in curriculum. While under the guise of tolerance and cultural appreciation, these events do little to spread cultural appreciation, as they treat the different cultures that comprise the school in exotic and fixed ways and contribute to constructing the liminality of South Asian students in American and Canadian schools (McCarthy, 1998).

Desi Teens and the Model Minority Discourse

While the faculty and staff take discriminatory and racist attitudes towards Desi students, they also position some of these students as the model minority. This typification provides an additional layer of complication to how educators and faculty members conceive of Desi students in formal academic spaces. Often seen as high achievers, many Desi teens are placed in college-bound academic tracks (Agarwal, 1991; Asher, 2002; Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Lee 2006, 2009; Ng & Lee, 2007; Shankar, 2008). On the whole, Asian students tend to academically achieve to higher degrees than their majority group peers (although minimally), as well as other minority group peers (Gibson, 1988), and paradoxically, have parents who do not have the same educational achievements or command of the English language (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988). In these ways, these students exemplify the model minority discourse for their educators and peers, demonstrating that, while othered through linguistic and cultural frames, this othering does not interfere with their ability to achieve.

However, differences in achievement are closely related to the age of arrival and entrance into American schools. Gibson (1988) notes in her study of Punjabi American youth that those students with longer exposure to the U.S. environment perform better than newer arrivals. In Canada and America, Zine (2001) and Ghaffar-Kucher (2014) note how some individuals are improperly placed in lower academic tracks making their ability to academically succeed in relation to other model minority students a challenging endeavor. Similarly, class operates in distinct ways in regards to the model minority stereotype. Lee's (2006) and Ngo's (2010) work with Southeast and South Asian American students shows that those from upper-middle-class and middle-class backgrounds are more highly achieving than their peers, solidifying class distinctions between different minority groups. Scholars in the U.S. have found that those Desi teen students that engage in school activities using English and the established or accepted customs of interaction indicated by the school space are deemed model minority students, while those who do not call into question their model minority status and further mark themselves as others, damaging their chances as being placed in college level tracks (Gibson, 1988; Lee, 2009; Shankar, 2008). Notions of gender further complicate the construction of the model minority. Gibson (1988) found that boys are more likely than girls to take science and math courses. This means that, while male Desi students become the model minority, those females who do not take these courses, and students of both sex taking ESL or other remedial courses, are not thought of as model minority students and are further othered because of their lack of academic achievement. Going further, Wing's (2007) work with Asian Americans broadly (East Asians, South Asians,

Southeast Asians), and Shankar's (2008) work with South Asian American youth born in America, found that students who do not academically achieve do not receive the extra attention from educators that non-Asian and non-South Asian youth receive, as the model minority stereotype makes these students invisible. Scholars in the U.S. and abroad find that educators and staff place intense pressure on these students to perform, and yet, will not help them at times when they do not live up to model minority expectation (e.g., Ghuman, 2001; Shankar, 2008). This sends a distinct message to students – perform like you are supposed to and know how to, or be left adrift.

Informal Academic Spaces: Negotiating Difference and Seeking Belonging

Racism and discrimination are pivotal in formal academic settings when positioning South Asian American/Canadian students, as educators and other faculty use students' cultural and linguistic capitals to mark aspects of racial, classed, cultural, and religious based difference. With difference understood as foreignness (Zine, 2000), individuals wish to belong. In informal academic settings, race, class, culture, and religion figure prominently in South Asian students' lives in the U.S., Britain and Canada (e.g., Abbas, 2002; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2001). Desi teens use self-made naming systems to categorize and sort the cliques and social groups that move through the schooling space. Consequently, these cliques and social circles impact how Desi teens form their identities in schools.

Students are highly susceptible to social pressures when navigating the schooling space and trying to fit in (to be addressed shortly). However, much like the educators and faculty members that give derisive looks and racial/discriminatory remarks, Desi teens'

peers (of multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds) do the same. For instance, Canadian studies have documented how peers give female Muslim students seething looks when these students wear their hijab to school (e.g., Handa, 2003; Zine, 2000). Studies in the U.S. have also described how Desi students are teased for wearing a turban or having long hair (e.g., Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Gibson, 1988). Here the confluence of religion, culture, and race as creating difference is evident. Scholars describe how South Asian students in the U.S. are jibed for the color of their skin (Agarwal, 1991; Gibson, 1988; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008), called Hindoo in derogatory ways (Maira, 2002), are told that they smell bad, have to leave the country, or worse yet, receive physical abuse, and have food, pins, and cigarettes thrown at them (Gibson, 1988). Other scholars studying South Asians in the U.S. and Canada point to how the post 9/11 context has increased these incidents, with students beaten up and called terrorists (e.g., Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Lee, 2006; Maira, 2004a; Purkayastha, 2005; Verma, 2004).

Desi students in the U.S. and Canada use social groups as one vehicle to find a sense of belonging (e.g., Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008; Talbani & Hasalani, 2000). Social cliques are important as they orient students with certain feelings about school. These sentiments then impact Desi teens' socialization patterns and achievement. Shankar's (2008) study demonstrates how cliques search for safe spaces on school grounds to 'kick it' and spend time together. While youth self-segregate, teachers and faculty of the school are also complicit in segregating different social groups through language practices and interactions with students. Racial and ethnic lines are implicit in the formation of social cliques (Shankar, 2008). Of interest here is the intersections between race and ethnicity.

While race is a socially constructed phenotypic notion of difference, ethnicity entails an ideological construct or cultural system with its own, shared sense of community values, beliefs, and customs (Maira, 2002). As Desi youth appear phenotypically similar, their different ethnic backgrounds of Hindu, Punjabi, or Pakistani entail different modes of behavior and different world outlooks that impact the ways they use language and socialize in schools towards encountering a sense of belonging and forming their identities. Many Desi students choose social circles and peer groups with Desis like themselves in America (e.g., Asher, 2008; Shankar, 2008), Canada (e.g., Handa, 2003), and Britain (e.g., Robinson, 2005). Desi teens make this choice due to fellow South Asian American/Canadian peers understanding what it is like to be a Desi student in American schools, as these peer circles provide a “comfort” that is not verbalized but understood within the group (Shankar, 2008, p.64).

While race/ethnicity plays into peer group selection, aspects of class, and class as culture seen through language use, become another factor in forming social groups. Language use is determined by language ideologies, which become cultural representations in the social world (Gal & Woolward, 2001; Kroskrity, 2000; Shankar, 2008). Desi teens use different linguistic styles to build solidarities with each other and differentiate themselves *amongst* other South Asian American youth in Canada and the U.S. (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). This section will focus on Shankar’s (2008) and Handa’s (2003) work in America and Canada that describes the naming systems used to position South Asians. Some of these categories that sort South Asian youth in schools are “fresh off the boat (FOBs/FOBby),” “refugee (ref),” “normal,” “cool,” “popular” and

“tight,” “geek,” and “neutral,” with each category entailing its own class/cultural aptitudes and designating appropriate/inappropriate behavior in schooling spaces (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008).

Handa (2003) states that “FOB” and “ref” are used to describe typical Indian tendencies of being “gossipy,” “snobby,” “not very nice,” “ignorant,” or acting with an “attitude” (Handa, 2003, p.87). Shankar (2008) terms FOBS and FOBby as describing that which is “...unhip, unattractive and generally undesirable from India or elsewhere” (p.8). The FOB moniker applies to Desi individuals who were born in the U.S. and Canada, with the meaning of FOB context and relationally dependent (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Shankar (2008) describes FOBs as usually not wearing the trendiest clothing or semiotics that have value in the school space due to their lower-middle-class or middle-class status (also found in Pyke & Dang, 2003). They also tend to avoid participation in extra curricular activities. These individuals are termed FOBs because of their native language use in school, their peer group associations, and their marginalized social status in the school’s hierarchy. As such, FOBs build community with each other and ‘kick it’ in peripheral areas of the school campus or cafeteria. FOBs do, however, participate in observing other upper-class rituals of style and gossip amongst each other about what fellow South Asian American peers are doing in the schooling space, and simultaneously manage the gossip used against their own group.

Shankar (2008) also draws attention to the gendered use of language amongst FOBs. FOB boys engage in dialogue centered on inappropriate topics of girls and sex and use curse words. These dialogues help build community, forge a heightened sense of

masculinity given the topics of conversation, and define themselves in relation to other South Asian American youth. FOB girls are more cautious about the language they use and the spaces in which they congregate, as their language use is connected to notions of propriety and proper Desi female behavior. As such, they do not curse, and separate themselves from FOB boys. In these ways, the community's requirements of appropriate female behavior impacts FOB girls in schools, with the requirement of chastity and propriety for females an impetus for separation from those who curse and act in loud, unbecoming ways.

Shankar (2008) describes Geeks as another social group who tend to be middle-class or upper-middle-class and have parents that are involved in their education. Their cultural capital from their upper-middle-class status allows them to better self-orient within the schooling space and the school culture, aiding in their efficacy and ability to traverse the schooling context. Geeks restrict their native language use in school spaces. Geeks do not overemphasize aspects of style, but take care in their presentation. They are heavily invested in their grades and seek A's in all of their classes, and as such, tend to be socially ostracized at times due to their inability to interact with ease. Geeks are high achieving and highly respectful towards the school and their educators, and are rewarded with unused science classrooms to 'kick it' during their scheduled lunch periods. Gender relations for geeks operate distinctly from that of FOBs. There are far more male geeks than female geeks, which speaks to the ways that students are tracked by educators and school faculty.

Populars are the final social category that Shankar (2008) highlights. These individuals are middle-class or upper-middle-class and also control their native language use. Unlike geeks, populars are involved in school activities and socialize along classed lines. Populars are revered for their style choices, their good looks, smarts, popularity, and their knowledge of both Desi and American lifestyles (Handa, 2003). Populars do not have a designated area to ‘kick it’ and instead use the whole school space to interact with one another. Gender operates in an interesting way for populars. While males tended to dominate the geek cliques, females tend to dominate the popular grouping. Their upper-middle-class status allows their parents to support their buying habits of clothing and cars, the Desi ‘bling’ that demonstrates status (Shankar, 2008). Middle-class populars are more careful about their purchases but still participate in buying name brand clothes. Of particular interest is the reach across racial lines for some popular Desi teens. Some middle-class popular females choose to align their style with a “Latina-inspired ‘gangsta’ look,” where they tweeze their eyebrows into arches and wear their hair in slick ponytails (Shankar, 2008, p.86). Still, other middle-class popular males look to African American hip-hop culture for their Desi ‘bling’ and status, choosing to wear large, puffy jackets, baggy pants, gold chains, track suits, and even have their hair faded (Maira, 1999, 2002; Shankar, 2008; Sharma, 2010). These instantiations of gendered popular style are context dependent, and demonstrate the fluidity of class and culture in how students self-express and are positioned/conceived of by peers and educators alike.

Desi teens find the need to differentiate between themselves in schooling spaces, with the expression of differentiation occurring in informal schooling spaces. Of interest

is how each group, through a confluence of class and language choices, navigates and *separates* themselves as different from one another in order to obtain status and a sense of belonging in the schooling space. Both Handa (2003) and Shankar (2008) demonstrate how some Desi teens elect to avoid certain South Asian peer groups in Canada and America, moving away from narrow ideas of community towards multiracial and multi-religious social spaces. This becomes a challenge as cliques form along racial and ethnic lines, and African Americans' or Latinos/as'n inability to understand the pressures of being a Desi teenager (Asher, 2008; Kurien, 2005; Shankar, 2008). It must be noted that what individuals self-identify as their group may not be the way that others position these individuals in the schooling space (Shankar, 2008). As such, notions of belonging through consumption and the cultures particular to FOBs, geeks, and populars become paramount to belonging and garnering positive experiences/outlooks as they pertain to the schooling space.

Another key aspect to South Asians finding belonging in schools relates to extracurricular clubs revolving around ethnicity. Zine's (2000, 2001) work with South Asians in Canada, and Shankar's (2008) work with South Asians in California, describes how extracurricular clubs like Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) and Indian Student Associations (ISAs) are another avenue students use to belong. These associations create a social and institutional space for a subculture that works against the Eurocentric curricula and White dominant culture within the school. These organizations are also politically charged, with MSAs in Canada fighting for a prayer space in the school to create a religious subculture within the school that allows for students to mitigate the

extent to which they feel othered (Hebdige, 1979; Zine, 2000). These associations act as support systems for South Asian students in America and abroad and help them navigate aspects of peer pressure. Here, peer pressure refers to the need to act in accordance with the dominant culture of the schooling space, particularly the aspects of Western society where teens engage in social activity that involves drinking, smoking, and contact with the opposite sex. Students receive religious and academic support that acts as a buffer to social pressures that involve drugs and alcohol. Of important note is the difficulty in establishing and maintaining these organizations and networks. Strong student leadership is required to form the organization and maintain the insulatory, positive peer pressure approach that these organizations foster. Zine (2001) notes that as these networks of support break down, Western transgressions once again begin to resurface.

THE HOME SPACE: CULTURAL PRESERVATION, CULTURAL NEGOTIATION, AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE

The school space impacts students' identities and academic trajectories through racist and discriminatory remarks from peers and educators, tracking based on students' native language use, and the classificatory naming systems used by students to sort and categorize one another. In general, the literature suggests that the home space is a sacred space with the world divided in two: the outside world of work and immoral rampant capital and racism, and the inside world of the home with its own moral spiritual culture that requires preservation and cherishing (Rudrappa, 2002; Prashad, 2000). Prashad (2000) states that the home space inculcates feelings of empowerment, "superiority" and "dignity" (p.105), becoming a cultural bastion (Rudrappa, 2002). Scholars in the U.S. and

Canada also describe how the home embodies a feeling of longing, of nostalgia, for India and Indian ways of being (Bhatia, 2007; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2014; Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002; Prashad, 2000). The production of nostalgia is based on the absence of a “cultural anchor” and the presumption of an earlier time where “cultural wholeness” was possible and obtained (Maira, 2002, p.55). Narayan (2004) describes how South Asian families create cultural anchors for themselves by practicing a private culture where India and Indian styles of living are present and performed through narratives and stories. Mehta and Belk (1991) describe how South Asian families also use and display cultural artifacts in the home like wooden carvings, musical tapes and videos, and tapestries to create a sense of India in a different land.

This section will address the multiple conceptualizations and interactions of the home space that work to preserve culture/ethnicity in Desi youth in two sections. In general, the literature suggests that home space interactions aim to preserve culture in children through consumption practices and specific educational, behavioral, occupational, and social expectations. As such, the first section will address the home space as a sacred space of cultural preservation through consumption practices, gendered expectations of children, language practices, and surveillance. The second section will address youths’ moments of resistance to inculcated ways of being through their own consumption practices, cultural negotiations, and resistive behavioral strategies.

The Home Space as a Sacred Space: Cultural Preservation through Consumption, Gendered Parental Expectations, Language and Surveillance

On the whole, parents inculcate aspects of cultural purity and cultural authenticity through consuming authentic foods and purchased goods from Indian grocers with Indian brands. These connections aid in recreating India in America (Maira, 2002; Purkayastha, 2005; Shankar, 2008). Scholars indicate how families in America and Canada consume Bollywood movies or South Asian television channels together, helping to build notions of community within the family as well as helping solidify native language fluency (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Grewal, 2005; Mani, 2012; Purkayastha, 2005; Shankar, 2008). In these ways, the family's participation in global flows of capital help the home space preserve culture and recreate imaginings of India that children incorporate as they grow and move inside and outside the home.

By creating a vision of India within the home space, cultural preservation begins to take root and impact Desi youth. Parents hold strict, high educational expectations for Desi youth, especially for those children of the post-1965 migrations (Bhatia, 2007). Scholars describe how some parents stress attendance, completing homework, earning top test scores, devoting time to studies, achieving higher than fellow Desi peers, and in some instances, calling the school to request more work (Asher, 2002; Bhatia, 2007; Bhattacharya & Schoppelrey, 2004; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Leonard, 1997; Mani, 2002; Shankar, 2008). Various scholars also highlight the ways that immigrant groups use the educational system for social uplift, working harder than other minority and majority group members (Asher, 2002; Gibson, 1988; Ngo, 2006). In these ways,

academic success preserves culture by increasing family status and reputation through access to top tier universities, and later, high-paying jobs.

However, at times, parental involvement in their children's education is class dependent. While families of all class backgrounds stress academic achievement, scholars suggest that the cultural capital of some lower-middle-class and middle-class families does not provide them the knowledge of the ways to contest how their children are tracked (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Ngo, 2006; Shankar, 2008). On the other hand, Shankar (2008) describes how some upper-middle-class parents are involved in their children's education by speaking to faculty members and educators alike. These parents' educational experiences and achievements provide them cultural capital that they pass to their children, allowing both parent and child to navigate educational contexts with greater efficacy.

Scholars note how South Asian parents inform children of the jobs they are to obtain, stressing the need to be doctors or engineers (Asher, 2002; Min & Jang, 2009; Shankar, 2008). A gendered split in occupations existed in the past with men encouraged to work in technical fields and women working as secretaries (Gibson, 1988). Contemporarily in the U.S., both women and men are encouraged to pursue high status professions like doctors, lawyers, and engineers (Asher, 2002; Bhatia, 2007). These jobs require top grades, and in this way, scholars indicate how parents hold up the model minority discourse as important and self-defining, and reify this message through interactions with their children (Bhatia, 2007; Klassen, 2004; Prashad, 2000; Shankar, 2008).

The literature also suggests how some home space interactions instill specific codes of behavior, dress, and socialization along gendered lines enforced through surveillance. Shankar's (2008) study found that many Desi parents want their children to have light skin to increase family prestige, telling daughters to avoid the sun. Other scholars cite how girls are sometimes told they cannot date or mingle with individuals of the opposite sex (Maira, 2002; Purkayastha, 2005; Shankar, 2008; Subramanian, 2013). These gendered expectations for girls are used to preserve culture as women are seen as carriers of culture, ethnic authenticity, and the family name in the U.S. and Canada (Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Jain, 2011; Leonard, 1997; Maira, 2002; Prashad, 2000; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2000). Various scholars also note how some parents enforce these expectations by exercising control over where children move and who they are with, monitoring incoming and outgoing phone calls to the house, and using other Desis in community networks to aid in their surveillance (Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008; Subramanian, 2013).

Scholars in the U.S. note how some parents discourage South Asian children's participation in extra curricular activities such as sports or academic clubs, as well as attending official school functions like Homecoming and Prom that bear too risky a "nocturnal nature" (Durham, 2004; Shankar, 2008, p.88). Some lower-middle-class and middle-class families generally do not allow their children to attend, while some upper-middle-class families who support their children's consumerism allow their Desi teens to attend these events with an elder as a chaperone. Shankar (2008) finds that gossip, and the fear of gossip tarnishing the family's reputation, leads parents to limit their children's

participation at school functions as well as other social activities like going to the mall. Other scholars note how some South Asian parents regulate clothing, hairstyles, jewelry, peer groups, and the ability to leave the house (Handa, 2003; Purkayastha, 2005; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2001). In stark contrast, Shankar (2008) and Maira (2002) note how many Desi teen boys do not receive the same attention nor have the same limitations as girls, as boys are linked to class and social mobility through occupational attainment rather than cultural continuity and preservation. In these ways, the limiting of social activities becomes the definition of being South Asian (Handa, 2003).

While gender plays an important role in the socialization and freedom of Desi teens, the home space also preserves culture through parent specified language use along religious and class-based lines. Shankar (2008) notes that many Muslim and Sikh teens tend to use native languages in the home space to preserve culture by reinforcing Islamic traditions and beliefs. However, Desi Hindus are the least likely to be fluent in their native language as their parents are fluent in English and speak English at home (Dave et al., 2000; Min & Kim, 2009). Dave and colleagues (2000), and Shankar (2008), also make clear that the class implications in language use are closely tied to the cultural capital of these parents, with those households that speak English (upper-middle-class and some middle-class) holding jobs that entail capital that helps foster academic success in America. On the other hand, there are also some South Asian American teens of middle-class or lower-middle-class status may not have the same capital with regards to English, and are unable to interact in schools with the same efficacy leading to a different academic prowess. In these ways, language becomes key to continuing and inculcating

cultural ways of being, and is also heavily linked to academic achievement and social cliques as highlighted earlier.

The home space becomes a space of cultural purity and specific gendered expectations for girls and boys, all towards cultural preservation. While appearing strict, Handa (2003) notes that some Desi children understand that their parents are concerned with what is best for them (Handa, 2003). In these ways, some parents stress the need to take the good from both worlds, the American world and the Desi world, and blend the two into a (new) South Asian ethnic identity (Gibson, 1988; Maira, 1999, 2002; Purkayastha, 2005). As the home space encourages these ways of being and behavior, children tend to adhere to their parents' mandates. However, this is not to say that, at times, Desi teens actively resist these positionings.

The Home Space as Constant Negotiation and Resistance

In general, the literature situates being a Desi teen as a complicated and constantly negotiated endeavor. While Desi teens believe in the values of the home space and their parents' lessons and stipulations, scholars indicate that many South Asian American/Canadian teens desire social time with peers and friends away from their families. Many times, the conflicts between Desi teens and their parents center on a lack of freedom and the inability to go out, conflicts that require careful negotiations and avenues of resistance (Agarwal, 1991; Handa, 2003; Rahman & Witenstein, 2013; Shankar, 2008).

While Desi youth consume aspects of India through various ethnoscaapes and mediascaapes that their parents encourage participation within (Appadurai, 1996), many

teens also consume other television programming, including MTV and hip-hop/pop videos and videos, even consuming MTV Desi (Nair & Balaji, 2008; Shankar, 2008). Various scholars demonstrate the strong presence of hip-hop in the lives of Desi teens and adults (Asher, 2008; Nair, 2008; Maira, 2002; Prashad, 2008; Sharma, 2010). Desis balance their consumption of ethnic forms of cultural music and productions with hip-hop, as noted earlier in the confluence (context and class specific) of middle-class Desi boys adopting baggy jeans in their schooling spaces.

Nair and Balaji (2008) describe how Desi teens consume and latch onto hip-hop as a form of resistance against parental values and values of the dominant culture, becoming an additional form of expression and style learned and practiced inside of the home and performed outside of the home. Other scholars denote how Desi teens also take to Bhangra music, a fusion between Indian music and aspects of hip-hop music that create a hybrid bhangra style, often performed on cultural days of celebration in schools (Maira, 1999, 2002; Shankar, 2008; Sharma, 2010). Going further, Gopinath (1995) highlights how youths' engagement with this style of music becomes a response to the necessity for "coherence and stability" within specific White/Desi "racial and cultural contexts" (p.312).

Desi teens are creative in the ways in which they resist the mandates, expectations, and requirements of their community and family. Shankar (2008) describes how, sometimes, Desi teens' older siblings vouch for their whereabouts, stymying both the community's and their parents' attempts to regulate Desi youth behavior. At other times, older siblings accompany younger siblings out, resisting their parents' wishes but

providing a chaperone to ensure that the family's name is not tarnished. There are also two additional ways South Asian American/Canadian youth subvert their parents and engage in behaviors they desire; lying (Agarwal, 1991; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008), and going behind parents' backs (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Some Desi youth lie to their parents regarding their whereabouts, who they are with, or what they are doing. Handa (2003) and Shankar (2008) describe how lying is used to gain more freedom and maintain the image of the good South Asian American/Canadian daughter (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Sometimes other Desi teens go behind their parents' backs, leaving the house in one form of clothing, but changing to wear something more revealing or something considered unfit by parents (Handa, 2003; Gibson, 1988; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008). Gibson (1988) also describes how, on some occasions, students fake notes for absences or cut class so their parents never find out and exercise punishment. Gibson (1988), Handa (2003), and Shankar (2008) also indicate that some Desi teens clean their rooms frequently to get rid of notes that indicate fraternizing with the opposite sex, or other items that they feel parents might become angry over, in order to keep their affairs on the 'down low' (Gibson, 1988).

Conclusion

Desi teens engage with and negotiate aspects of their community, school, and home interactions, all towards forming their identities. Their class status informs their cultural capitals and language use, with these two attributes heavily informing how they are positioned based on race, culture, and gender with distinct implications for their educational achievements. While Desi parents and community members stress their own

versions of South Asian cultural ways of being, these notions are taken in, manipulated, and “reinvented” by the second generation to forge the “South Asian American” form(s), which are context and relationally dependent (Purkayastha, 2005, p.139). Throughout these negotiations and interactions, Desi teens are confronted by/with notions of ‘authenticity’ and are expected to act in ‘Indian’ ways.

At times, Indian ways of acting/being entail a proclivity towards academics, and at other times, the need to speak in native languages, especially on cultural days of celebration. However, these same authentic ways of being Indian also become limiting and problematic. Aligning with aspects of dominant White culture positions them as sell-outs to their own cultural group and community, while using their native language and home-informed ways of being further reifies their othered status and marginalization in schools while making approved socialization difficult. In these ways, being a Desi teen in schools becomes a complicated and challenging endeavor, walking a tight-rope of culture between the spaces they traverse (Handa, 2003), accommodating but not assimilating (Gibson 1988), enacting aspects of symbolic ethnicity during safe and/or appropriate moments (Bhatia, 2007), while also playing down their ethnicity in unsafe moments (Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008).

The literature stipulating South Asians’ schooling experiences in America, Canada, Britain and Australia presented here demonstrates how South Asian students’ racial, cultural, ethnic and religious identities become key in marking difference. These scholars’ work demonstrates the many strands composing South Asian difference, whether related to language, culture and religion, or different semiotics. The literature

reviewed intimates how the racial and cultural identities South Asians in diaspora form are relational, locality dependent, and formed in-between their multiple interactions between home and school.

While some of the literature reviewed here stems from investigations into schooling contexts in the U.S. (e.g., Asher, 2002; Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008), many of the school-oriented investigations are from Canada and Britain (e.g., Gillborn, 1997; Handa, 2003), with a large majority of the literature emerging from the United States conducted by sociologists and cultural anthropologists (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Prashad, 2000; Rudrappa, 2002). Thus, in general terms, this study aims to engage a traditionally marginalized group from educational scholarly research and examine how South Asian Americans, and Indian Americans specifically, directly experience the schooling context with schooling interactions and dynamics with peers and educators shaping their identities, following paths of previous ethnographic research examining ethnic students' experiences in schools.

However, at a deeper level, this project seeks to examine the identity formation of Indian American youth in a particular historical moment. Asian Americans are touted as a model minority, as the highest income earners in the United States. Thus, in some ways then, this study seeks to interrogate the identity (both racial and cultural) "cost" that Indian American students pay in order to maintain this elite status in the U.S., and how payment of this cost impacts and shapes Indian American students' conceptualizations of self within a school culture that stresses/places great importance on academic achievement. Included in this cost is a direct focus on how pedagogical dynamics

shape/impact the racial and cultural identities of Indian American students, a unique contribution to the existing educational literature and new terrain particular to the schooling experiences of South Asian Americans. Moreover, this study seeks to chronicle how the neoliberal educative moment in a highly competitive schooling context impacts and shapes the racial and cultural identities of students positioned/conceptualized as the model minority, and how achievement within this type of school culture serves to position and solidify racial and cultural difference. These insights to the cost at which Indian American students seek achievement speaks back to the burden of being the model minority and the highest income earners in the United States, and how overarching discursive positionings and ways of knowing/making sense of South Asians in America underpin how Indian American students experience a highly achieving school context. Not only does this project begin to illuminate the contours of the gap particular to South Asians in educational research, it seeks to contribute to existing ethnographic work by examining how a largely homogenous and highly privileged schooling context creates a particular brand of school culture with its own particular schema of creating, positioning, and perpetuating discourses of difference attributed to being Indian in a setting containing a flattened school culture. Having reviewed the literature, I will now describe the theoretical framework that governs this investigation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature reviewed highlights the multiple ways that race, ethnicity, class, culture, religion, region, and language are used to position South Asians in schools, and in turn, impact Desi teens' identities how they negotiate their worlds, act in their worlds,

and traverse their worlds. I use a multifaceted theoretical approach to situate what I consider to be distinct and important aspects that intersect and/or diverge to conceptualize identity formation for Indian American youth. One component of the framework situates Indian bodies in the U.S. and the historical (and contemporary) ways in which the East became known in the West, informing how Indian American students make sense of themselves and how they are positioned by others through postcolonial theory and Orientalism. The framework for this study also addresses aspects of race and racialization by locating Indian American students as “space invaders” towards understanding how youth make sense of race when coming to know themselves and their peers, and how racial self-conceptualizations impact interactions between their home, school, and community. The framework also positions Indian American student identity as linked to notions of “cultural identity in diaspora,” and how individuals form cultural identities given their diasporic origins and ways in which they negotiate between their native culture and aspects of dominant culture. The final component of the framework considers how Indian American students form their identities through exercising agency and resistance to different mandates of the home, school, and community.

Situating the ‘East’ in the ‘West’: Postcolonial Theory and Orientalism

The overarching theoretical framing for this investigation utilizes postcolonial theory. The term postcolonial can itself be problematic, as a true shift from colonial ways of knowing and being has yet to be realized. As such, I use postcolonial to mean a move towards the post-, to examine how contexts are simultaneously shaped/not shaped by colonial ways of being. Postcolonial theory works against the ways in which the world

was known through quests of colonialism and imperialism (Said, 1978). Postcolonial work moves away from Western humanist forms of knowing and knowledge (Lyotard, 1992), and the Eurocentric domination of everyday life that creates universal narratives of knowing and being (Chakrabarty, 2000; Said, 1978), towards a new humanities that becomes a project of psychological and historical recovery from a “history still in process” (Lloyd, 1993, p.11). This involves remembering and revisiting colonial pasts to uncover the relationships between colonizer and colonized and making known the exclusions that privilege Western canonical knowledge that informs present day realities. Postcolonial work seeks to re-write knowledge in the public sphere, to refuse the primacy of Europe (Fanon, 1965), challenging the unequal distribution of power (Said, 1983). Moreover, postcolonial approaches allow for an examination of identity as in-between or “not-quite,” resisting dominant culture in time-, place-, and space-specific ways (Bhabha, 1996).

Additionally, a postcolonial approach allows insights into how transnational capital and participation in capitalism re-draws the boundaries and re-writes the relationships between center and margin (Spivak, 1993), garnering new details into the evolving ways that South Asian Americans are interpellated into the polity. By debunking notions of universality and highlighting the political investment in the creation of official knowledge, gendered norms, and cultural ways of being, a re-centering and re-valuing of marginalized non-European knowledges can ensue (Chakrabarty, 2000), attempting to understand how postcolonial individuals negotiate daily life and form their identities. Postcolonial theory becomes relevant to educational studies to address aspects

of identity, marginalization, oppression, difference, and representation, especially for racially minoritized youth (Asher, 2008). A postcolonial framing becomes especially useful for engaging “transgressive” Indian American youth who embody the merging of European “ethnic immigrants” with that of “colonized racial minorities,” providing insights into “new immigrant integration” evidenced through experiences in schools (Kibria, 2002, p.3).

An investigation into how Indian/Indian American bodies are positioned, conceptualized, and conceived of contemporarily requires a treatment of how bodies from the ‘East’ became known in the ‘West’. While West and East ontologically co-construct one another, it was also said that the “East was an invention of the West” (Said, 1978, p.1). The West invaded the East through imperial expeditions aimed at colonization. In these historical processes of conquest, visibility and the power of sight were the instrumental colonizing devices used to create metanarratives. Westerners arrived on Eastern shores and documented observations of individuals or collectives, with their documentation becoming official knowledge that was brought back home for display in museums (Bhattacharyya, 1998; Willinsky, 1998). Museums today are visited on holidays and school trips, inculcating a sense of nostalgia as to how the world was, and still is, meant to be (Willinsky, 1998). The impacts of these forms of settler colonialism are both deep and far-reaching, teaching individuals how to “divide the world...[and] read the exotic, primitive, and timeless identity of the other, whether in skin color, hair texture, or the inflections of taste and tongue” (Willinsky, 1998, p.19). Colonial imperialism not only plundered lands, resources, and lives, but also colonized knowledge

and put forth one version of the world for all to know. These processes of conquest and knowledge production solidified the superiority of the West and inferiority of the East, and developed institutions like schooling to perpetuate these narratives.

Through the multiple “mis-meetings” (Bauman, 2000) between colonizer and colonized, imperialism and modernity worked symbiotically to decrease the distance between primitive and civilized, forging a “science of our humanity,” characterized by imperialism’s will to know (Willinsky, 1998, p.25). This became realizable through the heavy exchange of ideas, an “intellectual mercantilism” of imperialism, whereby indigenous knowledges and resources were plundered (Césaire, 1972), then used to create “universal theories of knowledge” that informed colonies and those colonized that they would always be *outside*, marginalized, and on the “periphery of learning” (Willinsky, 1998, p.32). The known world unfurled with fields of anthropology, philology, and anatomy revised in accordance with the new world order, and new workers “devoted to colonial conquest by classification and categorization” occupying posts in universities, government, and industry (Willinsky, 1998, p.26). Imperialism’s institutions represented and reified colonial thought, created information and controlled it, and propagated (mis)information through lectures and texts that glorified global domination and capitalism. These processes created “common-senses” particular to race and gender, as markers formed and took root, establishing tropes used to sort, position, and categorize (Bhattacharyya, 1998, pp. 57, 70).

These processes of conquest through knowledge production and dissemination conceived in Western science created Orientalism and the Occidental gaze (Ahmed,

2006; Bhattacharyya, 1998; Said, 1978). Postcolonialism's critique of Orientalism centers on notions of truth and representation from a textual standpoint, as texts as well as the body as text, is read in specific ways with different prescribed meanings. Orientalism was derived from the changing sociohistorical/cultural dynamics between Europe and Asia as dictated by Western colonialism and the study/examination of Eastern cultures and peoples. Fundamental to Orientalism (Said, 1978) is the power of discourse used to relate culture with politics and the political (Foucault, 1977; Gramsci, 1971). The "Orient" is an invention of the West, a place of romance, of exoticism, of fantasy, a land with distinct landscapes and experiences – everything the West is not (Ahmed, 2006; Said, 1978, 1983). Orientalism entails a specific way of making the Orient known, a project of teaching, writing, researching, and depicting the Orient, even regulating anything potentially imaginable about the Orient. Moreover, Orientalism impacts the ways research is conducted, interpreted, and how individuals experience the Orient, whether located in the East or West (Said, 1978). This notion of the East as a construction of the West becomes manifest in the occidental gaze. As individuals situate themselves around the Occident and Western ways of being, they are simultaneously directed towards the Orient, longing for that which the West is not, as evidenced through Eastern stories and narratives re-capitulated and re-oriented by the West, "supply[ing] the thrill of the other and the reassurance of the known,...[as] 'exotic'" (Ahmed, 2006; Bhattacharyya, 1998, p.9). In these ways, Orientalism transforms distance into proximity through the occidental gaze, making the Orient tangible (Ahmed, 2006) by presenting the East as static, fixed, and frozen in time.

As postcolonial theory allows insights into colonized peoples and their interpellation in public and school spaces as historically informed, an analysis of Orientalism provides insights into how Indian students are positioned and conceptualized. Postcolonial theory's critique of orientalism situates how teacher and faculty interactions, and peer interactions with Desi students, align with tropes associated with Indian bodies. Moreover, with Eastern bodies in the West closing the distance between colony and colonizer (Brah, 1996), a postcolonial framing allows for insights into how larger discourses of inferiority or the model minority shape schooling experiences towards impacting identity. Through recognizing colonially informed historic relations used to make sense of Indian bodies in Western spaces, further understandings into how students negotiate their locality and historical discourses becomes attainable, highlighting how these students resist dominant positionings, and providing details into the reasons behind choices when navigating everyday life. Having situated the one aspect of the theoretical framework, I will now address aspects of the racial framing for this investigation.

Addressing Race: How are Indian Bodies Raced/Racialized?

In situating the racial portion of the framework for this investigation, I acknowledge the global permeation of Whiteness that took root through colonial capitalism and imperialism, and the production of knowledge that situates White male bodies as superior to all others. These processes of conquest fostered the global development of institutions imbued in racism and discrimination, limiting access and resources to some while allowing others to reap the benefits of being able to live in certain neighborhoods and escape urban areas. As such, American society is organized by

a racial structure with its own implicit cultural hegemony, impacting the lives of all who live in the U.S. This racial structure then interpellates individuals into discursively produced racial ideologies implicitly or explicitly, as these racial logics are used to as a governing device, positioning, categorizing, and sorting individuals in daily life.

The notion of race was used as a marker of difference and positioning device historically, emerging within capitalism and nationalism (Brown & De Lissovoy, 2011). In order to justify the subordination and inferiority of newly arriving ‘different’ Black bodies to America, various White individuals, including doctors, scientists, scholars, and philosophers, spread pseudo-scientific discourses to solidify the inferiority of dark bodies. During the late eighteenth century, Polygenist scholars in America claimed the physical differences between Whites and Blacks meant that Blacks had different origins than Whites. Still, other scholars used craniology and the measurement of skulls to delineate Blacks as a different species than Whites. These same scholars also purported that Blacks had inculcated a different culture once leaving the Garden of Eden, and that over time with Christian doctrine and education, Blacks could become civilized (Menchaca, 1997). If inferior, the use of Blacks as slaves was justified, with Blacks themselves internalizing their ‘inferiority’ and reciprocally justifying their social positions (Fanon, 1952; Freire, 1970). As such, while Blacks have their own ethnicity and culture, their racial assignation, and consequently their inferior and incapable status, was socially constructed to enslave both mind and body within systems of colonial/imperial capitalism.

Part and parcel to the social construction of race and the power and prestige of White are gender ideologies that define man and woman, and the ways in which racial categories of Black and White became known. Black bodies were conceptualized as hyper-violent and hypersexual in the colonies during the late seventeenth to middle nineteenth century, with these conceptualizations continuing contemporarily. Black males were defined by their physical and sexual prowess. Black women were typified as hypersexual jezebels, justifying their rape, their submission to medical experiments, and bearing children against their will (Collins, 2005; McKittrick, 2006). While some Black men and women were known in “safe, asexual, assimilated, and...subordinated” ways (Collins, 2005, p.57), the majority of Black bodies were typified as deviant and hypersexual/violent, unable to even look up at their masters (Browne, 2012). These socially constructed narratives then typified and constructed White masculinities and femininities – that is, what Black lacked and was not. As such, White men were gentleman, not violent, heteronormative and not sexually wanton, with White women representing purity, the epitome of femininity and gentility (Collins, 2005). In these ways, a discourse and general belief in Black heterosexual promiscuity committed by both Black males and females defined Whiteness, and what White is, can be, and what should be upheld (Collins, 2005). These colonially birthed tropes and ways of knowing and positioning Black bodies are evidenced contemporarily, seen in hip-hop videos (Collins, 2005), as well as general pop-culture and other forms of media.

Native Americans’ and Mexicans’/Tejanos’ interactions with Whites racialized them in similar ways to African Americans – that is, through deficit perspectives. Many

Native American groups were positioned as savage and uncivilized. Key to their status as uncivilized and Other, on top of their skin color, clothing and apparel, and patterns of speaking (Rains, 2001), was their communal attitude on life and sharing lands and food with one another (Grande, 2007). According to Anglos, only when Natives divide lands and work to be better than their neighbor would they progress, with Christianity and the eradication of Native culture the keys to progression. Mexicans/Tejanos were racialized along similar lines given their interactions with Whites, with Whites feeling hatred and contempt that stemmed from the Texas Revolution and the Mexican American War. The independence of Texas saw Tejanos' status plummet in the socioeconomic and political order, with Whites taking prestigious jobs and Tejanos occupying the least skilled jobs available. Anglos positioned Mexicans/Tejanos as racially and culturally inferior, and viewed them with suspicion, distrust, and hate (San Miguel, 1987). In these ways, Native Americans and Mexicans/Tejanos occupied an inferior and subordinate position once interacting with Whites during the eras of colonial imperialism and Westward expansion.

While South Asian Indians did not make the Black Atlantic slave journey, they experienced their own forms of colonial exploitative labor on the Subcontinent. The British began their colonial expedition and rule in 1612. While Black, Native American, and Mexican/Tejano historic racialization was informed through deficit and gender ideologies, Indians experienced their own racialization and construction of difference through the popularity of tea. Mass purchases of land in the Assam Valley took place “within the monopolistic control of British capital in Assam” (Behal, 2006, p.143). Capital here refers to the numerous laborers brought into the area to work on tea

plantations. These laborers, better known as “coolies,” were “mobilized under appalling conditions of fraudulent recruitment and insanitary transporting, leading to high mortality rates and large-scale desertions from plantations” (Behal, 2006, p.157). During the middle nineteenth century, Indian laborers experienced the “...racial prejudice of the European planters,” with this prejudice growing to a “mingling of hatred and contempt that led in some instances to acts of revolting cruelty” (Behal, 2006, p.158). Indians were racialized as Others, considered unclean and heathen, and exploited by the growing swell of capitalism and the market for tea, as the power of European tea giants to institutionalize power structures in India facilitated the permeation of deficit ideologies and racism towards coolie laborers.

During the nineteenth century in the U.S., the State changed racial definitions in response to the influx of other minority populations. During this time, the only racial categories recognized by the government were “White,” “Negro,” and “Indian.” The influx of Chinese laborers in California changed the racial status of Mexicans to “White” and Chinese to “Indian” (Omi & Winant, 1994), with these racial lines changing during the middle twentieth century. This racial shifting was indicative of the growing sociopolitical unrest of minority groups like Asians, Blacks, Latino/as, and Mexicans, and how concentrated mobilizations of members within these communities sought political voice and representation.

The historical ways that Black, White, and Brown bodies (Indian and Latino/a or Mexican) were racialized during colonial imperialism, in tandem with the shifting racial definitions of the nineteenth century, impact the historic ways Indian bodies were known.

The Indians who first migrated to the U.S. arrived during the late nineteenth century as highlighted earlier. Some scholars speak to a pervasiveness of the Black/White dichotomy to which other minority groups are racially defined against. As racial definitions are fluid and in constant flux, various scholars have conceptualized Asian American racialization as neither here nor there, with their status as ambiguous non-Whites (Bhatia, 2007; Kibria, 1996; Morning, 2001; Purkayastha, 2005; Thangaraj, 2012), close to both Black and White (Okiihiro, 1994).

Bow (2010) goes further, conceptualizing Asian American racialization as interstitial in nature. Building from ambiguities of racially positioning Asians in a rigid race system, Bow's intersectional approach to racial formation situates notions of class, inassimilability, sexuality, and gender as "axes of differentiation" (Bow, 2010, p.5). In this way, an Asian individual's gender, 'foreignness,' sexuality, and class status intersect to position them within structures of power as either "anomal[ies]" or as succumbing to dominant culture. However, the focus on the space in-between anomaly and acquiescence produces narratives that work against the dominant culture's "prevailing cultural logic" that purports to exclude, erase, or incorporate individuals from the East in the West (Bow, 2010, p.4, p.11). Racial interstitially becomes a useful tool to think about the liminal status and nature of Eastern bodies, and more importantly, how bodies can simultaneously belong yet not belong, with relations of exclusion/erasure/incorporation tied to capitalism and the various labors that these bodies perform. Asian American and South Asian Americans are racialized in distinct ways: as sometimes White; at other times Black(ened); as Latino/a; or as an altogether unidentifiable racial/ethnic group, with

their daily interactions and movements through space positioning them in different racialized ways when seeking belonging.

Working within the postcolonial framing this investigation will use the notion of “space invaders” (Puwar, 2004), situating aspects of racialization, difference, and how Indian Americans come to know themselves in schooling spaces. While racial interstitiality captures the intersections of race, class, gender, inassimilability, and sexuality that inform (self-)positioning(s), the concept of space invaders moves beyond the prevalence and dominance of Whiteness to specifically include institutionalized spaces as White, and the White male body as the somatic norm of all spaces. Building from Mills’s (1997) racial contract that stipulates how historic colonial relations of domination continue contemporarily with White males as the holders of all privilege, Puwar (2004) contends that a somatic norm as to what a human can be has been solidified, with all others pushed to the periphery. Bodies of color and women become hyper-visible in schools as they misalign with the White somatic norm of institutional spaces, drawing attention to themselves, with anything that these bodies say/do/enact/think as their defining characteristic(s). This framing becomes especially useful in analyzing the movements and social interactions/dynamics of Indian American youth in schools imbued with White culture, and how Oriental tropes positioned on these students in tandem with student language practices may be used to position and conceptualize Indian Americans in school. A racial framing of space invaders allows for understandings into how participants conceive of their race, of being Indian American, of difference and how difference becomes manifest, while also allowing for insights into

instances of resistance, and how the confluence of these practices informs their identities. Having situated the racial framework for this investigation, I will now address the body of theory I will draw on to explore how Desi teens form their identities in diaspora.

Identity in Diaspora

My literature review highlighted the global movements of bodies that forged the ever expanding South Asian diaspora, both historically and contemporarily, and how Desis were welcomed by some and reviled by others in the various communities in which they settled. Through a postcolonial and orientalist framing, insights into how individuals from the East occupy places and are positioned in the West becomes possible, with Easterners dispersed from their homeland and (re)forming a cultural diasporic identity, often times in contrast to the culture of dominant society. As space invaders, Indian bodies form racialized identities with varying psychological identification to their racial group (Helms, 1990).

The degree of psychological identification with one's racial/ethnic group is tied to the ways in which individuals form individual/collective identities. Identity formation is an on-going, socially informed, unfinished product. The social structure and racial hierarchies embedded within society create distinct social realities for individuals. As such, identity formation is dependent upon the perpetuation of discourses, social relations, cultural processes, and cultural productions that create the social world in which individuals are implanted. In these ways, identity is (in)formed by space and place (Calhoun, 1994; Hall, 1996), language and linguistic exchange (Bourdieu, 1977), and processes of self-negotiation through dialogism (Holquist, 1990; Lachicotte, 2002) when

self-authoring (Mead, 1913, 1925; Bourdieu, 1990). Individuals self-author within, and are authored by, the multiple interacting worlds they traverse (Holland et. al., 1998), using semiotic mediations particular to each space in order to interact and frame interactions particular to each world. Through interactions in multiple spaces, recognition becomes key to identity formation (Calhoun, 1994; Della Porta & Viani, 2006), as acts are recognized and meaning is assigned to traits and characteristics, further solidifying aspects of self.

The worlds that individuals traverse structure society. Structure here refers to the institutional way social life is organized and embedded within power relations. Fundamental to the conceptualization of identity is the notion of agency. Agency here refers to the ability of individuals to act freely, to act independently. While the social structure heavily influences the ways in which individuals interact and orient themselves, it is not overly determinant. Agency provides a landscape of what is possible, with individuals enacting choice and acting on their own volition in relation to the places and spaces they occupy (Grossberg, 1996). In this way, individuals enact agency in their choices, their movements, their language use, and the ways in which they produce and consume culture in time and place specific ways. As such, agency is critical to understanding identity formation. While individuals traverse school, community, and home spaces imbued in structures of class, race, and power, their ability to decide, to choose, what their movements are, what they will do/say/act, are paramount to understanding how Indian American youth form their identities and negotiate in/between their worlds of interaction.

Underpinning the ways in which Indian American youth form identities in diaspora are notions of capital and the global cultural flows of ethnoscaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, mediascaples, and ideoscaples that together comprise the institutionalized ways social life is organized (Appadurai, 1996). Appadurai's (1996) notion of "scapes" highlights the global movements of individuals, the fluid spreading of high and low technologies, the global link of currency through stock markets, the mediascaples of images/narratives that enable individuals to imagine other lands or impact the ways in which they live, and ideoscaples with images and ideas that are political and dependent upon each country and space. The rate and volume of these flows occur on such a scale that these scapes "misalign," with capital flowing from and collecting in certain parts of the globe, and migrants flowing from and collecting in other areas as an example. The global flows of information, goods, and services creates transnational connectivities between the U.S. and India (Grewal, 2005), linking individuals and provide them American/Indian focused ways of being.

Scapes and locality intersect in diaspora and inform identity driven processes. In order to engage how individuals within the diaspora form their identities, this investigation will use Hall's (2003) notion of "cultural identity in diaspora". Cultural identity entails identity formation through historical experiences and culture with a temporary, unstable, and fragmented nature (Bailey & Hall, 1992; Grossberg, 1996; Haraway, 1991). Identity in diaspora is constructed with and through notions of difference, with the body as a point of suture and interpellation between larger discursive positionings and the individuals' localities (Bhabha, 1994; Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 2003;

Mani, 2002). In this way, identity is constructed with a focus on the body. The body is used to identify similarities and differences, including skin color, semiotics, and cultural aptitudes, that align/misalign with the prescribed ways of being of popular discourse which become context and place dependent. From this conceptualization of cultural identity, insights into histories, as well as understanding how overarching discourses and locality merge to make difference *felt* in time-, place-, and space-specific ways that impact Desi youth identity formation towards cultural hybridity, becomes attainable (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996, 2003; Radhakrishnan, 2003). Moreover, these framings and constructions of “cultural identity in diaspora” permit insights into how participants conceive of their culture and negotiate their culture through their interactions with family/kinship networks as well as other non-South Asian individuals. As such, a cultural identity frame allows deeper understandings into how students negotiate prescribed “authentic” cultural ways of being with those of the dominant culture, in their interactions in school, informed through their relationships of the home and community.

Youth Studies: Agency and Resistance

Desi youth find themselves within a transnational diaspora. With youth considered the future of society, their “places” in the world are becoming less secure. The “war on kids” (Grossberg, 2005, p.5), and the “assault on youth” (Giroux, 2000, p.10), are connected to the commercialization and commodification of youth, the institutional policies and practices of pushing students of color out of schools, as well as the diminishing spaces and resources that foster youths’ creativity (Talbert & Lesko, 2014). Contemporary youth act and are situated in the postmodern era. This moment creates a

near hyper-reality for youth as goods, information, products, and services are available instantaneously, making navigating the postmodern context in order to be, become, and belong a challenging endeavor (Tilleczek, 2014). Youth studies and theories are central to this project as they provide insights into the concerns of youth as they navigate and make sense of their worlds. Moreover, theories of youth provide details into how Indian American students come to make choices that impact their daily realities. These insights become key to obtaining a clearer understanding of Indian American youth as they move about their worlds.

Studies of youth and adolescent development have been conceptualized in multiple ways. Many tools for analysis use an ecological, progression, or linear based model to depict how youth interact, mature, and form themselves (Erikson, 1968, 1985; Tanner & Arnett, 2009). This is due in part to the “developmental paradigm [having] achieved canonical status in the field” (O’Loughlin & Taylor Van Zile IV, 2014, p.48). While these deterministic models of normality are widely used to study youth and their mental, emotional, and physical growth, other scholars conceive youth studies as the study of youth subjectivities and how youth are interpellated into existing cultural milieu, ideological milieu, and specific familial and socio-historical discourses. In this line of thought, subjectivity is discursively created and produced. A subjectivity-framed approach to studying youth highlights the situation(s) that make the subject rather than the subject making itself (Butler, 1997), and how entrance into pre-existing symbol systems inform senses of self (O’Laughlin & Van Zile IV, 2014).

The context that youth find themselves in contemporarily is governed by a postmodern condition that produces youth culture imbued in anxiety, pressure, and even isolation. Today's youth experience "...chaos, indeterminacy, contingency, stimulation, and hyperreality" as the forces that "constitute the very texture of their experiences as they deal with...information and media overload" (Kellner, 2014, p.3). The information and media overload is due to technology use and consumption as fundamental to youth culture and youths' identity formation (Danesi, 2014; Kellner, 2014; Tilleczek, 2014). Youth find themselves pressured to participate in new forms of media like video games and consuming a multitude of TV channels (Kellner, 2014). Through technology and the Internet, youth become the target audience for marketing campaigns of the latest "cool" clothing, hairstyles, and language (Danesi, 2014; Gelder, 2007). Through hyperconnectivity, youth culture and "cool" is context and relationally dependent, as the multiple ethnicities and cultural backgrounds of youth located in multicultural/multilingual societies contribute to evolving youth culture (Danesi, 2014). In these ways, youth participate in intense consumerism, and consequently, become sites of cultural consumption and production.

Other scholars study youth in educational contexts towards uncovering how larger sociopolitical discourses, economic realities, and interactions in school impact student life and identity (e.g., Giroux, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977). Key to youth engagement and agency in schools is the ethnicity/culture and class status/position students bring with them to school (Bettie, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977). Willis's (1977) work with lower class "lads" in England demonstrates how youth develop

cultural aptitudes and ideological outlooks from their daily realities, deeming manual labor as masculine and office work as feminine. The lads' cultural capital and ideological outlooks clash with that of the schooling space, leading them to resist the formal mandates and codes of interaction in the school, potentially to their own detriment as social ascension becomes difficult. However, Valenzuela's (1999) work with Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano students notes that youth agency and resistance is not always detrimental. In her study, class operates through ethnicity, and students resist the schooling *process* and school culture by disregarding the requests of educators in classrooms, waving a Mexican flag during the American national anthem, or wearing t-shirts with messages of revolution.

Bettie's (2003) investigation of adolescent girls in California renders similar theorizations of youth engagement and resistance, as her study highlights the conflation of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation as class/culture. The girls of her study resist prescribed femininities and the high-status femininity of "preps," and take up agency when performing different femininities that are linked to their class and racial/ethnic identities towards self-definition. Their agency takes the form of distinct styles of hair, make up, and clothes. Some girls resist "boring" classes by bringing girl culture, gossip, and femininity into the classroom, while others apply their make up in class against the wishes of the teacher. These moments of agency and resistance exhibit classed, raced, and gendered performances when trying to encounter a sense of belonging in the school community that does not align with the prescribed dominant school culture.

These scholars' work situates the White, middle-class, dominant hegemonic culture and ideologies that permeate school spaces, marking difference through notions of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, and sexuality. At times, difference is marked through race and class conflated as culture, or culture and class conflated as race. This work indicates how youth with cultural and social capital that misaligns with dominant school culture are positioned as different and placed at a disadvantage in school. In response, youth enact agency to move, act, and "be" with purpose in the schooling to encounter a space of belonging. Studies of youth provide insights into the contexts and lived realities that Indian American youth negotiate on a daily basis. Situating the postmodern context and youth's selective consumption and cultural production practices provides insights into the school's culture and what values, beliefs, semiotics, linguistic styles, and ways of being are valued over others specific to the school space. In this way, the work of these scholars provides a way in which to conceptualize the actions of Indian American students, how they take up agency, their moments of resistance, and the reasoning behind these choices as youth move through schools, the community, and their home space.

Chapter 3: Methodology

INTRODUCTION

The literature review highlights the contingent nature of South Asians in America, as well as the deeply complicated nature of identity formation and how the postcolonial Indian body is represented, treated and conceptualized in contemporary America (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978). Indeed, in thinking about identity formation, this current investigation is concerned not only with what individuals bring to the schooling space vis-à-vis their cultural domains and cultural milieu (Carspecken, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002), but also how the schooling space itself informs individuals of what being Indian can come to represent, embody, and mean on a daily basis.

As such, the purpose of this investigation is to uncover students' identity forming processes and racializing moments that inform identity through conceptualizing schools as a space where understandings and experiences pertaining to race, the model minority discourse, Orientalism, and educator/peer dynamics transpire that reify/resist the various meanings of being Indian in America. Thus, in this study, I attempt to respond to the following questions:

1. How do Indian/Indian American youth self-conceptualize their racial and cultural identities? What are the identities they construct/come into/perform/produce for themselves?
2. How does the spectrum of essentializing tropes, from racial "Otherness," foreignness, and inassimilability on the one hand, to hard-working, industrious, and intelligent on the other, manifest itself and operate in schools?

3. How does the school space impact/influence how Indian/Indian American students come to know themselves and the world around them?
4. How do Indian/Indian American students resist dominant positionings and ways of being and undertake conscious agentic decisions and actions that recreate their interactions in the schooling space?

To explore these questions, I will conduct critical case studies and classroom observations that garner detailed, in-depth understandings through participants' voices.

This study utilizes a conceptual framework informed from the theories and literature highlighted in the previous chapter. Identity formation is conceptualized vis-à-vis place and locality (Hall, 1996; Mani, 2012), community interactions (Dwyer, 2000; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008), school culture and interactions in schools with peers and educators (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008), notions of racialization (Bow, 2010; Prashad, 2000; Puwar, 2006), and aspects of transnational consumption and production in processes of global capitalism (Bhatia, 2007; Grewal, 2005; Mani, 2012; Prashad, 2000; Rudrappa, 2008; Shankar, 2008). Of interest is how these processes impact the individual – the student – in their everyday lived routines. In this way, students' perceptions of self will be examined in relation to these facets of everyday life and the intersections between the local, national, and global. Following this line of thought, this chapter will evolve as follows: I will first address the research paradigm and notions of ontology and epistemology; Next, I will outline the research tools used for the investigation, and the reason(s) behind their selection; Following the research tools under use, I will highlight aspects of case selection and participant

selection; I will then address data collection and methodological procedures; Data collection will be followed by data analysis procedures then ethical considerations; I will then address my positionality as a researcher; and I will conclude with potential limitations of this investigation.

RESEARCH PARADIGM CONSIDERATIONS

Asians have been studied through quantitative and qualitative lenses when examining academic achievement and the model minority discourse (e.g., Baker et al., 2000; Chu, 1991; Lee, 2009). Similarly, South Asians have been studied through qualitative and quantitative lenses in Britain and the U.S. when examining aspects of achievement and identity (Abbas, 2002; Asher, 2002; Gibson, 1988; Kibria, 1996; Philip, 2007; Shankar, 2008; Thangaraj, 2010). Building from this work, this current investigation aims to provide voice to a faction within the South Asian category – Indian Americans – and garner insights into how these individuals negotiate identities in the educational context. This investigation will use a critical qualitative approach to understand a cultural group (Carspecken, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994), their ideologies, values, and beliefs within systems of power, and how these facets manifest themselves in schools and impact identity forming processes.

Issues of ontology and epistemology are fluid in nature within the critical paradigm, not only reciprocally impacting the researcher and the study, but also informing the structure and scope of the investigation. In situating a framework for this investigation, the constructivist paradigm would be helpful for framing the socially/self-constructed nature of everyday life and working against positivist notions of reality and

research. The postmodern paradigm could also potentially achieve the desired goals, rejecting Western traditions, holding that there are no absolute truths or values. However, I find postmodernist frame lacking an appropriate treatment of culture, treating modernism (and modernist accumulation) as so rampant that hierarchical organizations in society cease to exist, with elite culture versus popular culture as having vanished (Crotty, 1998). For these reasons, I selected the critical paradigm for this investigation. I am drawn to this paradigm, not only for its movement against positivistic understandings of research and reality, but more so for its critique of capitalism, of systems of power and domination through notions of hegemonic culture and ideology (Gramsci, 1971), and the ways in which we come to know reality towards action and social justice (Carspecken, 2002; Crotty, 1998; Giroux, 2001, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, 2002; Mertens, 2009).

Ontological considerations address notions of reality, and how reality itself is structured (Carspecken, 1996; Chilisa, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Mertens, 2009). Ontological implications of the critical paradigm account for the historically contingent structuring of reality in constant flux due to power and social, political, and cultural factors (Mertens, 2009; Neuman, 2010). The socially constructed nature of reality is then informed by social location, with certain versions of reality as more privileged than others, with the intent of uncovering the deep, non-tangible structures that govern interaction (Chilisa, 2012). With regards to the current investigation, the ontological implications seek to understand and uncover how respondents construct their own realities as informed by their

movements through school, home, and community, and how the positioning of race and valued culture inform the world that students inhabit.

The epistemological implications are informed by ontological considerations. Epistemology concerns the ways we come to know what we know, referring to the way aspects of knowledge are presented (Carspecken, 1996; Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Critical epistemological considerations aim to destabilize notions of official knowledge through examining issues of culture and power that work in the production of knowledge and truth claims (Carspecken, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Mertens, 2009). This destabilization occurs through acknowledging that power relations mediate thought, that knowledge is biased, and that the relations between individuals and things are constantly shifting and never static (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). These epistemological foundations build from Habermasian critical theory, holding meaning as constantly in flux and negotiated, as the epistemological concerns here refer to how signs are used rather than how they are perceived. Within the current investigation, epistemological implications seek to understand how respondents make sense of school culture, school knowledge, and the use of language and semiotics that have traction in schools (Carspecken, 2002; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002).

In these ways, critical ontology and epistemology critique notions of power and culture, and how these facets impact everyday lived realities. The critical paradigm is central to this investigation. Through examining participant interactions in the schooling space, deeper understandings can be generated regarding how Indian American students traverse, negotiate, and make sense of the schooling process. Implicit within their

movements and social dynamics of interaction will be notions of culture and power within the schooling context – this study aims to contextualize these interactions. However, I was drawn to the critical paradigm for another reason; its treatment of praxis. Praxis, here, can be conceptualized as human expression and action despite certain constraints (of power, race and ethnic background, gender, and class location) made by “self-actualizing, autonomous subject[s]” (Carspecken, 1996, p.66). It is these notions of reflection and action that this investigation seeks to uncover: how individuals embedded within structures of power and domination self-express, envisioning themselves as whole within the schooling space, and how the choices they make when self-expressing may lead to building alliances across racial, ethnic, and cultural divides. It is my hope that participants and I engage in a dialogical relationship that uncovers some of the hidden rules that govern student action. These hidden rules provide insights into how spaces of school, community, and home function towards impacting Indian American students’ and the decisions they make that aid them in acting with greater self-efficacy.

RESEARCH TOOLS AND SELECTION

South Asians first made their way to the South peddling Oriental wares, settling in towns, and starting families with locals. These movements continued over time with individuals settling in established networks and some moving farther east than New Orleans (Bald, 2013a; 2013b; Bald, 2013c). The surrounding community of Alcove City (pseudonym) continues to experience significant South Asian growth. This growth is evidenced not only in the numbers of South Asian individuals attending schools, but also in the amount of first-time voters registering in the state of Texas (Asian American Legal

Defense and Education Fund, 2013; Texas Education Agency, 2014). Explanations for this growth are associated with several trends. The location of tech-heavy companies in the central Texas area draws individuals with knowledge in information technologies. With the high number of South Asians, and Indians more specifically, trained in these fields, it makes sense that they settle in these areas, especially as policy has grown more lenient in encouraging business to move to Texas. From interactions with individuals in the South Asian community, I was informed that another reason why South Asian and Indian families settle in a suburb of Alcorn City, Northwest (pseudonym), is because of high quality schools. Simultaneously, it then serves that migrating individuals will select a space where other South Asian individuals have settled, creating ethnic enclaves (Massey & Denton, 1993). Furthermore, these conversations conveyed that many South Asian parents are heavily involved in the PTA and events at the school, helping organize as well as volunteer.

With the expanding population of South Asians and Indians, and the increased presence in schools of both Indian students and parents, this investigation becomes important in shedding light into the experiences of an expanding community. This study examined a high school context engaging how Indian American students navigated/experienced the community inside/outside the school, gaining insights into student identity formation as well as understandings of how students in the Indian diaspora negotiated the schools and communities in which they settled. To gather insight into identity formation of these students through the overarching research questions, qualitative research methods were employed. Qualitative methods work toward

understanding how individuals interpret their worlds and how they make sense of, and assign meaning to, their experiences (Merriam, 2009). In these ways, the qualitative process tends to be inductive, as the intent is not to test hypotheses, but rather build concepts and hypotheses from the data collected (Merriam, 2009).

In order to generate the required data to examine identity formation, critical case studies with five respondents of both genders was selected as the method of inquiry. The multiple respondents allow an opportunity to fashion new theories from the data, building robustness in the study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008), while also allowing for inconsistencies in the data set to surface, holding the potential to push theorizing in new directions rather than overtly pre-determined way of knowing Indian American students (Carspecken, 2001; Yin, 2008).

Interviews and data generation focus on human society and culture, generating rich descriptions of people, contexts, and the ways individuals negotiate spaces to identify cultural patterns, cultural descriptions, and daily routines, all within a collaborative context between researcher and researched (Carspecken, 1996, 2002; Foley, 2002; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Case study interviews treat respondents as individual cases for analysis. Interviews attempted to build rapport with participants through multiple interactions over time. Interviews spanned topics of home life and parental dynamics, school life and interactions with curricula, the social dynamics amongst peers and peer selection, and their experiences of being Indian. These topics allowed for insights into how Indian American students see the world, how they think, act, and behave. These facets of world outlook and building

rapport through dialogical exchange provided key insights into how individuals make choices inside and outside of schools that (re-)inform senses of self.

Critical case study helps uncover notions of hegemony and domination made through truth claims that shape and impact how students come to know themselves and the world. By examining the “emancipatory knowledge” individuals use to interpret dominant culture and navigate instances of conflict, insights into how individuals become “interpellated” and inscribed into the cultural sites they traverse become realizable (Trueba & McLaren, 2000, p.40). Treating respondents as individual cases within bounded systems of interaction provided depth and perspective to the critical ethnographic framing (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005). Respondents’ bounded systems included their dynamics in the home space, their navigations and interactions within their community, as well as their interactions and experiences in the schooling space. These contexts provided instantiations to examine how hegemony and dominant culture operated in the lives of respondents, and how choice and action bent and made flexible the various boundaries and borders that created, maintained, and formed the bounded systems they interacted within.

In these ways, analyses examining the similarities and differences across cases became attainable. More importantly, conceiving participants as individual cases allowed for a thorough, detailed, deep situational understanding of how they navigated their bounded systems, and in this way, formed their identities in context-, time-, and place-specific ways (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005). The tandem of ethnography and case studies have been popularized when investigating the culture of a “particular social

group...studied in depth” towards understanding connections to everyday life choices within the organization of larger systems of capital and power (Merriam, 2009, p.42). Following the critical paradigm in this investigation and the interactions/discussions with respondents, it was hoped that participants and the researcher would become more aware of the various systems of power and domination that Indian Americans occupied on a daily basis, and how these systems influenced the choices made on a daily basis.

The “how” and “why” (Yin, 2008) questions that guided this investigation pertaining to schooling contexts and Indian Americans interacting/navigating the schooling space made case study research an ideal fit. It would be difficult to gain insights into identity formation using quantitative methods, as a quantitative model for identity formation may be too rigid and linear in conceptualization. While data could be generated and emerging themes identified, they may not be at the depth or level of detail that is necessary to acquire knowledge about the choices/information/experiences that inform students’ identities as they traverse the schooling space. Critical case studies build relationships with respondents, attempting to understand what makes them “tick” when self-expressing. Moreover, examining the flexible boundaries of participants’ bounded systems of interaction allowed the possibility for garnering understandings into how students’ identity forming processes that resisted/replicated dominant school culture and ways of being both inside and outside of the schooling space.

PARTICIPANTS AND SITE SELECTION

Garnering insights into Indian American students' identity formation both inside and outside of schools required specific participant selection. In this study, I obtained an almost equal number of male and female respondents to provide gender balance, with respondents voluntary and selected based on distinct criteria (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Furthermore, participants as "information-rich cases" were selected through snowball, chain, and networking sampling (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002, p.230), and adhered to the following criteria: students were born in the U.S. to parents who immigrated from India or were born in India and migrated before the age of 5; students spoke English; lastly, students were currently enrolled and attending high school in the Northwest Independent School District at the time of the study.

The participants for this were both male and female of different ages, and all had different interests. Rani, a Muslim female Indian American, was fourteen years old at the time of the study and in her freshman year at CHS. She enjoys spending time with her friends, listening to music, and likes to read – if she has the time. Gopal was fifteen at the time of the study, and also a freshman at CHS. Gopal is also a Muslim Indian American, and greatly enjoys sports, both watching and playing with his close friends. Anu, a Kashmiri Indian American, was eighteen at the time of the study and in her senior year at CHS. Anu is interested in law and philosophy, and is committed to understanding/helping others to the best of her ability once she finishes higher education. Geeta, a Muslim Indian American female, was also eighteen at the time of the study and a senior at CHS. She greatly enjoys dancing and Indian dance, both taking and teaching lessons in her

community. Darshan, the final participant, was an Indian American male and eighteen at the time of the study. He is interested in computers and has a knack for taking an issue and analyzing it down to different data points. He plans on attending higher education in order to study computer programming and wants to create apps for smartphones.

The focus on high school students was informed by several factors. Students in all schooling contexts have experiences that shape their identities. However, high school tends to be a moment in time when individuals are *solidifying/re-working* previous/new identities informed by choices and social dynamics (Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2000), all while planning for paths after the high school experience. Moreover, high schools are raced spaces (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001), where students negotiate and interpret the racialized meanings of both linguistic and body communication from peers, educators, and school leadership. While these instances occur in middle school, students are older in high school, have been exposed to more racial discourses in media and pop culture, and can better speak to these acts of racialization and racialized identities. Social groups are forming and being re-negotiated, all while individuals further (self-) discover, refining likes and dislikes. These occurrences, and the reasoning behind these choices/actions, were key to this investigation in understanding how Indian Americans negotiated schooling contexts. Older high school students who were better able to speak to these cumulative experiences both inside and outside of the schooling space may have been better able to self-reflect and speak to aspects of schooling, social developments and interactions inside/outside of schools, and issues surrounding race. With students as older, participants may have been more autonomous, perhaps more active in participating

in consumer culture (Shankar, 2008), choosing articles of clothing to self-define and differentiate themselves from other classmates. These decisions behind consumption and differentiation/belonging were key to this investigation, with the high school context an ideal space to garner insights and make connections between schooling contexts and identity formation.

Given the centrality of the high school space and its own values, beliefs, dispositions, and ways of being that impact how students form their identities, classroom observations attempted to capture moments of identity negotiation that occurred in hallways and classrooms. I attempted to observe history and/or literature classes, noting how students negotiated classroom contexts as well as interpreted historical- and narrative-based subject matter. However, participants determined which classes I observed. I hoped that participation in the study, and the potential for participants to be aware of how systems operated in schooling contexts, helped myself and participants navigate schooling spaces and the larger community with greater self-efficacy.

The high school in the Northwest Independent School District (NISD) to conduct observations and investigate the research questions was Cresthill High School (CHS) (pseudonyms). Of note is NISD's multi-ethnic character, with students from White (44%), Hispanic (30%), Asian (12%), and African American (9%) backgrounds. The district boasts a 94% graduation rate, as well as a 96% attendance rate (retrieved from <https://www.roundrockisd.org/about-rrisd/district-profile/>). Property values hold strong, and the median household income is \$70,000 (retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4863500.html>). Medium household incomes

are at high levels due to residents of NISD involved in management, business, or science occupations (44%), as well as sales and office occupations (26%). Service, construction, and transportation-based occupations complete the labor picture of NISD (retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>). In these ways, Northwest City and its inhabitants occupy a classed school district. Most individuals are involved in higher-paying, technical jobs. With property retaining its value, and with the high incomes of many residents, CHS is well resourced (teacher experience was 10+ years on average, with nearly 30% having graduate degrees) and contains challenging academic programs.

That Northwest City and NISD is a highly privileged district made sense. Through conversations with participants, it appeared as though most of their parents occupied jobs in science-based fields like engineering, within companies that arranged for outsourcing, as well as sales/interior design. It appeared as though Gopal's father moved the family in direct relation to a job within the field of engineering, while Rani's mother moved to NISD due to close family friends and diasporic networks. In these ways, it appeared as though participants' parents fell in line with migratory practices associated with the "Brain Drain," as well as those families coming together through family reunification provisions built into immigration policies during the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, it also appeared as though, through interactions with community members in NISD, as well as participants, that NISD represented a large Muslim diasporic community – there were not many Hindus. Thus, it was possible that participants' families made the initial migration from India to the U.S./Canada, then

moved to NISD upon knowledge of a large diaspora, a great school system, and an up-and-coming job market for technically skilled laborers.

The school that participants attended (CHS) was also an IB school. Students were able to select from a wide range of curricular offerings, including AutoCAD and a Theory of Knowledge course, in addition to required core classes. CHS was also experiencing an increase in South Asian students due to migratory movements and individuals settling in established neighborhoods. The parents of Indian youth were visible in CHS, participating and volunteering in PTA events. The presence of Indian parents in schools became an interesting space of analysis, as students made sense and interpreted their parents' participation in/at these events. As one narrative attributed to parents of children of color is their lack of engagement in schooling, paying particular attention to culture (Kao, 1995), examining student interpretation of these acts allowed deep insights into how community engagement impacted the ways students engaged with school and form their identities. The characteristics chosen for participant selection spoke to experiences in the diaspora, the forms of cultural knowledge maintained by these individuals, and aligned with the research questions that sought to illuminate Indian American students' experiences and interactions in schooling contexts that shaped their identities. In these ways, with a growing student and adult population in the NISD community, there existed a certain urgency in conducting this investigation to understand how Indian Americans formed identities and negotiated the schooling context to better address their, and their community's, needs in culturally relevant and responsive ways (Gay, 2010).

DATA COLLECTION

The primary sources for data collection were participant interviews and observations compiled in research notes and reflective journals, with data collection that began in January 2015 and ended in June 2015. Interviews were used to garner insights into how individuals made sense of their daily lives, routines, and obtained information about how students interpreted the worlds they traversed. Interviews became crucial, garnering insights into how Indian American students made sense of their race, gender, culture, experiences in schools, and experiences within their family and community used towards fashioning their identities. Participant observations in the schooling space provided an additional layer of analysis. Observations in school and classroom settings allowed for reaffirming/contradicting details pertaining to race, gender, and culture from interviews, as well as providing direct observations of how Indian American students formed identities contingent upon interactions in classroom and school spaces.

Participants were secured through inroads made within the South Asian community in NISD. These networks helped gather five (n=5) Indian American students who were male and female to voluntarily participate in the study. Participants had full knowledge about the aims, scope, and sequencing of the study through consent forms and conversations, and answered any questions or concerns participants or their parents had. In this way, respondents were aware of the participatory nature of the project and provided thoughts/feedback during interview sessions, guided the discussions, and asked their own questions for me, or them, to answer. After gaining access to the schools, data collection began by observing the layout of the school, the language used in posters and

announcements, and the school personnel and their body language/dispositions as they interacted with different students in hallways, the cafeteria, the gymnasium, and the classroom. These observations moved towards gaining an initial understanding of the schools' culture(s), the students who occupied its space, the resources available to educators/students, how students were grouped/tracked/disciplined/praised, and the overall school climate. My aim was to be as little of an interruption as possible during these initial school visits so as to not interfere with gathering initial impressions. Shortly after this initial phase of data collection, participant interviews and classroom observations began.

There were four interviews sessions of no more than seventy-five minutes each between researcher and participants. In order to accommodate respondents, as well as address potential privacy and confidentiality concerns, interviews were conducted individually at a time and place of the participants choosing. The interview questions were semi-structured and open ended, probing and encouraging respondents to share stories, experiences, behaviors, feelings, and details of their lives as they pertained to the focus of the investigation (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The first interview session was used to get to know participants, build rapport, begin to form an understanding of participants' lives, and focus on aspects of school. Rapport building questions attempted to gain insights into the types/forms of media students consumed, music preferences, leisure practices and language preferences. School related questions aimed to uncover participants' early memories of school, present school routines and interactions with curricula and educators, the value participants placed on school/education, patterns of

socialization, and the styles students brought to the schooling space. These questions began to address the identities that participants wore and the time-, space-, and place-contingent motivations that delineated/influenced which identities were selected at what time. This initial session also provided insights into how the schooling space positioned participants, and how larger discursive imaginings (i.e., the ways we have come to know South Asian bodies) influenced how participants interacted with their peers and educators, all towards shaping their identities inside and outside of the schooling space.

A short time after, the second interview took place, centering on notions of family, participants' feelings of closeness to their family (nuclear and extended), food preparation and consumption, and socialization with other Indian families. Family context was important in situating individuals and conceptualizing the flexible borders of their bounded systems, and how their familial interactions created distinct dispositions that impact how students formed senses of self in relation to school, style, socialization, relations with the opposite sex and prescribed gender roles, and notions of ethnicity and cultural/ethnic maintenance. Consumption practices, too, became important in self-identification, with "Desi bling" and "cool" style important to self-expression in schools, especially in attempting to understand how dynamics of school are recreated in the home or larger community (Gibson, 1988; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008). These insights helped further illuminate students' fluidity between identities, how they crafted particular identities, and how they made agentic choices and decisions that impacted their lives.

The third interview session addressed notions of being Indian and racialization. Notions of race arose in earlier interviews. However, this session was directed at gaining

an understanding of how individuals self-conceptualized racially. By directly addressing micro-aggressions, notions of difference, and the consumption of transnational “authentic Indianness,” insights into how students hybridize their identities (within structures of power) between ethnic/cultural identities and school identities were attained. Moreover, details into the how/why of agentic choices and negotiations can be drawn, as well as how school (context and culture) specifically fits into various parts of these negotiations. Indeed, this line of thought provided details into how tropes of Indianness manifested themselves in schools, and how students made meaning from these interactions, all towards informing their identities.

The fourth interview session occurred several weeks after the initial interviews. This interview session was used to member check details gathered during interview sessions and ensure that the meaning I made from responses reflected the meanings participants intended to convey. Moreover, this session was used to gain participant input into how to name themes, working through details garnered to create a collaborative environment in which participants provided input into the presentation of details and wording of findings. While these processes did not occur in the ways I had originally envisioned, this interview session was helpful in adding details to previous responses that participants deemed necessary. After reflecting upon questions and responses, participants wanted to clarify or change their responses, given new experiences and thoughts.

As mentioned earlier, observations began before the interview sessions, when obtaining a feeling for the school and the community within its walls. While I intended

for these first observations to be general, moving through the school space and the hallways, cafeteria, gymnasium, and other spaces of the school to observe how students interacted with each other, I was not allowed to make these observations by the administration. It became clear to me through email communiques and visits with school leadership that I was to strictly conduct classroom observations with a small amount of time in the public spaces of the school like the cafeteria or library. In these moments, I attempted to engage school personnel, from individuals in leadership positions to custodial staff, to gather their thoughts pertaining to the school and its functioning, and their dispositions towards education in general.

The first participant observations in the classroom setting occurred after approximately one week after the first interview with participants. I planed this to provide me an instance to get to know participants and how they comport themselves. I also wanted to use classroom observations and details particular to interactions/dynamics to open conversations with participants, gaining their insights on phenomenon I had observed. During the study, there were between three and four direct observations of participants in classroom settings. These observations lasted the duration of a class period and sought to detail the physical classroom layout, and how participants moved in this space – perhaps with free mobility or some type of constrictedness. I looked for participants’ engagement with their teachers, their peers, and how they interacted with/engaged with classroom materials. During interactions with peers, I was particularly interested in who participants sat with, whom they communicated with, and how they demonstrated engagement/disinterest in various moments of the class to gain insights into

how participants' Indian culture/background surfaced or underpinned engagements and helped to inform their racial and cultural identities. As interviews with participants spoke to classroom dynamics with teachers, peers and aspects of CHS's school culture, classroom observations sought to identify these dynamics while also paying attention to participants' peers and their interactions during class. Once in the classroom and asked to participate by the teacher, I usually refrained from engaging in classroom activities or introducing myself and my study so as to not compromise participants in the class and not disrupt the natural occurrences of the classroom dynamic/context. By documenting participants' body language, their linguistic choices in interaction, and how they participated in small group/large group discussions, specific insights were drawn into how the schooling space impacted students' identities through these patterns of interactions, and how these interactions may have been influenced by tropes of "hard working" and the "model minority" attributed to Indian Americans.

Classroom observations were important as they provided a context in which to situate interview data and engage first hand how participants made meaning of their interactions in classrooms and school. In these ways, classroom observations provided an immediate account of how schools influenced the decisions of students, especially regarding style and self-expression. Of importance, as well, was the observation as a moment to examine consistencies/inconsistencies in participant responses during interviews, as well as address potential "performing" that students may have undertaken given my presence in the classroom. Observations allowed moments to document how other individuals in the classroom and school context engaged with participants, and how

these educator and peer interactions also coalesced to impact student identity forming processes. Classroom observations became critical, not only providing an additional site in which to examine participants and their interactions, but documenting the time-, space-, and place-specific contexts in which students made themselves.

The categories for interview questions, and the fluid movement between interview sessions and classroom observations, were chosen for the insights to be gained about the schooling space and how respondents (re-)negotiate aspects of their identities in new ways, solidifying some aspects while disengaging with others. The categories and interview questions built in their revealing of the personal. As such, I felt as though it was better to begin by getting to know the participants generally, then move towards aspects of race, class, gender, and power towards the end of the interviews once the participants got to know who I was. Moreover, this also allowed for re-writing or re-conceptualizing questions based on previous interviews and classroom observations to explore new/different considerations or experiences. The interview questions painted a vivid portrait of the schooling context, which in turn, allowed for an examination of how schooling dynamics/culture/facets impacted how Indian American students navigated and made sense of the schooling space towards informing their own identities. Focusing on preferred forms of pop culture, social media, and media consumption also provided insights into what forms of media had traction in schooling spaces, and how these students took up/resisted forms of media towards impacting their identities. Questions regarding being Indian delved deeply into notions of difference, how students negotiated this feeling (if they felt different), and how the schooling space inculcated certain ways of

knowing and being. Moreover, gaining insights into the family space and family socialization practices provided key insights into how aspects of transnationalism impacted how students navigated home spaces and school spaces towards forming themselves. These insights provided details into notions of power and culture, and how participants made choices when negotiating both of these overarching forces that impacted how they conceived of themselves and the world.

DATA ANALYSIS

Examining identity formation of Indian American students as influenced by interactions in schools necessitated a conceptualization of the processes/interactions within schools that informed identities. School culture is linked to power, is implicit in processes of domination, and is heavily implicated in informing individuals' thoughts/values pertaining to education, their world outlook and social well being, potential career paths, and inculcating ways of being that impact identity (Bernstein, 2003; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Foley, 1990; Giroux, 2001, 2005; McLaren, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977). Data analysis sought to uncover how students negotiated the school context, how instantiations of race, religion, and aspects of ethnicity/culture became manifest as gathered from participant interviews and observations. Meaning reconstruction (Carspecken, 1996) was used to analyze data in a recursive and dynamic manner (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis sought to gain insights into identity formation and school culture through examining facets of cultural productions and expressive practices (Foley, 1990), rituals (McLaren, 1999), and the

social capital (Valenzuela, 1999) that governed and structured social dynamics and interactions within overarching systems of capitalism, power, and domination.

As a tool of analysis, meaning reconstruction builds form hermeneutic understandings of humans as communicative beings and meaning making occurring through perception in communicative acts (Carspecken, 1996, p.95; Merriam, 2009). Hermeneutical analysis entails an intersubjective quality, with the researcher adopting the position of the participant towards inferring meaning. Meaning reconstruction is recursive, with interpretations negotiated and re-negotiated to arrive at understandings within the meaning field (Carspecken, 1996; Palmer, 1969). Here, the meaning field constitutes the space/context being reconstructed, with the meaning field itself as fluid and non-static, dependent upon who permeates the space and the unofficial rules that govern interaction, especially evidenced through speech acts that are valued. In these ways, I analyzed data and constructed meaning by taking the positions of the participants to the best of my ability. Meaning reconstruction analyzed verbal, non-verbal, and bodily forms of communication to develop an understanding of how space, time, and place impacted the identities that participants formed. This analysis aimed to help develop deeper understandings of how race and aspects of culture/ethnicity operated simultaneously with different degrees of saliency for students, depending upon contexts and the spaces traversed.

Data from participant interviews and participant observation were transcribed using pseudonyms. Coding ensued, analyzing transcripts for emerging patterns (Carspecken, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Coding generated open

codes, which were axially coded, moving from descriptions to interpretation and reflection on potential meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Richards, 2005). I began with the first observation and interview data and began transcribing, analyzing, examining, searching for patterns that highlighted how students negotiated the schooling context, making choices and taking action that, together, impacted how they formed their identities. Soon after, I compared these patterns and context-dependent behaviors/language uses axially over time, leading to broader categories and category construction, with data re-visited to look for any contradictions across interviews/observations, as well as ensure a fit within emergent categories (Dey, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 2009).

Data analysis through meaning reconstruction sought to uncover the cultural ideologies, cultural productions, rituals, and symbols that structured and governed interactions in the schooling space that impacted the identity formation of Indian American students. In this light, interview questions scaffolded towards understanding students' lives and contexts, from home space to school space. My interview questions considered language preferences, media tastes, opinions on schooling and curricula, dynamics of interaction with peers and educators, social groups, and race and being Indian. Not only did these questions probe into aspects of students' identities, they also conceptualized a portion of the cultural milieu of students, identified aspects of social capital with currency in the schooling space and implicitly spoke to school culture and ideology. Specific attention was paid to expressive practices of students, their clothing and media consumption practices, their styles, their peer group choices, and how they

used cultural knowledge from the home space to make sense of the school space and culture/ideology towards informing senses of self. Of particular interest was notions of hybridity or assimilation that might surface during data collection and analysis that intimated dominance of school culture, the various ways participants resisted/reified the ritual performances of school, and the importance of certain rituals over others dependent upon space, context, and individuals present.

Meaning reconstruction from interview and participant data was used to gain insights into how students acquired/created/reified/resisted social capital and made sense of the social structuring of the school. Data analysis also addressed how participants' cultural milieu interacted with, resisted, and reified school culture towards understanding social capital as a facet of social reproduction, cultural reproduction, and assimilation. Data analysis highlighted how participants navigated, made sense of, participated in, interacted with, and resisted schooling rituals and symbols in understanding school culture and its impact on their identity formation.

ETHICAL AND VALIDITY BASED CONCERNS

In conducting this investigation as the only investigator, distinct ethical dilemmas arose. I myself am Indian American, born to parents who migrated to America in 1965 and 1968, respectively. Born in America, I have spent most of my life in American spaces, consuming materials and media, participating in American institutional life. As such, my world outlook and previous experiences heavily influenced my desire to engage in this project, having been subjected to/adopted/resisted schools' cultures and ideologies. I considered it imperative to document how Indian American students engaged in schools

to better understand the needs of this growing population. In engaging in this project, I was reminded of Spivak and the notion of representation, or better said, who can speak for whom? As a researcher, I was in a position of power, interacting with participants, gathering data, analyzing data, and presenting findings.

One area of ethical concern was that this study focuses on and engages minors. In this way, I was open and honest with participants and their parents in attempting to build trust. Participants' parents were aware of the scope of this investigation, and the exact requirements of their children. Parents and students were made aware that participants could withdrawal from the study at any time. Moreover, participants were aware of the topic of each set of interview questions, so as to not be "caught off guard" or "put on the spot." Respondents did not have to participate in an interview session's topics if they did not want. Moreover, protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality as minors was of extreme importance. Pseudonyms were used during interviews (as they were recorded) and used during participant observation notes as well as transcripts. Moreover, I was the only individual who had access to any of these documents.

Disseminating findings became another area of ethical concern. As mentioned earlier, a central tenet of this investigation, especially in using critical case studies, is the notion of reciprocity. I held it unethical to conduct research within a community and leave with themes and findings in hand, creating a one-sided, removed, and impersonal research context. In adhering to the notion of reciprocity, insights gained from the investigation will be shared with participants and the community upon its completion. As participants were given the list of questions prior to each meeting, I told participants that

they have input into questions that should/should not be asked, that they could change questions, and that they could decline to answer questions. I also made clear that participants could ask me questions about my experiences, creating a reciprocal dialogue and exchange of information. It was my hope that fostering a reciprocal dynamic between researcher and researched facilitated a flow of ideas and sharing of experiences that helped participants and researcher think about situations and contexts differently, and potentially aid in navigating the complicated spaces and interactions between home, community, and school with greater self-efficacy. Furthermore, insights into how students conceptualized their navigations and the concerns associated with various spaces may have been beneficial for parents, school, and the community. These insights hold the potential to facilitate a deeper understanding of the multiple knowledges, feelings, and concerns that Indian American students bring with them to various spaces, and how parents, the school, and community can utilize this knowledge to understand the many forces at play in these children's lives towards better engagement and interaction with this cultural group.

As the principal investigator, this seat of power raises validity concerns. In theory, it was possible to analyze the data and generate findings that are particular to my own interests, shaping the findings and study as I see fit. Additionally, this mismatch in power may have made participants feel the need to perform, or tell me what I want to hear, during data collection. One way I attempted to address aspects of "what I want to hear" in interview responses was to look across all transcripts and field notes when analyzing data to identify contradictions, follow up to clarify meaning, and if possible, get to the root of

the different responses. Another tool used to address the concerns generated from unequal power relations and aspects of performance and validity were member checks. I spoke with participants and showed them the ways in which I am interpreting the data and reconstructing meaning based on interview responses and interactions noted from classroom observations, to be sure that meaning reconstruction aligned with the meaning intended by participants.

Member checks were pivotal for two reasons. First, they engendered dialogue that led to reflection about previous discussions. Here, allowing a period of time to elapse before reflecting allows for clarification, re-thinking, and new insights to be garnered with respect to previous interview sessions and topics discussed. Moreover, these sessions became a catalyst for participants to think about the research project and their responses more frequently outside of researcher contact, perhaps coming to new conclusions on their own regarding the spaces they navigate. Second, member checks also fostered reciprocity and assuaged validity concerns with participants actively involved in creating categories for naming the emergent themes from the interview sessions and observations. In these ways, multiple validity checks existed to mitigate researcher power in gathering and disseminating data and findings.

While member checks provided one way in which to mitigate concerns of validity, peer debriefers comprised a second layer. Here, peer debriefers were comprised of colleagues who read through transcripts and coding. Peer debriefers helped add their own insights and additional points to consider, while agreeing with the analysis I was generating. In these ways, my goal was to include the most accurate representations of

what participants shared and that spoke to how their identities were (in)formed by the spaces they traverse.

With open dialogue and communication about each step of the study with parents and participants, as well as member checks and peer debriefers, it was my hope that imbalances of power and my own positionality as biasing the research were alleviated to a great extent. Moreover, the reciprocal nature of this project also had implications for relationships with participants after the study was conducted. It has been great maintaining my contact with participants and having coffee and meals with them to check in and see how they are progressing with various aspects of their lives.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

I write, theorize, read, and investigate from the position of a privileged Indian American male. Growing up middle class, I had access to resources including tutoring, health care, and after school programs. I was able to attend college, and considered it as the next step, as the next thing to do, and rarely reflected on my privilege, status, and access to resources that facilitated my entrance to university settings. I am privileged to continue my studies, from a Masters of Arts in Teaching to the pursuit of a PhD. However, I am much more conscious now, to systems of power and capitalism, to domination, to gendered ways of being, to access, to privilege, and how neoliberal reforms in education re-conceptualize what education and pedagogy mean and embody.

I remember growing up and going to school. I cried for the first three days of school from kindergarten through second grade. By third grade, while I wanted to cry, I told myself that I would not, and I remember feeling a sense of accomplishment, of

growth, in knowing that I had a little control. In my experiences in middle and high school, most days were normal, while some days had their microaggressions. I was made fun of for the food I brought to lunch, I would be told that I smelled, that I was related to a taxi drivers and gas station attendants, or be given a “thank you come again” in an accent mimicking Apu’s character on *The Simpsons*. I would see some Indian American peers receive more of this ethnicizing treatment, this ridicule. Other Indian American peers were able to steer clear of this treatment, or maybe I was just never privy to it. It was as if our own uncertainty, anxieties, and self-conscious nature were being used against us, as other peers could not quite place us, or make sense of us. After 9/11, these jibes took on new, terrorist lexicon that positioned some Indian Americans as even more outside the norm. In these ways, race was prominent and salient in informing my high school experiences and my identity as based in difference.

My past experiences inform the foundations of this research investigation, examining how Indian Americans negotiate schooling spaces and how the schooling process played a major role in identity formation. Given my upbringing, I am very familiar with what it is like, and what the experiences are, being Indian American in American schools. In some ways I am an emic. I know what it is like to have Indian parents who, at times, may not be in tune with the norms of schools and socialization. When I wanted to spend time with friends or peer groups, or needed a ride to the movies, it was either “no” or that it was an “inconvenience.” If other parents took me and picked me up, I was given permission. Having grown up in an Indian home space, it was possible that I shared a certain amount of cultural knowledge and practices with

participants, entailing similar ideologies, beliefs, and ways of being. In these ways, these experiences regarding home space norms, school space norms, and socialization had the potential to help me build rapport with participants, to emote with them, to share some of the similar struggles/challenges that they may experience. I know for a fact that, with certain participants, this was the case. This shared knowledge provided a bridge with which to connect with participants, with sharing these similar circumstances as key to creating open spaces of communication where personal details could be shared in an equal dialogue.

While I did share cultural knowledge, certain ways of being, and experiences in secondary schools, I was simultaneously an outsider. It was possible that the experience I had in the home and school space did not resonate with participants, as maybe my family dynamics, and school dynamics, were different than those of the respondents. Additionally, I am not in tune to youth culture today, especially as the symbols, rituals, and social capital that structured my schooling experiences have changed. I did not know the traction that new media and social media has, as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms did not exist when I attended high school. It was very possible that, while I felt as an outsider and different in schools, the use of technology and social media alleviated some of these anxieties. Through hyper-connectivity (sometimes considered false connectivity) and time-space compression, there was an increased connectedness, perhaps making students feel part of a community, the school community. In these ways, my conceptions of identity and assumptions of difference tied to race may not explain how participants conceived of identity or made sense of

schooling life. Perhaps respondents were not so focused on notions of race as a difference maker, rather attributing difference to class, gender, religion, region, language, and sexual orientation. Moreover, students may not have felt different in schools given the large number of South Asians that attended their school, or the emergence and prominence of Indian American entertainers and politicians, which did not exist at the time I was in school. In these ways, both media and pop culture have normalized Indian culture in America to an extent, which may have proved my own assumptions about students' feelings, emotions, and potential experiences of difference in schools as null and void.

These differences in experiences, going further, hold the potential to complicate/hinder aspects of data analysis. Data from participant observation and interviews recapitulated narratives from distinct spaces and contexts. In these ways, data analysis sought to position-take and reconstruct meaning given the meaning field of interaction. However, my unfamiliarity with the present day schooling context may have led my interpretation and reconstruction of the meaning field to be different from the field the students experience and participated within. Moreover, the inclusion of various platforms of social media and their associated hyper-connectivity may have also altered the contexts of home, school, and community, and the ways in which students engaged in these spaces in ways that I was not aware of or never considered previously. As such, with race a floating signifier that may be even less attached to bodies presently than it was when I attended schools, I needed pay extra, focused attention to how students engaged in schooling contexts and their interview sessions in order to determine how

facets of race, class, culture/ethnicity, gender, and religion were at play in impacting students daily realities and the identities they formed. All of these facets became a potential challenge to overcome through careful engagement in interviews and observations, and above all, with multiple member checks.

An additional caveat to my positionality in engaging in this project was evidenced in location. I attended secondary schools and higher education in the Northeast. In these ways, I had very little insights into typical social dynamics of Texan schools, what it was like to grow up in Texas, and the culturally appropriate forms of interaction, especially in the South where race was conceptualized/treated/weighed differently (Joshi & Desai, 2013). The confluence of these factors and processes may have stymied me from being able to get close to participants in their routines and habits, as well as gather data that spoke to notions of difference that inform Indian American identity formation in the space of schools.

Moreover, I am aware of the paradox that encompasses conducting this investigation. An overarching intent of this investigation was to dispel and work against some of the problematic tropes used to position, make sense of, and categorize Indians and Indian Americans. Many of these tropes and narratives are essentialist in nature, treating Indians and Indian culture as static and fixed, with individuals as either highly educated and achieving, or working dogged hours as convenient store workers and gas station attendants. It would appear as though I was essentializing as well, taking the respondents' thoughts and feelings in data gathering, analysis, and presenting findings. These paradoxes then, become embodied and lived through me. Thinking in these ways

about representation made me hyper-aware of my interactions with participants, how I moved my body in schooling spaces and interview sessions, and how I used language when interacting with participants and school educators/staff. In these ways, I aimed to be open, in the most literal of ways. I did everything in my power to ensure that I did not prescribe answers, or phrase questions in such a way as to lead participants into a specific kind of answer. Additionally, I aimed to be faithful to what participants shared when portraying and disseminated findings (through peer debriefing and member checks) so as to not further essentialize respondents. In these ways, I attempted to employ what Spivak (1988) termed “strategic essentializing,” whereby my choice was deliberate towards describing a cultural group, while being aware that this activity was, and is, itself problematic. As such, while not generalizing experiences, this study spoke to potential experiences/contexts/situations that Indian/Indian American youth encountered, and potential strategies to help cope with certain situations/contexts when in secondary educative settings as well as larger society.

LIMITATIONS

This investigation sought to uncover how Indian American students negotiated cultural, ethnic, and racial identities in schooling spaces, with a particular focus on the schooling space and school culture as implicated in identity driven processes. Certain factors limited the extent of this investigation. The most overarching and impactful of these factors was time.

This study operated within a limited time frame, with data collection lasting six months. As such, I was in the field for a limited amount of time. It was impossible for me

to be at every extra curricular event, every meeting, or every theater department production. In this way, it was difficult to garner a total and complete picture of the schooling and community contexts that respondents (inter)acted within on a daily basis. In certain ways then, this impacted the completeness of the study, painting a snippet, a small portrait, of these students, the school, and the community.

Additionally, this study used a small sample size. While this decision was made in order to gather rich, deep contexts of the participants, it did not provide many numbers that could assertively and representatively speak to the phenomenon under study. When conducting interviews, participants may have performed, providing answers that may not necessarily be what they truly felt, potentially leading to Type I error. However, I hoped that this was not the case and that each participant valued being honest and enjoyed being part of this project, sharing narratives that they may not have been able to share regularly. Additionally, it was possible that the important aspects of identity formation were occurring earlier, perhaps in middle school, or even elementary school. In this sense, this study could be missing key moments that also informed Indian American identity formation. Thus, because the sample size was small and in a fixed location, the data gathered might not have been as accurate a match in identifying how Indian American formed their identities as originally intended.

Moreover, the small sample size was also impacted by location and from where I gathered participants. Given the community in which these individuals and schools were situated, it could be inferred that the majority of the sample were middle class. In this way, one avenue for further investigation would be investigating and working with Indian

American individuals who did not come from middle-class backgrounds and who are not American born. Another angle to consider would be working with middle school students to gather how their interactions in schooling spaces inform their identities, and comparing those results to what occurs in the high school space. While these limitations and avenues for new study exist, I feel that the overall structure, paradigm, and methodology in use for this current investigation has garnered deep insights into how Indian American students form their identities, evidenced through interactions in school spaces, with these insights to be shared in the remainder of this dissertation.

Chapter 4: Asianness Shaping Social Networks and Dynamics at CHS

An analysis of social dynamics at Cresthill High School (CHS) requires situating the Northwest Independent School District (NISD). The community of NISD contains high-income earning parents that, if necessary, pay for tutoring for their children (Anu, Interview, March 8 2015; Rani, Interview, February 13 2015). In fact, Anu stated how she received years of tutoring at Kumon to get ahead and even used Kumon as a point of bonding between peers in class (Interview, March 19 2015). Many students' parents possess the financial resources to pay for extra help and place a value/importance on their children's education. With NISD composed of high-income earners, White and Asian students together total almost seventy-seven percent – 2,066 of 2,582 students. Moreover, seventy percent of students take AP exams each year, allowing CHS to maintain their position in the top one-percent of schools in Texas and in the top eight-tenths of a percent in the nation (U.S. News & Education, 2013).

The class backgrounds of students facilitate a “flattening” of the school space and school culture at CHS (Shankar, 2008). With students “dropped off in Bentleys” at CHS (Gopal, Interview, March 22 2015), class functioned differently at CHS in comparison to previous investigations (e.g., Bettie, 2003; Ngo, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977). Interviews with participants intimated how there were no real styles for particular groups or gender categories. Students wore, more or less, similar styles and name brands (Ngo, 2010): boys wore Sperry shoes, khaki pants or shorts, and a polo-style top while girls may dress up once a week in heels and a skirt but typically wore jeans and a top (Geeta, Interview, March 18 2015; Gopal, Interview, March 1 2015; Rani, Interview, February 13

2015). These descriptions intimated how belonging in at least middle- to upper-middle class quartiles, in tandem with a largely Asian and White student boy, homogenizes aspects of clothing and style that may have once been highly important markers of identification.

CHS is a school that overwhelms you with its size and the amount of students, faculty, and staff walking through the hallways at any given time. The school is very clean, boasts a large library and has windows throughout that allow natural light into the corridors and other spaces of the school. The hallways are adorned with student work and posters, election signs with catchy phrases pertaining to candidates running for student government positions, and signs stating the importance of academic integrity. A “Hall of Honor” adorns one of the walls adjacent to the office, paying tribute to high-achieving and well-rounded students, many of whom are Asian and Indian American.

Walking into CHS, a large orange painted sign welcomes students. The school has one main corridor extending from the main entrance all the way to the back of the building. This hallway is split perpendicularly by two hallways running parallel, providing CHS with two heavily trafficked intersections that provide the main divisions between areas of the school. The classrooms on the left-hand portion of the main hallway range from science, history, language arts and foreign language classrooms located upstairs and downstairs. The areas to the right of the main hallway contain larger community spaces for students like the cafeteria, gymnasium and a student café.

The school operates on A and B days using CHS’s school colors to make this distinction. CHS uses block scheduling with each class ninety minutes in length. One day

during the week, CHS begins on a “late start” which reduces class time by five minutes. The hour delay before students’ classes begin is used by faculty members to hold meetings within their department, collaborate regarding learning activities, plan lessons, or complete administrative duties. When I began my on-site research, I took a tour of CHS with the principal. We spoke about the size of the school, the number of students present, and the ways she saw differences between South Asian parents’ involvement with their children’s education at CHS in comparison to non-South Asian parents. She also told me that CHS administers close to three thousand AP exams in the spring (Interview, February 3 2015) with over ninety-percent of students moving on to institutions of higher education.

CHS’s size, physical layout, and schedules composed the “outer layers” of factors that shaped the ways students and participants navigated CHS negotiated their social habits and social dynamics. Thus, while participants spoke to their ability to socialize between classes on some days, they also indicated how classes across the building made socializing during passing time difficult (e.g., Gopal, Interview, March 1 2015). In these ways, this chapter seeks to identify and engage the “inner layers” of factors that impacted and shaped participants’ social lives at CHS, providing insights into the formation of social groups and participants’ social dynamics.

In thinking about social dynamics at CHS, I had a conversation with Rani’s English teacher as students engaged in their group task. He told me that at CHS, “everyone is cool,” from those students who are members of the band to those on the football team (Interview, February 24 2015). While this teacher’s perceptions may be

skewed given his position as an authority figure and the different relationships he maintains with students, his insights remained important as they depicted CHS as an open and accepting space for students. Dialogues with participants both aligned and contradicted this teacher's affirmations. Participants spoke to certain groups in the top and bottom of the social hierarchy, with fluid relations between groups in top and bottom and moments of slippage between top and bottom.

This chapter seeks to respond to two of my research questions:

1. How do Indian/Indian American youth self-conceptualize their racial and cultural identities? What are the identities they construct/come into/perform/produce for themselves?
2. How does the spectrum of essentializing tropes, from racial "Otherness," foreignness, and inassimilability on the one hand, to hard-working, industrious, and intelligent on the other, manifest itself and operate in schools?

This chapter will engage these research questions by examining the social structure at CHS and how participants' formed their peer networks through social dynamics and interactions. This chapter illustrates the governing dynamics of socialization in CHS's school space and how the social hierarchy, and participants' social networks and dynamics, were structured and informed by particular racial, cultural, and academic logics. The borders around Indianness/Asianness interacted with CHS's White school culture and made "Asianness" a fluid category with different points of intersection (with school culture and/or different social groups) that engendered participants' feelings of

belonging through shared cultural dispositions, feelings of difference/Otherness through intra-ethnic Othering (Pyke & Dang, 2003), and performances of Asianness linked to styles, patterns of interaction, and academic achievement.

MAKING SENSE OF THE RACIALIZED SOCIAL STRUCTURE AT CHS

I became fascinated by the ways in which each participant described their perceptions of the social hierarchy and social structure at CHS during our conversations. The back and forth during our dialogues, with changes in both speed and intonation, intimated the difficulty involved in describing school culture and social dynamics at CHS. When speaking about social groups and how social networks comprised the social hierarchy, participants backtracked, re-worked, or clarified their responses after reflecting on previous interview sessions. Participants' difficulty in speaking to various classifications within the social hierarchy and the relationships between groups at CHS demonstrated a complex social structure with fluid social dynamics and relations between groups. When attempting to delve into the various groups at CHS, I asked Rani if there were groups of athletes or cheerleaders that maintained a position at the top of the social structure. She said that while these groups exist, they were not necessarily placed above anyone else. For Rani, students' social networks and groups were created along lines of similarity, "what you do" or "your personality" (Interview, February 13 2015). Darshan and Gopal expressed similar sentiments, stating that social networks at CHS were formed along lines of shared interests and participation on sports team or extra curricular clubs that allowed students to find like-minded peers with which to build and maintain friendships (Interview, February 15 2015; Interview, March 1 2015). Participants

highlighted their dynamics with White and Asian students and how students in the top were popular, Whitewashed, hyper-achieving or embodied a delicate balance between performances of Indianness and school-valued dispositions, while those in the bottom displayed too much Indianness/Asianness, did not achieve, and were not popular or the leaders of their different “groups.”

The Top and Bottom at CHS

When I asked Geeta how she would respond to being asked what CHS is like, our dialogue began to provide texture to the social groups and hierarchy. When sharing her thoughts, I asked her to place Indian American students in her conceptualizations:

Geeta: I feel like the Indian group has their like, leader...and then like, there's like a group...leader...for like the white group...like Indians are like,...like the popular Indians are the most White-washed. And then its like...its like, like its like this group of Indian guys, who are like there, but they're really awkward too so...

Ven: Interesting, when you mean awkward like what do you mean...

Geeta: I don't know they're just like weird...they talk fast and stuff...

Ven: Who are like, or who are the leaders of the Indian group, like how is that, how do they come to this status...

Geeta: I don't know like I mean I feel like most people don't like them, but they act like they do...

Ven: Ok so it's kind of fake in that respect...

Geeta: Yea...

Ven: Ok, um and these leaders are they the most Whitewashed kids?

Geeta: Yea...and there's like this smart, I think its like divided, like the Whitewashed kids and then the super smart ones...

Ven: Ok ok and the super smart ones are on the same level as the Whitewashed ones, a little bit below...?

Geeta: I think just a little bit below...

Ven: Ok are there any other Indian groups...

Geeta: I think like there's like a middle group, and then there's like the awkward Indian kids that no one really talks to...they talk to themselves...(Interview, February 7 2015)

Geeta's description of the social organization provided an entry point to engage the social hierarchy at CHS. For Geeta, the top of the social hierarchy was composed of students who were popular, the leaders of various groups at CHS, those students who academically achieve, and "Whitewashed" students. Whitewashed took on different meanings for participants. While Geeta was unable to provide a pinpoint definition, Anu used Whitewashed to describe Indian American students that socialized in ways she avoided (e.g., boyfriends, partying), or Indian Americans that "[were] proud of their Indian culture" but spoke out against India when convenient because they "[didn't] actually know the reality of India" (Interview, May 2 2015). Darshan had described Whitewashed Indians as those who "[tried] and be White," with White embodying "intolerant ways of being" (Interview, March 17 2015).

Geeta's description of the social hierarchy indicated how borders that organized the top of CHS's social hierarchy were formed along cultural, racial and academic lines. As CHS placed students that were "Whitewashed," the leaders of different groups, and those who academically achieved at the top (Lew, 2006), CHS's school culture valued particular "White" dispositions, actions, behaviors, and speech patterns that were used as

positioning devices (Bettie, 2003). Whitewashed dispositions formed parts of the cultural lines along which students were sorted while students' racial phenotypes were also used to position them in the top or bottom. The Indian American student that did not embody White dispositions did not display the appropriate cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), which then functioned to reinscribe their racial difference, leading to their positioning in the bottom. However, an Indian American student that academically achieved and was "super smart" was placed in the top. In these ways, achievement became a border used to separate the top from bottom as achievement was valued and respected at CHS. Thus, a student demonstrating an unwavering commitment to Indianness was placed in the Indian category at the bottom unless highly achieving which placed them in the top. Likewise, an Indian American student that shed their Indianness in favor of White dispositions was placed at the top, demonstrating the ways that the social hierarchy was (in)formed through racial, cultural, and academic logics.

I also asked Anu about the social organization of CHS:

Anu: Ok, ok so they're mainly like the other group, like the Whitewashed group, they're at the top. Because they're just like, they do a lot of stuff that I wouldn't necessarily think, like your parents allow you to do...[like] have boyfriends or girlfriends [and party] and stuff like that. Like it's so weird its like, the Indians are at the top of the chain...

Ven: Of, of the overall social structure...not just Indians alone?

Anu: Yea yea I think so,...because I mean, I don't know this is coming from my viewpoint and I don't really hang out with that many like jocks or anything like that, also because of the academic life...of CHS, we place the Indians and the smart people at the top...

Ven: Ok ok and so the Whitewashed Indian kids are at the top of the social hierarchy...

Anu: ...because apparently they cheat a lot so they get higher grades...

Ven: ...[and] cuz you mentioned jocks and everything else like that that too so what are the other groups like that like how does it all work...

Anu: ...so I mean I view them as the top, but no one really likes them they all kind of like fake like them, and I think the jocks are kind of sort of below them I don't really hang out with them...

Ven: ...ok ok and jocks just being male athletes?

Anu: Yea...or like cheerleaders stuff like that, I don't even see them in the hierarchy honestly but then again there are different groups and then we create our own hierarchy within those groups so I'm kind of stuck in the Indian group. So I don't even know what goes on in the other groups that much, I assume because of movies that the jocks go up, but that's just me I don't know...(Interview, February 28 2015)

Here, Anu's description complemented Geeta's conceptualizations of the social at CHS with particular points of divergence. While Geeta did not explicitly include Indians in the top of the social hierarchy, Anu did, stating it was "weird" that the "Indians are top." Both participants situated Whitewashed students, achievers and popular students at the top. Moreover, Anu provided additional details about the Whitewashed students and their ability to maintain positions at the top by earning high grades through less than honorable ways. Thus, some Whitewashed students were positioned at the top for their demonstrations of cultural ways of being that reflected Indianness as well as their ability to achieve. Additionally, Anu highlighted how groups like "jocks" and "cheerleaders," to her, were positioned at the top. While other students at CHS did not like these groups,

their positioning at the top may be related to their embodiment and adherence to the White dispositions and backgrounding of ethnic identities.

Together, Geeta and Anu demonstrated the complicated web that comprised the social hierarchy at CHS and how conceptualizing/positioning the social hierarchy and its members depended on each participant's perspective. Through our conversations, participants' conceptualized notions of "top" as linked to popularity, increased social standing associated with achievement, and particular cultural performances that veered away from Indianness. "Bottom" meant a lack of popularity or social standing, a lack of achievement, and/or cultural performances too Indian/ethnic. These social cliques became indicative of how some Indian American students "parlayed their ethnicity into popularity" (Shankar, 2008, p.79), while others were positioned as "too Indian" and thus in the bottom of the social hierarchy. These categories of "top" and "bottom" remained fixed with performances of Indianness (cultural expressions or native language use) the important factors that influenced how participants were placed. In these ways, CHS's school culture provided points of gravity (e.g., achievement, valued cultural dispositions linked to Whiteness) that allowed for other formations (e.g., popularity, Asianness) to coalesce around and form borders that slotted some students in the top and other students in the bottom.

Inter-ethnic Dynamics at CHS

Thus far the data revealed how the social hierarchy took shape around cultural dispositions valuing Whiteness, high academic achievement, and how different embodiments of "Indianness" placing some students in the top or bottom. While Anu and

Geeta spoke to social groups composed of “Indians” or “Whitewashed” students in CHS’s social hierarchy, participants also described their social dynamics and interactions with peers that fell outside of categories of “Indian.” During an interview session with Darshan, he intimated how class backgrounds functioned to shape and inform the social hierarchy and participants’ dynamics at CHS:

The students [at CHS] come from similar SES backgrounds. They are mostly Asian and White and they are very concerned with getting into prestigious college[s]...there's a lot of peer pressure coming from that. Sometimes the school environment can be very stressful because of that. Those that are not from the same SES background usually don't mix with the majority...this lack of [racial/ethnic] mixing is really sad because most people fit into their racial stereotype rather than define it...(Interview, March 17 2015)

I was blown away by Darshan’s response, not only for his sophistication, but also for how he engaged and reflected upon aspects of class, culture, and the ways that class and culture coalesced and inflected racial meanings. For Darshan, Asian and White students shared similar cultural outlooks through tastes, values, and beliefs. Darshan’s use of “majority” indicated that, for him, the students who were White, Asian and achieving were at the top, with other students taking different classes with different cultural dispositions at the bottom. His conceptualizations of class and culture linked to race demonstrated how racial stereotypes played out as positioning devices at CHS.

Anu, like Darshan, recognized these insulatory practices between Whites and Asians and the ways that Asians tended to form all Asian social groups. Anu became tired of all Asian social networks, and explained why she decided to branch out:

...its just like bridge out I say, because it will give a better perspective on like other people as well and you won't have to be too insulated in your

culture. Cuz I know people who like were my friends and they were way like [insulated] like only Indians and everything, the only group [they] had any friends [in were Indian], and they kind of just like, it was like, it didn't really help their situation because then, because then, I don't know I felt like they weren't able to connect with other people because they just [were] automatically...like oh you're not Indian then never mind. Yea so like I guess, I guess just spread out...yea...because like the Indians who are totally Indian mode they don't really deal with other Indians, they just focus on their own stuff and their own well being but with others I'm like, I'm able to connect with them and I'm able to I don't know, I can put my differences aside, our differences aside and able to connect with them on another level that's void of race and its cool to have that. And if you're just in that Indian group then you're missing out on a lot, like, I mean, yea, I feel like, moving out of that boundary and out of that Indian group is also very important because you get into like new perspectives...(Interview, March 19 2015)

Here, Anu described her interactions with peers from outside the Indian American category and why she decided to branch out and create social networks with students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Anu prided herself on her ability to make connections with everybody, placing her differences aside and expanding her horizons by incorporating new perspectives that she had trouble finding when socializing within the Indian American community at CHS. Anu did not want to limit her social network by adhering to rules that other Indian American peers used to select their social groups. As such, she moved away from using criteria of the same cultural background when forming her networks and interacting with peers. This provided Anu a freedom of sorts, and allowed her to bridge different gaps, self-express, and be heard in ways that would not be possible if she did not have multiethnic social dynamics.

While students at CHS belonged in their various categories of the social hierarchy, they interacted with peers outside of their racial group. These inter-ethnic

dynamics demonstrated how some participants sought to make connections with students from different cultural/ethnic boundaries to expand their own horizons and understand other's different points of view when navigating and interacting within CHS. Previous studies linked class position to Indian American students' socialization with Whites. Those Desi students with non-Indian American social groups from high-class backgrounds associated with Whites (Shankar, 2008). However, Anu's descriptions of CHS indicated how Indian Americans from middle- or upper middle-class backgrounds with Desi peer groups branched out to incorporate White students, making her social networks overlap and span across different ethnic groups.

During one conversation, Rani and I spoke about racial relations at CHS. In this conversation, I asked her how some (i.e., non-Asian American) students viewed Indian American students at CHS. In this conversation, Rani's details provided insights into how the social hierarchy and dynamics took shape:

Rani: ...I feel like its a lot more hatred towards Indians because there are so many. So I feel like a lot of the, like anytime someone, like we got a new student the other day and we're like who is she and then someone says oh she's Indian and like everyone is like "ahh" and I'm like oh wow that's so rude...so its like stuff like that....

Ven: Oh wow ok so then, what are, do you have any idea as to some of the reasons why people may not like Indians?

Rani: I feel like cuz maybe cuz they are so ambitious I feel like, yea ambitious yea. And like Indians are always gonna get the good grades, well Asians in general, like not saying that there aren't White kids that get good grades or anything, I'm sure there are, but a lot of the other kids do, and also like I guess a lot of the people who represent our school like in competition's and stuff like that and get their names on the wall are all Indian. And maybe like maybe the other kids may feel like they are a minority

maybe....Like all the advanced classes are like Asian and so at least um in my classes, maybe its different in the regular classes, but at least the ones in my classes they, feel like they're in competition with all the other Asians. But maybe they're also just like sick of so many Indians, like I feel like that's it too like sometimes...

Ven: ...sick in what way...

Rani: Like there are just so many people like, I don't know, like probably at other schools it's not like this so maybe there's like a "why does my school have to have so many Indian people" and like the same racial, like you know segregation, like these people aren't as good as us. Like maybe a little bit of that...(Interview, March 21 2015)

Rani's insights depicted how some students' aversion to Indian American students at CHS was informed by Indian American students' increasing presence and notoriety, something I observed when walking by the main office and seeing a Wall of Fame praising students for their positive representation of CHS. Rani's insights demonstrated the particular underpinnings of how the social took shape at CHS. As some students at CHS disliked Indians for their increasing presence, ambitious nature, and academic achievement, this distaste became a part of the school's culture and could explain the different ways that Indians/Indianness were taken up and used to inform the social hierarchy and structure. For instance, it was difficult for Indian American students to be considered in the "top" unless academically achieving, Whitewashed, or a particular hybridized version of Indianness and accepted/valued dispositions particular to CHS's culture, a category to which Gopal might have belonged. Conversely then, many Indian Americans were placed in the "bottom" of the social configuration at CHS for displaying "too much" Indianness or not fitting into the mold of what was considered "popular" or a "group leader."

It is normal that the students present in a school will inform how the social structure takes shape, and how various groups are positioned in relation to one another. At CHS, the large number of Indian American students, their achievement, and school wide recognition impacted the ways other students at CHS made sense of and positioned Indian Americans. While “dislike” and “hatred” may have been important feelings that played into how students interacted with one another in a diverse school setting, these sentiments did not represent how all students at CHS felt about their Indian American peers. Many students from non-Asian backgrounds were close friends with Indian Americans at CHS. In these ways, the diversity at CHS served to enrich the school with students from different cultural backgrounds and perspectives, while also creating borders between the “top” and “bottom” linked to racial and cultural background, and performances of class, culture, and achievement.

THE DIVIDING LINES AMONG INDIAN AMERICANS AT CHS

Thus far, the social structure at CHS was composed of a top and a bottom with Indian American students occupying positions in both of these levels. Some Indian American students adopted the socially constructed and valued dispositions at CHS, others neither adopted nor embodied their ethnic identities, while still others were too ethnic. In order to gain understandings into the social hierarchy and participants’ social groups informing their identities, a further analysis of how Indian Americans socialized amongst themselves at CHS is required. During interviews, participants spoke to divisions within the Indian American community at CHS along lines of cultural expression, region, and language. The data revealed how these lines fostered intra-group

surveillance and policing to ensure the boundaries around Indianness and Whiteness were kept in check (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). By keeping these boundaries in check, peer-to-peer surveilling in the Indian American community was aimed at maintaining a healthy and acceptable homeostasis by adhering to a balance between Indianness and Whiteness within the school space.

Indian Americans as FOBs at CHS

The social structure placed particular groups of students in the top and bottom halves. In the narratives from participants, Indian students occupied posts in the upper and lower halves of the hierarchy. Anu and Geeta also spoke to how divisions within the community of Indian American students impacted students' social networks and interactions. Anu explained the divisions within the Indian American students and how the use of the term "FOB" (Fresh Off the Boat) surfaced at CHS:

[FOB is considered]...just like, like if you're seen as doing a lot of like Indian stuff or anything like that or if you have Indian peers or something. Even if, its literally just like in the Indian crowd that you'll be called a FOB...which is so ironic since, like, they call me FOB for example and I'm like "hey, I was born here, you were born in India this doesn't make sense, you don't even know what this means." And second I'm like, I'm fine with, I'm ok with being Indian I don't really care if you see that as, I don't understand why it's a problem being Indian like I listen to Bollywood music so what,... (Interview, March 19 2015)

When I asked Anu who was using the FOB term against fellow students, Anu explained that it was primarily Indian American students who were responsible:

...no its actually like the Indian kids, like they're not the hardcore Indian kids but they're like the Indian kids who,...ok so I'm mainly talking about the Indian guys who go to my school. And they just like, and I don't know, like the guys I hang out with at least, they're just so immature and they call each other like, they make fun of Indians but at the same time they act

very Indian. It's so hilarious to watch them cuz like they have these accents. It's so weird cuz these guys are acting like how Indian aunties or everything like that, and I'm like you're acting more Indian than I'm acting and you're calling me FOB...(Interview, March 19 2015)

I was surprised at the details that Anu revealed. I originally thought terms like FOB emanated from students of non-Asian cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, the use of FOB by fellow Indian American students became a system of checks and balances within the Indian American community at CHS. Previous investigations examining the use of FOB in schooling context defined FOB as “unhip” and that which was “undesirable from India” (Shankar, 2008, p.8), as well as a “typical Indian” or newly arrived immigrants (Handa, 2003, p.82). Anu’s description indicated how FOB was also linked to one’s social groups and activity in addition to aspects of style. Additionally, it was interesting that FOB was not balanced out by terms like “tight” or ‘cool’ evidenced in earlier studies (Shankar, 2008). While style was important in delineating FOBbiness, it was possible that FOB at CHS was linked more to social groups and activity as there was no term to counter the opposite of FOB but Whitewashed. By policing oneself and fellow Indian American peers, the use of FOB became a device that signaled difference away from the cultural norms and dispositions valued by students and CHS’s school culture. The signaling of difference provided students using FOB the possibility of solidifying a position above those displaying unacceptable amounts of Indianness by self-elevating over Indian American peers. However, through Anu’s insights, it appeared as though the students using this term may have been considered FOBby as they spoke with accents. As such, their use of this term became even more important and interesting as

these students attempted to deflect their FOBby status by ‘passing’ it onto other students and self-position above FOBs.

Anu stated that the students using FOB against each other were more “FOB” than she was given their birth in India and speaking with accents. As Indian American males used these phrases, the use of FOB may have been a performance related to masculinity and strength (Collins, 2005). At the same time, the use of FOB may also demonstrate internalized racism and intra-group othering as these students attempted to find a place of belonging by positioning peers as overly ethnic (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The project of naming peers as FOB/Whitewashed could embody a deep commitment to Whiteness on the part of these Indian American students as they self-policed their own expressions of Indianness at CHS (i.e., not openly following the religion or speaking in native languages) and surveilled other group members in the same way. These students’ use of FOB/Whitewashed could also indicate a power dynamic and how these students attempted to “pass” at CHS (Bettie, 2003). Because they were ‘less’ Indian in relation to students they positioned as FOB, their policing, in some ways, intimidated attempts at being a “good Indian” that maintained a healthy homeostasis between expressions of Indianness and Americanness.

Students’ use of FOB as a signifier was particularly interesting. Anu was termed FOB because she regularly listened to Bollywood music. On one school day she wore Indian clothes to school because she did not want to bring a change of clothes and peers said “FOB FOB FOB” as she walked about CHS (Interview, May 2 2015). Terms like FOB were indicative of “intragroup othering” and sub-ethnic identities, intra-ethnic

social boundaries, and surveillance used to solidify the borders of these groups of belonging (Pyke & Dang, 2003). Anu described a group of Indian boys that did not act Indian and called her FOB when she was working in the library, telling her to “stop studying” and “get a life” (Interview, May 2 2015). For this group of Indian American males, FOB was a naming device used to distance themselves from Indian Americans that were “too Indian,” and in this way, self-position as Whitewashed Indian Americans, Indian Americans who were not very Indian, and/or Indian Americans that did not acknowledge their own Indianness. It was interesting how terms like FOB did not emerge from White students or other non-Asian students. Rani provided one possible explanation when she stated that there is so much diversity in the school that White students are “normed” to seeing students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Interview, March 21 2015).

Regional, Religious, and Racial Dividing Lines

While the use of FOB linked to foreignness became one dividing line within the Indian American community at CHS, Anu spoke about other divisions:

Anu: ...my best friend is Muslim Indian, so she kind of tells me about them and everything and they are divided by religion mainly, and so that's there. But then the Muslim Indians actually speak more in Hindi and Urdu...the Muslim guys are the ones who, you know, start cussing in Hindi or Urdu and its really weird cuz like they'll cuss out like random people like,...

Ven: ...does the other person know?

Anu: Hmm? Sometimes they don't know...and its really weird because now actually because they use it so often though some Americans and some other races have learned those words and they started using it against us. So its really weird like there'll be a cuss word

coming out in like Urdu or Hindi and its so weird because now Americans know what we're saying and know the cusswords and some Muslims will be like oh this means that and this means that and they'll be like ohhh it does now...(Interview, March 19 2015)

While Anu began describing the divisions within the Indian American community by the use of FOB, here she described how region, religion, and language often used as the dividing lines in diaspora also became salient points of difference between Indian Americans at CHS; this is in line with previous studies (e.g. Bhatia, 2007; Prashad, 2000). Anu observed how Muslim Indians had their own group of socialization with hierarchies within their group. Moreover, she noted how the native language use at CHS was learned by non-Indian American students, giving way to inter-cultural exchanges of give-and-take that may have helped some of the Muslim Indian American students find senses of belonging within their “FOB” category or lower social position.

Anu's descriptions indicated how the borders that functioned to separate and distinguish Indian groups from each other fell along lines of region or religion, as well as how multiple groups maintained their own in-group hierarchies. These in-group hierarchies reflected the ways that power dynamics surfaced and played out in Indian American socialization at CHS. Rather than envisioning the connections and building solidarity across the different Indian American students present at CHS, these students adhered to the previously established affiliations between religious groups and different regions used in India and the South Asian diaspora in America to position different students within the Indian American community at CHS (Prashad, 2012). Moreover, Anu demonstrated how those students that used their native language cursed at one another or

other peers (Shankar, 2008), and in this way, carved out a specific space of belonging within the Indian American community at the risk of being termed FOBby.

While Anu described the various groups and borders that divided the Indian American contingency at CHS, Rani spoke to further instantiations of how race and culture coalesced to impact her dynamics with fellow Indian Americans:

...for racial things, skin color type things,...like someone will say, like when I didn't wear clothes on Diwali [Day] for example and they'll be like oh its just cuz you're White. And its like not in a funny way like genuinely like 'oh get out we don't want to talk to you',...and its like excuse me...(Interview, March 21 2015)

Rani highlighted the ways that her lack of participation in an event where students wore traditional Indian clothes momentarily ostracized her from her peer group. While many students and teachers dressed up for Diwali day, Rani did not because she felt American clothes were more comfortable and she did want to be the only student dressed in Indian clothes. Rani's resistance to the mandates of this day and wearing Indian clothing backfired. While wearing these clothes may have made her feel "too" ethnic in school (Handa, 2003), her lack of participation made her friends position her as White and exclude her from general social interactions. This moment represented a point of crystallization between aspects of race and culture. Said another way, Rani's lack of cultural participation and expression on a day when students wore Indian clothing to school functioned to position her racially as White. When I asked Rani about her reaction and what she said to these peers, she continued:

...yea and they were like "oh I was kidding," and I'm like well it didn't seem like you were kidding. But he said that to my face, like the tone, and I was like oh ok. And like another time I...I don't remember what I was

saying and we were in the library, like I said something that had nothing to do with my skin color and another one of my friends, like a different one, said “why do you always talk about your skin color like its not even that big of a deal just let it go.” And it was almost like it was not a complex, well actually it was like a complex, like it sounded like that, and I'm not saying that I'm superior because I'm fair but it sounded like that, like if I said, I don't know, like I'm jealous, that's the way that she said it, like you think you're superior. And I'm like “I didn't say anything like that like I said something about computers or something,” and I was like “that's not what I said.” And she's like “oh well it just sounded like you said that”...and I was like “ok”...and then it got really quiet and she never said anything after that...(Interview, March 21 2015)

Here, Rani depicted how divisions occurred within her own peer group with micro-aggressions based upon cultural expressions of Indianness and racial phenotypes. During our conversation, it was clear how this peer's statements and tone made Rani feel awful about herself. While this placing of difference and division within her peer group was attributed to her lack of cultural expression, her skin color became another point of contention (Shankar, 2008). Rani's conversation in the library took a turn she did not expect when her fair skin became the focus of conversation. While Rani self-positioned as Indian, it appeared as though her fellow peers questioned her status as Indian American given her skin color. Yet, these were Rani's own peers who knew she was Indian American, spoke Hindi, and had a social group composed of Indian Americans. These statements of being White or having lighter skin took on an additional hurt for Rani. Thus, the Indian American community at CHS used pointed comments particular to phenotype or and/or cultural expressions of Indianness to create intra-group divisions (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008).

While it may appear as though these categories of belonging within the Indian American student community were fixed and relatively static, these categories were fluid and in constant evolution in relation to one another. While students were positioned as FOBby or Whitewashed, participants' self-positionings were important indicators of how they self-authored, positioned themselves in the schooling space, and how the selection of peer groups and intra-group dynamics functioned to define participants in their group, within the Indian American community, and within the overarching social hierarchy at CHS.

Conclusion

The different groups within the Indian category at CHS represented the coalescence of different performances of race, class, and culture that formed the dividing lines between groups (Bettie, 2003). Race, class and culture coalesced as positioning devices used at CHS and within the Indian American community. For instance, a student's phenotypic appearance (race) provided one avenue of sorting in the overarching social structure and hierarchy, as well as within the Indian American community. Particular performances of Indianness (culture, class), the use of different semiotics (class, culture) and different language preferences in school (culture/class or class/culture) all became markers of difference that also functioned to place students in the top, bottom, and different groups within the Indian American grouping at CHS. In these ways, the analyses here aligned with previous investigations that linked the coalescence of race and/or culture as delineating factors that functioned to position students (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). At CHS, facets of race, culture

and class fluidly interacted, ebbing and flowing as students moved about the school space to position students in different ways depending upon their groups of interaction.

As such, there were those Indians that displayed behaviors that were “very Indian” or “not very Indian” as Indianness was related to particular semiotics, styles, and patterns of interaction. Some Indian Americans used “FOB” against fellow Indian American peers (Handa, 2003; Pyke & Dang, 2003; Shankar, 2008), with further divisions of hyper-competitive Indians, Muslim Indians, and a group of students that fell between these many categories of identification and belonging also present at CHS. These divisions were informed by cultural aptitudes and regional, religious and academic differences (Anu, Interview, May 2 2015; Geeta, Interview, May 30 2015). Students that were “very Indian” may have spoken in their native languages in school and may not have demonstrated the same “with-it-ness” particular to American sociocultural norms and patterns of interaction, positioning them as “Other” or “FOB” at CHS. Those Indian American students termed “very Indian” demonstrated less Indianness (to be termed FOBs) but maintained enough of their Indianness to avoid categorization in the Whitewashed category (Gibson, 1988; Shankar, 2008). Earlier ethnographic work examining social dynamics between White students and their minority counterparts found students embodying a “work hard play hard mentality” with Whites pitted against non-Whites (Foley, 1990). However, this dynamic did not emerge at CHS. Instead, a different instantiation of competitive dynamics surfaced as both Indian American and non-Indian American students competed with hyper-competitive students. These dynamics created distinct groups within the Indian American community and fostered participants’

disinterest in socializing with the hyper-competitive Indian American students (Anu, Interview, March 19 2015; Rani, Interview, March 21 2015). These divisions between groups demonstrated how borders were formed along lines of cultural performances and dispositions, religion, region, and achievement linked to cultural- and class-based performances.

SHARED ASIANNES AND PAN-ASIAN MULTICULTURALISM

Participants' insights denoted how the social structure and hierarchy at CHS were fluid with different divisions within the Indian American community along regional, linguistic, and racial lines. While Anu spoke to her Indian American social network and branching out to gain other perspectives, most participants maintained all Indian or Asian American peer networks. Participants' all Indian/Asian peer networks, their peers' all Indian/Asian networks, and the large number of Asians/Indians at school fostered a pan-Asian multiculturalism at CHS. During interviews, participants made clear how the pan-Asian multiculturalism helped participants interact, provided a basis for cultural events, and created a "wannabe Asian" categorization at CHS.

Support from Same-Culture Peer Groups

With most participants maintaining all Asian peer formations, Geeta, Anu and Rani spoke to how their Asian peer groups provided a sense of relief or ease. Geeta associated with Indian peers because there was a "level of comfort" (Interview, May 30 2015) while Anu said that she "chills with [her] Indian friends because it's...just much easier" (Interview, May 2 2015). Anu's description intimated the "ease" she felt was

perhaps more cultural in nature as Indian American peers “knew” what it was like to have overbearing parents and the need to focus on schoolwork. Rani’s description of a freshman “fish bowl” activity, where incoming students socialized amongst each other, provided an example of the ways that social networks were racially and/or culturally informed. Rani described how Indian American girls from a different middle school that filtered into CHS joined them and everyone “just hit it off, exchanging phone numbers.” At this event, Rani described how “the Indian people” and the “White people” had their own groups of socialization with a small group that was mixed (Interview, February 13 2015). The shared sense of Indianness and Indian culture was used as an identifier to build social bonds as students gravitated to peers thought to share similar cultural experiences or outlooks.

In this way, CHS’s patterns of all Asian peer groups aligned with previous investigations demonstrating how participants looked for similarities in what their peers did or the ways peers acted as ways to build connections and form social networks, (Bettie, 2003; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977). Anu elaborated on these connections:

...it was just like easier to be with [Indian Americans] and be friends with [Indian Americans] because they understood how you were living your lifestyle because they were going through the same thing, harsh parents, you know, gotta study all the time and everything. So it was like you want to go with people who are like you and like the Indian circle was like yea...(Interview, March 8 2015)

These shared characteristics further facilitated and solidified Indian American students’ intra-ethnic socialization (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The ease felt by participants when

interacting within all Asian peer groups became a determining factor in the creation and maintenance of their social networks. While previous ethnographic work identified how different minority groups may have understood the difficulties in dating within or outside one's own cultural group due to parental wishes, cultural norms, or an individual's closeness to their cultural identity (Foley, 1990; Handa, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999), many non-Asian peers at CHS may not have understood what it was like to have parents control one's socialization or dating life. To some non-Asian students, these cultural ways of being and the monitoring or enforcement of dating rules by parents could be considered strange or different, perhaps verging on weird. The participants' choice to keep all Asian company indicated that feelings of belonging and the development of close social bonds with non-Asians may have been more difficult as the characteristics shared with non-Asian peers may have been more limited in comparison to the many connections shared with Asian peers.

CHS's (Multi)Cultural Events and "Wannabe Asians"

As the school contained a large number of Asian students, interview data revealed how a pan-Asian subculture developed at CHS. Rani earlier explained how students' social networks took shape around shared interests or cultural similarities. The subculture of pan-Asian multiculturalism took shape through the Indian American and Chinese American students at CHS. I became intrigued when participants spoke about this subculture and how it took shape at CHS through both official and unofficial events at the school. One official event was called "Taste of Asia" and took place on a weeknight, which surprised Anu as she thought it would take place on a Saturday given its

importance as a fundraiser for Project Graduation and the many community members that attend. Anu described the event:

[It] is one of the biggest fund raisers that Project Graduation has and its because there are so many Asians at our school so like, and there are so many other people who are really enthusiastic about it too. So that's why we have like they're kind of like, its basically mainly done by the parents, so the parents do this and everything and the kids help obviously and its really fun...Because some of the Indian kids were like "oh my gosh they were selling tickets on the side," because my mom gave me 30 tickets to sell and I'm like...(Interview, May 2 2015)

The pace at which Anu spoke, and her rising intonation, intimated how much she enjoyed this event and how important it was for her. While she sold tickets that her mother gave her, her description detailed how the event took place because of the large number of Asians in the school district. In this way, CHS's administration was smart and catered to their community when creating a space for community and school members to come together. Anu described how the event had "mainly just Indian and Chinese food," a "Bollywood dance and Chinese [cultural expression]," and was well attended by both White and non-White members of the community. The type of home-school-community connection fostered by this event was very powerful in aiding Indian American and Chinese American students to see their cultures present, valued, appreciated and interesting to non-Asians or non-Asian Americans (Shankar, 2008). The cultural program with Bollywood dances and Chinese cultural expressions provided students a moment to connect and see their culture as valued and presented positively for the rest of their peers and peers' parents.

Through events like “Taste of Asia” and the positive representations of Asian culture, it made sense that a pan-Asian multiculturalism took root at CHS. Participants embodied pan-Asian multiculturalism in different ways. For example, Geeta shared how she “usually [was] just with like Indian or Chinese or like other kids like Asian people” at CHS (Interview, May 30 2015). However, the importance of “Taste of Asia” was in its broad valuing of Asian cultures and the creation of what Geeta and Anu termed “wannabe Asians” (Geeta, Interview, May 30 2015; Anu, Interview, May 2 2015). In fact, Rani also stated that she thinks “...some people wish they were Indian” (Interview, March 21 2015). Wannabe Asians were described as “always hang[ing] out with Asian people [doing] what Asian people do...” (Geeta, Interview, March 18 2015). Geeta made specific mention of a student that I saw during an observation with her as a “wannabe Asian” (Classroom Observation, February 18 2015). While I originally thought this student was White, Geeta told me that she was not friends with him, that “he [was] Hispanic,” “very smart,” and a “wannabe” because he always “[hung] out with Asians” (Interview, March 18 2015). Students did not self-label as “wannabe Asian” – other students used this moniker to sort and position those they felt were “wannabes.” The construction of “wannabe” appeared pejorative in nature and emerged from Asian American students themselves, perceiving an appropriation or encroachment on their style, culture, and/or ways of being. Additionally, this construction also raised questions regarding how a “wannabe” status could be positioned onto students who had friends who were Asian and spent time with them, as students will socialize with those around and with whom they feel comfortable. However, its discursive production and use in

positioning students gave the term power and traction in the schooling space, particularly as minority students tended to emulate Whites, not vice-versa.

Additionally, Rani, Anu and Geeta spoke to “Diwali day” at school. Students organized this event by creating a Facebook page. Participating students were instructed to wear traditional Indian clothes in a show of support for those celebrating. Upon entering school, Rani was “shocked” at the amount of people dressed up, including “every single one of [her] friends.” I asked Rani about the racial breakdown of students dressed up. While she could not provide an exact number, she mentioned that nearly half of the school had dressed up, with non-Indian American students in Indian peer networks borrowing clothes in order to participate (Interview, March 21 2015). Anu shared how teachers dressed up, perhaps not in full clothes, but with a purse or a small article to show cultural inclusion and sensitivity. She went on to say how teachers would say “Happy Diwali” to students passing. In one class, Anu said that the teacher:

...told [them] all to get up because [they] were all wearing Indian clothes, well not all, there were some people who didn't, but she was like, we were separated but she made it, it made me feel good because she was like.....“oh my gosh you guys are so beautiful” and she wanted to know more about the culture and she wanted to know the background bout Diwali which was kind of funny because when she asked about it we were like “oops,” we didn't know we were getting a quiz so we were all just looking at each other...(Interview, May 2 2015)

Not only did this teacher wear an article of Indian cultural heritage and wish students Happy Diwali, she told them how “beautiful they looked” and asked them to stand up so that their classmates could examine their clothes for the day. While this may serve to single out students who did not dress up whether Indian American or not, it provided a

space where Indian American students had their culture valued, appreciated, and shown off, even if in an Orientalist manner. Moreover, the non-Indian American students that wore clothes were also able to actively participate in the festivities. Student prompted days of celebration like this Diwali Day aided in forging a pan-Asian multiculturalism across the school between Indian American and Chinese American students. Moreover, the pan-Asian multiculturalism expanded beyond “Asian” boundaries and individuals to include White students as well. On this day, students wearing garbs “felt good,” with this day and celebration conceptualized as welcoming, encouraging, and even necessitating a wannabe Asian status.

With school sponsored nights like “Taste of Asia” and student-organized days like “Diwali Day,” CHS’s students of all racial/ethnic backgrounds saw Asian students and their cultures as valued. Days of cultural expressions or school sponsored events functioned to Orientalize Asian students while also creating a space for pan-Asian subcultural expressions. “Diwali Day” represented McCarthy’s nonsynchrony (1998) at CHS. Nonsynchrony refers to the irregular interactions of students’ race, class and gender within CHS. As expressions of Indianness placed students in the bottom half of the social hierarchy, days of celebration erased and even reversed these previously established logics, as White students wore Indian clothes to school. These days of celebration allowed South Asian American students the ability to share their Indianness with the school’s community. However, the next day, these same South Asian American students needed to place their Indianness on the backburner and forefront the particular cultural dispositions that CHS valued, exemplified when Anu shared how a group of Indian

American students made a fellow Indian American peer change out of her cultural clothes into American clothes on a normal school day (Interview, March 19 2015). Thus, while valuing these students and their cultures, these events became more exoticizing than anything else, giving a nod to “saris and samosas” without properly contextualizing these days and their significance (Anu, Interview, May 2 2015). While these days of celebration were a move in a positive direction towards representation and celebrating multiple cultures in school, these events also fit a pattern that has been noted by researchers in which Indian and Chinese cultures are essentialized and reduced to specific tropes vis-à-vis food, styles of dress, and specific cultural productions or performances (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). In these ways, students saw their culture as positively represented, but also felt a liminality because “Indian [was] on your mind” but it “never [came] out” (Rani, Interview, March 21 2015).

Conclusion

The large amount of Chinese and Indian American students at CHS gave way to a pan-Asian subculture. This pan-Asian subculture created pan-Asian alliances, evidenced in participants’ all-Asian social groups. This subculture provided participants a sense of ease and belonging at CHS as these students shared similar cultural lifestyles, home contexts, and parental expectations. While these peer groups provided participants a sense of belonging through shared cultural aptitudes, they also provided students an insulatory space of belonging that shielded them from aspects of CHS’s White school culture. School sanctioned and impromptu student-led events containing Chinese and Indian cultural expressions and food made being Asian “cool,” giving way to many

“wannabe Asian” students. These days of celebration allowed participants a moment to place their cultural backgrounds on display at CHS. While these events embodied multiculturalism in their static and reductionist treatment of different cultures (McCarthy, 1993, 1998), students were able to resist the normal socially constructed mandates of appropriate dress and levels of “Indianness” that could be brought and displayed at CHS. While Orientalizing Indian culture and students, these days of celebrating difference allowed Indian American participants moments to approximate feeling more “whole” in a school space that stressed White cultural norms and dispositions.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SHAPING SOCIAL DYNAMICS AT CHS

Thus far, interviews with participants revealed a top half and bottom half of the social hierarchy at CHS and how participants’ social networks took shape along multiple lines of similarities and differences. The dialogues from participants highlighted in this chapter insinuated a relationship between achievement and being Asian at CHS. The link between Asians and achievement surfaced in Rani’s description of the students that achieved and composed the ‘smart’ classes at CHS. In previous investigations, academic achievement has been both coveted and resisted by Asian students (Lee, 2009; Ngo, 2010), more important to immigrants than their American-born counterparts (Gibson, 1988; Valenzuela, 1999), key to those students identifying as strictly ethnic rather than Asian American (Kibria, 2002; Lew, 2006), and influenced by home culture, class standing and the realization of jobs prospects (Corrigan, 1979; Willis, 1977). While all American-born participants stressed the importance of academically achieving to the same degree that Geeta did as a migrant from India, the data revealed how a culture of

hyper-academic achievement became an additional factor within CHS's school culture that informed students' positions within the social hierarchy and shaped participants' dispositions towards school, social networks, and social dynamics at CHS.

Academic Culture and Participants' Social Networks

Participants described the social structure and hierarchy at CHS in similar ways with certain individuals in the bottom and top halves. Cultural dispositions and performances of culture became salient devices that sorted students into the top and bottom while also becoming the borders along which social groups formed their boundaries of belonging. Through my conversations with participants, I discovered an additional aspect that played into the social hierarchy and participants' dynamics, surfacing when I asked Geeta to describe CHS and her thoughts about the school's culture:

Geeta: Its like I think its just like really divided cuz like, there's kind of, like the Asian community and then there's like the other races,...

Ven: All the other races are together...?

Geeta: No not necessarily I feel like, OK, I think it makes more sense to think of it like AP and IB world and regular world cuz we don't really interact with like people who take regular like all regular classes. I think we don't associate, like I feel like half the time I don't know most people who go to our school...(Interview, May 30 2015)

Geeta's insights demonstrated how she conceptualized CHS's academic culture as an additional factor contributing to social configurations. It was interesting that, in Geeta's response, her description of the school's social hierarchy began with a racial conceptualization and division and then moved towards academic categorizations that

shaped school culture. Participants' classes formed the borders that enclosed their social networks (Anu, Interview, May 2 2015). For this reason, Geeta stated that she and her friends "[didn't] interact" with students in all regular classes. While Geeta's tone did not indicate a sense of superiority and/or derision towards those that take different classes, her lexical choices indicated how these types of superiority/inferiority relations might exist. In these ways, students' academic tracks acted as bridges that connected students with peers sharing the same classes, creating a funneling effect that narrowed possible social connections throughout the day.

Darshan relayed the ways in which he felt academic culture and class selection impacted students' social networks and dynamics. For Darshan, the academic culture created a school environment that was too competitive for his liking. He told me that "eighty- to ninety-percent of the top ten [students in each grade were] Asian," and how "seventy-percent of IB [was] Asian" as well (Interview, March 17 2015). Moreover, Darshan explained how:

...there are probably very few people in regular classes who are Asian...and there are very few African Americans in those AP classes. The school put out an email that they were trying to get more Black people into AP classes to have more black kids taking the AP exam...(Interview, March 17 2015)

Darshan conveyed how he greatly disliked the academic culture at CHS that instilled competitiveness across all students. His description of top-achieving students as mostly Asian and the IB track as also "mostly" Asian began to demonstrate how the academic culture at CHS created a school culture that linked academic achievement with Asian students, whether Indian American or Chinese American. In these ways, Darshan's

description solidified Geeta's racial and academic divisions at CHS as academic tracks underpinned how students and participants formed, maintained, expanded, and regulated their social networks. While participants created social networks along similarities and shared cultural affiliations, academic orientations and dispositions became an additional component figuring into social relations and dynamics.

Anu shared an instance of how the academic culture informed her social networks. She had a very close friend she met in elementary school, and they maintained a close friendship until high school:

I'm not that close friends with her [now] because of the lack of classes we have. Cuz you need to have classes nowadays to be like really close friends with someone. And now she doesn't take that, I think it's also that she doesn't take AP classes as much, she's like, two AP classes or something. So we don't have, I don't have any class with her actually so I do sit with her in lunch but I don't hang out with her that much anymore...(Interview, March 8 2015)

Anu's explanation indicated how the academic culture became an additional factor and force at play guiding students' social networks and dynamics. While previous investigations into pan-Asian or ethnic-specific social groupings and intra-ethnic socialization were negatively associated with the lack of students from the same cultural background (Ngo, 2010), or positively connected to support from those in similar social positions (Lee, 2009), the data indicated how CHS's academic culture operated as an additional component contributing to participants' social networks through high workloads that made socialization with students outside of one's classes difficult. In these ways, students made connections with those peers taking the same classes and/or

curricular materials which facilitated the building social bonds with Asian students, with these social networks underpinned by CHS's academic culture.

DISCUSSION

The data in this chapter highlighted how participants' negotiated aspects of CHS's school culture and context when selecting and socializing within their peer networks. Participants noted how their racial and cultural identities fluidly interacted within the school culture and positioned them positively, neutrally, and negatively in different contexts. This section seeks to make clear connections between the data contained in this chapter and participants' racial and cultural identities, the various tropes that positioned participants at CHS, and how these facets contributed to making "Indian" a fluid signifier at CHS.

"Flattened" School Culture and Hyper-Visibility

The largely homogenous student population from similar class backgrounds "flattened" (Durham & Kellner, 2001; Jameson, 1984) aspects of CHS's school culture that impacted students' social networks, dynamics, and placement within the social hierarchy. This flattening was evidenced in the lack of multiple tiers that composed the social structure, the lack of different and unique styles of dress, and participants' inability to place some groups over others within a two-tiered social structure at CHS. The top was composed of students that were popular, Whitewashed, academically achieving and "leaders" of each group. The bottom was comprised of students that were too Indian, not very Indian (but not Whitewashed), hyper-competitive, and students that did not pertain

to any of these categories. In addition to these categorizations, the Indian American community at CHS contained its own divisions along regional, religious, and linguistic lines with these divisions mirroring how the South Asian diaspora in American also divides and separates (Bhatia, 2007; Prashad, 2000; Rudrappa, 2004). The flattened school culture at CHS made the established borders delineating belonging (whether in the top or bottom) highly salient positioning devices that functioned to make some students feel different in relation to their peers.

The placement of Whitewashed students at the top, and students that were “too Indian” at the bottom, pointed to specific logics operating and influencing the social at CHS. The importance placed on “Whitewashed” as top made provided evidence of the power that “White” contained as an invisible ethnic category and “ethnic” its contrasting image (Frankenburg, 1993). In these ways, CHS’s social hierarchy and dynamics were informed by the domination and saturation of Whiteness (Leonardo, 2009), as specific linguistic styles, patterns of thought, style and daily social experiences were given value and preferred over others (Giroux, 1990). The “Whiteness” particular to CHS was also informed by NISD’s ideologies of “racial appropriateness” operating within the community (Bucholtz, 2001, p.85). An additional key component to participants’ placement within the social hierarchy and the formation of their social networks was a culture of academic achievement. While academic achievement has been linked to Whiteness (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), this association has lost its thrust as newer theorizations link agency and positive self-identification and self-esteem with achievement. At CHS, academic achievement was not linked to Whiteness. Instead, the

culture of achievement created a tunnel effect that blurred the margins of the larger field of potential social connections and encouraged students to centrally focus on building bonds with students sharing the same classes.

Thus, with a flattened school culture establishing a norm of relatively fixed semiotics and patterns of behavior amongst students, points of inflection particular to racial-, cultural-, and class-based productions became spikes that were linked to racialized tropes and sorted students into the top and bottom of the social hierarchy. Here, spike indicates a quick, sudden, and sharp movement away from the established norms of style, language use, or cultural expressions at CHS. For example, an Indian American student wearing khakis and a polo (male) or jeans and a nice top (female) will not draw any extra attention to himself/herself. However, this same Indian American student speaking in their native language in open school spaces, or wearing traditional Indian garb to CHS, was no longer within the established cultural norms of CHS. This spiking away from the norm made participants “hyper-visible” and thus “space invaders” to their peers, educators, and general faculty at CHS (Puwar, 2004). Their hyper-visibility was linked to Orientalized tropes and the presence of postcolonial Indian bodies in the West using different Eastern languages or wearing Eastern garbs (Said, 1978). Thus, when Anu intentionally wore Indian clothes on a normal school day, she was positioned as FOBby because her cultural expressions (clothes) misaligned with the norms established at CHS and made her a hyper-visible “space invader.” While this positioning did not bother her, this incident highlighted the intense self-regulation and agentic adherence to the cultural norms of CHS that many students and participants negotiated and followed on a daily

basis. Participants needed to carefully negotiate their hyper-visibility, seen in achievement or linguistic usage, to remain within the established cultural norms of CHS. However, on days of cultural celebration where performances and embodiments of “Indianness” were (almost) expected, participants’ clothes and hyper-visibility acted as a camouflage, making participants blend in with the oversaturation of Indianness at CHS. In these ways, the hyper-visibility of being Indian at CHS acted reflexively on these days, positioning those Indian American students not wearing Indian garb as hyper-visible and questioning their racial/cultural identities. In these ways, participants’ hyper-visibility marked them as different against a backdrop of CHS’s (White) cultural aptitudes, styles, and ways of being.

The racialized tropes of Otherness, inassimilability, foreignness, or hyper-achieving and hard-working positioned onto Asians *became the borders* and points of visibility along which students were sorted into the top and bottom at CHS. Those who were “too Indian” spoke in native languages, wore Indian clothes to school on ‘inappropriate’ days, or were hyper-competitive when seeking high grades. Although most participants avoided the hyper-competitive students, hyper-competitive students still remained in the top due to their achievement, while those speaking in native languages or seen as being “too Indian” were positioned in the bottom. However, those students who shed their “Indianness” and were Whitewashed, or struck a delicate balance between “Indianness” and the valued ways of being at CHS, were not hyper-visible as they cloaked their racial and cultural differences which lead to their placement in the top. The Orientalized tropes particular to Indian Americans’ cultural expressions interacted with

CHS's established norms, participants' social preferences and their racial/cultural identities to sort students within the social structure and shape participants' social networks towards all Asian (Rani, Anu, Geeta and Darshan) or away from all Asian groups (Gopal and Anu).

CHS (In)Forming Racial and Cultural Identities

Participants made conscious decisions when negotiating and regulating their visibility at CHS. While their status as space invaders ebbed and flowed depending upon their visibility, the necessity to adhere to the established norms of CHS's school culture particular to style and cultural expressions informed and helped participants shape their own self-conceptualizations of their racial and cultural identities. A focal point with which to engage participants' self-conceptualizations of these racial and cultural identities is through participants' definitions of India and Indian.

Darshan connected Indian to "following the religion and having all Indian friends" (Interview, March 17 2015). Anu associated Indian with "school" and "grades" (Interview, May 2 2015), much like Rani who described Indian as being "...focused, determined, caring about grades, caring about the...cultural importance [and]...valuing relationships a lot more [than] Americans" (Interview, March 21 2015). Participants' definitions of Indian demonstrated their linking of racial constructs (e.g., phenotype) with cultural constructs (e.g., religion) and traits/dispositions (e.g., focused, caring about grades, all Indian friends) that informed their conceptualizations of the racial and cultural identifiers of being Indian at CHS. While race and phenotype were important markers of difference, so too were cultural expressions that also positioned difference onto

participants. At CHS, race became a marker of both phenotypic and cultural difference (Bettie, 2003; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). For example, when Rani's lighter skin was used as a marker of difference to indicate her 'superiority,' this was an example of race as phenotype. On the other hand, when Anu wore Indian clothes to school and was called "FOB," this cultural expression (clothes) was equated with racial difference and became an example of culture as race.

In these ways, participants' identities developed first through a racial lens that identified and acknowledged racial difference associated with phenotype, and second through cultural expressions linked to racial difference (Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). While participants' racial and cultural identity formation partly aligned with narratives of "accommodation without assimilation" through adopting particular habits of style and interaction that CHS valued to mitigate visibility (Gibson, 1988), their racial and cultural identities aligned more with the aspects of "hybridity" whereby participants did not fully commit to CHS's mainstream ideologies and styles. This hybridity was not an even split between East/West, but rather a constant negotiation between the two as their "Indianness" was measured against the unmarked/unnamed category of White dispositions particular to CHS (Shankar, 2008). In these ways, CHS's days of multicultural celebration became the moments where participants could express their "ethnic" identities, with other school days embodying the careful negotiations of their "American" and "Indian" identities.

In these ways, participants developed "unresolved" racial and cultural identities as the power relations that surfaced in acceptable/unacceptable ways of being at CHS

produced racial and cultural identities that were “ambiguous” and/or “conflictual” (Ngo, 2010, p.110). For example, Anu wearing Indian clothes to school meant she was accepted/praised on one day and hyper-visible the next. The ways in which her peers positioned her sent ambiguous and conflictual messages as to what being Indian at CHS entailed. Additional ambiguities surfaced when participants conceptualized racial and cultural identities as interconnected with religion, language, maintaining all Indian social networks, being focused and caring about grades, or caring about relationships. While these traits could apply to anyone from any ethnic or cultural background, these personality traits took on a racial and cultural significance at CHS. In these ways, participants negotiated their “hyper-visibility” through carefully monitoring their appearance linked to phenotypic difference and cultural expressions repositioned as racial difference in different moments. These moments of race as culture or culture as race demonstrated the slippage between race and culture, further cemented participants’ simultaneous belonging/racial Otherness, and underpinned participants’ decisions of when to keep their Otherness “in check” (e.g., wearing American clothes on normal school days) or remain hyper-visible (e.g., Anu wearing Indian clothes on a normal school day).

Conclusion

The formation of the social structure and participants’ social dynamics indicated how Indian became a flexible border that informed the larger social hierarchy, divided the Indian American community, and informed intra-group Indian American social dynamics at CHS. In these ways, “Indian” became a “cultural field” (Hall, 1995; Ngo, 2010) where

meanings of Indian were situational, positional, and frequently changing. While participants could have pertained to the Whitewashed students and hyper-achieving students in the upper half of the social hierarchy, or the “ethnic” Indians in the bottom, they self-conceptualized as belonging in an “ambiguous” position within the hierarchy. In fact, Anu took pride in pertaining to a group that did not have its own classification within the Indian American community, much like Rani enjoyed the company of her Indian girl group. Thus, the linking of Indian through race, cultural dispositions or habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), and personality traits demonstrated the fluidity of being Indian and the use of Indian as a signifier at CHS. Moreover, these links underscored how borders around India and Indian cultural expressions contained tipping points that, when ‘flexed’ or stretched enough, made Indian American students’ hyper-visible and positioned them as FOBby or too ethnic. Simultaneously, when these borders were ‘contracted’ or lax and Indian American students did not display behaviors, dispositions or semiotics linked to CHS’s definitions of Indianness, they were positioned as Whitewashed and/or not very Indian.

I would like to end this discussion with a snippet from Rani when I asked her about being Indian at CHS. I asked her if being Indian made her feel different. She responded saying, “...being Indian makes you feel like you belong” (Interview, March 21 2015). Given our previous discussions, I found it interesting that she mentioned this in our last interview. Yet, after working through the data and participants’ insights, being Indian did make some feel like they belonged. The flattened school culture and re-working of Indian as a signifier to include aspects of race, culture, and personality traits

associated with achievement would engender feelings of belonging, especially with so many South Asian Americans attending CHS and days of celebration like Diwali day or Taste of Asia. However, this chapter has demonstrated the pliability of Indian as a signifier and positioning device through flexible borders that when expanded (too ethnic) or contracted (too assimilated) with different Indian cultural expressions functioned to position students in the overarching social hierarchy, as well as inform students' social networks and intra-group dynamics. Moreover, the intra-ethnic policing between different Indian American groups placed additional components that informed social configurations and dynamics, inculcating some students with the necessity to be self-conscious of, and self-police, their Indianness when in CHS. Thus, while Rani may have felt like she belonged, the operative work is "like," as she felt *like* she belonged in certain moments until her own social circle termed her White or questioned her status as Indian. In these ways, the flexible borders around Indian and a school culture imbued in Whiteness intersected to inform participants' conceptualizations of the social hierarchy at CHS, shaped participants' social networks and dynamics, and underpinned interactions in school to fall within the parameters of the 'good' Indian' in the contested "bicultural middle" of CHS (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The "bicultural middle" is a fluid site of accommodation and resistance between the Indian/Asian ethnic subculture and the White dominated school culture. As such, the bicultural middle was a space that represented participants' negotiations between their Indianness and the adherence to the cultural norms and values established and valued by CHS. While there were moments where participants resisted the "norms" of the bicultural middle at CHS (i.e., Anu wearing

Indian clothes to school because she did not want to change), the middle of the acculturative spectrum held power, seen in uses of FOB, the social structure valuing Whitewashed students, and participants self-policing as well being policed by peers regarding their Indianness and cultural expressions.

Chapter 5: Indianness and Achievement: *Interactions in Formal Educative Spaces Shaping Racial and Cultural Identities*

Participants' social groups and social dynamics were important in delineating and maintaining group membership and encountering senses of belonging at CHS. Not only did these dynamics provide structure, and in some ways a routine to participants' navigation of CHS, they also built and constructed borders around being Indian that participants used to inform aspects of their racial and cultural identities. The flattening of class, in tandem with the largely homogenous school population, produced a dual-tiered social structure with social groups informed by similarities along cultural and academic lines. These facets of CHS's school culture, in tandem with an underlying current of academic achievement, made Indian a particular social signifier with positive, negative, neutral and ambivalent meanings used by participants to self-conceptualize and sort, categorize, and/or position themselves and their peers.

The politics of acceptability/respectability particular to Indian as a social positioning device were identified, negotiated, constructed, re-constructed and challenged/resisted by participants on a daily basis at CHS. In similar ways, being Indian and Indianness were key points of crystallization that also shaped participants racial and cultural identities in formal educative spaces. Some classroom dynamics made certain content areas engaging (e.g., Rani, Interview, February 24 2015), while other classrooms made participants feel "bored" (e.g., Darshan, Interview, February 15 2015; Geeta, Interview May 30 2015). Aspects of engagement and boredom were important factors that influenced participants' approaches to content areas. However, dialogues and

observations with participants brought to light a core backdrop of classroom dynamics and interactions where a set of pedagogical, peer-to-peer, and curricular relations/interactions interacted with Indianness. These interactions solidified some meanings of Indianness, while leaving others open-ended and in constant states of production/re-production, negotiation/re-negotiation.

Participants overtly wore their Indianness on some school days (e.g., multicultural days of celebration), while covertly carrying/bringing their Indianness internally throughout all interactions and navigations at/of CHS. Chapter 4 outlined how Indian was associated with aspects of dress and speech, “doing things Indian,” “valuing relationships,” and “having all Indian friends.” An additional component to being Indian as highlighted in Chapter 4 was “caring about school and grades.” The culture of achievement shaped the social hierarchy and helped create hyper-competitive, or “hardcore” Indians. Anu shared how there was a “whole competitive vibe among the Indians at [CHS],” as there were “a ton of Indians, [and the Indian and] Asian influence upped the competition level for everyone,” an emergent theme across previous studies of Asians and South Asians intra-group social dynamics in schools (e.g., Kumar, 2006). Thus, it made sense when Geeta shared an expectation of being Indian at CHS as “Indians [were] expected to be smart” (Geeta, Interview, May 30 2015). This “competitive vibe” was also instilled at home and given cultural characteristics (addressed in Chapter 6), like when Anu spoke about her parents, and Indian parents in general, relaying messages that children “[had] to be the best at everything” (Anu, Interview, March 8 2015). In some ways then, it could be argued that participants

incorporated notions of academic achievement as a cultural and ethnic facet of being Indian in NISD, a phenomenon observed in other studies of pan-Asian youth's interactions and approaches to achievement (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991; Gibson, 1988; Lew, 2004, 2006, 2006b; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). In these ways, significant aspects comprising participants' Indian cultural and ethnic identities were the attention and focus on schoolwork and high academic achievement. The notion of academic achievement as connected to cultural identities was further reinscribed to participants as their out of school activities, and those of their peers, were limited in order to focus on schoolwork (addressed in this chapter). Following this line of thought, this chapter seeks to respond to two of my research questions:

3. How does the school space impact/influence how Indian/Indian American students come to know themselves and the world around them?
4. How do Indian/Indian American students resist dominant positionings and ways of being and undertake conscious agentic decisions and actions that recreate their interactions in the schooling space?

This chapter builds from Chapter 4's focus on participants' social dynamics in informal spaces to situate how tropes of Otherness and definitions of Indianness operated in formal educative spaces, highlighting different points of departure in defining Indianness at CHS related to dynamics between participants and their educators, peers, and curricula. Following this light, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how different pedagogical contexts and dynamics with peers, educators and curricula interacted with participants' internal repository of cultural tools linked to achievement to further define borders around being

Indian at CHS, with the negotiations around these borders informing participants' identities and worldviews.

ACADEMIC IDENTITIES, PEDAGOGY, AND BEING INDIAN AT CHS

With academics and achievement an important marker defining and informing social status at CHS, students and participants alike had “academic identities” that they created, developed, maintained, resisted and (re-)negotiated through experiences at CHS. These academic identities operated in converging and diverging ways in relation to the flexible borders of Indianness and what it meant to be “Indian” at CHS. In general, the development of academic identities has been linked to “identity domains” like race, ethnicity and social class (Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011; Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008), as youth negotiate these domains and develop some identities while ignoring others as they meld notions of perceived opportunities in the labor system with “the value placed on members of their own social group” (Zirkel, 2002, p.374).

In the classroom space, some educators' pedagogy used participants' Indianness as a platform to further notions of self-efficacy and achievement, while other pedagogical contexts destabilized academic identities and self-efficacy by making it difficult for participants to access aspects of their Indianness that would aid in achievement. This section seeks to demonstrate how teacher-centered pedagogical contexts operated to alienate students and encourage hyper-individualism, how student-centered contexts built community through collaboration, and how both of these contexts informed participants' racial and cultural identities in converging and diverging ways.

Alienation, Hyper-Individualism, and Indianness in Teacher-Centered Contexts

I noticed teacher-centered learning environments during a majority of observations at CHS. While some participants found some teacher-centered contexts unenjoyable, other participants like Geeta, Anu, and Darshan found their teacher-centered government elective very interesting and enjoyable (Anu, Interview, May 30 2015; Geeta, Interview, March 18 2015; Darshan, Interview, March 8 2015). Participants' insights, coupled with classroom observations, highlighted the emergence of alienation and hyper-individualism in teacher-centered contexts. When negotiating feelings of alienation and hyper-individualism, it appeared as though participants relied on aspects of their Indian cultural and ethnic identities linked to self-efficacy in order to mitigate negative feelings and launch themselves into the learning activities.

My field notes from an observation with Geeta in her science class illustrated how her educator's pedagogical choices and classroom activities isolated students, encouraged individuality, and engendered competition between students related to content acquisition:

I walked into the classroom just as the bell rang. I got lost trying to get to Geeta's class. Geeta's teacher greeted me with a smile, and told me to sit in the back of the room on the left-hand side. Students sat in pairs at lab tables with smooth black tops. The educator walked around the room and checked students' homework for completion. He put answers for homework on the screen and students looked down and up to compare their response. It seemed as though the teacher did not want to explain answers to students, and few students asked questions. The lesson abruptly shifted to cover the topic of the day – waves. The teacher put on a video about waves that was audio visually difficult to understand, especially when the audio cut out. I looked around the room – students seemed confused. To clarify, the teacher brought out a standing-wave machine and manipulated the amplitude, frequency and height of the wave. Some students seemed clear, while many still seemed confused. The instructor

moved on and students were told individually to answer questions on waves and check their answers with their seating partner. A young Muslim female was sitting in front of me. She had a question. She appeared to signal the teacher, and he seemed to stop, but then he continued on towards the front of the room. I could not see her face to gauge her reaction, but she did not re-signal him, indicating that she was either OK or that she may have been turned off in trying to get an answer to her question. The group reviewed answers as the teacher called on students. There was a noticeable shift in the classroom energy and dynamic. An Asian American(?) student next to Geeta softly answered the question, as if to limit the peers who could hear him, and followed up with “am I right?” as he looked for confirmation from peers. Students hesitated, spoke softly, almost appearing fearful of being wrong in front of everyone. The negative energy continued as the lesson moved on with a PowerPoint presentation read to the class. I surveyed the room again – many students remained confused and unsure. As the educator asked questions about the presentation and content, a White male student in the front *always* called out the answer while his peers continued working, as if competing to be the first student to say the answer, and be correct. The abstract ways that waves were discussed and presented to students made the classroom environment stale, almost flat. Geeta’s teacher felt the flatness, asking the group “nobody in a mood to say anything?” The lesson felt forced. Geeta turned to her partner and said “...I’ll figure it out the day before the test.” At the end of the lesson, Geeta’s teacher put on a video of a controlled experiment that used fire to demonstrate the properties of a standing wave. Some students yelled out “Oh yea!” as they saw the fire peak and valley, lifting the energy in the class slightly (Field Notes, March 9 2015)

While the lecture-based format of this class may have made students feel bored as “nobody” wanted to participate, the pedagogical dynamics made the learning environment uncomfortable, something I felt while sharing the space with students. There was a feeling of insecurity, or tepidness in the air, as it appeared students were afraid to contribute any information for fear of being wrong. As I conducted the observation, a competitive dynamic between students surfaced. This competitiveness between students was seen when one student would always be the first to call out answers, as if to say “I’m the smartest in this class, catch up to me.” The competitiveness within the classroom may

have been the reason why Geeta's classmate stated his answer and then "am I right" to peers around. Although students collaborated on two occasions, the pedagogical structuring of the class and the centering of a PowerPoint presentation as a major pedagogical tool delivering content isolated students from making connections with one another, alienated Geeta and her peers from the material they were reviewing, with these two facets further exacerbating the competition between students. The competition reinscribed a hyper-individualism in the classroom context as, on the whole, most students were working individually and not with their peer sitting at the same table.

Geeta's science class contained teacher-centered instruction and participatory dynamics that engendered feelings of competition and a learning environment where students were tentative to share their answers. However, in a different teacher-centered context that Anu and Geeta both shared, students appeared much more engaged in the lesson. My field notes from this observation demonstrated how classroom dynamics led to different instantiations of hyper-individuality and competition between students:

It was much easier getting to Anu's and Geeta's political science elective. I walked in, said hello to their teacher, and he directed me to an empty seat in the back-right corner of the room. The room was organized in the traditional row of desks all facing forward and had a large window that allowed tons of light to brighten the classroom. The brightness of the room matched the exuberance of Anu's and Geeta's teacher. He knew his content and wanted to share it with students. The lesson focused on the primaries, the importance of states like Iowa and New Hampshire, and the history behind current processes to determine Democratic and Republican candidates. From the moment the lesson started, it was clear that lecture would dominate. I surveyed the room – some students seemed engaged, while others were on their phones or looking off in different directions. I glanced at Anu – she had her/arms crossed, not taking notes. As the lecture continued, I found it hard make connections to the focus of the lesson. As students asked questions about past leaders and historical

moments the lecture veered in different directions. Some students looked confused during tangential moments, other students seemed interested, and others did not pay attention. As the lesson continued to cover personal responsibility, the teacher said, “We collectively are dumb. I’m brilliant, and each of you are individually, but collectively we are dumb.” The laughter seemed to help keep the class and lecture moving. Geeta and Anu did not take notes for the first fifty minutes of class, but slowly began jotting down thoughts here and there afterwards. Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher referenced the ways candidates used people of color in the background to make the candidates themselves seem “real.” As the lesson wrapped up and students left, the educator asked me whom I was observing. I told him that I could not reveal that information. He then asked if the person “was,....., the girl..., sitting next to you?” While Anu was in fact sitting next to me during the observation, it became clear that he did not know or remember her name, which struck me as odd. As I walked out of the classroom, I felt like I had seen a lot of interesting material, but could not recall how the information fit together and related to the primaries (Field Notes, March 23 2015)

This excerpt indicated how students were better able to connect with this educator and the educative material given his enthusiastic nature, his answering of students’ questions, and his ability to garner a few laughs in the process. However, notions of confusion, misunderstanding, and disinterest surfaced through students’ quizzical looks and passing notes during class. The extra pieces of information delivered to students, while interesting in some moments, drew focus away from the important content of the day. The lecture-based instruction continued to isolate students from one another, and did not make more than two explicit connections to how the lesson content appeared and operated in students’ daily lives. The lack of collaboration or dialogue between students, and the reliance on the educator for information as well as leading the lesson, once again delivered a message of hyper-individualism and self-reliance as the key to success in this class. Additionally, it appeared as though this educator, in some ways, viewed students as

vessels that assimilated and reproduced knowledge rather than viewing students as humans with names. He could not remember Anu's name, stuttered when trying to remember, and then referred to her as the "girl sitting to my left." He may have positioned and conceptualized all students in this way, making their evaluation easier and further reinscribing students' need to individually assimilate content and demonstrate content acquisition on assessments.

During our next interview, I asked Anu about this class's dynamics and how she viewed and used her time in class:

Normally I don't take notes in [that] class. I feel like taking notes in that class, like, doesn't allow me to retain the information. All those PowerPoints are online, so if there is something important then I'll note it down, but other than that, then I don't...[because] his, his lectures are very all over the place...because we ask a lot of questions, and like a lot of random questions. So he goes all over the place, so it'd be kind of futile to like record his [lectures], or to take notes, because half the time you're just scribbling down something and you're like what did I just write? And I feel like you have to pay attention more to what he's talking about because he just throws information out...(Interview, May 2 2015)

Anu took few notes as she felt classroom interactions were based on the teacher "throwing" out information as he went along, with this bombardment of information detrimental due to the difficulty in sifting through important versus ancillary content. After thinking through Anu's insights into her approach to this class, I asked Geeta about how students were evaluated in relation to the pedagogical style of lecture-based instruction. She said, "if anything, if you just listen to the lectures, you probably get one question right on the test, it's all from the text book" (Interview, May 30 2015). As lecture material was infrequently represented on assessments, Geeta and Anu took

minimal notes. In order to do well, Anu and Geeta worked with the textbook outside of class in order to acquire the knowledge necessary for evaluations. In these ways, the misalignment between lectures and material required for assessments sent distinct messages of hyper-individualism as the avenue to achievement to students. Participants were alienated from their peers through a lack of dialogue and alienated from the educative material through the lack of the multiple connections to their daily lives.

On the whole, teacher-centered pedagogical contexts served to reinscribe participants' notions of hyper-individualistic approaches to classes and academic work at CHS. While competition and alienation had surfaced in previous investigations examining pan-Asians' academic performance in schools (e.g., Ngo, 2006; Kumar, 2006), the individualism participants highlighted aligned with the general culture of academic achievement at CHS in the contemporary neoliberal moment. In these ways then, Anu and Geeta spent "a lot of time" outside of CHS in order to read the text (Geeta, Interview, March 18 205), create their own schemes for studying and interpreting what they felt was important, and study this information in order to perform well on the assessments. While many students at CHS may have responded to these pedagogical contexts in similar ways, Geeta's and Anu's status as Indian may have made them face additional pressure to achieve from both home and CHS's use of achievement marking Indianness and informing social status. As "performance-focused" classroom contexts engendered competition amongst students as they competed with each other and made finding belonging within the school a difficult task (Kumar, 2006), these contexts also alienated students from one another and isolated students from the curricular material

through lecture. In response, it could be argued that Geeta and Anu looked within to their Indianness outside of school in order to increase their academic identities through rigorous work in order to achieve and maintain aspects of their Indian status at CHS.

Mitigating Alienation and Individualism: Collaboration and Community Building Participants' Academic Identities

Participants spoke to pedagogical contexts that were teacher-centered and lecture-based using PowerPoint presentations to 'deliver' knowledge as reproducing underlying currents of CHS's academic culture related to individualism and competition, potentially mitigated by participants looking within to their Indianness to overcome these pedagogical contexts in order to achieve. While participants revealed teacher-centered dynamics at CHS, they also spoke to a different set of dynamics in student-centered learning contexts that mitigated aspects of competition and alienation and created a different set of relations between participants, their peers and their Indian cultural identities.

The foundations of participants' approaches to classroom contexts and experiences with pedagogy were relayed through messages from home particular to achievement (further elaborated in Chapter 6), and different expectations placed on self.

During an interview with Rani, I asked her about how her Indianness surfaced at CHS:

Ven: How does being Indian or Indian American come up at school? Does being Indian American, like, impact your classroom interactions at all to your knowledge? Like are there certain expectations of you?

Rani: No I feel like a lot of the times, the kids put the expectation on themselves. A lot of times they will say "I'm Indian I should not have gotten an 80" or whatever. Cuz like I said before there's a lot

of kids who lose motivation, so its not like every Indian kid does well, there are some Indian kids who don't try at all. But um, most of the Indian kids obviously [try] so...(Interview, March 15 2015)

Here Rani indicated how, for many Indian students, the desire to achieve and perform well academically was in some ways a self-imposed facet linked to their racial and cultural identity. For many students at CHS then, being Indian and Indianness contained different capitals that aided students in their achievement. While some Indian American students did not perform well and lost motivation, many attempted to do well in their classes as their achievement was based/hinged on their Indianness. In some ways then, Rani's insights here could be read as linking Indianness to achievement, and could also help to underpin participants' definitions of Indian as achieving and hardworking (Chapter 4).

Keeping in mind these thoughts of Indianness in some ways linked to achievement, I conducted an observation in Rani's English class at CHS (Classroom Observation, March 2 2015). My field notes during this observation outlined the classroom dynamics and culture:

I arrived early to Rani's class and her teacher greeted me outside. I walked in and he cleared off a seat for me on the far right-hand side of the room. Students sat in groups of four, facing each other, with these groups organized throughout the room. Students settled down after the bell, and he told them about an upcoming quiz. He used words like "easy" when describing the quiz and reviewing content to be covered. He explained the first task of the day: students would be working in groups to draw a scene from their text on Greek mythology. I saw Rani engaged in the task with her peers, examining the text, dialoging with peers and grabbing a pencil to draw. Everyone in her group was working well together. Around the room, all of the groups had students working together and focused on the task. As students worked, I had a chance to speak with her teacher. He told me that the academic culture at CHS was "crazy" and that "teachers like to

take credit” for student success, when it was “really the students.” He brought the class back together, asking students if the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were “old myths” or “based on truth.” Students took a moment, and then contributed their answers. He used students’ responses to guide the focus and path of discussion. I looked around the room, Rani and her peers were carefully listening and taking notes. Rani’s teacher then used technology to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, highlighting concepts of “fear” and “anxiety” from these texts, even using the word “Orientalism,” and how their texts related to contemporary terrorism and media as a new show *American Odyssey* was slated for release on ABC. As I glanced around the room, students were focused and engaged with the dialogue, contributing thoughts and taking notes while focusing on the teacher and each other. The educator then presented the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, Indian epics containing philosophical content and outlining different approaches to all types of relationships. These Indian epics, fundamental pieces of Indian culture, were positively presented and related to material under study for Rani and her peers. The classroom dynamics were collaborative, the classroom environment positive and welcoming, and I left the class feeling energized (Field Notes, March 2 2015).

While student-centered instruction may have engaged students in the lesson, it was clear that students were excited to participate, perhaps informing Rani’s description of this teacher as “really cool” because “everyone [was] really like, in it” (Rani, Interview, March 15 2015). My observation detailed how Rani’s educator used student’s responses to guide the discussion and created a warm and collegial classroom environment. As the teacher connected mythological texts to the contemporary moment of global terror, students were able to see how themes and tropes evident in their texts still endured and applied today. By linking the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* to epics from India, Rani and her peers connected texts under study to ancient texts from different cultures and civilizations while also allowing Indian American students a moment to see their cultural heritage valued and connected to classroom dialogues and texts in culturally responsive and/or

sustaining ways (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012). It appeared as though the student-centered collaborative learning environment overcame the isolation felt between students and curricula, and mitigated (to a degree) aspects of competition and individualism. Classroom dynamics that valued students' input and used responses to scaffold and guide the evolution of the class facilitated Rani tapping into her will and desire to achieve at CHS, with her cultural repository aiding in her successful interactions with material, peers, and teacher in the classroom space.

I also observed a similar classroom context and dynamic in Darshan's science elective (Classroom Observation, February 20 2015). My observation notes detailed this classroom experience:

I made it to class just in time as the bell rang. Darshan's teacher was very welcoming, and pointed me to an empty table in the back middle of the room. The room was decorated with images of animals everywhere: on walls, the teacher's filing cabinet, and even her desk. Students were organized in pairs of two, sitting at science tables with black tops facing the front of the room. The teacher welcomed students and went over the schedule for the day. She had a warm demeanor – around the room students seemed comfortable and appeared to be intensely paying attention. The students took a Socratic seminar quiz, reviewed the quiz, and then moved onto a lab where they were germinating seeds. The teacher provided an overview of the lab, explained the procedure, and demonstrated the appropriate amount of each material needed for the lab. Students were permitted to gather materials and move about the room. Darshan asked the teacher a question, she provided him an answer, and he moved to collect the lab materials. Darshan began the lab, interacted well with his partner, and took charge of the lab and the activities. Darshan's teacher noticed this, telling Darshan's lab partner to "put on" his safety glasses. As I looked around the room, students seemed focused and on task, working well together, encouraging each other during different steps of the lab, and having a laugh every now and then. I saw Indian Americans from different groups walking to each other, asking questions, and going back to their groups to continue working. Students asked questions and Darshan's teacher moved about the room responding to each group.

Darshan's teacher observed students moving on to the next task, paused every group from moving forward, and explained the next task in order to complete the lab. Students completed the lab, and Darshan's group followed directions and cleaned up their station. The class then moved on to group presentations. Earlier, each group was instructed to pick a topic related to the environment and present this issue to the class. As groups presented, some were experiencing technical difficulties. Darshan made a suggestion, to which peers said "Darshan, no heckling" leading Darshan and the class to laugh. As groups presented, students were thoroughly enjoying and laughing with the videos, seeing their peers on the 'big screen.' The classroom context was vibrant with a positive energy, and after presentations finished, students quietly chatted for one minute before going to their next class (Field Notes, February 20 2015)

Field notes from this observation demonstrated how, in this science class, students were engaged and receptive to the ways their educator's pedagogical structuring of the class. The teacher put forth the lab requirements, and told Darshan's lab partner to put his glasses on, perhaps suggesting that he collaborate and participate in the learning activities. The educator presented instructions for students and anticipated their needs as they moved through the lab. The collegiality amongst students was difficult to ignore. Not only did students work well together in their labs, moving around the room to ask each other questions, they encouraged each other in executing different lab tasks and paid close attention to their peers' videos. The jokes between group members, as well as the large group discussion during presentations, gave the class a collaborative feel with a positive energy and classroom dynamic.

Student-centered pedagogical contexts, and classes in general, allowed students to feel a level of comfort with one another by assuaging alienation between participants, their peers, the curricula and their educators. Said differently, these "mastery-focused" learning contexts created a community of learners that helped participants overcome

potential stymies to achievement (Kumar, 2006), as participants were able to tap into their cultural resources related to work ethic, will and desire to achieve academically at CHS in the classroom space. This helped students move away from notions of hyper-individuality and competition as they completed tasks and engaged in dialogues facilitated by their educators. Thus, the feelings of validation and affirmation felt in student-centered learning contexts (Kumar, 2004, 2006), in some ways, appeared to help participants use their Indianness as a tool for success to launch themselves into classroom content and dialogues using their intent to achieve as point of departure. While participants may have also tapped into their will and desire to achieve outside of these classes through intense study, student-centered contexts aided participants in assimilating information as they engaged in practices with different learning activities (Nasir, 2012), focused with the material in class, and were not simply limited to making sense of material on their own outside of class.

“I Usually Sleep”: Resistance to/within Pedagogical Contexts

Thus far, the data revealed how different pedagogical styles impacted participants’ ability to tap into their cultural and ethnic identities connected to their will and desire to academically achieve. While teacher-centered contexts encouraged participants to tap into their work ethic outside of class, it was possible that student-centered contexts helped participants access aspects of their Indianness linked to achievement in their classrooms. In these ways, pedagogical contexts became important in facilitating participants’ access to their repository of cultural tools used to achieve, helping build their academic identities and overcome aspects of competition and

individuality. Additionally, dialogues with participants indicated how resistance to both student-centered and teacher-centered pedagogical contexts changed the ways participants relied upon their will and desire to achieve at CHS.

Observations in student-centered learning contexts did not yield overt instantiations of participants' resistance. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to know participants' thoughts during lessons to see if they were engaged or not. Even though student-centered contexts allowed participants to launch themselves from their repository of resources related to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds, participants found ways to disengage. I saw Darshan playing with his water bottle and using his phone as he placed it on his leg under the table, or at least, out of view from the teacher (Classroom Observation, March 10 2015). He later told me that he liked to check websites like Reddit during class (Interview, February 15 2015). These moments of checking out may have also occurred in other student-centered contexts, as Rani did not take notes during different parts of her English class (Rani, Classroom Observation, March 2 2015). The lack of taking notes and engaging could be viewed as resisting the mandates of academic achievement at CHS. However, as student-centered educators made explicit connections between material and participants' lives (e.g., connecting Indian epics to Greek mythology), there was little down time as students continually tapped into will and desire to academically achieve, helping them engage with the learning activities.

Participants indicated how teacher-centered learning contexts engendered competition, hyper-individualism, and alienation between participants', their peers, and educative material. In response to these contexts of individualism and competition, Geeta

“slept” or “[used her] phone” (Interview, May 20 2015). While Geeta resisted the hyper-individualism, competition, and alienation by ‘entertaining’ herself in different ways, she acknowledged how these avenues of resistance presented a different set of challenges:

I don't know it's like a lot of out of schoolwork. Like I have to study everything again when I get home like...Its not like I just can do the homework and get it, [I] have to like actually study...(Interview, May 30 2015)

In these ways, Geeta's resistance to classroom dynamics and learning activities required her to rely on her will to achieve outside of the classroom, which in some ways, became an additional strain given the work she had to complete for other classes. Thus, in some ways, it could be argued that participants' actions helped make some of the links between ethnic identity (read: Indianness) and the self-imposed need to achieve clear as participants invested extra time outside of class in order to assimilate information.

Rani provided insights into the final component of participants' resisting their pedagogical contexts. My field notes during a medical science classroom observation with Rani and our subsequent interview detailed an additional path of resistance for students:

Rani's teacher was very welcoming, even asking me if I wanted to introduce myself to the class. I politely told her that was not necessary, and I sat at a table on the left-hand side of the room, perpendicular to the organization of the other tables facing the front of the room. I could see across the entire class. Technology was built into the walls, controlling the screen in the front of the room linked to her computer. The teacher began by putting a review question on the screen for students to complete. There was not any group sharing of responses. The teacher then read an introduction for students' task dealing with protein synthesis, and students were told to download the document and begin working on the online learning module as she walked to the back of the room. As I looked around the room, a few students were involved in the task, while other

students wore headphones, chatted, and played on their phones. The near absent nature of the educator created a classroom environment of ambivalence – it seemed as though few students were concerned with doing well. I saw Rani working intensely, chatting minimally, and not using her phone. I heard a pair of students converse, with one saying “Google it, copy the exact question.” Their partner replied “I did that,” to which the first student said “did you find anything?” The partner did not speak, and instead, shrugged their shoulders. Students across the room seemed to work on the task sporadically, and either chatted or used the laptops given to them for the lesson to surf the Internet. After students were done, with twelve minutes before the bell, they were told to “work on other stuff.” I left the class wondering what I had witnessed, and eager to speak to Rani about this class (Field Notes, February 13 2015)

These field notes from the observation indicated how students conducted themselves in a similar fashion to teacher-centered contexts, resisting engagement with the learning modules by playing games, listening to music, and chatting with each other. While competition and hyper-individualism did not emerge, alienation between students and course content did emerge as students looked to each other for information on how to make sense of the learning modules. I asked Rani about this course and she told me that:

Students [were supposed] to use computers for the online [assignments]. But, people play games, talk, do other work...yea, [and] people talk when she is talking too. [And] in that class, I actually had a test right after that, so I was actually holding a piece of paper trying to study, I don't know if you saw that (Interview, February 13 2015)

Rani's technologically driven class with little teacher interaction or facilitation represented a multi-layered example of her resistance. Rani resisted aspects of alienation from course material by tapping into her will and desire to achieve and studying for another test after this class. While the pedagogical context did not facilitate her engagement by tapping into her internal desire to achieve, she accessed it nonetheless for another class. Thus, in some ways, this pedagogical context allowed/encouraged Rani to

tap into her cultural repository towards academic success, however, increasing her academic identity and self-efficacy for a different class.

On one level, participants' resistance to pedagogical contexts demonstrated individual level resistance to alienating, hyper-individualizing, and competitive classroom contexts (Valenzuela, 1999). On a different level, participants' resistance was also directed at the overarching expectations of the dominant school culture and Asians as achieving/engaged at all times (Horvat & Lewis, 2003). In two of these contexts, participants' resistance led them to tap into aspects of their cultural and ethnic identities connected to the will and desire to achieve outside of class, or in class in preparing for another class. Yet simultaneously, participants' resistance to pedagogical contexts served to re-affirm and solidify aspects of their Indianness as their will and desire to achieve continued to serve as sources of strength outside of school.

EDUCATOR/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS: SHAPING IDENTITIES IN FORMAL EDUCATIVE SPACES

Participants' insights into their experiences with different pedagogical styles at CHS demonstrated how each classroom context contained unique dynamics between participants, their peers in class, and their educators. While the spectrum of pedagogical styles at CHS impacted participants' tapping into facets of their Indianness inside/outside of class, the data also indicated how pedagogical styles and classroom cultures shaped the dynamics and relationships between participants and their educators. These student/teacher dynamics and relationships functioned to inform participants' conceptualizations of their identities related to aspects of content acquisition, self-

efficacy, and shaped participants ability to access the will and desire to academically achieve.

Building, Solidifying, and Maintaining Achievement through Contextualizing Knowledge

Geeta, Anu and Darshan spoke highly of their teacher that used lecture-based instruction that was able to build positive relationships with participants and other students in their class on global economic systems. I asked Anu what made this teacher her favorite teacher. Anu explained that:

...[this] teacher [and class]...[are my] go to place, because like during tutoring, he's very helpful. He will make sure that you understand it, and if he senses any signs of questions in your answer, he will make you understand it. Just recently I was going over to review a test that I'd gotten and he was like no, [Anu], I want you to figure it out for yourself. So...I'm going to tell you, show me the graph, I want you to do it yourself. And I [was] like 'I don't know what to do, you gotta help me out cuz I'm clueless.' And so he went over the entire thing. So during tutoring he's much better because he only has to focus on two [students] and one of them is me because I'm usually there all the time... (Interview, March 8 2015)

Here, Anu demonstrated how lecture-based instruction during normal class time made assimilating all of the information a difficult task, perhaps limiting her ability to tap into her will and desire to achieve and leaning on these aspects of her Indianness outside of the class space. For this reason, she visited this teacher during tutorials. Her teacher carefully began to paint the whole picture and contextualize where this knowledge fit within the larger scheme of content on the test (Anu, Interview, May 2 2015). Anu's teacher approached the session in a student-centered, constructivist fashion, considered Anu's positionality, and connected the material to Anu's pre-existing knowledge to make

the new content clearer and accessible. In this setting, Anu was isolated from other peers, yet, the dynamics with her teacher mitigated this isolation to connect closely to the material. In these ways, these dynamics demonstrated to Anu that her desire to achieve was understood by this teacher, allowing a platform on which to enter into tutoring sessions and increase her self-efficacy in this class through explanations of content in ways that connected with Anu.

Although this teacher used teacher-centered instruction with occasional group-work and “cold-calling” on students to share their answers (Darshan, Interview, February 15 2015), he remained one of participants’ favorite teachers (e.g., Geeta, Interview, March 18 2015). This was due to taking “thirty minutes” to explain content (Anu, Interview, May 2 2015), aiding participants in accessing their ability to achieve during tutoring sessions, and take their increased self-efficacy and academic identities with them to the next class meeting. Similar patterns of academic support and tutoring arose in previous investigations of Asians’ experiences in schools, helping students negotiate and solidify aspects of their racial and cultural identities (e.g., Lew, 2006). Thus, accessing the will and desire to succeed during tutoring sessions allowed participants like Anu to quickly assimilate knowledge, making tapping into Indianness outside of CHS more valuable when reviewing material rather than attempting to make sense of the different ways material fit together individually and in isolation.

Grading Policies and Discourse Shaping Achievement at CHS

On the one hand, participants highlighted how some educators contextualized knowledge through dynamics that developed positive relationships and built participants’

academic identities and notions of self-efficacy. On the other hand, participants also spoke to how their educators' classroom policies and dialogues underpinned interactions and dynamics that further complicated participants' ability to tap into their will and desire to achieve at CHS.

During an interview with Rani, I had asked her about her least favorite aspects of school. She spoke to me about educators' policies regarding assignments:

...so I guess that's another one of my least favorite aspects, like how teachers can just not care [about your grades], and you can show interest to make it up, but they will be like 'no sorry.' Then its like I don't know what to do now...like if you don't have it in class the moment its due its an automatic 0. Like you can have it at home you can turn it in the next day, but it'll still be a zero, like they don't care that its pulling down your grade. Its really nerve wracking, like you always need to make sure you have your stuff, like sometimes their picky. Like major grades they'll [sometimes] let you make up to a 70, and like one time in the beginning of the year everyone did really bad [sic] on this one quiz and she's like no I'm sorry you can't make it up. And its like if everyone is doing bad [sic], it may not be us its probably you...(Interview, March 15 2015)

Here, Rani demonstrated how teachers' strictness with grades caused her anxiety and stress, especially as her teacher did not admit responsibility when students performed poorly. While Rani shifted some responsibility for poor achievement onto teachers, some examinations of South Asians found a near split between South Asians blaming/not blaming teachers for poor achievement (e.g., Abbas, 2002), others finding that South Asians did not blame teachers at all (e.g., Gibson, 1988), and still other investigations of pan-Asians stipulating that success was spiritual in nature and irrespective of the teacher (e.g., Smith-Hefner, 1990). With participants' self-efficacy intricately connected to their achievement, these policies made it difficult to tap into the will and desire to succeed

both inside and outside the classroom space. Thus, independent of how much time Rani invested in this class outside of the classroom space, forgetting an assignment, even though it was complete, jeopardized her ability to academically achieve. In some ways then, these types of classroom policies destabilized Rani's self-efficacy, making engagement and achievement in the classroom a difficult task.

While Rani spoke to her educators' strict adherence to grading policies as one aspect of classroom dynamics, she also indicated how educator's threats in speech patterns and interactional dynamics also made achievement and engagement a difficult task:

Yea...my math teacher was...crazy. She would, she would always, she wouldn't let us talk and she was always so intense. Like she would tell us that we were going to fail and stuff like that so,...so it was like not comfortable at all in her class. She was just ridiculous, we used to have class averages of like 30s and stuff like that in the class and she'd be like you all failed because you didn't study hard enough and I'm like no we failed because you're a terrible teacher...(Interview, August 18 2015)

This teacher took on an almost hostile nature and approach to teaching and interacting with students. Rani's teacher may have intended for students to look within in order to launch themselves into the material and lesson activities. However, this threat linked to achievement had the opposite effect. Being told one was "going to fail" may have steered participants away from tapping into their cultural repository of sources towards achievement, making it difficult to construct their academic identities related to their self-efficacy when working with the content in class.

While Rani's dynamics with her educator used threats linked to achievement, field notes from the observation with Geeta in her science class mentioned earlier

demonstrated how educators insulted students and diminished notions of Indianness informed by their academic identities, achievement, and notions of self-efficacy:

[Students were individually working on the questions from the PowerPoint presentations]. I looked around the room, and students were engaged in answering the questions. Towards the far right corner, students were quietly talking. I focused in, and it seemed that students were discussing the questions themselves. A South Asian (American?) female had a question, and asked the teacher ‘What is an antinode?’ I looked towards the teacher – he winced, expressing disgust. Shocked, I looked back at the student. She followed up, saying ‘I don’t get [it]...’ Still with the same grimace, the teacher said ‘You don’t remember from last class?’ While his intonation minimally indicated this as a question, the overt tone was one of insult. This student did not answer the teacher’s question, and remained silent. After a few moments, a peer said the answer out loud, and the class continued...(Field Notes, March 9 2015)

Geeta’s teacher’s patterns of interaction insulted students and their intelligence. Earlier, this chapter demonstrated how Geeta’s science teacher’s pedagogical style bred competition and hyper-individualism. These dynamics and dialogues chastised students in a form of public punishment/embarrassment where their academic identities decreased as notions of self-efficacy evaporated. In these ways, this teacher’s ways of interacting with students further reinscribed the competition and individuality of his classroom. These types of dynamics may have stripped this student of her will/desire to achieve as she attempted to negotiate the lesson material and classroom context to a degree. While her physical appearance may have marked her as other and thus requiring different treatment from her teacher (e.g., Kumar, 2006), or asking this question did not align with the teacher’s expectations (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lareau, 1996), it appeared as though this teacher treated all students in this way.

Racist Dynamics: Faculty Members Reinscribing Difference

Participants spoke to educator relationships that both increased or limited the growth of their academic identities. In some ways then, participants' notions of self-efficacy and the formation of their academic identities hinged on their relationships and dynamics with educators. Anu and Rani also spoke to how their dynamics and relationship with a faculty member solidified Indian students as different. Rani and Anu told me how this faculty member worked in the library. However, Rani told me how she felt that some teachers/faculty members "had it out" for Indian American students and made specific reference to a librarian (Interview, March 21 2015):

Rani: Some [of] the kind of stuff she [did], I'm not even going to say I think she [did], she [had] it out for Indian kids

Ven: Male, female, both?

Rani: Both, both. Like my friend and I were eating, and I don't look Indian, and anytime I'm alone I don't see her giving me the evil eye. But when I'm with another friend, like anyone who is with Indian people, she [had] it out for them too. So like my friend and I were eating and like, we're not allowed to eat inside the library, and we were eating outside of the library on the table. And she comes out, she takes [my friend's] yogurt, and she says excuse me what do you think you're doing, she threw it away [and] she said get out. And it was the middle of lunch and [my friend] didn't have anywhere to go [and] we didn't, we didn't have any books with us we were just, we had our, not homework, I was helping my friend with something, [we had] our composition books like where we write down our notes. And she was eating her yogurt and I was eating a cookie...

Ven: ...it wasn't like you had books everywhere and stuff like that...

Rani: No it was no big deal. And she came and picked up and threw it away and she said 'get out, get out right now.' And we were just looking at each other like 'OK' and we left. And there was another girl who was sitting next to us who was eating, and I think she was

Latino or something, and [the librarian] went up to her and said excuse me what do you think you're doing, and she actually gave her a chance to respond but she didn't give us a chance to respond. Not that she was nice to her either, but she was like...oh I think you should, oh uh like please go put that away. But...even before that, like the Indian kids would be talking in the library and she would tell them 'no talking in the library get out.' And then there would be other kids who [were] eating by the computer and talking and she'd be like 'excuse me you need to go throw that away' and it is just so obvious. A lot of people notice it. Like, we were in class and sometimes our teacher lets us go to the library, and...I feel like [the librarian] doesn't have it out for Asians just Indians. [These students] came back [to class], and then, the teacher was like 'why did you come back?' and they were like oh the librarian kicked us out. And then he was like 'what about the other two kids?' and then they were like, 'oh yea'...and I remember some people trying to explain to the sub[stitute], its like, 'oh you know, she just doesn't like Indian people type thing...' (Interview, March 21 2015)

As Rani shared her story, I was taken aback. I could not imagine a teacher or faculty member being so straight-forwardly rude and mean to a specific group of students. While the librarian did not call students "terrorists" (Ghaffar-Kutcher, 2012), her patterns of interaction mimicked previous studies where faculty members "looked strangely" at South Asian American students (e.g., Pang, 2006; Zine, 2001). One space participants and their Indian American peers frequented was the library, as hard work and studying could lead to increased self-efficacy and achievement. This educator used Indian Americans' phenotypic difference as a means, and/or justification, for solidifying their overall difference and ushering these students out of the library. It was difficult to pinpoint an exact reason as to why the librarian had an overt dislike for South Asian/South Asian American students. Her actions made the library an un-safe space for Indian American students, with Rani and Anu made to feel that their racial and cultural

identities of being Indian were different and warranting punishment and/or segregation. These interactions equated Indian with different and synonymous with some type of “lack” (Chakrabarty, 1992). In these ways, a space rich in resources and educative materials designed for students was no longer appealing to participants and Indian American students alike, as these speech dynamics made them feel different and even unwelcomed.

“I’m Scared of asking Stupid Questions”: Abstaining from Classroom Discussions

Participants spoke to their educational contexts and their different relationships with educators that used/recognized their will and desire to achieve in different ways, while also solidifying difference connected to racial/phenotypic difference (e.g., the librarian). While the data revealed that participants viewed favorably those contexts where educators built and/or recognized participants’ intent to achieve, participants’ insights also revealed how they acted in response to their relationships and dynamics with educators.

Geeta spoke to strategies she used in classroom contexts with threatening or insulting educators. When I asked Geeta about her science class and the teacher insulting the South Asian American female asking a question, Geeta responded saying:

...[those types of insults] happen all of the time. And when students [went] to ask him questions [during or after instructional time], he [would say] ‘Google it’,...whaaattt. [And, so now] no one asks him anything anymore (Interview, May 30 2015)

Geeta demonstrated how dynamics and relationships with this teacher were poor for all students. Not only were students insulted, they were told to “Google” answers to their

questions. Thus, students resisted the contexts where they were insulted and encouraged to compete with one another by not participating in the class. Geeta also told me that, during this class, she would “chat with [the] friend [sitting to her right]” or use her phone (Interview, May 30 2015). In these ways, Geeta responded to the lack of building, or even acknowledging/maintaining, her will, desire and work ethic to achieve by ‘checking out’ periodically during the lessons, and then learning “everything the day before” the assessment.

While Geeta shared how she resisted contexts where her will and desire to do well were unacknowledged, Anu shared a similar moment of resistance that shed additional insights into the dynamics between educators and participants:

Anu: There’s calculus,...and the teacher scares me. So I don’t like, I don’t want to go to tutoring, like I’ll go to tutoring [in my ‘go to spot’] I’m not scared about asking stupid questions. But with calculus, I don’t know why I’m just scared of the teacher...

Ven: How does [this teacher] scare you...

Anu: ...I don’t know he’s just like, I honestly don’t know, I just don’t...want...*to be me* [emphasis added]. Like, I don’t want to act stupid near him because I don’t want to see how he feels [or reacts to me being ‘stupid’]. Like I don’t want to cuz I feel like, cuz my questions, like my calculus grade sucks, like yea. But I don’t want to show to him that I’m stupid, I don’t want to show to him that I don’t know it. So I don’t want to act stupid even though my grade shows that, so I end up having to ask my friends these questions and everything. But luckily they’re smarter than I am, so in calculus it’s ok...(Interview, March 8 2015)

Anu’s thoughts were powerful, as in this classroom context, she felt she “could not be herself.” Here, I understood this to mean that Anu felt she could not ask the questions she would in her political science elective during the lecture, or the questions she would ask

during her global economic systems class. Her will and desire to achieve forming parts of her Indianness were key to notions of “being herself,” as her inquisitiveness was used to build her academic identities as they related to achievement and her notions of self-efficacy in these classes. In order to resist being ‘found out’ as ‘stupid,’ Anu did not participate. Thus, while Geeta and Anu resisted teacher/student relationships that were insulting or threatening through silence and the lack of participation, Anu demonstrated how the lack of participation could also be linked to classroom cultures and the need to appear Indian and smart, not Indian and unsure of the content and material. Anu felt that she could not tap into her cultural resources in class, making her access her internalized cultural repertoire outside of class and attempt to launch herself into the material and demonstrate knowledge acquisition when in class. However, it appeared as though even though Anu studied for this class outside of CHS, this classroom dynamic and context continually made it difficult for her to demonstrate her knowledge as her will and desire to achieve became unlocatable during this class because she could not be “herself.”

IN-CLASS PEER-TO-PEER DYNAMICS, CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS, AND INDIA IN THE CURRICULUM

Thus far, participants’ insights and classroom observations demonstrated how pedagogy and relationships/dynamics with educators or faculty members shaped participants’ racial and cultural identities of being Indian at CHS. While pedagogical experiences and educator dynamics/relationships were vital to shaping participants’ academic identities and notions of self-efficacy, in-class interactions with peers and curricula were also important factors shaping participants’ racial and cultural identities.

These in-class dynamics became critical to understanding how participants navigated and negotiated classroom interactions, as well as understanding how peer-to-peer interactions worked in tandem with pedagogical dynamics and relationships with educators to underpin how participants' Indianness was further defined, constructed and re-constructed within these interactions.

Positive In-Class Peer-to-Peer Dynamics

All participants shared instances where they got along well with peers in their classes. During observations with Rani and Gopal, I saw how they worked in pairs or with other class members to complete a task. During Geeta's English class, I observed her diligently working in her group and quietly conversing with a fellow Indian American regarding a trial taking place and their need to refute testimony from the person "on the stand" (Classroom Observation, February 18 2015). During an observation with Rani in her Spanish class (Classroom Observation, April 13 2015), I was able to link her responses from our first interview to my observation notes. In this Spanish class, the educator asked students questions about what they did over the weekend, allowed them time to process an answer, and then guided them through a properly conjugated response to the question using the preterit verb tense in a complete Spanish sentence. Later, he had students working through pages of vocabulary in the textbook in pairs. Rani was across the room from where I was sitting. I saw her interacting with an Indian American peer in a friendly manner, moving through the textbook's exercises, and writing down answers (Classroom Observation, April 6 2015).

During our first interview, I asked Rani about her preferences of using her native language in school in her classes. She responded, saying:

Umm...[longer pause]...in class, like its not in every class maybe, like in Spanish class, I guess we do it sometimes like, [chuckles], like the teacher has a really strict rule about not speaking in English, and when he comes by sometimes we switch and we don't even know what happened sometimes. We'll just switch but then its like we're talking in Spanish but he just says not to talk in English so I guess, like, just to make it sound like...you know we're not talking in English...we'll change. And like if we don't know the Spanish word we'll say the Hindi word just so it wont be in English or something...(Interview, January 31 2015)

Here, Rani spoke to the friendly and positive interactions with an Indian American peer in her class and how she used her native language in formal educational spaces, a pattern found in previous studies of South Asian youth in North America (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). She described how she spoke in Hindi in particular moments in order to abide by class rules that stipulated students' inability to use English. In fact, her native language use was so normalized in this context that Rani and her peer slipped into Hindi without even noticing. These moments of native language use allowed Rani to communicate with a peer in culturally sustaining ways that increased her self-efficacy and, through an almost subversive resistance to classroom rules of no English implying Spanish, exercised agency in the classroom space. Rani's use of her native language with her peer helped Rani use her Indianness as a launching pad to propel herself into the lesson and content of the day, increase her Spanish academic identity and self efficacy through her native language, and build social bonds with an Indian American peer in class.

Positive peer-to-peer interactions in formal educative spaces aided participants in building on top of their Indianness and academic identities related to self-efficacy through positive interactions with peers, educators, and classroom material (e.g., the inclusion of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*). Additionally, Rani's native language use may have helped her connect internal notions of Indianness and self to audible, verbal expressions, helping her feel culturally "whole" in the classroom as particular speech patterns and ways of being from home were mirrored in school. Rani's Hindi use at CHS allowed her to build positive associations between home and school as these interactions became culturally sustaining as she was not ridiculed for her native language use (Gay, 2010).

"Asianness" and Negative Peer-to-Peer Dynamics

While participants spoke to positive peer-to-peer dynamics in some classes, another set of formal classroom dynamics emerged from the data that made direct connections between the borders around Indianness and achievement, and how the interactions between Indianness and achievement functioned to position Asian students at CHS. While achievement has been identified as a sorting device in previous studies (e.g., Lee, 2009; Ngo, 2010), achievement-based interactions in formal educational contexts demonstrated how achievement became a racializing device at CHS. During an interview, Rani intimated how she needed to self-police her speech patterns when achieving:

...oh like I got, oh I got, if you think you get a bad grade, like the other day in school I got a 90 on this quiz and everyone was like, well not everyone, but a lot of people were like 'Oh its only cuz you are Asian.' And they weren't kidding, like, they were serious about it. Like, I'm sorry I didn't mean to offend you, I'm just genuinely upset. Or just cuz you're

Asian you think like that. But not that specific words that people say, its not terrible, in some ways its true what they are saying, maybe, you can't help it, I don't know, or maybe I mean I'm not doing this on purpose but maybe...Its just sometimes you say things like 'Oh I can't believe I got this grade' and then you know that the other people didn't get it. And you can't help but say it, cuz you feel really bad, and then some other kids will be like oh that's rude...(Interview, March 21 2015)

Here, Rani recounted how classroom dynamics between peers made her feel different in ways related to achievement. Rani's insights demonstrated how her peers assimilated notions of Indianness linked to academic identities, academic self-efficacy and achievement. Thus, Rani's peers attributed her success to her "Asian" background, with this explanation aligned biological discourses of culture linked to achievement (Lee, 2009; Purkayastha, 2005). However, as Rani verbalized her desire to have earned a higher score, she noted how her peers thought her behavior was "rude." In these ways, Rani was reminded of the need to maintain, and be cognizant of, her Asian (read: Indian) status as linked to academic achievement and the need to "hide" or "background" her Asianness when achieving or face (informal) reprimanding as wanting a higher grade was "offensive."

On the one hand Rani's achievement reinscribed her Asianness for herself and her peers when mentioning her desire for a higher grade, positioning her as "rude." Did Rani's positioning differ when she did not achieve? Rani continued:

On a math test I didn't do as good as I wanted. And so everyone was like 'Oh that's cuz you're White.' And I was like genuinely, like, whatttt. Like I already [felt] kind of bad, like why are you saying that. Like it's subconsciously there, but then there are times when it will get out. But there are other times where it's like, genuinely, 'what are you saying?' That is so mean. You have to like, rethink in your brain like, 'was that an insult to my skin color or something'?...(Interview, March 21 2015)

As she was speaking during our interview, it became clear that her peer positioning her as White really hurt Rani, exemplified when she said that was “genuinely” upset. When Rani said “its subconsciously there,” she was referring to comments that directly or indirectly referred to her skin color, and thus one of the many components comprising her Indianness. As such, she was on the verge of saying that these racializations or comments about her skin color “happen[ed] so [frequently],” caught herself and said “not daily,” then re-clarified by saying “occasionally” to describe the frequency of utterances positioning her as White. Through these phrases, Rani implicitly indicated that she reflected about the ways she was racially positioned at CHS, with the fluidity in her status attributed to her achievement, skin color, or wearing clothes on school sanctioned days of celebration (Chapter 4). With Indianness closely tied to achievement at CHS, and participants’ stipulations of certain ways Indianness was connected to self-imposed mandates of achievement, Rani’s insights detailed how her lack of achievement fostered dynamics with peers that made them question her Indianness and led her to be re-positioned as White. In some ways then, achievement was a highly salient positioning device factoring into students’ interactions and dynamics in formal educative spaces.

Rani’s achievement/non-achievement demonstrated the ways that academic excellence became a fluid racializing device with specific borders for Asian students at CHS. Rani’s achievement (when her classmates did not) reinscribed her Asianness and Indianness, and aligned with narratives of Asian “exceptionalism” or academic success (Bhatia, 2007; Lee, 2009; Ngo, 2010; Prashad, 2000, 2012; Shankar, 2008). Yet, these borders acted reflexively when Rani did not achieve, re-positioning her as White. In these

moments, it was too late for Rani to use her repertoire of resources related to Indianness in order to perform well as assessments were graded, leading peers to position her as White. With her Indianness temporarily missing, her only resort was to re-encounter certain aspects of Indianness related to the will and desire to achieve outside of class, bring back these re-solidified notions of her abilities to the classroom context, and then attempt to perform well. In these ways, the dialectic of Asianness and achievement at CHS created constantly changing borders between being Asian and White. An Asian student that achieved maintained a place on the side of Asian, whereas an Asian student that did not achieve was placed on the White side. While the data did not indicate a middle space between “White” and “Asian” that surely existed, Rani’s status as Indian (and thus Asian) was fluid and partly contingent upon her achievement. She was Indian until she did not achieve with her achievement then moving her out of “White” and re-solidifying her status as Indian.

Deficit Conceptualizations: India in Official Curricula and Classroom Dialogues/Presentations

Insights from participants and classroom observations detailed how pedagogical styles, educator/student dynamics and relationships, and student-to-student interactions functioned to shape participants’ conceptualizations of Indianness and the ways being Indian and Indianness operated in different ways at CHS. The final aspect comprising participants’ experiences in formal classroom settings was their interactions with curricula. Dialogues with participants indicated the different ways that India surfaced, influenced classroom discussions, and informed participants’ notions of self and being

Indian at CHS. Darshan noted that, when India was brought up, it was often the “negative parts” like “population” (Interview, March 8 2015). Geeta added that India appeared once in her tenure at CHS during sophomore year, and was mainly “focused on the history” with no links to the contemporary (globalized) moment (Interview, May 30 2015). From my conversations with participants, it became clear that India was minimally represented in CHS’s official curricula, surfaced infrequently in classroom discussions, and when presented or brought up in classroom discussions, was spoken about through deficit frames.

The “official” curricular inclusion of India was “barely there” for Anu, but did surface once during her AP history class. When I asked Anu to elaborate on how India was presented in her classes, she responded saying:

...awkwardly because like the teacher was all like, aww spices and everything like that. And its just really awkward because you're like ‘uh no not exactly that’s not how it is’ cuz you learn vaguely about the *Bhagavad Gita* and she's like *Bad-vad-Git-a* and you're just laughing the whole time. Umm yea, but barely, [India was] like, really underrepresented and its kind of sad, and I don’t like how India [was] so under represented cuz you know like India its like a really, powerful nation and stuff that like. And I don’t understand why it’s so underrepresented like, we learn barely anything and then we go immediately to Buddhism. And its so weird cuz we'll learn India through the religion, not even India as a nation, just India through religion in Hinduism and then some Buddhism will be there too, [yea like]...we'll learn a little about Hinduism and then Buddhism and then Islam and everything like that...(Interview, March 8 2015)

Anu’s disappointment at the limited ways India was studied became clear during our interview as she slowed her rate of speech and raised her intonation, nearly questioning how a school with so many Indian American students could (re)present such simplistic

renditions of India. Anu's description highlighted how India was epistemologically positioned through Orientalized lenses that "excoticized" aspects of India or Indian culture (Said, 1978). The introduction of texts like the *Bhagavad Gita* through mispronunciations made its inclusion in class feel strange, inauthentic, and even out of place to Anu and her Indian American peers. Tropes of "spices" and different religions became the frames of reference that guided India's presentation and discussion in this class. Anu indicated how the lesson became "awkward" because she, and her Indian American peers in class, did not agree with the limited ways in which India was presented and known. Anu understood India as more than spices and religion, and wondered why India was examined through religion and linked to Far Eastern countries through Buddhism without analyzing India as an independent nation and its contribution to both historical and contemporary global processes.

While India was included limitedly in official curricula, it also surfaced informally in class discussions. Anu spoke to the ways that India surfaced in one of her classes:

A while back, there was this one Indian [girl] and we were talking about legitimate governments, world governments...There was one Indian who was like 'well what about the Indian government, are they legitimate?' and she starts talking about how bad India was and how there were all these slums and everything. And I'm like, we have slums in our backyard, there are slums all over the world. I mean, like, that's because it's portrayed like that in the news and everything, whereas America is not portrayed as much as having that but we have it too. So like, it was kind of interesting because she just went on,...[and] we were all just like 'What?' and like 'oh my gosh stop'...(Interview, May 2 2015)

Here, Anu demonstrated how student-led dialogues emerged in her classes that positioned India at a deficit. Anu described how her teacher did not know much about Indian government and contemporary realities which allowed this student to continue talking. It was possible that this teacher was aware to realities in India, but wanted the discussion to take its own natural course. In either case, Anu explained how this student's inability to contextualize India, Indian government, and India's relation to America was frustrating. Anu was critical and quick to point out how media played a major role in the dissemination of particular images, knowledges, and ways of thinking about different peoples and places. Anu's story indicated the ways that this peer had internalized the deficitized, or even Orientalized, epistemological ways of knowing India and rearticulated them in front of the class when stating that India did not have a legitimate government.

Deficitized presentations and conceptualizations of India also transpired during the aforementioned classroom observation with Darshan when he performed the lab and watched student presentations. My field notes for this observation continued:

[Students completed their labs and sat down to watch group presentations]. Students enjoyed the videos and presentations of their classmates, solidifying the collegial and collaborative classroom context. One group was focusing on contamination of resources and leaks, and presented on a leak of this nature occurring in India. They showed images, and detailed how official causes were deemed "poor maintenance" and "worker negligence." As the presentation continued, the presenters said that they "sump waste in a third-world culture" and that the "government does not have the money to pay patients." The images, and videos shown, helped the class position those in the 'third world' as backwards and containing "cholera." I cringed slightly as the presentation continued, and was curious to see what, if any, actions the educator would take. She did not say anything to complicate or push back on the presentation, further

solidifying ideas of India and Indians as backwards (Field Notes, February 20 2015)

While many countries do have cholera outbreaks and power or water treatment leaks, these comments during the presentation helped the class solidify India as backwards, in development, and premodern. These notions of premodernity, in some ways, clashed with the ways participants conceptualized their Indianness and racial and cultural identities at CHS. Thus, while Indianness was linked to phenotype as well as participants' academic identities and self-efficacy, it was also defined in part by backwardness and a premodern status that surfaced in official curricula and classroom discussions. Consequently, those students with Indian roots, like participants, needed to contend with, negotiate, and navigate through these descriptors and additional premodern layers of being Indian at CHS.

Anu's insights and my observational field notes made clear how official curricula and informal discussions depicted India negatively, contained few connections to the multiple components of Indian and South Asian culture that were adopted and practiced in the U.S., and failed to stipulate how India continues to be a major global power that shapes how companies conduct business domestically and internationally. The Orientalized ways in which India was presented spoke to CHS's Eurocentric curricula, and how Western epistemological frames dominated the canon of knowledge and shaped how students came to know India and their Indian American peers. As South Asian Americans composed a large portion of the student population at CHS, the lack of India in students' curricula may not have helped Indian American students form positive

associations between themselves, their texts, and increased their feelings of self-efficacy. As such, the moments when India was reviewed became even more critical in shaping participants' conceptualizations of self, as well as their peers' thoughts, views, and beliefs about India and its inhabitants. On the one hand, many students in participants' classes were Asian American/White and also friends with participants, making it possible that they did not pay much attention to curricular representations and instead used their own experiential knowledge from interacting with Indian Americans to move beyond India/Indian culture as spices and religion. On the other hand, these notions of spices and religion may have reinforced participants' peers' notions of Indian culture and what being Indian means.

DISCUSSION

The data in this chapter highlighted how participants' experiences in formal educative spaces with educators' pedagogy, student/educator dynamics and relationships, and peer-to-peer dynamics and interactions with curricula shaped participants' racial and cultural identities linked to Indianness and informed dispositions to CHS. Participants noted how different pedagogical styles left them tapping into their repository of cultural resources to achieve inside and outside of classrooms, helping them engage in some content areas while attempting to mitigate feeling bored in others. This chapter focused on aspects of participants' Indianness at CHS, and more specifically, how Indianness was defined by phenotype as well as achievement linked to academic identities and notions of self-efficacy in content areas. As previously mentioned, academic identities were informed by "identity domains" of race, ethnicity, and social class, as well as "the value

placed on members of their own social group” (Zirkel, 2002). The ideas particular to “valuing” members were of critical importance for Desi teens at CHS. For participants and their fellow Desi teen counterparts, the images of Indians seen and internalized through first-hand experience or second-hand media consumption positioned Indians as high-income earners working in important and valuable sectors of the labor market. Thus, Desi teens at CHS see India, Indians, and Indianness valued by their community and larger society. Seeing Indians as valued for labor contributions and technical knowledge became crucial to participants when constructing their Indianness at CHS. Said differently, the images of Indians in the community and larger society helped solidify hard work and achievement as precursors to success and intimate parts of Indian cultural and ethnic identities. As such, prolonged exposure to CHS’s culture of achievement led to the further development and solidification of participants’ academic identities connected to self-efficacy in content areas. This section seeks to make clear connections between the data points contained in this chapter and participants’ interactions in formal education that further informed participants’ racial and cultural identities linked to tapping into cultural and ethnic traits of Indianness and being Indian at CHS.

Pedagogy, Indianness and Participants’ “Resilience”

Participants were clear to indicate which teachers and content areas they enjoyed and those they did not. While I thought teacher-centered contexts engendering competition and individualism would be disliked, the data revealed how participants preferred these classes because of the ways their educator interacted with students. At the same time, participants noted how they both enjoyed and were bored in student-

centered contexts that built community to mitigate individualism. While participants' actions of tapping into their will and desire to achieve outside of school or in the classroom as a launching pad into the learning activities, these practices of using Indianness as a resource also embodied a type of resilience to the schooling context and culture at CHS.

Participants' insights highlighted how pedagogical experiences engendered a negative climate to the classroom where students did not participate and disliked their teacher, a pattern found in other scholars' work (e.g., Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Maira, 2004). Contexts that made participants feel their Indianness (related to the ability to achieve) went missing or was non-existent (e.g., Rani's math teacher, the librarian), or classes where their will and desire to succeed were destabilized through educator/student dynamics (e.g., Geeta's science class), participants felt uncomfortable and conceptualized these spaces as unsafe at times. In response, they resisted the requirements and responsibilities of these classes at the individual level (Valenzuela, 1999), unable to use their repertoire of cultural tools as a springboard to enter the conversations, or tap into these facets of desire and hard work in the moment to increase self-efficacy in that content area and achieve. As such, participants slept, used their electronic devices, and/or completed work for other classes. While these moments of resistance were not indicative of "class consciousness" and did not transform power relations (Willis, 1977), the rebellious "content" of these actions indicated a "critique" of pedagogical contexts and educators' dispositions towards students at CHS (Valenzuela, 1999).

As participants like Rani alluded to achievement as composing some parts of Indianness and an Indian identity at CHS, it could in some ways be argued that participants' reliance on being Indian related to the will and desire to achieve embodied practices of resilience used to sidestep perceived stymies to achievement. Notions of using one's cultural background as a source of strength surfaced in previous investigations of Asian minority students in North American schools (e.g., Handa, 2003; Kumar, 2006; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2000), as well as other investigations chronicling schooling experiences of ethnic minorities as informing their identities (e.g., Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Lei, 2003; Soloranzo & Bernal, 2001). "Resilience" in education has expanded beyond low socioeconomic "at-risk" students (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000), moving towards "universal resilience" centering positive relationships, shared values and feelings of belonging that coalesce to help foster achievement (Battistich, 2001; Brown, 2004; Carter & Doyle, 2006; Cefai, 2007, 2008). While participants were not necessarily "at risk," the use of their cultural repertoire towards achievement, and the self-imposed mandates of achievement related to being Indian, could in some ways be conceptualized as a type of resilience in response to pedagogical contexts or educator/student dynamics that made achievement a challenging or difficult endeavor. In some ways then, participants' resilience could be seen as a 'looking within' to overcome challenges and succeed.

The Not-So Hidden Curriculum at CHS

Participants formed fluid identities through their experiences with pedagogy and dynamics with teachers, with their focus and determination (to perform well

academically) potentially embodying a type of resilience to overcome contexts where pedagogy and classroom engendered competition or disengagement. While class disparities and cultural predispositions became large fissures shaping schooling relationships and dynamics with peers, educators and curricula in previous investigations (Bettie, 2003; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Lee, 2001, 2009; Shankar, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977), class and socioeconomic standing did not significantly impact participants' experiences with pedagogy, teachers, peers and curricula. Participants were not positioned as "delinquents" like Asian groups in previous ethnographic studies (e.g., Lee, 2001; Ngo, 2010). In these ways, a particular confluence between class as culture/cultural aptitudes emerged (Bettie, 2003), as participants, irrespective of their distaste for content areas and teachers, continued to do their best in an attempt to earn the highest possible grade.

While Chapter 4 highlighted how aspects of class flattened CHS's school culture, class also transformed aspects of the "hidden curriculum." The hidden curriculum has often referred to representations of power and socially constructed/established norms, values, beliefs and actions (like linguistic preferences) that guided schooling interactions and dynamics (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1970; De Lissovoy, 2012; Giroux, 2001; Lee, 2009). As noted earlier, participants spoke to how students at CHS wore similar clothes, maintained peer groups that coalesced around shared interests and/or cultural/ethnic backgrounds, and maintained similar dispositions regarding style, behavior, and the need to academically achieve. These facets, and a largely similar student population, may have helped to homogenize CHS's school culture and students' self expressions as most

students brought middle- and upper-middle-class cultural milieu to the school. Given the relative lack of variety in the student body through students' similar class backgrounds, the messages particular to the hidden curriculum coalesced around two major points: academic achievement and the acceptable borders around being Asian and Asianness at CHS.

The hidden curriculum of CHS was associated with classroom codes of behavior (Bernstein, 2000), and the ritualized expectations around classwork/homework that stressed high-achievement and the constant need to engage in schoolwork (e.g., Lee, 2009; Ngo, 2006; Shankar, 2008). These notions of achievement and consistent work came easier to participants depending upon pedagogical styles and educator/student dynamics that aided participants in accessing their cultural repository containing the will and desire to achieve. Participants enjoyed classroom contexts and dynamics with peers and educators that allowed participants to immediately harness their intent to achieve, while pedagogical contexts that inhibited participants' ability to 'look within' made adhering to the mandates of the hidden curriculum particular to achievement a challenging task. In response, participants tended to resist classroom contexts and tap into their Indianness outside of class in order to increase their academic self-efficacy and eventually perform well. For example, while Rani and Anu had no problem working hard for their English and political science teachers respectively, they both had difficulty acting in these same ways in their mathematics classes. Thus, the hidden curriculum at CHS dictated that students make the best use of each pedagogical context, adhere to established classroom dynamics, and use tap into aspects of their Indianness as a resource

when negotiating and navigating classroom contexts and content areas towards achievement. Because participants had not experienced other ways of learning material, they were unable to conceptualize learning material in different ways, preferring lecture over more inquiry based methods (Anu, Interview, May 2 2015; Geeta, Interview, May 30 2015).

The hidden curriculum of CHS also made the writing of high-achievement onto Asian students visible. Achievement and hard work were not only characteristics pertaining to Indians and Indianness, but applied to Asians and Asianness at CHS. If a participant did not achieve, they were hyper-visible as they did not adhere to borders around ways that Asianness was defined at CHS. Thus, the exposed curriculum reinscribed the model minority stereotype linked to Asian students, even though scholars have pointed to this discourse as disastrous for Asians as well as students of color that did not achieve (e.g., Chae, 2004; Hattori, 1999; Lee, 2009; Li, 2005). As Asian students tended to be a dominant force in AP and Pre-AP classes, a “peer pressure” emerged whereby Asian and Indian American students felt they needed to achieve and take the hardest courses or all AP courses because Indian peers were doing the same (Anu, Interview, March 19 2015). The association of achievement with Asian students was so deeply ingrained at CHS that students in class would “pray” for an Asian peer in their group, or say “I need an Asian” when facing a challenge in class (Rani, Interview, March 15 2015). While CHS maintained Orientalist positionings related to Indians and Indianness (Chapter 4), this chapter has demonstrated a re-Orientalization of Asians and

Indians through achievement as these students were “exoticized” for their ability to perform well.

Orientalized Curricula in a Multicultural School

One place in which to re-work these positionings and build positive associations with Asian and Indian American students that moved beyond tropes of hard working racial others that achieve was through official curricula. On the one hand, neoliberal educative mandates and curricular control linked to testing was one possible explanation for the lack of including, or discussing, India in culturally relevant and sustaining ways. On the other hand, the lack of appropriate representation can be associated with the confluence of Orientalism, and Western epistemological frames that NISD used to structure content. I was so surprised when participants shared that there was scant inclusion of India or South Asians in their class materials and that India was infrequently presented in culturally relevant and sustaining ways, especially with so many Asian and South Asian students at CHS. While similar patterns of the hurried treatment, or lack of overall treatment of South Asians in curricula have been previously observed (e.g., Dave, Dhingra, Maira, Mazumdar, Shankar, Singh, & Srikanth, 2000; Pang, 2006), participants’ insights indicated how CHS presented an “unequal” assimilationist curriculum that contained master narratives using Eurocentric epistemologies (McCarthy, 1998; Pinar, 2000; Zimmerman, 2002). Anu’s insights into how India was presented during one of her classes through “spices” and “religion” treated India and Indians as fixed while exoticizing Indian American students as the Other (Hall, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Said, 1978). Anu was also quick to point out how these static and fixed representations,

especially seen in media, did not engage the cultural hybridity of America (Ladson-Billings, 2004; McCarthy, 1998).

While the data did not directly reveal how Orientalized curricula impacted participants' identities, it did in some ways indicate how participants may have leaned on their Indianness outside of classroom contexts in order to mitigate any negative thoughts, feelings and/or emotions that arose in these classroom contexts. Anu's statements when her teacher mentioned and pronounced Hindu texts, and how its inclusion felt "off" or almost "forced," provided some insights into the links between Orientalized curricula and participants' identities. The inclusion of this text and its pronunciation feeling unnatural spoke to the ways that India's inclusion was still unable to build from/atop of participants' Indianness in classroom settings. In a sense, this lesson stripped Indianness from participants, when the educator may have intended to tap into their students' pre-existing cultural knowledge. Thus, Anu and her peers mocked its inclusion. They felt the inauthenticness of its presence and were unable to connect with the text, its message, and share this information with their peers in class.

In these ways, participants and other Indian American students may have felt Othered as their culture was framed through a Western gaze and treated as static. These occurrences may have also further cemented the acceptable borders around Indianness and Indian cultural expressions at CHS. While these borders were key in socially organizing the school and informing participants' social dynamics (Chapter 4), the borders around Indianness particular to achievement were solidified through CHS's school culture and participants' experiences in formal educative spaces treating India as

premodern and Indian culture as static. Thus, the borders around Indianness included doing “Indian things” and “having Indian friends” (Chapter 4), as well as achieving but being from a premodern culture. The official curricula’s treatment of India and Indian culture did little to problematize these borders and made clear to participants that formal educative settings adhered to the same logics that governed the social structure and dynamics, further reifying participants’ needs to self-police their Indian expressions and/or use their Indianness as a resource to dig into, launch from, or lean on both inside and outside of CHS.

Orientalized curricula did little to destabilize the flattened aspects of CHS’s school culture and led participants to see use their racial and cultural identities linked to Indianness as the main schema guiding their negotiations and navigations at CHS. As India rarely surfaced, and when discussed was seen through deficit perspectives, participants and students alike may have internalized these narratives and used them to guide their interactions in school. The fact that curricula did not move beyond static and problematic depictions and representations of India and Indians placed participants further within the socially-constructed borders of acceptability particular to being Indian at CHS. In other words, participants spoke to their need to adhere to particular codes of speech and behaviors/patterns of interactions in formal educative spaces. If participants stepped out of CHS’s acceptable boundaries of being Indian/Indianness, they became hyper-visible and experienced racial Otherness or re-racialization. Participants’ hyper-visibility in formal educative spaces emerged from appearing unintelligent or not knowing content in classroom dynamics with educators/peers (e.g., Anu and Geeta), as

well as achievement or the lack thereof (Rani). If more accurate representative curricula were included at CHS, the dualities of Asian/White would be pushed in new directions, allowing participants and their peers to view Asians and Indian Americans in different lights, coming to understand cultural plurality and the cacophony of voices that contributed, and continue to contribute, to culture Americana and the American polity. Thus, while not overt, CHS functioned to organize itself both formally and informally in ways that “fractured” participants cultural and ethnic identities (Valenzuela, 1999), and forged social divisions between students and limited the ways in which participants could see themselves (as more than belonging/other, achiever/non-achiever, etc.) in formal educative spaces.

Chapter 6: Being Indian at Home: *Cultural Transmission, Experimentation, and Transnational Cultural Consumption*

I conducted Rani's last interview at her home. We were unable to meet in our normal locations as Rani's mom had car trouble. After our two-hour interview, Rani's mother invited me to eat. In my experiences with Indian culture, it can be considered rude if offered Prasad (an offering, usually from elders or made to Gods, that can be fruit or other such edibles), biscuits or coffee/tea and declining. In this case, Rani's mother was asking me to have dinner. If I said no, it may have been rude and also may have disrupted my relationship with Rani and her mother going forward. I happily obliged to eat dinner with Rani, her mother, and her sister.

Rani's mother told me to sit at the kitchen table with her daughters as she put the finishing touches on dinner. While sitting and chatting with Rani's sister about her likes, dislikes, and experiences in middle school, Rani's mother made dosas and sambar. Dosas are thin crepe like 'pancakes' made from different dals (lentils) that are soaked, blended together, and set to ferment. After fermentation, the mava (batter) needs to be used immediately due to a short shelf life. Inside these thin creations was a baji made of potatoes, onions, mustard seeds and vegetables. This dish was accompanied by sambar, a soup-like dish with vegetables and a small amount of lentils with spices and seasonings. The key to eating dosas with sambar is enjoying the dosas right as they come off the thava (cast-iron skillet) because they maintain their crispness and heighten the contrast between the flavors of the dosa, baji and sambar.

Rani's mother brought me a plate and placed it in front of me. I took a bite. I was taken back to my mother's kitchen, sitting at the counter waiting for more fresh and crisp dosas to eat. The dosas and sambar were exactly what I needed in the moment, a taste of home in my central Texas town. Rani's mother made sure to stuff me full of food before she joined us at the table. Rani's mother, Rani, and her sister and I began talking about what they did on weekends, and some of Rani's mother's struggles with making sure her children listen to her and adhere to her expectations. It was incredible being able to see intimate family moments, like Rani's mother jokingly trying to feed Rani at the table.

These dynamics at the dinner table reminded me of how important home was to me as well as my participants. Scholars have positioned home as a sacred space of separation from the outside world, a place where South Asians can practice "authentic" ways of being without fear or ridicule (Bhatia, 2007; Handa, 2003; Prashad, 2000; Rudrappa, 2002). Accessing "authentic" Indianness for South Asians in diaspora is now easier through transnational capitalism and the hyper-flows of ideas, goods, and information from homeland to the diaspora (Appadurai, 1996; Bhatia, 2007; Grewal, 2005). In these ways, the home space becomes a point of convergence between the multiple intersecting, overlapping, and layered discourses from homeland and within diaspora that are negotiated, internalized, resisted, and re-worked in guiding daily life.

However, diasporic localities make sense of transnational/local discourses in different ways, making Indian diasporic life in different communities unique. These processes of encoding and decoding take on different meanings that are place-, space-, and time-specific (Hall, 1993). Said differently, South Asians living in different

American localities may have contrasting conceptualizations of life in the diasporic community and may use cultural symbols to structure the “cultural practices of homeland” in diaspora. These new cultural practices and rituals negotiated in diaspora then inform aspects of ethnic identities that take up and impact aspects of race, class, gender in different ways (Bhatia, 2007). In these ways, participants’ home contexts and dynamics became a window into cultural practices and rituals in diaspora towards understanding how notions of race, class, and gender were constructed particular to living in NISD.

Keeping these thoughts in mind, participants’ home environments and community interactions were key sites where racial and cultural identities were foundationally inculcated and constructed. Different facets of being Indian contributing to their racial and cultural identities were adopted with others negotiated, re-worked and re-solidified over time, becoming the cultural milieu of Indianness they tapped into both inside and outside of CHS. This cultural milieu interacted with school culture in different ways, forefronted on some days, backgrounded on others, but always remained with participants, even if unlocatable. This chapter seeks to respond to the following research question:

1. How do Indian/Indian American youth self-conceptualize their racial and cultural identities? What are the identities they construct/come into/perform/produce for themselves?

As Chapters 4 and 5 traced participants’ self-conceptualizations of their racial and cultural identities in school, this chapter seeks to pinpoint the different ways that

participants' home/community contexts concomitantly informed schooling dynamics (e.g., school shaping home and home shaping school ad infinitum) in forming participants' Indian racial and cultural identities. In order to engage dynamics at home as underlying and (in)forming participants' racial and cultural identities in home/community, this chapter highlights how interactions with family and kinship networks, patterns of consumption, and adherence/resistance to parental expectations coalesced to shape participants' Indianness, conceptualizations of being Indian, and their racial and cultural identities.

DIASPORIC CONNECTIVITIES

Notions of diaspora and community are important to immigrants arriving in new spaces of residence. Very often, migrants elect to live in the same neighborhoods as earlier immigrants of similar class backgrounds forming "ethnic enclaves" (Orfield, 2002), now an "ethno-burb," "ethnic nexus," or "ethnic hub" in recognizing the "unbounded" nature of diasporic living (Park & Leon, 2008). Previous investigations examining South Asian youth outlined how diasporic networks provided community members with information to successfully interact with(in) American institutions (like schools), or the best stores to secure fresh produce (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Other scholars indicated how sharing information helped bring the diasporic community closer together as members took on fictive kinship roles as an extended "Auntie" or "Uncle" (e.g., Mani, 2012). Participants spoke to the families they created for themselves, demonstrating the focus on familiar bonds and building solidarity amongst the kinship network (Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000), and how

their interactions in NISD's community, "family" get togethers and formal diasporic Indian organizations provided cultural/ethnic foundations that informed self-conceptualizations and cultural beliefs related to being Indian.

Being Indian through Family/Kinship Networks & Get-Togethers

Interviews with participants revealed a limited amount of socialization outside of CHS. While Gopal would "chill" with his friends from the basketball team (Interview, March 18 2015), most participants did not socialize with peers from CHS regularly.

When I asked Rani with whom she spent with time with outside of school, she said:

...its mainly family friends. Like when I say a lot, I don't mean like everyday. [Maybe] like every other week, which is kind of a lot when you think about it. And um, most of them, they are not like family, they are just people who [I've] known ever since my mom first came here and like I've known literally since I was born like those kind of people...

When I asked Rani how these "family" get-togethers transpired, and what she did, she said:

We'll just you know...chill. Like the kids will go to a room and the parents will all sit and talk. It depends on whose house to you go typically, like sometimes it wont even be, like sometimes it will be a dinner party from an invite and other times its like "Oh um, do you want to have the kids over?," and like "Oh um yea ok sure." And all the parents will sit there and it will turn into a dinner party yea. We talk a lot, and we laugh a lot, we take a lot of pictures, and we just do stuff like that yea...(Interview, March 15 2015)

Rani's insights demonstrated how her social interactions outside of CHS were Indian-centric with a close-knit group comprised of her mother's close friends that organized meetings when possible. When Rani and her cousins "chilled," they used their iPods and other technological devices to take pictures that they may have uploaded to Snapchat and

other picture-based social media outlets. During our conversation, I became curious to any overlap between her “Indian Girl Group” at CHS and her networks outside of CHS:

Rani: I actually have like, OK, one is most of the people who are in the outside of school group only like two of those people, well three of those people - one is a guy – OK so two of those people who I am close with go to my school. But there is one person who is there at every one of those parties who I’ve known since I was a real little kid, so like not really, but there are some friends you’re closer with those people, because they know both people...

Ven: Oh OK OK, so for the most part those two groups are separate...

Rani: Yea... (Interview, March 15 2015)

Rani’s family’s interactions within the “family” they constructed for themselves were important for creating, sustaining, and contributing to different aspects of Rani’s cultural identities in diaspora. Rani’s mother socialized, building and solidifying her bonds with her ‘sisters’ through shared points of interest and similar outlooks while also creating a similar space of interaction for Rani and peers her age. The minimal overlap of Rani’s school group allowed her to connect and interact with different peers than her normal group of socialization, as well as disconnect from CHS.

Geeta spoke to a different set of relationships within her kinship networks, and how her dynamics in CHS were informed by informational exchanges in her diasporic network. Geeta said that:

The competition [at CHS] gets to a point where like, people are competing against friends. But I feel like it didn’t really impact me that much because me and my friends kind of just made a rule not to discuss grades or anything like that...

With all participants concerned about academic achievement, it was interesting that Geeta felt academic achievement did not “really impact” her and her friend group. As the academic culture that permeated CHS informed social groups and was reproduced by students through their in-class dynamics, avoiding discussions about grades took an active, conscious effort. I asked Geeta where the idea about not talking about grades began and emerged from:

[It began] freshman year. A family friend told, a family friend kind of told us..., and said like “Don’t get too competitive with your friends, like, try not and discuss grades. Yea, like definitely discuss school, but don’t like discuss grades and stuff”... (Interview, May 30 2015)

This family friend’s advice may have really helped Geeta when at CHS, allowing her to, at times, see beyond achievement when interacting with peers towards building and maintaining connections with her peer group. Geeta went on to share how her “Aunt’s” child also went to CHS, and how a strict focus on grades fostered competition and impacted their child’s social network negatively. These details provided an interesting contrast with respect to academic competition and competitiveness that participants noted in both Chapters 4 and 5. While participants like Anu spoke to the competition between her peers to perform well, Geeta’s peer group made an active attempt to avoid conversations about grades. Geeta’s “Auntie” shared this information because she did not want Geeta to experience isolation or break social bonds, with these kinship network dynamics providing key information about negotiating and navigating CHS with greater efficacy.

Participants' family and kinship networks were mostly, if not all, Indian/Indian American in composition and indicative of larger patterns of South Asian migrants' networks formed along sub-ethnic divisions of region or language (e.g., Dave et al., 2000). These diasporic networks imparted participants' heritage culture, modeling appropriate, if not expected, behavior of being Indian in diaspora. Participants were socialized to diasporic connectivities, made aware of the importance of these interactions and the information shared in these spaces, and incorporated these diasporic get togethers and organized meetings as composing part of their Indianness and being Indian in the community of CHS.

Cultural Transmission in Public Spaces and Ethnic Organizations

Participants spoke to their patterns of interaction and socialization outside of CHS, both individually and as a family, and indicated that Indians were visible in the community. Anu spoke to going to Kumon for tutoring and seeing a large number of Indians receiving instruction, with some Indians/Indian Americans working there (Interview, February 28 2015). Conversations with participants made clear how their dynamics outside of CHS remained heavily Indian-centric.

During a conversation with Rani, she spoke to family outings at one specific place in the community where interactions with Indians were welcomed, if not expected:

Oh my gosh its crazy, every time we go through we always, always, always bump into people know. My mom will be like "OK we're gonna go to Costco dress nice because we're probably going to see people." And before we go she'll be like "is my make up ok cuz you know we're gonna bump into like 20 different people," I'm like mom "its fine, its OK." I mean I guess Costco is like the hangout, I mean there are some people

who go there like literally every other day, just to like, not even to buy stuff, just to go there, and socialize...(Interview, March 15 2015)

Rani detailed how Costco became a major place of interaction in NISD's community where Indians/Indian Americans socialized. Dressing nicely stressed to Rani the importance of presentation and making good impressions when meeting other Indians in the community. While previous investigations saw Bollywood film events and malls as spaces of community exchange and teen exchange/socialization (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008), Rani's narrative indicated how the Indian community and Indian American youth within NISD used different retail spaces for diasporic social interaction and informational exchange.

As the community of NISD witnessed an explosion in the South Asians/South Asian American population, it was possible that constructing spaces to share culture and cultural productions (i.e., movie theaters) had not matched the rapid racial/ethnic expansion. As such, diasporic community members still engaged in these informational exchanges, but did so in other spaces like Costco and/or Kumon (tutoring center). Through these interactions, Rani was modeled 'being Indian' in public community interactions through her mother's styles of interaction, comportment, and dialogical dynamics. Rani was made aware that being Indian in the community of NISD meant a friendly and welcoming disposition, and engaging other Indians with the minimum of a smile, if not conversation, when traversing public spaces in the community.

While Rani spoke to diasporic interactions in commercial spaces like Costco, Anu shared how she and her family were members of a Kashmiris Overseas Association

(KOA) and provided insights into their interactions in public spaces. Per Anu, the organization came about because:

...they're a lot of Kashmiris and a lot of Kashmiri Hindus in America. And so, we kind of like, in order to keep our culture alive, we have to like group together and keep our [culture]. And so we have this Kashmiri Overseas Association which is like for everyone outside of Kashmir. And so...this, like, essay that I had to write [for] senior achievement recognition [has helped me reflect] about my heritage. And [I've learned] a lot about how we can move forward as a group and as a community. You know, like, we should encourage people to actually teach the language to their kids at a younger age because I know, I think the worst part is that I've never been to Kashmir, my friends have been and they're not Kashmiri, and they're like 'oh Kashmir is so beautiful' and I'm like...no...you're not going to tell me...(Interview, February 28 2015)

Anu made clear the pride she took in her culture, and was aware to how life in America in some ways, directly competed with, and/or eroded, her Kashmiri cultural origins. Anu's statements indicated her consciousness to her cultural identities as informed by her heritage culture and living in America. For these reasons Anu valued the KOA as this formal organization of Kashmiris living in America provided Anu and her family a platform to engage in activities and dialogues with individuals sharing similar pasts of migration from an area in turmoil, and bond over their experiences in navigating American life.

Anu told me about a camping trip organized by the KOA that gathered Kashmiris for a three-day event. She said there were "fifteen families" present that "rented cabins," and because Anu "[hadn't] been able to go for [three to four] years because of parents and school," she was once again able to interact with peers she had not recently seen

(Interview, March 19 2015). While this camping trip involved playing volleyball and eating delicious meals, Anu shared an additional focus/event that took place:

The adults planned this Kashmiri vocabulary thing and they really want us to immerse ourselves into Kashmiri everything. And so, I don't like, I don't really know that much Kashmiri. But somehow I got my team, which was like two people, and somehow we got into the championship level where there were only two teams. I don't know..., [and we didn't win] because my brother, like my cousin, I consider him my brother yea, he was on the opposing team. He knows so much Kashmiri, it was so unfair! It was so easy to him, cuz his parents both speak Kashmiri at home and my parents don't...(Interview, March 19 2015)

Parents organizing games or classes for children to learn about their culture had been observed earlier in studies of South Asians in America (e.g., Agarwal, 1991). Anu's description of this event demonstrated how she considered diasporic relatives as immediate relatives, calling her cousin her "brother." Anu's excitement when telling me this story was clear, especially when she got to the championship round but lost. This game of cultural competency may have worked to engender a type of competitiveness for Anu during and after the game, as knowing more Kashmiri would help at the following get together. Not only did the weekend allow those attending to build connections and share freshly cooked meals together, this game stressed the importance of Kashmiri culture and the passing of culture to future generations of Kashmiris in America. In these ways, the youth present saw Kashmiri culture valued and celebrated, with youth having more Kashmiri cultural capital rewarded for their knowledge.

Conclusion

Participants' insights demonstrated how their social interactions and dynamics outside of CHS were fundamental to imparting Indianness and the formation/maintenance

of their racial, cultural and ethnic identities. Participants' interactions with their families in public spaces provided specific schema for conducting and performing Indianness outside of the home space, whether at Costco, infrequent visits to houses of worship, or specific organizations where culture was overtly transmitted through games. The confluence of these interactions and dynamics in diaspora helped inform diasporic racial and cultural identities (Lew, 2006), as participants took in aspects of being Indian and Indianness that were demonstrated in diaspora. Being Indian and Indianness were connected to being sociable, interacting with other diasporans in public spaces, spending time with close-knit networks, sharing information, resources, and cementing cultural ties through shared outlooks and experiences. Moreover, Anu's insights into her native language use demonstrated how language became an instantiation of ethnic identity (Dave et al., 2000), a part of Indianness.

In some ways then, it was possible that participants' networks outside of CHS helped inform their social networks within CHS. By being around many like-minded individuals in intimate settings, participants may have looked to mirror these same relationships within school. In these ways, it was possible participants used their Indianness built (and continually solidifying) in diasporic interactions as platforms to build their social connections at CHS, seeking out those with cultural similarities and outlooks towards encountering senses of belonging at CHS. Interactions in family get togethers/kinship networks may have mimicked, reinscribed, reproduced, and informed their social networks within CHS. Conversely, it could also be said that participants' interactions within all Asian/Indian peer groups helped narrow the focus of their

interactions in family kinship networks to those Indian Americans with whom they felt comfortable. The dynamics within kinship networks and diasporic community interactions provided participants meanings of being Indian in diaspora as spending time/dialoging within closely shared networks, as well as sharing vital information to increase efficacy when interacting in/traversing the institutional spaces of NISD.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS AND FORMING INDIAN IDENTITIES

Dialogues with participants indicated how diasporic connectivities provided specific ideas about being Indian related to fostering, maintaining and interacting within diasporic networks. Additionally, official organizations allowed parents the ability to demonstrate the importance of culture and cultural interactions to their children. Parents' interactions in these different contexts, coupled with their own histories and changing positionalities related to American living, informed the ways parents approached child rearing, transmitting culture, and the beliefs/expectations to which their children would adhere. Participants spoke about their parents' expectations particular to dating, social media and school further defined being Indian and Indianness, while also impacting how participants approached and interacted within CHS.

Dating and Social Media Use: Parents' Non-Academic Expectations

Very often, the dialogues I had with participants about their families did not directly engage parents' expectations. Instead, these conversations covered different intra-family dynamics, participants' feelings of "closeness" with their mother or father's side of their families, and how these interactions shaped actions and dynamics at home

and within their families. I discovered many of my own family dynamics surfacing in participants' lives, as Rani shared how she is closer with her mother's side of the family than her father's side, even though some of her father's relatives live several houses down the same street (Interview, February 13 2015). While dialogues with participants indicated the need to keep a "clean room" or "be good" (e.g., Rani, Interview, March 19 2015), participants also indicated how their parents dissuaded them from dating and told them to carefully use social media.

Participants' parents expected them to adhere to advice and abide by their wishes (e.g., Anu, Interview, March 8, 2015). Previous ethnographic studies examining South Asians in diaspora found that parents attempted to monitor/regulate children's dating (Almeida, 1996; Agarwal, 1991; Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Ngo, 2002, 2006; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2000, 2001), with these patterns also observed outside the South Asian community (e.g., Valenzuela, 1999). Scholars also indicated how dating stipulations were gendered as South Asian/South Asian American males had more freedom than their female counterparts who were not allowed, or encouraged not, to date (e.g., Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). The data revealed an alignment with these previously observed gendered patterns with particular nuances pertaining to male dating.

Interviews lightly broached the subject of dating. I felt slightly uncomfortable asking participants outright about their dating lives, even with the rapport/relationships we were building together. Geeta shared insights into her parents' expectations around dating when speaking to the formation of her social group. For Geeta:

...Indian people, their parents aren't chill with like dating and stuff. And only like, Indian people, can understand that, cuz like other people are like "Why don't you just tell your parents that you don't, that you don't have to listen to them." But like, I think only Indian people understand, I guess there's just things like that...(Interview, May 30 2015)

Geeta covertly acknowledged her parents' preference, if not stipulation, of her inability to date. Geeta's social network understood the inability to date, becoming a point of congruency helping her build social bonds. While Geeta expressed how her parents did not want her to date, Anu shared how her dating preferences were a mix of her own wishes and those of her parents. Anu was "not supposed to have a boyfriend" (Interview, May 2 2015). I did not press Anu as to where these expectations/guidelines originated from, as it was possible her parents indicated, over the years, that a boyfriend was unacceptable. Simultaneously, Anu's focus on school and disinterest in boys at her school may have also influenced her decision to tell her parents "Oh my [gosh], no boyfriends, out of the question" (Interview, May 2 2015). In these ways then, Anu was not interested in dating, whether these conclusions were her own or also influenced by her parents.

These findings particular to limited dating represented a similar pattern of limited/no female dating linked to parental expectations found in previous investigations of South Asian American identity formation and home interactions (Agarwal, 1991; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). However, the data also demonstrated how expectations about dating also applied to males. When Darshan began attending CHS, his mother told him that he could not date. In fact, on vacation, his parents found out that he "liked a girl" and his parents became angry with him. However, once Darshan was a junior, his mother removed the limitations and said that "he could date someone" if he wanted. However, at

this point, Darshan said that he was not interested in the students at CHS (Interview, March 8 2015). In these ways, Darshan's experiences moved the discourse of limited dating for females only to also include Indian American males. Yet, his case also later cemented male children's freedom (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Prashad, 2000; Shankar, 2008), as his parents "allowed" him to date. Thus, participants' insights revealed their disinterest and inability to date peers at CHS as informed by their parents' expectations, participants' own wishes, and the combination of these two forces.

While participants shared their parents' expectations about dating, they also revealed their parent's rules and regulations to a closely related facet of dating – social media. While social media use could lead to points of exposure placing children at risk, all participants used Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. During a conversation with Darshan, he told me how his parents attempted to control his social media activity. Darshan had opened a Facebook account, and his mother "got mad at [him] for opening [an account] and not telling her" (Interview, March 8 2015). While this interaction may have revolved around Darshan's mother wanting to know how Darshan occupied his time, it was also possible that she did not want him using social media. Notions of parents being less than "pleased" with their children using social media also surfaced in Rani's dynamics with her mother. Rani used Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram, and when I asked Rani what her mom thought of her social media use, Rani replied:

She hates it. Its like, I could be on my phone looking at grades, and my mom will be like "You're on Instagram." And I'm like "I'm not on Instagram" and then she'll be like "You're just liking and unliking pictures" and I'm like "No mom that's not what I do." Except she has a Facebook too, so she is anti-social media for me, but not for her. But she

lets me have it, its not like she's super strict about it, but she doesn't think it's a super good idea ...(Interview, March 15 2015)

Rani revealed how her social media use was subtly contested by her mother. Rani was allowed to use her accounts, and although Rani's mother did not exercise direct control of Rani's social media use, she did level critiques at Rani's use, even when Rani was checking her grades. In these ways, Rani's mother's dispositions may have influenced Rani's social media use in certain moments, making Rani more self-conscious to the time spent checking social media, exercising caution as to what she posted, and perhaps not using social media on certain occasions.

“They’d Get Mad...”: Parents’ Academic Expectations and Involvement

Thus far, parental expectations encompassed aspects of behavior and expectations around dating and social media use. A major current across conversations with all participants was their focus on school, academics, and the need to achieve. While participants spoke to their academic focus as a form of intrinsic motivation, they also indicated how their parents placed a large importance on academic achievement at CHS (Anu, Interview, February 28 2015; Darshan, Interview, February 15 2015; Geeta, Interview, March 18 2015; Gopal, Interview, February 16 2015; Rani, Interview, March 8 2015). Interviews with participants provided insights into parents’ dynamics with children related to achievement and the perpetuation of the model minority stereotype related to focus and determination to academically achieve at CHS.

During a conversation with Darshan, he intimated how the majority of his parents’ expectations were academically driven:

They've gone down...I guess. They were high grades, they used to be a lot before. Like, they used to get mad if I didn't get a high A. If I got a 96 instead of a 98, they'd get mad. When I did well they'd say good job [but] now they don't bother me anymore. [They] don't care about the grades as much...(Interview, March 8 2015)

Desi youth feeling pressure to perform well academically has been well documented (e.g., Agarwal, 1991; Asher, 2002; Prashad, 2000, 2012; Shankar, 2008). These expectations placed great pressure on participants to perform well (Gibson, 1988; Ngo, 2006; Verma, 2004), especially as they did not want to upset their parents. If Darshan was able to meet expectations, he was presented a small amount of positive feedback or praise in return. It was possible that the thin line between praise and criticism (two points between a 96 or 98) slowly desensitized Darshan to both positive and negative interactions with his parents around achievement. As Darshan did not heavily interact with his parents and mostly resided in his room (Interview, March 17 2015), it was possible that negative conversations around achievement informed Darshan's decision to isolate himself in his room. Darshan's experiences with his parents particular to achievement may have also added to the pressure already felt at CHS and the hyper-competitive environment that he disliked (Interview, March 17 2015).

While Darshan's parents became mad when he did not bring home a "high A," Anu's parents informed her of their academic expectations by controlling Anu's involvement in extra clubs or activities, as well as the courses she took. Anu told her parents she wanted to volunteer through her religious organization, and informed me of the ensuing dialogue:

[My parents said] “no, we're not gonna let do that cuz is far [and] school is the top priority.” So I [was not] able to do anything else. I had to beg my parents just to get a job, because they’re like Anu “you need to focus on school, you need to get into [a good and reputable school]”...(Interview, February 28 2015)

Anu began to paint the picture of how academics were stressed and made important. It was possible that, even though Anu’s parents saw the importance of this volunteer work and were proud of Anu for wanting to volunteer within her religious community, school and academic success took precedence. However, Anu made clear how this was not the only occasion in which her parents placed academics and a focus on school over activities:

I played chess competitively for a while and then I stopped because my parents were like no you have to focus on school its more important. Like my parents have made me quit everything because of school. School school school. So yea, it was really disappointing that I couldn’t continue with competitive chess. But while I was at it, and like just now, whenever I get a free chance, I think chess. Like in the morning, if you come in the morning or whatever, like I will...playing chess if not studying...(Interview, February 28 2015)

During our interview, Anu’s love of chess was contagious. She told me how she was so happy that her parents “forced” her to play chess when she was in third grade, because when she loved the strategy and felt “so alive” when playing (Interview, February 28 2015). However, the inability to play chess competitively was quite a blow to Anu. The way she repeated “school, school, school” really stuck with me. It was in these moments that I realized how important academics were to Anu’s parents, and in turn for Anu, even though she could not engage in the activities she enjoyed.

While Anu's parents limited her out-of-school activities, they helped her decide her academic track and course selections. Earlier at CHS, Anu was a part of the IB program during her freshman and sophomore year. The IB program was challenging, and Anu explained how her mother helped influence her academic future:

It turned out that grades weren't that good, and my parents, my mom especially, was like harping like "You need to get your grades up, if you don't get your grades up then you're dropping IB." So, I was like, mainly cuz of my mom, cuz she was like "9th and 10th grade is pre-IB, so its not actually IB IB." But, I mean, it was still as rigorous I feel. But yea, but my parents were like "if you're doing this badly in 9th and 10th grade, then think about actually actual IB." And I was like, you know what, whatever. So I dropped IB, and then my counselor said a funny thing when I dropped. She was like "why are you dropping IB when you're taking the same courses in AP"...cuz I literally just changed everything from IB to AP, but they were as rigorous...(Interview, February 28 2015)

As Anu was expected to focus and do well in school, her parents kept a close eye as to her progress and grades. Anu and her parents' shared a goal of Anu attending a great university. For Anu's parents, it was not important which program she was in, so long as she achieved and performed well. Ironically, Anu's classes were not going to be easier. While Anu's parents stressed achievement and an intense focus on school, it was interesting that her parents did not become angry or hold her to specific grades (e.g., the ninety-eight percent cut-off for Darshan) that warranted praise or an adverse reaction. Instead, they allowed Anu to work to her ability, and stepped in to dissuade her from continuing as non-IB classes were not in Anu's best academic interest. In these ways, Anu's parents were actively involved in Anu's academic experiences at CHS and did not force her to take the most rigorous classes. Instead, they allowed her to experiment and

then suggested different options that would help Anu as she prepared for her future after CHS.

Conclusion

Parental expectations parents played an important role in participants' interactions both inside and outside of CHS. Expectations around dating heavily influenced how participants negotiated the meanings behind their racial/cultural identities, and their interactions within the community and CHS. Previous investigations of South Asian teens' interactions in community and school pointed to community members acting as faux parents and monitoring the activity of children, especially related to dating (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). Yet, dialogues with participants did not indicate this type of community surveillance existing in participants' lives. Additionally, participants did not indicate that they had specific career expectations. While Anu did state that her Auntie told her mother not to let Anu study philosophy (Anu, Interview, March 19 2015), this investigation did not find South Asian youth in diaspora directed to certain occupations in contrast to earlier studies (e.g., Almeida, 1996; Segal, 1991; Shariff, 2009). Participants adhered to their parents' wishes (e.g., Asher, 2008; Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002), and avoided these dynamics both inside and outside of CHS. Participants associated the lack of dating as part of their racial and cultural identities, signifying that being Indian and having a significant other was inappropriate. Additionally, participants did not indicate an increased pressure to adhere to their parents expectations found in previous studies (e.g., Shariff, 2009; Sharma, 2000; Wakil,

Siddique, & Wakil, 1981), although this dynamic may have existed but participants did not explicitly share these feelings.

Chapter 4 noted a pervasive academic culture at CHS, and it was possible that this culture may have influenced how parents conceptualized academic success and positioned this success on/for their children. However, it appeared as though there was a difference surrounding the importance placed on achievement between school and home. The expectations of parents particular to their children's achievement appeared natural, organic and as a general concern for their children's well being and success, while the expectations at CHS were geared around hyper-pervasive competition. At the same time, some scholars have noted how some South Asians in America justify their presence in "good neighborhoods" and prestigious job posts as due to their own exceptionalism and class standing (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Prashad, 2000). As participants' parents were high-income earners who accrued multiple degrees in order to obtain their posts in the labor market, they may have also stressed academics knowing the difficulties in securing gainful employment (in areas like NISD) in the hopes that children would experience the same success. Thus, although emanating from different points of intention (parent's organic concern vs. hyper-pervasive competition at CHS), it was possible that the focus on academics at home may have informed participants' academic focus at CHS as the academic culture at school simultaneously reinscribed parents' expectations of academic achievement, placing participants in a never ending cycle stressing achievement as they moved between home and school.

HOME DYNAMICS OF CULTURAL PRESERVATION, MAINTENANCE AND TRANSMISSION

Participants indicated how diasporic interactions in public and private spaces, in tandem with parents' expectations, delineated a set of values (e.g., spending time in close-knit family groups, knowing native languages) and expectations (e.g., intense academic focus, no/limited dating, careful social media use) that (in)formed the foundations of their Indianness and their Indian racial and cultural identities. Moreover, participants' interactions at home demonstrated the ways home dynamics were geared towards cultural maintenance and cultural transmission. Theories of cultural maintenance have been associated with language use (Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008), family honor (Gibson, 1988), the female body and sexuality (Das Dasgupta and Dasgupta, 1996; Gibson, 1988; Mani, 1993), discourses of ethnicity, and protecting children from the outside world (Dasgupta & Das Gupta, 1998; Gupta, 2006; Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002; Roy, 1998; Rudrappa, 2002). While earlier instantiations of limited dating spoke to aspects of cultural maintenance and preservation, participants described processes of "enculturation" where they were socialized to their own ethnic cultures (Weinreich, 2009; Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007), with this enculturation taking place through media, consuming authentic Indian food, and native language dynamics in the home space.

Transnational Media Consumption

Participants spoke to their media consumption practices at home during interview sessions. Interestingly, participants did not "watch television" in the traditional sense. Instead, participants consumed media through computers and online platforms like

Netflix and/or Hulu. Participants watched shows like *Gossip Girl* or *Archer* on Netflix (Darshan, Interview, January 25 2015; Rani, Interview, January 31 2015), as well as sports highlights on ESPN (Gopal, Interview, February 16 2015). While participants consumed American programming, they spoke to viewing/consuming transnational media in the forms of film, television shows and YouTube channels. These transnational media helped keep ties between homeland and diaspora that in some ways created an “imaginary homeland” (Rushdie, 1991), with this homeland and notion of “home” represented through “essentialized national origins” (Dave et al., 2000, p.81). Participants highlighted how their transnational media consumption provided further dimensions of accessing culture that further shaped their Indianness and Indian racial and cultural particular to the NISD community.

Bollywood Movies and Indian “Serials”

One major component of participants’ transnational media consumption was Bollywood movies (e.g., Anu, Interview, March 8 2015; Rani, Interview 1, January 31 2015). While some scholars outlined how Bollywood film has become the global perception of Indian film and simultaneously essentializing multiple strands of Indian cinema (e.g., Punathambekar, 2005), other scholars have posited Bollywood film as representative of nation and nationhood (read: India) – a mediatized embodiment of ethnic ideologies working to construct ethnic identity underpinned by race and gender (Grewal, 2005; Mani, 2012). In these ways, Bollywood films became a window used to shrink the distance between participants’ localities and India, providing instantaneous information particular to “authentic” ways of being that could be enacted in diaspora.

When I asked Anu about Bollywood films, she replied saying:

I watch Bollywood movies with mainly my parents and my sister,...mainly as a family together. Sometimes I watch it on my own, and my parents don't know that I'm watching. And then sometimes, when I wanna waste time, I'll just watch a Bollywood movie. But then, nowadays, I can't handle like a full Bollywood movie, so we understand Hindi cuz we watch Bollywood movies like all the time [laughing]...(Interview, February 28 2015)

Anu loved Bollywood so much she attributed the action sequences in Bollywood films to her preference for American action movies like *The Expendables*. She even associated an “accent” her parents (and one peer from CHS) made her aware of due to her consistent immersion in Bollywood music and film (Interview, March 19 2015). Watching these movies with family or individually allowed Anu opportunities to further develop her working knowledge of Hindi. Anu connected to her Indian heritage through media like Bollywood movies and Bollywood music, using these media towards Hindi language acquisition, and associating all of these activities as constituting her racial and cultural identities of being Indian. As transnational media and Hindi films have been positioned as important for imparting cultural and emotional capital for expatriate Indians (Punathambekar, 2005), watching Bollywood films as a family may have stressed the importance of these media/moments as participants saw how invested their parents were in the films and consuming them as a family unit.

In addition to Bollywood movies, Anu mentioned a different set of transnational media that she and her family consumed. Anu's grandparents came to visit, prompting her father to purchase a satellite-dish service so that her grandparents would not miss

Indian programs. When I asked Anu about the other programs they watched, she responded saying:

Oh my gosh, oh my gosh...my cousin told my mom about it, and...she was obsessed with Pakistani TV serials. Really, they're just so much more dramatic so yea, my mom is like a dramatic person. But at the same time, my dad cracks a joke and, its funny, she'll start laughing and its like a really good time everyone is laughing and everyone is having a good time...(Interview, February 28 2015)

While Anu and her family watch Bollywood movies together, they also enjoyed Pakistani serials. While South Asian families in diaspora consuming media together is not new (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Shankar, 2008), Anu's family's consumption indicated the ways global capitalism and the postmodern moment have made consuming transnational media as easy as watching the local news. Anu and her sister were exposed to South Asian media depicting Indian ways of being that they absorbed, negotiated, made sense of, and lived in diaspora. Consuming media in these ways allowed Anu's family to form closer bonds around their Indian culture, with the content from media and language preferences informing Anu's Indian identity and notions of Indianness.

YouTube Channels: Dance and Indian Reality Television

While Bollywood films and Indian television shows consumed through satellite television formed one aspect of participants' transnational media consumption, Geeta shed additional light into how she consumed India and Indian culture in the home space. From the very first meeting with Geeta, she made clear her love for dance (Interview, February 7 2015; March 18 2105; May 30 2015). Not only did Geeta work at a dance school teaching hip-hop or contemporary styled dance during parts of the school year

(Interview, February 7 2015), she also danced competitively in local, state-wide, and national competitions (Interview, March 18 2015).

When I asked Geeta how/where she learned her styles of *Bharata Natyum* dance, she said “videos” and “YouTube” (Interview, February 7 2015). I was surprised, as during my childhood, I went to see a family friend’s or family member’s, *arangetrum* (a graduation of dance marking the beginning of one’s career) as they had reached a pivotal point in their training. In these ways, I thought learning classical dance required finding a teacher and years of training. When I asked Geeta more about the online channels she watched to learn dance, she responded:

Geeta: I'm like doing the YouTube channel thing, and I got to network with like a lot of like really good dancers. So...yea, [and] I talked to the guy who won *Dance India Dance North America*, and then there's this other guy who lives in Virginia, [and] I was talking to him...[trying] to build a base...

Ven: And then with that network, what do you hope to be able to do?

Geeta: The YouTube channel, and I want to audition for the next season of *Dance India Dance*. I missed this one because my mom was sick and I didn't have time to practice and I had to help her...

Ven: Ok so first, tell me about this...*Dance India Dance*?

Geeta: Yea it's a video audition there's like,...then your video is put on their website and people like 'like it.' And then the top twenty with the most likes – and like the judges also look at the videos to make sure its not like skewed to any certain person or anything – and then, after that, you get to go to India and shoot the mini reality show....

Ven: So its almost like [MTV's] *The Real World*, you like live with everyone and have like dance competitions and then someone gets voted out...?

Geeta: Yea...[and] I think the judges just pick. So I'm waiting for the next season, cuz like, I was going to, like I had my I song set and I was working on the choreography and then my mom hurt her shoulder so then I had to help her. And like, I hope to like learn [more styles] this summer. I'm doing contemporary [dance with a] *Bharata Natyum* cross, and so we have like people who come from India and teach. So I guess I'm hoping to learn all these things, and I'm doing hip-hop over [again]...(Interview, May 30 2015)

Geeta opened up a new terrain of cultural transmission that I had never considered – online YouTube channels. As media consumption has now become synonymous with experience (Kellner, 2014), these online spaces were critical to Geeta as she developed her dance identity. Geeta watched *Dance India Dance* online and looked to this program to inform her own dance moves. Online media platforms like YouTube allowed Geeta to diasporically “tune in” to Indian dance in real time, or on a slight delay, absorb dance movements and music from India, and incorporate these moves or change them slightly for use in her own routines. As Indian dance was a major component of Geeta’s Indianness and Indian identity, she was only a few clicks away from being able to constantly redefine aspects of her cultural identity related to dance by consuming reality television displaying authentic Indianness for those in diaspora. Geeta’s cultural expressions of dance and music became as an outlet/vehicle to build and cement her racial and cultural identity of being Indian, with transnational media playing a major role in her ability to access and participate in aspects of Indian culture abroad.

Transnational media consumption performed individually or as a family became a major point of crystallization between cultural transmission/maintenance and participants’ Indian racial and cultural identities. These patterns of consumption provided

participants in diaspora a view into India, scenes of daily life, particular ways of being, styles of interaction and language use that became proximate and taken up/used in different ways in daily life. Moreover, the instantaneous nature of transnational media through YouTube channels or websites with Bollywood movies meant participants could build their Indianness and racial and cultural identities when they came home from school before doing homework or as a break from work later in the evening. Thus, media consumption of Bollywood films, South Asian serials, reality television, or YouTube channels became consistent undercurrents in participants' lives used to build racial, cultural and ethnic identities of being Indian informed by the reciprocal global flows of ideas between India and America.

Transmitting Culture through Food and Native Language Use

While transnational media consumption became one avenue participants and their families used to take in Indian culture and ways of being in diaspora, participants also spoke to how food consumption and native language use became additional tools used to transmit and maintain culture in their home dynamics. Previous work positioned South Asian native language use as marker of ethnicity (Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008), as well as an important facet of cultural transmission (e.g., Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). In addition to practices of native-language use, the cooking and consumption of Indian food became an additional way for parents to “reproduce” a family context/dynamic in the “Indian way” (Rudrappa, 2002). Dialogues with participants demonstrated how building Indian racial and cultural identities and sustaining Indianness were linked to food consumption and preparation, as well as

patterns of native language use that provided new insights into how language dynamics are brokered and executed with Desi teens in America.

Food as ‘Nourishing’ Indianness

All participants spoke to eating mainly Indian food at home (Anu, Interview, March 19 2015; Darshan, Interview, March 8 2015; Geeta, Interview, March 18 2015; Gopal, Interview, March 1 2015; Rani, Interview, March 15 2015), with certain nights of variety including a pasta or tacos (Darshan, Interview, March 8 2015; Gopal, Interview, March 1 2015). Participants shared how the consumption and production of Indian food were associated with cultural preservation and maintenance, with nuanced implications for cultural continuance and transmission.

When I asked Rani about her patterns of food consumption, she said:

[We] typically eat Indian food. But there are sometimes we eat other things like, Asian restaurants, like outside food. Like for the past month, my mom was even getting mad at us. She’s like, “you guys you eat out too much, we’re Indian we gotta eat Indian food.” I’m like “Ok, whatever...” then we go out and eat and my mom will come home and be like “I cannot believe I bought you food from outside.” She’d say “we need to eat Indian food, we need our culture, its our thing” (Interview, March 15 2015)

Rani’s family would eat at “Asian” restaurants, although they did visit Fuddrucker’s and P. Terry’s once in a while (Interview, March 15 2015), demonstrating how Rani’s mother did not reject all Western influences (e.g., Shariff, 2009). Rani shared how her mother made direct links between Indian food and maintaining/transmitting Indian culture to her daughters. Thus, Rani’s mother, in some ways, felt that not eating Indian food meant that she was moving away from their Indian culture and blamed herself for taking the children out instead of eating Indian food prepared at home. These dynamics around consuming

Indian food helped Rani associate her culture's food as constituting part of her Indian cultural identity, with her Indianness 'strengthened' through eating Indian food prepared by her mother.

When I asked Rani about food preparation, Rani shared how her:

[Mom] was [kinda] possessive of her food. She'd be like "no I want you to help," but honestly, if it went up to her and [I] tried to help, she would be like "no you're doing it wrong, you are doing it wrong you cannot cook." And its true, like I can't cook, like I don't have, my mom is a great cook. I guess, its better that she cooks because I'm terrible. [My sister and I] will help a little bit, like not with the cooking, but sometimes we'll chop vegetables. Sometimes my mom will be moody because she doesn't want us to cut vegetables because we might cut ourselves and then she can't cook, and I'm like mom "it hasn't happened" and she'll be like "no its ok stay over there"...(Interview, March 19 2015)

I was not surprised when Rani said she did not cook. The amount of homework every night would make it difficult to cook and complete all of her. However, with South Asian women positioned as transmitters and preservers of culture (e.g., Grewal, 2005; Handa, 2003, Subramanian, 2013), I was slightly surprised that Rani's mother did not want her to help more often. While this could be attributed to aspects of safety, some images of the "good" South Asian female include watching "your mom cook" (Subramanian, 2013, p.317). Thus, Rani was a "good" South Asian Indian American in different ways due to helping/staying away from the kitchen at her mother's discretion, and adhering to her mother's expectations particular to being "good" and focusing on school. Thus, it was possible that the small moments Rani was included were moments where her culture was preserved and transmitted through producing and consuming Indian food.

While Rani's mother may not have wanted Rani to help in the kitchen for fear of getting hurt, Anu shared a different set of experiences in the kitchen:

[Yea, we eat Indian food at home],...[and] mom pretty much cooks it. [My sister and I do not help] because she's like "no I don't want you anywhere near the kitchen," cuz like she...Whenever I'm in the kitchen, I mess up things apparently, like I burn things. There was Okra Bhindi, just recently, like a week ago, mom was cooking with Bhindi and she told me, she was like "[Anu] just turn it on and stir it," and I'm like "OK I'll stir." And she didn't tell me when to stop, and she saw like, after a while, she was like "stop," she saw it, it was burnt. She's like "you ruined it," [and I was] like "what?" And then there was another incident with samosas. Yea...I burn a lot of things, but then people say that my burnt food tastes better...(Interview, March 19 2015)

Anu was not allowed to help because she "burned" food. In contrast to Rani, Anu's mother allowed her in the kitchen and gave her responsibilities that involved cooking, not simply cutting vegetables. Although Anu would burn food, her mother continued to give her opportunities. In these ways, it was possible that Anu's mother saw food preparation as a major avenue in cultural preservation, maintenance, and transmission. In these ways, cultural preservation and transmittance through food preparation was more prominent for Anu than Rani in their home spaces. Anu was exposed to the processes of mixing ingredients and cooking over the stove-top in the tradition of food preparation outlined by her mother, allowing Anu to connect food preparation and different flavor combinations as constituting her Indian culture, ethnicity, and Indianness in NISD's community.

Native Language Use and Cultural Identity

Food consumption and preparation was one aspect in which participants like Rani and Anu were brought into Indian traditions particular to their families. Another important aspect of diasporic living and interactions in the home space revolved around

native language use. Much like patterns seen in consuming Indian food at home, all participants engaged in dynamics of speaking in their native languages (e.g., Hindi, Urdu) at home. Of particular interest was how participants were exposed to their native languages, the subjects broached in different languages, and the blending of English with participants' native languages.

Anu was particularly conscious and in-tune with her Indianness and Indian cultural and ethnic identities. Not only did she demonstrate this awareness in her problems with India's status in CHS's curriculum and her belonging in a KOA, but also through her thoughts about her native language use and assimilation. While Anu speaks Hindi (from Bollywood movies) with a level of fluency, she spoke about learning Kashmiri:

So...I speak a little Hindi, like I understand Hindi, but I'm trying to learn Kashmiri. Its really hard though because you have to learn a language early on before you actually are like fluent in it. And I like, what my parents did was [teach] me Hindi, that was it. So they [use] Kashmiri with their parents and everything and they talk with the other family friends in like the circle, cuz we have a Kashmiri circle as well. So they talk amongst them[selves], but not amongst us, like the family unit. So I asked my dad, I was like "dad why haven't you taught me Kashmiri, why didn't you teach me Kashmiri when I was younger? You know cuz I was like the perfect age to teach me and now I'm struggling to learn by myself or like with your help..." And they're like "its too much work, we just need efficiency..." [laughing]. [And] dad [was] like "we apologize, that's our fault." And I was like, I was happy that they admitted it, but at the same time, I was like right now admitting it doesn't do anything [to help me learn it]...(Interview, February 28 2015)

While Anu knew Hindi, she did not know her "true" native language and felt at a disadvantage as she was missing out on additional avenues to further solidify/add to her Indianness through a working knowledge of Kashmiri. Interestingly, her parents said they

needed “efficiency,” almost indicating to Anu that teaching her two languages would impinge on her parents’ ability to conduct their daily affairs related to work and familial responsibilities. Most of the time, Anu’s linguistic interactions with her parents were “mainly English,” but “[when her] parents spoke to [her] in Hindi,” she would respond in “English” (Interview, February 28 2015). These dynamics of being spoken to in a native language and participants’ responding in English emerged across participants and seemed to be the norm (Darshan, Interview, January 25 2015; Gopal, Interview, March 18 2015; Rani, Interview, January 31 2015).

When Geeta explained her native language dynamics with her parents, she described a more pronounced blending between her native language and English:

Like with my parents, I think its like mixed. [With my] parents [it is] English and Hindi, [and] like with grandparents [and cousins who live in India] usually Hindi. I think with my sister its usually English, cuz like she’s not as like fluent in Hindi, but with my parents most of the time its just that blend, like mostly Hindi but adding English words. But if we're talking about grades, my mom tends to speak in Hindi more...(Interview, February 7 2015)

Here, Geeta raised two important differences from participants’ responses to their native language use. While Anu indicated how she would be asked a question in Hindi and respond in English, Geeta described how her interactions combined both of these languages. This lack of separation could have further cemented aspects of cultural maintenance and transmission as most of Geeta’s interactions at home used her native language mixed with English. These interactions became the embodiment of a hybridized cultural identity, blending diasporic location with native languages to blur Indian and American as one. Additionally, the use of Hindi to speak about grades was an interesting

shift from previous ethnographic work with South Asians that demonstrated how grades were typically discussed in English (e.g., Shankar, 2008). In these ways, it was possible that the 'Indian slant' in language used to discuss grades reinscribed for Geeta the links between being Indian/Indianness as associated with academic achievement particular to NISD and CHS.

Conclusion

Participants reports of their transnational media consumption related to film, television shows, and online-mediated content demonstrated the ways that youth took up Indian culture in the postmodern moment. Participants' transnational media consumption indicated how they made sense of multiple strands of representation that shaped their social realities (e.g., Geeta incorporating dance in India into her own routines), informed their language practices (e.g., Anu and her family when watching Bollywood media), and connected parents' places of origin with their current localities (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994). In some ways, Indian- and/or ethnic-centric media consumption became an important ritual socializing South Asian American youth to India and aiding them in developing peer networks (Maira, 1999). These media forms were critical in exposing participants to different forms of Indian culture that may have been unavailable in NISD's community. In these ways, participants' home dynamics and patterns of media consumption became key points of enculturating Indianness, and when consumed as a family, became a point of family bonding around Indian media towards Indian ways of being/thinking that were adopted, negotiated/re-negotiated, and/or resisted when participants and their families navigated their diasporic community and CHS.

Participants' consumption and production of Indian food and native languages were also fundamental to their Indian and cultural identities and forming a repository of Indianness. Participants' consumption and production of Indian food helped them construct Indian identities through their parents, especially as parents viewed Indian food as part and parcel to being Indian and Indian culture. As an expressive cultural practice (Foley, 1999), food consumption helped participants' develop and invest in shared Indian identities in their home contexts. Previous investigations into South Asian American youth's native language uses found that Muslim families spanning all class backgrounds tended towards their native languages at home, with non-Muslim families' native language use frequent among middle-class and lower-middle-class South Asians (e.g., Shankar, 2008). This investigation indicated how middle-class and upper-middle-class Muslim participants like Rani and Anu used English in a majority of their interactions. One potential explanation for the majority English interactions for participants was the relative wealth and cultural/linguistic capitals associated with living in NISD. In these ways, the English that parents spoke in professional interactions was also used in the home space during conversations about a variety of subjects (Dave et al., 2000; Shankar, 2008). Although parents spoke to participants in English, their native languages, or a mixture of English and native languages, the constant exposure to native language helped participants further associate knowledge of native languages as part of being Indian and contributing to their Indianness.

DISCUSSION

This chapter delineated the ways that participants' practices of cultural consumption (e.g., television shows, film, food) and reproduction (e.g., native language use) helped underpin, inform, develop, and nurture their racial and cultural identities related to Indianness and being Indian. Parents and community members modeled being Indian and Indianness, imparted aspects of religious identities, transmitted cultural knowledge, and demonstrated an ability to meld traditional values with American constructs and culture particular to locality (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007). Participants' experiences and dynamics in home and community contexts helped them develop particular Indian diasporic identities. Diasporic identity here refers to the emergent heterogeneity, diversity, and hybridity when forming racial and cultural identities and interacting with different cultural objects (Brazier & Mannur, 2003; Hall, 2003; Lowe, 2003; Radhakrishnan, 2003). Cultural objects, like participants' social media applications, the media they consumed, and even the languages they used contributed to creating their Indianness in the community of NISD. Following this logic, this section seeks to link the various aspects of cultural enculturation, transmission, and maintenance related to practices of cultural production and consumption to gain deeper insights into participants' Indian racial and cultural identities in diaspora, and how they came to know/self-conceptualize the Indianness they took to CHS on a daily basis.

Racial and Cultural Identities through Public/Private Diasporic Dynamics

Dynamics with fellow South Asians in public and private spaces provided participants with distinct ideas of their racial and cultural identities as Indians. Interacting

with South Asians in public spaces like stores helped make participants cognizant to their Indianness acting as a bridge, seeing their parents model behavior of politely nodding or engaging in conversations to build bonds across, through, and within difference (Hall, 2003), based upon shared histories and similar cultural backgrounds. Thus, public dynamics helped participants connect their Indian cultural identity as based within a Diasporic “collective self,” that is, a collective Indianness that used shared “cultural codes” to build bonds that overcame deep fissures of difference (Hall, 2003, p.234).

For participants, kinship network get-togethers allowed them to be surrounded by family that shared similar beliefs and ideological outlooks (e.g., Abbas, 2002; Weinreich, 2009). These interactions allowed both participants and their parents to build bonds through native language use, sharing memories and playing games. While parents conversed in one area, children did the same, taking pictures and having laughs with their ‘cousins.’ In these ways, participants used an underlying familial/cultural bond to write their own definitions of Indian identity as spending time within these tight-knit networks and using technology as a mediating device to help pass time and form closer bonds.

Ethnic organizations with established members that gathered in public spaces (e.g., Anu’s KOA camping trip) helped transmit additional components that formed part of participants’ Indianness and Indian identities in diaspora. The creative activities had parents and children intentionally solidify bonds around culture through performance and games. Participants’ diasporic dynamics in public and private spaces were fundamental to informing their racial and cultural identities and notions of Indianness. Participants’ diasporic dynamics in private and public spaces shaped notions of Indianness and Indian

cultural identity as heavily oriented around notions of “one people” constituting the diasporic community (Hall, 2003). Thus, participants and their families shared a surface-level bond of Indianness in some spaces (e.g., interacting in Costco), while fostering and maintaining deep connections of Indianness in other spaces (e.g., family/kinship get togethers). In these ways, being Indian meant building multiple connections across the different South Asians encountered in different contexts of diasporic interaction. Thus, participants’ notions of Indianness and being Indian meant spending time within these close/distant networks, communally sharing in performances of culture linked to styles of interaction and ways of being, and using technology and social media to display and demonstrate their diasporic bonds.

In some ways, participants’ interactions in their diasporic connectivities may have heavily shaped their social dynamics at school. For example, Geeta’s diasporic kinship network helped her understand how academic achievement functioned to destroy social bonds at CHS. Thus, when socializing in school, Geeta and her peer group were careful to avoid certain contentious points of conversation. Participants’ heavily Indian interactions spanning difference and building similarities may have underpinned the level of “comfort” felt with Indian American peers at CHS highlighted in Chapter 4. These culturally-centered patterns of interaction may have encouraged participants to look for peers that were culturally/phenotypically similar to mirror interactions in community and encounter feelings of belonging and “wholeness” at CHS. While participants’ identity forming processes were fragmented and in constant development both inside and outside of CHS, interactions within community presented them with a residence on the “Indian

side” of the identity spectrum (Asher, 2002) in order to compete with the White dominant culture at CHS (Chapter 4).

Parental Expectations and Be(com)ing the Model Minority

Participants described the different ways their parents’ expectations impacted behaviors and further shaped self-conceptualizations of their Indian racial and cultural identities. Female participants made direct references to their inability to date, and their subsequent lack of interest in dating, while males relayed how their inability to date waned as they progressed through CHS. As controlling female’s sexuality is often linked to cultural maintenance and cultural transmission (Almeida, 1996; Bhatia, 2007; Dion & Dion, 2001; Gopinath, 1997; Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002, 2004; Prashad, 2000), it was not clear if female participants made connections between their lack of dating and the continuing and maintenance of culture. Interestingly, themes of dating behind parents’ backs, lying, or siblings protecting one another in lies did not surface either (e.g., Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008; Shariff, 2009). This does not mean that these dynamics did not transpire – participants may have felt uncomfortable sharing this information during interviews. Dynamics and interactions at home helped inform Indian identities as linked to the inability to have a significant other. Additionally, home dynamics in previous studies of South Asians in North America highlighted how interviews with respondents led to dialogues about an arranged marriage and the expectations of children to fulfill their parents’ wishes particular to spouses (Bhatia, 2007; Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002; Shankar, 2008). Participants made no mention of arranged marriages surfacing with their parents, relatives, or friends, potentially indicating the level of “structural integration”

related to the access to economic and educational opportunities within the community (Purkayastha, 2005), and the shifted focus on academics and self-improvement.

The lack of dating may be closely informed by parents' expectations of "school, school, school" and careful social media use (Anu, Interview, February 18 2015). By overtly/passively stating social media was inappropriate, or that children needed to be careful, participants may have been inclined to use their social media less or share less details, thereby making the possibility of connecting with peers to date small. However, messages of achievement and the need to be "the best at everything" (Anu, Interview, March 8 2015), as well as limiting extracurricular activities in order to focus on school, sent a clear and direct message to participants: school and achievement above all. Participants were consistently reminded the importance of their academic achievement from their parents whether being scolded for not scoring well or told to select different courses in order to earn a better GPA for college admittance. In these ways, participants' interactions at home became representative of continuing the model minority discourse, and may have helped to inform the links between Asianness and achievement at CHS. Thus, in some ways, negotiations of achievement at home may have represented the internalization of the model minority stereotype and the need to achieve, while also representing a facet of culture within diasporic Indian communities that surfaces and operates regardless. Parents knew that, in order to succeed to the same level, achievement was the route to success, and they sought to inculcate children with this message. Thus, the focus on academic achievement by parents (e.g., Asher, 2002; Handa, 2003; Shankar,

2008), positioned participants to assimilate hard work and achievement in some ways as an aspect, or facet, of their Indian cultural identity.

Thus, while participants were not cognizant to the model minority discourse, their actions in attempts to abide by parental expectations and school culture, as well as their own intrinsic motivations, positioned them as providing further evidence to the model minority stereotype. Participants were expected to “[study] hard, [and go] to family and community gatherings” (Handa, 2003, p.111). Interestingly, participants did not state that their parents expected them to move onto specific careers. Thus, previous instantiations of South Asian men encouraged to work technological jobs to increase families’ social standing while women were limited to “safe” jobs as the carriers of tradition did not emerge (e.g., Purkayastha, 2005; Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008). As a consequence of both parents’ expectations particular to achievement and their course loads, participants did not interact/socialize with their families very often during the week. Participants described their after school routines as arriving home and taking a slight break by checking social media or watching a show, then working for the remainder of the evening. If they did take a break, it was to eat dinner. While Gopal and Rani ate all of their meals within family, Darshan and Anu ate most of their meals by themselves before continuing to work.

In these ways, the dynamics of interactions at CHS simultaneously underpinned and informed by dynamics at home, with home dynamics underpinning and informing interactions at CHS. Dynamics of alienation and isolation emerging at CHS also surfaced at home as participants isolated themselves from family (and peers) in order to complete

work and study. The countless hours spent involved in work became a stymie to developing closer bonds with family, which made time spent with family engaging in different activities that much more important in developing Indian racial and cultural identities. Simultaneously, the culture of achievement at CHS, and the peer pressure between Indian American students, also served to underpin participants' academic focus and interactions at home. Thus, because peers at CHS were achieving and achievement was pivotal to social positioning and maintaining one's Indian status, participants intently focused on work at home and in community, except when engaging in activities with family.

Racial/Cultural Construction in “Consuming” Indian Media, Food, and Languages

Participants' interactions and dynamics in family/kinship get together and official organizations helped develop facets of their cultural identities as linked to sharing community spaces, informational exchanges, and sharing/contributing/participating in cultural performances. While these gatherings occurred in public spaces as well as family members' or participants' own homes, participants' consumption of transnational media, food and food preparation, and language practices also imparted and transmitted facets contributing to, and defining, their Indian cultural identities in the home space.

Consuming transnational media was observed in earlier studies examining South Asian youth negotiating their identities in diaspora (e.g., Handa, 2003; Maira, 2002, 2008; Shankar, 2008; Sharma, 2010). These previous investigations outlined how consuming transnational media became a vehicle of cultural inculcation guiding Desi youth in developing their Indian cultural identities. Participants' consumption of

Bollywood films and South Asian television serials modeled particular styles, beliefs, and ways of being that participants viewed, made sense of, and used in their own ways to define their Indian cultural identity. However, unique to participants' insights in this investigation was the consumption of YouTube channels and viewing user-generated cultural content to inform diasporic life. Participants' access to Indian media using specific websites for Bollywood movies (Anu, Interview, February 28 2015), as well as dedicated YouTube channels, made constructing their Indianness and Indian cultural identities as matter of fact as checking their social media. The instantaneousness of turning on and off a switch of consuming India made cultural transmission and maintenance more readily accessible and available. In these ways, Indian programming providing cultural schema particular to India and South Asian ways of being was available for participants to view and absorb, and in turn, required them to negotiate the underlying messages of culture when constructing their Indian identities at home.

Indian food was directly linked by Rani's mother as "their culture." While male participants did not help at all in the kitchen, female participants' experiences with food preparation may have been linked to cultural maintenance and preservation (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Handa, 2003; Prashad, 2000; Shankar, 2008). In this way then, participants like Anu and Rani were made aware of their Indian culture as females as participating with activities in the kitchen and food preparation. While they may not have been particularly "good" at it yet, it was more than likely that they will have additional opportunities to refine their cooking habitus. Consuming Indian food, with ingredients from the Indian store, made direct connections between India and diaspora as participants' households

used family recipes to create dishes for children to consume and learn about their culture. In these ways then, consuming Indian food became another facet of being Indian for participants, another component of their Indian identity, a cultural nourishment of sorts.

Aspects of native language use were also important in helping form and provide foundations to participants' Indian identities. Language use was representative of language ideologies that were "cultural representations in the social world" (Shankar, 2008, p.102). As language ideologies aid in navigating social hierarchies, they connect language to identity and formation of community (Shankar, 2008). Thus, Anu wanted to learn Kashmiri even though she still had a working knowledge of Hindi. Speaking in native languages, even if participants responded in English, demonstrated the importance of native language knowledge, use, and understanding to participants and became part of their Indian cultural identities, underpinning and forming a part of participants' Indian cultural identities in diaspora, and even helping elide rules in class (e.g., Rani's Spanish class and the no English rule). Although they did not practice it regularly, the viewing of films and mini-dialogical exchanges about a variety of subjects helped parents transmit culture, and participants to maintain culture through these language practices and exchanges.

It would be difficult to pinpoint with certainty how transnational media consumption, Indian food, and native language use informed interactions and dynamics at CHS, or how dynamics at CHS underpinned cultural consumption at home. On the one hand, Rani did speak to how some of her friends bring Indian food to lunch (Rani, Interview, February 13 2015), thus one potential example of home informing school. On

the other hand, as native language use was difficult at CHS given the associations to being FOBby, the *inability* to express cultural identities related to language use and styles of dress may have underpinned participants' willingness to engage in these dynamics at home, especially as they related to transnational media consumption. Thus, with Indianness and the borders around Indianness closely patrolled and monitored at CHS through a lack of achievement or wearing/not wearing Indian clothes, the freedom to express Indian styles and ways of being may have led participants to engage in these culturally sustaining, maintaining, and preservative practices at home and in community.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

My interviews with participants and visits to CHS presented me with a spectrum of emotions, thoughts, and feelings. I ebbed and flowed between feeling content and cheerful in some moments to frustrated or questioning myself and my research. However, the ongoing relationships with participants and meetings to eat or have coffee and keep in contact to find out how they are doing and their current situations in home, community and academic settings reaffirmed the whole process for me. Conversations and observations with participants demonstrated how participants' navigation of different contexts had real, tangible and durable effects on their daily realities and how they viewed themselves and the world around. I could see myself in participants' narratives and descriptions of their experiences of home, school and/or houses of worship when being told that I had to go to a family friend's house or that I needed to study and do well. Conversely, there were also moments where participants shared details about their daily routines that I could have never imagined when I was in high school, especially around the rampant use of technology for instantaneous breaks from work or pure enjoyment, communication and completing assignments.

Participants' insights into their negotiations of different contexts delineated the ways they took up aspects of their Indianness in some moments while resisting/letting go in other moments. The study I share in this dissertation presents the voices of Indian American students and their interactions both inside and outside of the parameters of school, situating how the historic ways of knowing Asian bodies in the West functioned in certain ways to underpin students' interactions in school and the ways

home/community dynamics shaped and impacted the production, negotiation and re-negotiation of participants' racial and cultural identities. The borders around participants' Indianness were complex and composed of multiple fluid layers. These layers were in constant flux and flexed or relaxed depending upon spaces traversed, social interactions, aspects of phenotype, school culture and the multiple interactions of participants with their peers, educators, and curricula. It is the intent of this chapter to elaborate on the major themes and findings and specify the various facets/components contributing to participants' racial and cultural identities, pointing to similarities between previous investigations, and also indicating the points of departure and contributions to the research engaging South Asians Americans' interactions in diaspora and how school shapes self-conceptualizations of identity.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The research questions guiding this investigation sought to specifically center the school in the lives of participants, chronicling the ways that interactions in formal and informal educative settings functioned to shape participants' identities. Participants' insights into their interactions in school, coupled with classroom observations, painted a rich picture of schooling life at CHS and how myriad forces operated to shape distinct notions of what being Indian in NISD and CHS meant, and the ways that Indianness was taken up to guide and underpin schooling interactions and life.

A major component both underpinning and shaping schooling life at CHS was aspects of class and socioeconomic status associated with the community of NISD. Participants indicated how CHS was composed of a two-tiered social hierarchy with high

achieving, Whitewashed, and popular students at the top and the bottom composed of the remaining students, with different interactions between both of these layers. Participants built social bonds with peers they felt as similar, with most of participants' social groups all Indian/Asian in composition, with some branching out towards the end of their tenure at CHS. The large presence of Asian students created a pan-Asian multiculturalism at CHS, especially visible during multicultural days of celebration.

An additional and important undercurrent figuring into the social dynamics of CHS was the academic culture geared towards achievement. The heavy workloads and time invested in academics limited students in their ability to form social bonds with peers outside of their classes. To a certain degree then, it could be stated that the culture of achievement became one force shaping participants' social groups. In these ways, participants' insights indicated how CHS's social structure and their social interactions within and outside of school linked Indianness with academics and achievement, a level of competitiveness, doing things "Indian," and maintaining all Indian social groups. As CHS's students shared similar class backgrounds, school culture was flattened in different ways making aspects of achievement and being Indian points of inflection that led to identifying/positioning difference on Indian American students and impacting their ability to belong. Participants indicated the careful negotiations and navigations of their Indianness particular to their social groups and social interactions, as too much/too little Indianness on different days was detrimental to participants' ability to belong, making them hyper-visible and different within CHS's school space. In these ways, ethnic identity adopted aspects of being "colormute" at CHS (Pollock, 2004). In some instances,

one's Indian ethnic/racial identity meant a position at the top when related to achievement. On the other hand, an Indian ethnic identity placed one in the bottom of the social hierarchy when displaying "too much Indianness." Moreover, the absence of ethnic Indianness and adherence to norms of dominant culture at CHS placed a student in the top (e.g., Whitewashed students). Thus, an Indian ethnic identity at CHS fluidly operated in different moments to position students within the social hierarchy.

While social dynamics played an important role in providing the preliminary foundations to constructing Indianness at CHS, participants' identities were further constructed through their dynamics in formal educative settings. Participants were able to fully engage in some classroom contexts, were unable to "be themselves" in others, and resorted to using their phones or passing notes in order to pass class time their other classes. Peer-to-peer dynamics using native languages aided in connecting dynamics of the home to school, with other peer-to-peer interactions solidifying/destabilizing participants' ability to find belonging in the classroom space related to participation and achievement. Thus, while some educative contexts made it easy for participants to be Indian both racially and culturally in the classroom, especially when curricular materials presented positive links between India and the material under study, other classroom contexts solidified aspects of difference when presenting or discussing India through deficit, premodern and Orientalized frames.

While pedagogical styles and educator/student dynamics may have made participants' access to their Indianness related to achievement difficult, participants' interactions with peers in formal educative contexts further refined the borders around

being Indian at CHS. While participants enjoyed positive peer-to-peer dynamics in some classes that allowed them to build positive associations with the content, classroom environment, and directly link experiences in home/community to guiding interactions in class, the data also indicated how achievement was associated with Indian/Asian students and used to solidify/place in question participants' Indianness/Asianness. Participants' resistance to these different learning contexts helped solidify some of the layers constructing the borders of Indianness at CHS, with their disengagement leading to additional work outside of CHS in order to perform well. As India was Orientalized in curricular representations, there were very few opportunities for Indian American students to see themselves represented positively. This made it difficult for their peers to move beyond static conceptualizations of India/Indians as foreign and premodern towards dynamic conceptualizations of Indians as more than bodies that achieve. Thus, participants' insights from interactions in formal educative contexts demonstrated how the borders around Indianness were heavily linked to performing achievement at CHS.

The home and community contexts of participants were heavily India(n)-centric and became spaces of cultural maintenance, inculcation and transmission that heavily impacted the contours of the borders of participants' Indianness. Participants described their creation of diasporic networks in NISD that exchanged information towards greater efficacy when interacting and traversing NISD's community, helping participants associate Indian and Indianness with prolonged engagement with Indians and close family friends or formal South Asian ethnic organizations. Additionally, parents' expectations around dating, social media use and achievement further defined the

contours and construction of Indianness and Indian identity as participants associated the lack of dating and achievement as important components of their Indianness. Through interactions in home and community, participants associated Indian racial and cultural identities with tight-knit community relationships with fellow diasporans, the consumption of transnational media, and the production/consumption of food and language that provided Indian ways of being be taken up, negotiated, re-negotiated and re-cast in diaspora. In these ways, participants' experiences in their home/community served to enforce aspects of the academic identities and culture found at CHS. While the school space may have stressed dating and socialization, participants' home experiences worked in contrast to these 'expectations' between peers, while simultaneously placing great importance in being Indian and outward Indian cultural expressions that worked to contest the prescribed ways of being at CHS (except on days of cultural celebration).

DISCUSSION: AUTHENTICITY, INDIANNESS, AND DIASPORIC IDENTITY

The data and findings from this small-scale study lead to optimistic, though potentially tentative, conclusions particular to the terrains of Indian American youth's lives, and how these terrains shape their racial and cultural identities and identity development. A major factor emerging in this investigation was class. Scholars have noted the importance of class in schooling dynamics and academic achievement for Asian students both domestically and internationally (e.g., Abbas, 2002; Lew, 2006; Ngo, 2010), and noted class as highly influential in informing diasporic identities by shaping diasporic networks within the racial politics of a given community (e.g., Dave et al., 2000). As previously noted, class shaped and flattened school culture (Chapter 4),

impacted students' and participants' dynamics in school (Chapters 4 and 5), and shaped the ways in which participants conceptualized being Indian and Indianness (Chapter 6). While scholars have conducted investigations examining 'classed' South Asians in America (e.g., Bhatia, 2007), as well as classed South Asian Americans' experiences in school (e.g., Shankar, 2008), this particular investigation helps illuminate how a middle- and upper-middle class community, in tandem with a highly Asian and White school, created distinct meanings around Indian and Indianness that functioned to shape participants' racial and cultural identities. It is the intent of this section to highlight and link key findings to aspects of the theoretical framework and literature review towards painting a clearer picture of the identity formation processes of Indian American youth attending CHS. This section will bring together schooling interactions and dynamics in home/community to illuminate the contours of participants' identity forming processes and move towards conceptualizing the identities participants formed through the spaces they traversed.

Racial and Cultural Liminality in Schooled Identities

“Indian is on your mind” but it “never comes out.” – Rani

In this line of eight words, Rani succinctly summarized some of the key notions of being Indian American at CHS. While participants spoke to a host of experiences and thoughts particular to CHS and their experiences, they described key events and dialogical exchanges that highlighted how their Indian racial and cultural identities prescribed a liminality/liminal status of belonging at CHS. Liminality here builds from

Bhabha's (1994) conceptualizations of the spaces in-between within identities, the "interstices" of cultural synthesization. This liminality, and the spaces in-between-, have been conceptualized as an "ambiguity," or an "uncertainty," particular to racial positioning and belonging impacting the self-conceptualizations of racial identities (Purkayastha, 2005). These liminal spaces, often times spaces of constant negotiations between ethnic ways of being and prescribed ways of being according to the dominant culture, allow for new forms of consciousness, or new forms of being and living, that participants took up on a daily basis when negotiating and navigating CHS. Participants' insights into their schooling experiences and dynamics with educators/peers highlighted how Orientalism (Said, 1978), and different degrees of hyper-visibility (Puwar, 2004), surfaced to impact participants' self-conceptualizations of their Indianness that underpinned their negotiations of the school space and their social dynamics.

Participants' social groups and dynamics provided examples of their simultaneous belonging/not belonging and foreignness which were, at times, linked to Orientalist tropes of Asian bodies in the West (e.g., Lew, 2006). Notions of belonging/not belonging here aligned with previous investigations examining cultural identities of ethnic students and/or students from the different class backgrounds seeking like-minded peers to form social groups (e.g., Bettie, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977). Particular to South Asians, participants' maintenance of all South Asian/Asian social groups was not a new phenomenon both in North America and Britain (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Handa, 2003; Modood, 1994; Shankar, 2008; Zine, 2000). Thus, this study provided further evidence to previous findings of South Asian students as maintaining South Asian/Asian peer

networks in order to create senses of ease and/or solidarity when interacting in the schooling space. It was possible that the class standings of students created a hyper-permeation of Whiteness at CHS. Said differently, the higher socioeconomic standing of the majority White and Asian student population helped solidify particular ideologies and beliefs regarding “normalized” middle-class style, tastes, values and dispositions that were used to guide interactions and expressions of self at CHS, a phenomenon observed in earlier ethnographic work (e.g., Bettie, 2003). These tastes and values may have stressed academic achievement, the importance of particular social dynamics, or the need to wear particular semiotics in order to have traction in the schooling space socially and academically. These dynamics around Whiteness may have further encouraged participants’ need to look amongst one another for support and belonging. Additionally, these findings further solidify school culture as in some ways incongruent with being an ethnic minority in school, no matter the class standing and privilege associated with the students present.

While maintaining like minded peer groups and interactions helped students encounter feelings of belonging (e.g., Bettie, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999), it was from within the Indian American community that terms like FOB emerged to position peers as exceeding the limits of acceptable Indianness at CHS. One potential explanation that these types of comments did not come from White/non-Indian students could be linked to their classed ideological stances and the associations made with India/Indians that include food, yoga, and Bollywood as now socially acceptable to “like,” express this like, and take part in. Terms like FOB embodied “negative identities” that were built around racial

stereotypes and cultural assumptions reified in mainstream society and used by co-ethnics to position peers. The use of FOB/Whitewashed positioned some Indian Americans as “too ethnic” or “too assimilated” (Chun & Hudley, 2010; Pyke & Dang, 2003). The use of these terms indicated an “internalized racism” on the part of Indian American students at CHS, perhaps an “adaptive response” and a form of “compliance” to CHS’s school culture that served to reproduce inequality and reinscribe stereotypes (Lipsky, 1987; Pyke & Dang, 2003; Schwalbe, Godwin, Holden, Schrock, Thompson, & Wolkowicz, 2000). These instantiations of Indianness aligned with previous ethnographic work chronicling African Americans in school, and the color-mute applications of race as important in student-to-student dynamics (Pollock, 2004). As Orientalism centered difference and inferiority, overt cultural expressions became the underlying definitions of FOB at CHS.

The use of FOB against fellow South Asian/Asian peers is not a new phenomenon both domestically and in England (e.g., Handa, 2003; Pyke & Dang, 2003; Shankar, 2008; Tabbas, 2002), and this study contributes additional evidence to its continued use by Desi peers when policing and checking Indian peers’ expressions of Indianness. This investigation provides further evidence of Whiteness comprising a major component of school culture, especially in highly-classed educational settings as students’ self-expression (e.g., dress, language) were flattened which made any expression of Indianness extremely hyper-visible, facilitating Indian American students’ patterns of “intra-ethnic othering” (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The borders around Indianness as constructed by school culture led participants to feelings of racial and cultural liminality. Thus, when the borders of Indianness were relaxed (e.g., wearing “normal” clothes to

school, speaking in English) participants may have felt as though they belonged, that they were not different. However, when the borders of Indianness were flexed through overt instantiations of Indianness (e.g., wearing Indian garb on non-sanctioned school days, speaking in native languages, “doing things Indian”), this flexing may have led to surveillance from within the Indian American community and participants may have been made to feel as though they did not belong. Thus, the occupation of both of these positions on different school days, and the need to monitor self-expressions of Indianness, may have engendered feelings of racial and cultural liminality in the school space.

An additional key component in constructing participants’ liminality in CHS was through their interactions in formal educative spaces. Dynamics of practice within classrooms and different learning activities served to destabilize aspects of participants’ racial/cultural identities (Nasir, 2012). Going further, while previous investigations examining South Asians in schools in North America, Britain and Australia found negative classroom dynamics revolving around xenophobic and racist exchanges (e.g., Gibson, 1988; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2012; Ghuman, 2001), this study did not reveal such outright and ‘in-your-face’ racisms from educators or peers.

However, in some ways, taking the place of the blatant forms of racism were subtle insults to being Indian and Indianness related to achievement and the *need* to adhere to being the model minority. South Asians, and pan-Asians more generally, have been touted as the model minority both domestically and abroad (e.g., Kao, 1995; Lee, 2009; Maira, 2002; Ngo, 2010; Shankar, 2008). These scholars’ work makes links

between racialization and achievement, as those students in these studies that achieved maintained their Asianness while those that did not had their Asianness questioned. In these ways, notions of ‘academic disengagement’ and poor achievement led to negative identity formation (e.g., Nasir, 2012). However, this study further highlighted the surfacing of the model minority discourse, and provided additional insights into the saliency/power of this device in a high socioeconomic status school and school district. Said differently, because NISD’s socioeconomic standing created a school context with a flattened school culture, a large component of conceptualizing difference was through achievement. At CHS, the model minority discourse became extremely detrimental to Asian/Indian American students, including participants, and may have placed even more pressure on participants (than already felt) to succeed or lose their Asianness. In schooling contexts with majority Asians and Whites from higher socioeconomic quartiles, the model minority stereotype delineated how Asian students needed to academically achieve. Thus, in some ways then, the model minority stereotype contributed additional layers to constructing participants’ liminality, as the lack of achievement led to the questioning of one’s Asianness and aspects of belonging within CHS.

In thinking of achievement, an interesting reversal emerged whereby participants were Asian/Indian when achieving and re-positioned with the status of Whites when not achieving. That White students perform poorly was not the key take away. Rather, it was that White was placed in some ways as “less than” in relation to Asianness/Indianness, providing an interesting paradox and/or reversal of Orientalism regarding achievement.

Thus, while poor achievement has been used as a racializing device particular to Asian bodies and their 'lack' of Asianness (e.g., Lee, 2009; Ngo, 2010), this study contributed a key finding that demonstrates how, in this highly-privileged schooling context, the lack of achievement repositioned non-achieving students as White, perhaps previously considered 'out of reach,' with this repositioning more than likely informed by students' perception of the majority of their peers who attend CHS. Thus, this study makes a direct link between achievement as a racializing and re-positioning device that deeply impacts students' racial and cultural self-conceptualizations, as the lack of academic performance meant an ontological quandary where one knows their Asianness but was not seen as Asian. This reversal, although temporary and fleeting, was an important indication of the power dynamics at CHS evidenced in these social re-positionings, demonstrating participants' liminality when belonging in one moment then Othered and made different the next, a key finding providing new insights into the continuation/evolution of the model minority discourse and achievement in hyper-classed settings.

While earlier ethnographic work highlighted the ways students occupied racially or culturally liminal statuses within school by adhering to different pre-established tropes particular to locality specific racial/cultural identities (e.g., Bettie, 2003; Nasir, 2012; Willis, 1977), participants were schooled to their racial and cultural liminality on days of multicultural celebration. While previous studies spoke to aspects of multiculturalism and days of celebration in schools (e.g., Handa, 2003; Shankar, 2008), CHS's celebration of differed as they included student-generated days of celebration. These events further served to Orientalize/position Indian students as Others, exoticizing Indian culture and

fetishizing garbs as teachers stressed the beauty of students that, on other days, may not have been directly addressed or acknowledged. Those participants that took part wearing Indian garbs saw their Indianness reinscribed, with those Indians not taking part were re-positioned as White. The surveillance of Indian American students once again emanated from the Indian American community at CHS, making those not participating hyper-visible and non-belonging. This hyper-visibility was slightly different to Puwar's (2004) conceptualization. While these students were positioned as hyper-visible, it was not the institutional space and White bodies that pointed to the hyper-visibility. Rather, it was peers of the same cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

However, this study revealed a deeper dynamic at play. These days of celebration embodied a shift in the centers and margins at CHS (Spivak, 1993), impacting the ways participants formed their "ethnic identity at the margins" (Hall, 1996). While difference and overt Indianness were viewed negatively and led Indians to be called FOB or Indians that were "very Indian," multicultural days of celebration re-wrote these logics, although temporarily. As students and teachers alike participated in these events, all students could participate in the co-opting of Indian culture, contributing to static Orientalized views of "Asian" as exotic. The overt Indianness on display made students hyper-visible in the "right" way, as Indianness was valued and centered on this day. Thus, participants' ethnic identities normally constructed in the margins through self-surveillance, careful use of native languages, and monitoring of "doing things Indian" so as to not be hyper-visible were mitigated as these displays paradoxically brought them closer to the center of belonging at CHS. Some participants (like Anu) and their peers enjoyed these days of

celebration – a day to proudly display one’s cultural origins and see others taking part in the same show of pride. As previous investigations noted how participation in these events was resisted due to the event being considered FOBby (e.g., Shankar, 2008), this study demonstrated the extreme degree to which students and participants took part in these dynamics of cultural display and celebration.

Thus, the class and ethnic composition of CHS played heavily into constructing participants’ racial and cultural liminality and their simultaneous belonging and not belonging. While semiotics and aspects of style, dress, dispositions towards school and a largely homogenous student body helped Indian American students to belong, their racial ambiguity and occupation of a status as “in-between,” a split self, were made clear when displaying too much Indianness on different school days or not achieving, reinscribing aspects of their liminality and inability to fully belong within the school. This occupation of the third space, the in-between, was at times a conscious decision, like Anu’s refusal to bring a change of clothes and instead wear her Indian clothes to school. On these school days of celebration, it was “cool” to engage in these processes of co-option and dress, for one day, and students had both the cultural and social network capital to acquire garbs to perform Indianness. Thus, the racial and cultural identities that participants formed were liminal as their Indianness on non-sanctioned days positioned them as different and/or foreign. However, the points of crystallization around which racial and cultural liminality emerged were achievement and overt displays of Indianness, which when placed in perspective, are a rather small and finite set of factors constructing difference. These findings are particularly interesting and help provide additional insights into South Asian

youth studies in the U.S., demonstrating how Indianness was conceptualized, acted, and taken up in highly privileged and academically oriented school settings.

Transmitting India and Indianness in Home/Community Spaces

The overt instantiations and conscious decisions of managing, negotiating, and monitoring their Indianness in schools, home and community engagements aided participants in finding a balance through shifting the relations between center and margin (Spivak, 1993). Said differently, the centers and margins of home and community were inversely relational to those of school, to an extent. While participants centered themselves in their Indianness at home, it was not as if they placed their school expectations and identities at the margins in relation to their centered Indianness. Rather, their Indianness was centered with aspects of their schooled dispositions and identities adjacent to this center, perhaps with a small amount of overlap.

This study aligned with the findings of previous sociological investigations (e.g., Bhatia, 2007; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000), and educational studies (e.g., Asher, 2008; Dwyer, 2000; Shankar, 2008), that highlighted the importance of family, home, and community in the forging of South Asian diasporic identities. The commonalities between this study and previous investigations were found in the importance of family dynamics regarding Indian/South Asian ways of being, aspects of achievement, limited dating and social activity, adhering to parents' expectations and outlined 'codes of conduct,' diasporic connectivities, and transnational media consumption that parents used to socialize participants to aspects of Indian ethnic identity, while also navigating aspects of acculturation to the dominant culture of the NISD community.

Within these home and community contexts, participants' occupied positions of "enculturation" as well as "acculturation" (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007; Weinreich, 2009), much like students from different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds in previous studies (e.g., Valenzuela, 1999). As parents, and even diasporic community members, brought strong belief systems on their native culture and traditions (Dasgupta, 1986), these traditions and cultural moors were passed onto participants. While dynamics of authoritarian parenting styles were not mentioned by participants (e.g., Jambunathan & Counselman, 2002), it was possible that the need to impart cultural values may have made participants' parents restrict aspects of behavior (Sodowsky & Carey, 1988), as instilling a cultural identity for children was a key goal for parents (Dhruvarajan, 1993). Thus, interactions in home and community helped "consolidate" the "orthodoxies" of their ethnic culture and identities while also negotiating aspects of cultural "reformulation" when placing their ethnic identities in relation to the culture of the larger community (Weinreich, 2009). The totality of these processes of give and take, inculcation and resistance, underpinned how participants formed their cultural, ethnic, and racial Indian identities in diaspora.

A key re-conceptualization offered by this investigation is the dynamics of home in relation to school. Participants' interactions in their home and diasporic community spaces helped orient participants to their Indianness through particular stylized ways of being, linguistic exchanges, and consumption/production of culture through transnational media and Indian food. As scholars have positioned the home space as a "bastion" against the outside world of capital accumulation and dominant culture (e.g., Rudrappa,

2002), it would appear as though these dynamics remained true as participants were exposed to and incorporated aspects of their Indianness in preparation for interactions in the outside world. While their Indianness was not necessarily “backgrounded” in their interactions outside of the house/community, they needed to carefully monitor their expression of Indianness at CHS in order to mitigate difference and edge closer to feelings of belonging, with this notion of careful self-regulation towards belonging observed in earlier work (e.g., Bettie, 2003). Thus, in some ways, interactions in the home space ‘replenished’ Indianness that was lost, tested, or made to feel absent in interactions outside of the home – a type of cultural/ethnic healing through familial dynamics and consumption practices.

As pedagogical and classroom contexts destabilized aspects of participants’ cultural and ethnic identities linked to their will and desire to perform well, it was as if interactions in community and home geared towards Indianness provided a balance *in relation* to their experiences at CHS. Thus, in some ways then, participants’ orientations around their Indian racial, cultural and ethnic identities provided cultural foundations to launch themselves towards the dominant culture (read: Whiteness) and pedagogical contexts found in their school interactions. While their ethnic and cultural identities were used as a launching pad in some classes, other classes destabilized participants’ notions of their ethnic and cultural identities, requiring them to find cultural/ethnic healing in spaces outside of CHS through interactions at home or in their diasporic communities. Thus, interactions in home and community demonstrated how participants, and their families, agentially wove together the resources available in community and their

transnational networks to strategically inculcate Indianness and act with greater efficacy in the community.

Participants' Hybridized Diasporic Identities

Experiences of racial and cultural liminality at CHS, in tandem with participants' experiences within their home/community and diasporic networks, led to the formation of ongoing, never complete, hybridized identities. These identities were representative of negotiations through difference towards finding stability at sites of struggle and contradiction, notions that aligned with previous work examining South Asians in diaspora (Asher, 2008; Bhabha, 1994; Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Gopinath, 1995). Notions of hybridized identities describing South Asian diasporic youth's negotiations and conceptualizations of self have been previously identified (e.g., Shankar, 2008; Maira, 2002), and even related to music (e.g., Maira, 2002; Gopinath, 1995). Thus, participants indicated the heterogeneity and diversity of their diasporic experiences (Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Hall, 1996), especially when navigating CHS and their home/community, incorporating aspects of the dominant culture in relation to their Indianness and "creolizing" them by "rearticulating" their meanings in new ways (Mercer, 2013). Participants took in aspects of school culture, negotiated and wrestled with them, adopted them in certain ways, and re-cast them in new ways that made sense to participants (e.g., forms of style, dress, and comportment), becoming in certain ways a form of "survival" particular to NISD and CHS (Lowe, 2003).

Thus, while Orientalisms particular to participants' postcolonial status operated at CHS to shape their schooling interactions as India was known through spices or problems

with infrastructure/clean water, participants negotiated and re-negotiated aspects of school culture and their own Indianness to act with self-efficacy and agency within the schooling space. Participants decided to wear/not wear Indian clothes on certain days knowing the inevitability of being called FOB, used their native languages in class even though peers might position them as different/Other, and made conscious decisions to disengage during certain classes which required them to invest further time outside of CHS in order to do well. While these negotiations and actions may have made participants more/less hyper-visible, they continually maintained and attempted to launch themselves from their Indianness, indicating various aspects of hybridization particular to their racial and cultural identities. Indian Americans were accepted, if not welcomed, when achieving, hard-working, 'good' Brown students displaying (generous) amounts of White cultural capital and habitus. Thus, Indian American students' hybridized identities allow them to experience integration, until they exceed the limits of acceptable Indianness at CHS and are made hyper-visible and different – thus dis-integrated. Their hybridized identities aided when negotiating different spaces, agentially acting with Indianness fore-fronted outside of CHS with their Indianness kept internalized at CHS, picking particular moments for their Indianness to emerge when safe, or unsafe, depending upon each participant.

Participants' class status in relation to CHS's school culture may have altered and impacted participants' processes of hybridization. The class standing of participants, and their peers, may have veiled aspects their hybridity and masked their adoption of Indianness and dominant culture. Said differently, participants' use of English, similar

outlooks regarding achievement, and similar styles of dress/behavior may have made their Indianness at CHS fly ‘under the radar’ in certain ways, that is, until using their native language, demonstrating too much Indianness, or not academically achieving. Their class standing, in some ways, further divided the cultural fields of school and diasporic community, with home/community dynamics heavily Indian-centric and schooling interactions more focused on aspects of CHS’s White school culture. Even though participants maintained all Indian/Asian networks, Indian students policed Indian peers to make sure that they did not ‘cross the line’ of acceptable Indianness. Thus, participants hybridized identities saw them walk a “tight rope” of their cultural realms (Handa, 2003), forming “unresolved identities” (Ngo, 2010), and engaging in styles of “cut and mix” (Maira, 2002), in order to continually balance aspects of their American and South Asian identities (Purkayastha, 2005).

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Participants’ insights from interviews and classroom observations painted a rich and detailed picture of CHS and the spectrum of their schooling experiences. While CHS is a highly privileged schooling context with a largely homogenous student body, key insights were garnered particular to the impacts of class, school culture and pedagogy on participants’ social dynamics with peers, educators, and shaped distinct notions of being Indian/Indianness in a central Texas high school. As the borders of Indianness were fluid, flexing in some moments to position students as hyper-visible and retracting in others towards mitigating hyper-visibility, participants highlighted how instantiations of Otherness and difference surfaced within the spectrum of their interactions with peers,

educators and curricula. Through navigating these notions of difference within CHS, and prolonged engagement within home/community spaces and diasporic connectivities, participants' hybridized identities spoke to the creolizing between aspects of their Indianness and the dominant school culture which functioned to shape the ways in which they self-expressed and came to know/interact with the world around. These findings present a set of implications for both teacher education and curricular reform towards more inclusive, culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogies.

Further Investigations of Indianness in Different Geographic and Classed Localities

This study demonstrated the ways that students' class standing, the community's socioeconomic status, and a largely homogenous student body impacted the ways South Asian American students formed their social groups, interacted with peers in informal/formal academic settings, engaged with pedagogy, and navigated different contexts towards establishing, forming, and coming to know Indianness and being Indian in their daily lives. As CHS may have represented an anomaly of a school/school culture given the rampant academic achievement, additional research needs to consider South Asian Americans, and Indian Americans more specifically, in schools that may not be so highly privileged and how these school cultures, pedagogical dynamics, and interactions with peers/educators in formal educative settings shape what being Indian/Indianness means on a daily basis. While CHS contained particular definitions of the borders of being Indian/Indianness, these borders would surely shift and be composed of different layers within school cultures that have not been flattened by aspects of class and require attention. The semiotics particular to styles, speech patterns, and general dispositions

towards education contain the potential for new avenues to conceptualize/position difference and/or belonging onto South Asian American youth, with these new meanings shaping students' identities.

While newer investigations are needed in suburban areas representing a wider spectrum in the class backgrounds of students, additional investigations are needed that specifically examine South Asian Americans in urban settings. While Asher (2002) and Maira (2002, 2004) have moved in this direction, their work does not specifically address the schooling space as shaping identities. They address aspects of negotiating familial career expectations related to negotiating a hyphenated identity, as well as South Asian youth negotiating aspects of pop culture and hip hop music in New York City. A centering of urban schooling contexts is needed to understand how these schooling contexts impart/shape Indian identities, Indianness, and the cross-racial and cross-cultural alliances that South Asian American students may form. By investigating these diasporic identities in urban contexts, and the negotiations of school particular to social and pedagogical dynamics, further insights can be gathered between South Asian identities in urban versus suburban settings, and what these identities mean towards shaping educational expectations, notions of self-efficacy, different conceptualizations of Indian/Indianness, and how being Indian/Indianness figures into these processes.

While racial difference surfaced particular to overt instantiations of Indianness, achievement, and intra-ethnic othering, further investigations are needed to engage how Indians/Indianness is positioned as different/Other or belonging in different contexts, whether these contexts are urban or suburban, low, middle, or high class. These insights

will point to the saliency and importance of locality as related to discursive tropes particular to Asian and Indian bodies, and how different school contexts take up these notions in different ways to position difference, belonging and the spaces in-between onto/upon South Asian/South Asian American students. Moreover, these insights between different localities and class standings allow for insights to be garnered about South Asian Americans and the different ways their experiences align with/diverge from other ethnic minorities in schools. In these ways, new details can be garnered into the ways different South Asian Indian communities negotiate schooling contexts and find belonging particular to the hybridized identities they form, and how these identities are formed within particular constructs of power. Through these additional studies, new insights into agency, and agentic actions/resistance, become attainable to understand the ways South Asian Indian students navigate different schooling contexts towards finding belonging, and if/how they form cross cultural/racial alliances in order to obtain these senses of belonging.

The student population at CHS was focused on achieving, with all Indian American participants focused on their own achievement, at times, in relation to their peers due to the “peer pressure” to perform well. While this current investigation further stipulated and spoke to the terrain of the model minority discourse, we need further research to examine how South Asian students are shaped by, and negotiate, the model minority stereotype as impacting the self-conceptualizations of their identities. Achievement played a crucial role in this current investigation, and was used to position students in the social hierarchy while also used to solidify/reinscribe one’s Asianness, or

the lack of Asianness. Thus, further questions/investigations are needed to examine the achievement of Indian Americans, what it looks like when Indian Americans do not achieve, and how the lack of achievement plays into the formation of their racial and cultural identities. Are these students able to use their Indianness as a launching pad? Does Indianness become a hindrance? Do they acknowledge Indianness or self-identify in different ways? What does it mean for Indian American students, and their identities, when they do not achieve, and how does the lack of achievement play out within their social relations at school to position them in particular ways? Along these lines then, new investigations into South Asian American youth identity as constructed in schools, and informed by achievement, need to also consider the social dynamics between Desi teens, and the underpinnings/reasons behind selecting different peer groups and how social bonds are maintained with respect to native language use and/or intra-ethnic othering. Moreover, these investigations also need to situate home/community connections *in relation* to schools, to examine the different ways that these dynamics impact schooling dispositions and vice versa. In these ways then, additional investigations need to interrogate how different Desi teens' self-conceptualize Indian/Indianness, what the borders/meanings of being Indian/Indianness include or omit, and how this Indianness operates in their school and home/community lives in different American localities to impact notions of self-efficacy and the ways they make sense of the world.

These investigations are even more critical now, as the global pull of neoliberal capitalism constrains all facets of life, and in schools, continues to marginalize students and distance students from material and make critical consciousness an increasingly

difficult endeavor. These investigations will help place Indian American identity formation in relation to different localities with differing socioeconomic backgrounds and the forces of global capitalism. It is my hope that these future investigations will have the power to change the ways in which we conceptualize, position, and make sense of Indians and South Asians in contemporary popular discourse, perhaps allowing for the further problematization and even eradication of Orientalist associations made between Indian/South Asian bodies and the West, and a deeper contextualization of Asian histories/contributions to culture Americana both past and present.

Plurality and Critiquing Power in Teacher Education Programs

This investigation has once again made apparent the need for critical interventions in teacher education programs and teacher preparation coursework. While teachers were “good” and students excelled at CHS, participants regularly spoke to being bored in class. Thus, in some ways, teacher education programs need to focus on student-centered constructivist pedagogies that allow/help students to connect learning materials to their daily lived realities, scaffolding content and encouraging collaboration to aid students as they assimilate and make information their own.

Going further, this investigation also highlighted the ways that pedagogy, and educator/student dynamics, further solidified aspects of participants’ racial and cultural liminality in formal educative spaces. These notions of liminality, and the ambiguity of belonging, necessitate interventions in teacher education programs that situate the histories of ethnic minority groups, their arrival/presence in the U.S., how these migrant trajectories are often inflected by labor needs, and the ways that inequalities continually

persist linked to Eurocentric curricula and deficit thinking. By tracing these histories, new teachers entering the field will be made aware of the history of education and the ways that contemporary schooling in America continues to position some students for success while relegating students from racial, cultural and ethnic minorities to the periphery as they do not embody the proper capitals valued by schooling spaces. Moreover, these educators would become privy to the model minority discourse, its moment of origin, and the ways that it problematically continues to impact and shape the schooling experiences of Asian and South Asian youth.

These insights become key to critical self-reflection for new educators, considering the ways in which incoming teachers subconsciously position students, with the hope that this awareness will help mitigate some of the additional expectations placed on Asian students. Additionally, the focus on ethnic minority groups, in tandem with the evolution of education in this country, will introduce/present incoming teacher practitioners with notions of assimilation, accommodation, and enculturation – key concepts that ethnic minorities negotiate on a daily basis as they form their hybridized identities when negotiating contemporary schooling contexts. These points become crucial, indicating the give and take between one’s “home” culture and the dominant culture found in schools. With teacher practitioners aware to these dynamics, the possibilities of mitigating aspects of these difficult negotiations through culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies towards creating comfortable, safe, and collaborative classroom contexts become realizable, diminishing/avoiding dynamics that create/solidify difference for students from different ethnic backgrounds.

This investigation also highlighted the ongoing need to revamp Eurocentric curricula. Orientalist depictions of Asia and Asians in students' curricula remained, with colonial/imperial ideologies underpinning curricular materials. As teacher preparation programs stress the history of education and the experiences of non-dominant cultural groups as previously highlighted, new practitioners in the field will have the opportunity to use their newly developed/refined critical lenses to critique the required educative materials under use, and revamp these materials towards creating culturally sustaining and responsive materials. These new materials, it is hoped, will demonstrate to students the value inherent within their communities, relay to students that they themselves have value/are valued, and increase students' academic identities and notions of self-efficacy related to their self-worth and their possibilities of academic achievement. In these ways then, teacher education programs become critical to presenting new paradigms of thought – the “other side” of official knowledge. As neoliberalism in education continues to close the fields of possibilities for youth, these interventions become critical in resisting the mandates of global capitalism, and philanthro-capitalists, that continue to focus reform on testing and a nationalized curriculum, rather than students and their communities.

CONCLUSION

This investigation examined Indian Americans students' schooling experiences and how interactions in school, as well as home and community, worked towards shaping their racial and cultural identities. I used critical case studies to undertake this project and move towards gaining insights into the meanings behind being Indian and Indianness in a Central Texas high school. This study highlighted the fluidity associated with being

Indian/Indianness in a highly privileged schooling context, demonstrating the acceptable borders of Indianness that allowed students traction in the schooling space while also noting the moments where “too much” Indianness positioned students as different. Moreover, this study presented findings particular to how being Indian/Indianness surfaced and operated in participants’ peer groups, pedagogical contexts, and interactions in formal educative spaces with educators/peers that further delineated/specified the borders around being Indian/Indianness that participants negotiated on a daily basis.

Through negotiations in school, home and community, participants formed hybridized identities as they negotiated aspects of Indianness/dominant culture when coming to know themselves and the world around. As the localities we as a society traverse and interact within continue to grow in diversity, or experience constriction particular to who has opportunities (e.g., access to community resources, food, schools and opportunities in the job market) and who loses out, our studies of ethnic groups and their schooling experiences must increase and pay particular attention to non-dominant groups and how they negotiate institutional contexts towards belonging, achievement, and access to higher education. This study also informs my goals for continuing to research South Asians in America, their experiences in schools, how the definitions of meanings of Indian, Indianness and Indian culture change and take on new/different meanings in different contexts particular to instantiations of racism and achievement, with the overarching goal of revamping curriculum, pedagogical strategies and public/community services for Asians in America.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This document represents the spectrum of questions to be asked. These questions will guide the interviews.

Background/Rapport Building Questions:

1. What is your name (provide a pseudonym)?
2. What grade are you in?
3. How old are you?
4. Where were you born?
5. Where else have you lived?
6. How long have you been in the community of Austin? What are your feelings about your community? How do you like/dislike Austin? What are the ways you engage with/in the community?
7. Do you speak any other languages besides English?
8. Do you speak certain languages in school? How do you decide what language to use in schools? In what ways do you move between using different languages?
9. Do you speak certain languages at home? How do you decide what language you use at home?
10. What are some of your interests/favorite things to do in your free time? How did you 'find' what you like to do?
11. What are some of your favorite TV shows? How did you come to form these preferences?
12. What are some of your favorite websites? How did you come to like these sites in particular?
13. What kinds of music do you listen to? How did you make these musical choices?
14. Who is your favorite artist or band?
15. What kinds of movies do you like to watch, what are some of your favorite movies? With whom do you watch movies?
16. What are some of your favorite genres to read?
17. What do you read for fun?
18. What forms of social media do you typically use, and how frequently do you use them? Do you use 'apps' to interact on social media?
19. What are your thoughts about social media? How do you see your peers/parents/community using it? Does it help bring people closer?
20. Do you play video games? If so which ones?
21. What are some of the courses you are taking this year? What are you currently studying in your classes? What informs your choices to take these particular classes?

22. What clubs/sports/extra curricular activities do you participate in? What influenced your decision to participate in these activities?

Schooling and School Related Questions:

23. What are some of your earliest memories of school? Waiting for the bus, getting up and ready in the morning, maybe some memories of being in school?
 - a. For me, I always remember walking into my kindergarten class and looking at myself in the mirror, with all these curly locks of hair.
24. What have been some of your previous experiences in schools, before entering high school?
 - a. These experiences can be good, bad, or neutral.
25. What are some of your experiences in high school? These experiences can be any story you wish to tell.
26. What do you 'think' about school given these past and present experiences?
27. Describe a typical day of school, including what you do before going, and after coming home, from school.
28. What are your plans post high school? How did you come to this decision? What do you think some of your friends and peers will do?
29. Is education important to you? To your family? How have you received these messages of the importance of education?
30. What are your thoughts on attending college? The thoughts of your peers? The thoughts of your family?
31. What kind of clothes do you like to wear? How do you make these decisions? Have these decisions/choices changed over time?
32. What do you eat for lunch? Do you buy from the cafeteria? Do you bring lunch? Who makes your lunch?
33. What kinds of electronic devices do you and your peers have/use on a regular basis in school? Do you access social media in school?
34. Do you like the classes you are currently taking? What are your favorite subjects? What are your least favorite subjects?
35. What are some of your favorite aspects of school?
36. What are some of your least favorite aspects of school?
37. Describe your relationships with your teachers? With other students in your class?
38. Describe how you talk and socialize in? When? With whom do you socialize? Your best friends, good friends, anybody else? (No names please)
39. How would you generally describe your interactions in school?
40. How/when does being Indian or Indian American come up in school? What are some experiences where being Indian/Indian American has come up?
41. How does the curriculum represent Indian, Indians, or Indian Americans?
42. How does being Indian/Indian American affect/impact your classroom interactions? Are there certain expectations? What are some of the roles you have in the classroom?

Home and Family Related Questions:

43. Are you close with your family? Are you closer with some family members than others? How has your closeness developed over time?
44. What are some of the things that your family does together? What is your role in these actions/events?
45. What are some of the things that your family does for fun? What is your role in these actions/events?
46. Are you close with your extended family? Do you visit or spend time with family often? Are your grandparents alive? Do they live here? How often do you spend time with your extended family?
47. What do you eat at home? Who prepares meals? How do you help?
48. Where do you typically purchase what is eaten at home? Who purchases these items? How do you help?
49. Who are your peers/friends? Same grade, different grade? Same clubs/sports/organizations or different clubs/sports/organizations?
50. Does your family spend time with other Indian families? If so in what kind of settings? (Dinner parties? Religious events? Cultural events of dance and song?)
51. Do you have friends through your family?
 - a. For example, children your age that you may meet, or have met, on a couple occasions?
 - b. What are some of the things that you do when at these family get togethers or cultural events?
52. Do you have friends that don't go to your school? Do you hang out with them? What might you do if you do hang out with them?
53. What are your parents' expectations of you? Both in school and out of school. What happens if you exceed/meet/do not meet these expectations?
54. What is a typical afternoon for you when you get home from school?
55. Would you consider you and your family to be religious? What is the space of religious worship that you frequent? Do you celebrate various holidays throughout the year?
56. Do you and your family watch any TV shows together? Any movies together?
57. Do you have your own computer/phone/TV/phone line? Do you access social media at home? What do your parents think about social media, and your using it?

Questions on Being Indian:

58. What are the ways you self-identify? Are you 'Asian', 'American', Indian, 'Indian American', etc.? A combination of some or all of these?
59. How does the schooling space make you feel? What are some stories that you could share that speak to your experiences and how the schooling space makes you feel?
60. Have people called you mean names before? What were some of these names? How did you feel? How do you react?

61. Are there moments when you feel ‘different’? What are some of these moments? Do you never feel different? Feel different all of the time? Feel different than your peers? Your friends? How does being Indian in any way contribute to your feelings, if applicable?
62. What are some of the moments when you were made to feel different? Or felt different? If so, how do you feel different? Does it have to do with your skin color? With your beliefs? With aspects of your culture? With your likes and dislikes?
63. Have you heard the phrase ‘model minority’? Has anyone ever ‘called’ you that? How did it make you feel? Has someone named you a ‘model minority’?
64. How do your parents feel about your activities outside of academics? Do you participate in other activities?
65. Do you watch Bollywood movies?
66. How do you keep up with events taking place in India?
67. How frequently do you attend ‘Indian’ events? If so, what kinds of clothes do you wear? Language do you use?
68. Do you look up to any Indian/Indian American celebrities? What do you think of people like Aziz Ansari and Mindy Kaling? What do your peers think of these people?
69. Do you pay attention to current events? If so, how?

Concluding Questions:

70. Were some questions easier to answer than others?
71. What was it like having me in class observing you and your peers? Did I change your behavior? Did my presence change the way you thought and acted in class?
72. Was there anything you wanted to say, upon reflection, regarding any questions? Is there any response you want to change?
73. What are your reactions to this project?
74. Have you ever thought about some of these topics before?
75. How did these questions make you feel?
76. What else did these questions make you think about?
77. Has this project changed how you think in anyway?

12. Do students move around the room during instruction? What do these movements look like? Where do they go? What do they do?

13. Does India/South Asia surface in classroom dynamics? If so, how? How do students/participants respond to India/South Asia?
a. Active discussion?

14. How do the teacher/non-Asian peers interact with participants? With other Asian students in the classroom?
a. What does this interaction look like? What are these dynamics?
i. Any “Orientalization” within these dynamics?
1. Do participants resist these dynamics in anyway? If so, what does this resistance look like?

15. Are participants/Asian students made to feel different? If so, how does this transpire? What does this difference ‘look like’/‘occur’? With whom does it transpire?

16. How does the class end? What do participants/students do? How do they leave the classroom space?
 - a. Are they talking with anyone? If so, who?

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