ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION AND RITUAL DYNAMICS: AN ANALYSIS OF FIRST-GENERATION ASIAN INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE SOUTHERN PLAINS REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract: This study focuses on issues dealing with ethnicity, community, and especially identity construction among first-generation Asian Indian immigrants who reside in the Southern Plains region of the United States. Identity not only refers to what we have, but what we do or practice in our everyday lives. Employing structural ritualization theory (Knottnerus 1997, 2011), this study explores how three dimensions of cultural practices or ritualized behaviors - regional-ethnic, pan-ethnic, and host - play a crucial role in constructing the "multi-ritual" ethnic identity of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants. The analysis of ritualized behaviors helps to determine the rank or overall importance of ritualized symbolic practices (RSPs). The higher rank of an RSP the greater the impact on the cognitions and behaviors of immigrants as they construct a multi-ritual ethnic identity. This social-psychological understanding of ethnic identity formation argues that immigrants interpret their behaviors, i.e., they continuously evaluate what the ritualized behaviors mean in their lives and make decisions to create one or more forms of ethnic identity.

This qualitative study used thirty-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with observation method. The results indicate that in the process of ethnic identity formation, first-generation Indian immigrants negotiate with their distinctive pan-Indian cultural practices that separate them from others, retain and alter their regional-Indian ritual practices to celebrate their internal cultural variations, and bring their ethnicity to the mainstream society through selective pan and/or regional-ethnic ritualized practices. This study adds to the social constructionist perspective of ethnicity emphasizing the situational dimension of ritual dynamics and contributes to the micro-sociological analysis of ethnic identity. It enhances our empirical knowledge of an under studied Asian Indian immigrant community and provides an extension to the analytic potential of structural ritualization theory. It also offers a theoretical framework to explore the complexity of race and ethnicity of other ethno-racial groups.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores ritual dynamics in the ethnic identity formation of the first-generation Asian Indian immigrants, who reside in the Southern Plains regions of the United States (U.S.).[1] Asian Indian experiences of ethnic identity formation in the U.S. are profoundly influenced by the immigration reform of 1965. This new era of immigration fundamentally changed the background of Indian immigrants in the U.S., from "pariahs to elite" (Rangaswamy 2000). Unlike the first wave migration movement of Punjabi men from the northwest area of the subcontinent, the second wave Indian immigrants are highly skilled professionals who migrate from the diverse regions of India to pursue their economic and educational goals.[2] Scholars argue that new Indian migrants construct multifaceted and dynamic identities because of their regional, religious, linguistic, and caste diversity, the process of racialization in the host society, their attempt to construct a unitary Indian identity, and even recent developments in maintaining ties with the homeland and the host society (Mukhi 2000; Khandelwal 2002; Maira 2002;

Brettel and Reed-Danahay 2012). Therefore, Indian immigrants' ethnic experiences are not monolithic but rather are constructed through multiple practices and behaviors.[3]

Ethnic identity is socially constructed and fluid which involves a sense of self-identification with an ethnic group, a sense of commitment and belonging, and social participation and practices (Nagel 1994, Howard 2000). The meanings and boundaries of an ethnic group membership vary based on social, political, and economic forces and an individual's self identification in response to those forces. That is, individuals' self identification along ethnic lines, as members of a group with a common culture and origin by themselves and/or others, is changeable and so is their participation in shared cultural activities (Dhingra 2007).

According to sociological social psychologists, the self is composed of various identities, the "meanings attached to oneself by self and others" (Gecas and Burke 1995:42). Social psychologists distinguish between personal identities, unique self-narratives based on distinctive characteristics of individuals, role identities which are based on the performance of expected roles, and social identities, which are based on membership in various groups and categories such as race, ethnicity, and nationality (Thoits and Virshup 1997). Psychological theories, Tajfel's social identity theory and Turner's self-categorization theory, explain the sociocognitive processes involved in group identification, i.e., the cognitive and emotional commitment to one's community or group (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Hogg, Terry, and White 1995).

Research shows that ethnic identity involves shared cultural practices such as language, food, religion, sports, music, dance, festivals and so on (Bacon 1996; Mukhi 2000; Khandelwal 2002; Maira 2002). However, scholars of Indian immigration to the

U.S. never addressed the complex socio-cognitive processes involved in ritualized ethnic behaviors or cultural practices. Employing structural ritualization theory (SRT), this study analyzes the role of multiple ritualized practices and related socio-cognitive processes of individuals in the formation of multi-ritual ethnic identity of Asian Indian immigrants. SRT argues that the greater the importance or rank of ritualized behaviors; the greater will be the influence on the cognitive structures that will help in forming ethnic identity.

Further, studies on Asian Indian immigrants usually concentrate on Indians who reside in the denser pockets of Asian Indian settlements – eastern and western coasts, larger urban areas of the south – with a significant focus on second-generation Asian Indians. In this research, I examine the under studied group: first-generation Asian Indian immigrants residing in sparsely crowded communities in the Southern Plains region of the U.S.

In the present study, building up on existing literature, the focus is on actors and structures for explaining the ritual dynamics involved in ethnic identity construction. By re-conceptualizing the nature of ethnic identity among first-generation Asian Indian immigrants as "multi-ritual," the study identifies the extent to which ritualized behaviors are involved in the construction of identity.

Research Questions

In general, the following research questions provided the framework of the present study.

(1) How is ethnic identity created?

(2) Are social rituals involved in the formation of ethnic identity? And, if so, how?

More precisely, this study addresses the following questions:

(3) How do rituals involving three dimensions – regional-ethnic rituals, pan-ethnic rituals, and host rituals – play a crucial role in constructing the ethnic identity of the first-generation Asian Indian immigrants? This question is divided into two sub-questions that together provide an answer to the above question.

(a) How do important ranked rituals help in forming multi-ritual ethnic identity?

(b) How are the three dimensions of ritualized behaviors involved in understanding what it means to be an Indian in the U.S.?

To address these questions, I explore the perspectives of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants who migrated to the U.S. after 1965, reside in the Southern Plains region of the U.S., and are characterized by high levels of education and income.

Significance of the Study

The identification of Indian immigrants in the U.S. has involved various names – "Hindoos," "Caucasoids," "East Indians," and "South Asians" (Brown 1982; Hess 1982; Lee 1993; Alba and Nee 1997). It is important to note that the racial categorization of Asian Indian since the 1980 U.S. census includes culturally or ethnically divergent groups. By using the concept of ritualized behaviors, I examine how in the process of ethnic identity construction, immigrants (i) retain and celebrate their pre-migration ethnic activities, (ii) change and negotiate some of their ethnic behaviors in accordance, and also (iii) adapt their ethic behaviors to the expectations and standards and the expectations of the American society. During their identity formation, immigrants interpret their behaviors, i.e., they continuously evaluate what ritualized behaviors mean to their lives such as how important is regional-Indian food, American food, or other ethnic foods, why

is it important to wear ethnic clothes during festivals and celebrations, how important it is for immigrant parents to pass down Indian culture and language, what is the importance of pan-Indian festivals and religious practices, why is it important to celebrate the host society's festivals, and much more. The important three dimensions of ritualized behaviors – regional-ethnic, pan-ethnic, and host – help migrants to understand their choices to act out ritualized behaviors reflective of the ethnic group and ultimately to construct their ethnic identity.

In sum, this study will help to develop a social psychological analysis of ethnic identity formation of Asian Indian immigrants involving multiple dimensions of ritualized practices. In doing so, this research contributes to the study of the relationships between ritual and ethnic identity that will provide an important theoretical framework for analyzing ethnic experiences of other ethnoracial groups.

Method

The purpose of the study is to uncover how respondents give meaning to and construct their identities. Here, I am using meaning to refer to the socio-cognitive processes involved with the experiences of immigrants which help to construct multi-ritual identity (Maxwell 2005). The use of varied qualitative data collection techniques, consisting of participant observation, secondary data analysis, and in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed me to capture the real-life meanings, contexts, and processes (Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006).

Most importantly, I conducted participant observation and in-depth field interviews from July 2010-June 2012. A sample of first-generation immigrants who in recent decades migrated to the Southern Plains regions of the U.S. was interviewed.

I employ two strategies to increase the accuracy of my research. First, by closely examining the exceptions to the data, I modified my conclusions. Second, I use multi-method research to reduce the risk of systematic biases associated with one method. To address the internal generalizability of my research I rely on an in-depth examination of my potential biases in the research. These strategies enhance the likelihood that this study can be replicated in other studies.

A History of Asian Indian Immigration

Before discussing in greater in detail the methods, theory, and findings of this study, it is important to briefly discuss the history of Asian Indian immigration, which has culminated in the unique situation and challenges, faced by this ethnic group in contemporary America.

Early Asian Indian Immigration

Asian Indians have a long tradition of immigration to the far reaches of the world mainly for the purposes of trade and commerce. As far back as two thousand years ago people from India started to settle in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Japan, and most of East Africa. Historians relate Buddhist pilgrimage to major immigration movements from India which started after the death of Buddha (563-483 B.C.). India's Hindu influence is also prominent in the mythology and religion of Thailand, Burma, and other parts of South Asia (Tinker 1977; Helweg 2002).

In spite of the ancient trade networks, South Asian diaspora only started in the late nineteenth century with the abolition of slavery in the European colonies, especially the British Empire. During this period, India experienced severe drought and famine, and hence, workers agreed to provide cheap labor to the empire. This led Indians to travel

vast distances for work, which continued even after 1920, when this 'new system of slavery' was abolished. The U.S. became one such destination for the Indian diaspora (Helweg 2004). In this context, Daniels (1986) argues that the new system of slavery or indentured Indian labor has special significance for the migration of Asian Indians to the U.S. "The existence of this world wide system…, helped establish in the Western mind the simplistic equation of Asian immigrants and servile labor" (Daniels 1986:9).

U.S. Immigration Legislation, Nationalist Movements, and Formation of Identity

From 1820, when a solitary Indian was admitted to the U.S., through the next half century, fewer than ten Asian Indians arrived per year on average (Chandrashekar 1982; Bharadwarj and Rao 1990). In fact, between 1820 and 1899, fewer than seven hundred persons over a period of eighty years entered the U.S. Between 1893 and 1898, no Asian Indians were admitted to the U.S., but from 1905 Indian nationals had begun to enter the continent in search for jobs and new opportunities. Between 1899 and 1920 a significant influx of immigrants from Punjab, i.e., farmers and laborers, to the U.S. occurred. They entered America through Vancouver, Canada where Canadian companies publicized economic opportunities in the U.S. During that period some 7,300 immigrants from India settled on the west coast, mostly in California (Hess 1982). Although a large majority of laborers who came from Canada to the U.S. in those years were largely Sikhs, they were universally named "Hindoos," "Tide of Turbans," or "ragheads" (Brown 1982; Bharadwarj and Rao 1990).[4]

In 1907, when Indian arrivals were almost five times greater than had come in 1906, the U.S. Bureau of Immigration became concerned. Thus, it debarred the entry of Indians because they were "likely to become public charge; surgeon's certificate of

mental and physical defect which may affect alien's ability to earn a living; dangerous disease; notably trachoma; contract labor; polygamy; geographically excluded, and other" (Brown 1982:42). Because of public prejudice a legal theory was created, the "Asiatic Exclusion Act of 1924," which argued that East Indians could become a public charge.

As a result of increasing discrimination Asian Indians thought that the British were behind every disability suffered by Indians in the U.S. Thus, the Indian revolutionary movement against British rule developed in the U.S. in the form of the Hindu Association of Pacific Coast, especially the Gadar movement (Bose 1971; Brown 1982). Indians from all faith groups, regional backgrounds, classes, and caste groups united to participate in the revolutionary struggle. Among all movements, the Gadar movement contained a genuine expression of nationalist support which provided the immigrant community with a distinct ethnic identity and immigrant community identity, though, later it also contained an overt Sikh communal identity and class identities. Gadar movement could not remove India from the "barred zone" in America's immigration legislation before World War I. However, with their attempted nationalist struggle Indians began to see themselves as an oppressed minority community in the U.S. (Juergensmeyer 1982).

The 1914 immigration restriction was not applicable to skilled professionals, ministers, or religious teachers, students and travelers (Daniels 1986). Nevertheless, Asian immigrants to the U.S. started to decline gradually from 1914, and further decreased with the Quota Act of 1924, which was based on the idea of racial purity. Until 1946, Asian Indian population was decreasing.

It was after World War II that Asian Indian immigrants became visible in America. A change in immigration policy occurred much later with the McCarran Walter Act, 1952. Though this act upheld restrictionist policies, it replaced admission on the basis of a racial category to an economically viable one. It gave greater preference to immigrants with desirable technical knowledge and their immediate family member (Helweg 2002).

A major shift in all forms of previous immigration laws came with the Hart-Celler Act in 1965. This act was made a prominent move to end discrimination based on race and ethnicity, and thus triggered an upward surge for Asian Indian immigration to the U.S. Indians changed their course of immigration from Great Britain to the U.S. because of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962, which curtailed immigration from commonwealth countries (Robinson 1991).

Along with increased immigrant influx, the post-1965 era also changed the character of immigrants in the U.S., now mainly of educated, professional elites unlike the first wave of Punjabi Sikh immigrants. By 1970s Asian Indians along with other Asians became a prominent part of the U.S. immigration stream (Helweg 2002). Educated Indians, primarily from Punjab, Gujarat, and Kerala took advantage of this policy change, and later on, people from Tamil Nadu, Bengal, and twice migrants joined the group of new immigrants.[5] Between 1966 and 1977, 83 percent of Indians who migrated to the U.S. comprised about ‘‘20,000 scientists with PhDs, 40,000 engineers, and 25,000 doctors’’ (Prashad 2000:75). Thus, as a result of American ‘pull’ factors, Asian Indians turned into one of the ‘visible’ minority groups with an increase from 13,149 (1970) to 387,223 (1980) (Leonard 1997). The family reunification clause in the

U.S. immigration legislation also proved to be one of the major factors influencing Asian Indian immigrants in America. In this context Daniels (1986) argues that:

> Had immigration legislation and regulations not changed in the post-World War II years, the "circuitous assimilation" of Asian Indian immigrants and their children would probably have continued. But the new ability of Asian Indians to become citizens and bring over relatives as nonquota immigrants, plus the renewed trickle of immigration in the two decades after the war, served significantly to reinforce Indian elements in the community (p. 32).

In the 1980s, the new arrivals became citizens and taking the advantage of immigration laws brought relatives from India. They carried with them new patterns of settlement and acted as independent cultural brokers (Helweg 2002). Thus, by 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau) 2.8 million Asian Indians resided in the U.S. This group was facing unique challenges in developing their ethnic identity and finding their niche in America's diverse racial and ethnic spectrum. My dissertation focuses on the social experiences of some of these recent immigrants and how they have met these challenges.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I utilize a substantive literature review to examine the relevant research on varied perspectives on ethnicity. The major perspectives of ethnicity such as 1) primordialist, 2) instumentalist, 3) transactionalist, 4) social psychological, and 5) ethno-symbolic approaches are discussed with a broad focus on the significance of the social constructionist perspective of ethnic identity. To better understand a more micro level analysis of ethnic identity, I examine the social psychological research on identity. Finally, I provide an overview of multiple dimensions of Asian Indian ethnic identity in the U.S.

Defining Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity is an elusive concept and very difficult to define in one precise way. Just like any other areas of study in sociology, it grew out of diverse scholarly contributions. For example, Talcott Parsons calls ethnicity as the "primary focus of group identity, i.e., the organization of plural persons into distinctive groups, and second, of solidarities and

the loyalties of individual members to such groups" (1975:53). Again, ethnicity may be regarded as an enclosing device where recognizable social collectivity perceives distinctive commonness (Barth 1969; Das Gupta 1975). Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity, consisting of subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people. It is often an aspect of culture by which the group can differentiate itself from the others (Brass 1991; De Vos 2004). Ethnicity is looked at from an emic viewpoint featuring "how one feels about oneself, not by how one is observed to behave" (De Vos 2004:11-12). In addition to this subjective-self consciousness, ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves a claim to status and recognition (Brass 1991).

Given the variety of theories sought to explain the ethnicity and ethnic identity theoretically, however, "primordialism" and "instrumentalism" are the two major camps (Hutchinson and Smith 1996). "Primordalists" focus on culture and tradition to explain the emergence and maintenance of ethnicity. People are tied together in their ethnic groups because of primordial ties such as religion, blood, race, language, and customs. Clifford Geertz (1963) holds that primordial ties are "one that stems from the 'givens' – or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed givens of social existence" (p. 109). Keyes (1981) agrees that such givens are determined at birth, but an extending primordialist standpoint, he asserts that ethnicity is external to individuals, and exerts coercion over them bestowing ethnic identity. Therefore, Keyes (1981) contends that ethnicity is derived from a cultural interpretation of descent. Ethnicity is a form of kinship reckoning, but ethnic heritage is learned and not traced genetically.

"Instrumentalists" (A. Cohen 1969; Bhabha 1990; Hall 1993; R. Cohen 1994), on the other hand, view ethnicity as a product of social interaction and, thus socially constructed (Hutchinson and Smith 1996). This approach treats ethnicity as a strategic tool or resource. Scholars argue that populations remain ethnic as long as ethnicity fetches some interests to the group. Rational interests play an important role in the retention and dissolution of ethnic ties (Espiritu 1992). However, instrumentalists neglect the "wider cultural environment in which elite competition and rational preference maximization take place" (Hutchinson and Smith 1996:9).

Apart from these two important theoretical approaches, there are some alternative versions of ethnicity (Hutchinson and Smith 1996). Federick Barth (1969), as "transactionalists," views that interactional and organizational features of ethnic group are problematic. He calls for understanding ethnic group boundary, which is not exclusively based on territoriality; rather, durability. It is the permeability of the boundary that makes it more durable, and the transactions across the boundary in terms of stable inter-ethnic relations perpetuate the boundary. In poly-ethnic societies ethnic identity is imperative, which constrains individual's behavior, and becomes superordinate to most other statuses. Such imperative status helps in standardizing interactions and maintaining ethnic boundaries in diverse societies.

Again, the "social psychological" approach of Horowitz (1985) focuses on "differential estimations of group worth, and on their collective stereotypes" (Dasari 2008:24). Horowitz (1985) does not refute the importance of primordial ties, but he evaluates ethnic groups' honor as being relative to other groups. Thus, along with his contention that ethnic identity is ascribed, it is a matter of degree, and has a possibility of

change. The changes may take place though linguistic or religious conversion, intermarriage and procreation, or there can be changes via collective action, which modifies groups' behavior or identification (Horowitz 1975).

There is also the "ethno-symbolic approach" (Armstrong 1982; Smith 1986) of ethnicity, which emphasizes persistence change, and resurgence of ethnic groups with the usage of myths and symbols of the past history. Myths and symbols play important roles in unifying people. Differing from primodialist account, ethno-symbolicism (Smith 1981, 1991) argues that intelligentsias of the modern world help in rediscovering the ethnic roots (Huntchinson and Smith 1996).

The Continuing Significance of Ethnic Identity

The academic debate about the possibilities of maintaining ethnic identities has started with two perspectives on ethnic incorporation in the host society - "assimilationist" and the "pluralist" (Waters 1990). Based on white European immigrants' experiences, over the centuries, the U.S. had absorbed immigrants from various parts of Europe helping them to assimilate in the host society (Gordon 1964). It was believed that as Italians, Irish, Polish, and German immigrants, to name a few, have been gradually accepted as *bona fide* Americans, despite initial scorn and prejudice. And the non-white immigrants, like the European immigrants, would also follow the straight-line assimilation model (Waters 1990; Alba and Nee 1997). In his multidimensional exposition on assimilation, Gordon (1964) argues that immigrants and their children will adopt the Anglo-Saxon culture to acculturate in American society. And a complete assimilation is possible with structural assimilation, when the minority groups engage in

mainstream social groups and institutions. Thereby, such groups' ethnicity would gradually wane in significance.

The process of converting of non-white immigrants into Anglo-American culture received criticisms because of its overt ethnocentric tendencies (Alba and Nee 1997). Theories of assimilation were also criticized for their inability to see immigrants as active agents who can create and negotiate their ethnic identities (Song 2003).

Cultural pluralists challenged the inevitability of assimilation of immigrant groups and assert the prevalence of ethnic identity (Glazer and Moyinhan 1963). Again, the pluralist model is not beyond criticism. Das Gupta (1997) claims that even though pluralist model refers to the coexistence of various ethnic groups, but it did not refute the dominance of the core elements (including language, norms, and values) of mainstream society. While debates about the continuing significance of ethnic identity were initially fuelled by the developments among white ethnics of European origin (Gordon 1961; Waters 1990), it gained its importance by the Immigration Act of 1965 that dramatically changed the rules for the allocation of immigrant visas, eliminating the old national-origin quota system that systematically favored immigrants from Northern Europe (Glazer 1993).

Many recent analysts of ethnic identity have stressed that ethnicity is socially constructed and highly politicized; for instance, Werner Sollors (1989) "invention of ethnicity" and Joanne Nagel's (1986) "political construction of ethnicity". It is well theorized that ethnicity is emergent, malleable, situational, and contingent (Barth 1969; Waters 1990; Espiritu 1992; Nagel 1994, 1997; Hall 1996; Eriksen 1996; Cornell and Hartmann 2007). People's conception of themselves in ethnic lines, their ethnic identity,

can be symbolic when there is much distance from the immigrant point of origin (Gans 1979), develop in response to both internal interactions and external forces (Nagel 1994), develop in response to external group threats (Portes and Rambaut 1996), pan-ethnic when different national origin groups aggregate at supranational levels of ethnicity and identity (Latinos and Asians) (Lopez and Espiritu 1990; Espiritu 1992), develop with the help of pre-migration regional attributes in the destination country surpassing national attributes (Bozogmehr 1997), and affiliative when individuals identify with the culture connected to other ethnic ancestries (Jiménez 2010). Thus, ethnic groups can change their boundaries and criteria for membership and ethnic groups (and the individual members of these groups) are active in re-creating and reinventing the meanings and practices associated with them (Song 2003).

In addition, research explores the ways in which people may construct and assert their ethnic identities. For instance, drawing on Water's concept "ethnic options," Miri Song (2003) argues that minority groups can possess ethnic options and individuals make choices (not without constraint) about their ethnic identity. Ann Swindler (1986) has talked about how cultural practices and resources provide a kind of "tool kit" or repertoire of diverse stories, symbols, rituals which individuals use for constructing lines of actions. Therefore, as an ongoing process ethnic identity is a complex repertoire which people experience, use, learn, and practice in their daily lives (Jenkins 1997).

By acknowledging that ethnic identity is situational and socially constructed, I address the possibility of agency (not without constraints) and social action in ethnic identity construction. In the next section, I will briefly summarize some of the social

psychological literature on identity and explain the need for a more micro level analysis of ethnic identity.

Identity in Social Psychology

Self and identity have been central concerns of sociological social psychology at least since the writings of Mead, Cooley, and the early interactionists since the 1920s and 1930s. In these writings, self is essentially social in nature, anchored in language, communication, and social interaction. Sociological social psychologists argue that self is composed of various identities, which are perceived and interpreted during the interaction with others (Gecas and Burke 1995; Vryan, Adler, and Adler 2003).

Sociological social psychological theories on identity principally set out to explain role-related behavior (for example, mother, teacher, lawyer) and do not explain the cultural or collective view of identity which refers to one's national identity or ethnic identity(ies) within a national boundary (McCall and Simmons 1966; Stryker and Burke 2000). Two psychological theories, Henri Tajfel's social identity theory and John Turner's self-categorization theory focus on the sociocognitive processes of group identification. Social identities are based on individual's identification of themselves in various groups, including socio-demographic categories such as gender, race, and ethnicity. Social identity theory sees actors as having multiple social and personal identities that get activated depending on the social context. Social identity theory maintains that variation in social situation influence positive evaluation of the group to which individuals belong and hostility against the groups they perceive as threating to their social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; Thoits and Virshup 1997; Howard 2000; Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010).

Much of the research on ethnic identity in social psychology is based on Tajfel and Turner's psychological study on group identity. Ethnic identity, an aspect of social identity, is constructed over time in the process of which individual actions and choices play an important role (Howard 2000; Phinney and Ong 2007). Phinney and Ong (2007) identify ethnic behaviors including ethnic practices and interactions as one of the important ways to measure ethnic identity. Ethnic behaviors such as use of language, eating the food, associating with ethnic social group, religious affiliation and practices, areas of residence, other cultural activities, and politics are marked as ethnic identity indicators (Phinney 1990, 1992; Phinney and Ong 2007).

Building upon Structural Ritualization Theory (SRT) (discussed in the next chapter in detail), this study contributes research on ethnic identity in sociological social psychology. Ritualized behaviors involve both action and cognition. In other words, social behaviors in the form of ritual enactments express or communicate to varying degrees meanings or symbolic themes. In this study, I focus on the role ritualized practices play in the ethnic identity construction of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants in the Southern Plains region of the U.S. Multiple dimensions of ritualized behaviors are derived from behaviors involving language, food, cultural practices, and religious practices, to name a few, present in both receiving and sending society. The present study looks at how first-generation Indian immigrants celebrate, change, and/or negotiate with their multiple dimensions of ritualized behaviors in their everyday lives to form ethnic identity. Here, following the tenets of SRT, I address agents as the carriers of structures and historical processes for constructing multi-ritual ethnic identity. In the next section, I will discuss literature on ethnic identity of Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S.

Multi dimensional Asian Indian Ethnic identity: Identity Formation in Home Country, Host Country, and Transnational Spaces

> What does it mean to be "Indian" outside India? How can culture be preserved without being ossified? How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play into the hands of our racial enemies? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that came here with us?...How to build a new, 'modern' world out of an old, legend-haunted civilization, an old culture which we have brought in the heart of a newer one?...These questions are all a single, existential question: How are we to live in the world? (Rushdie 1991:17-19) [Cited in Mukhi 2000].

The Asian Indians experiences of ethnic identity formation in the U.S. are multifaceted because of India's internal ethnic diversity and various external labeling throughout the history of Indian immigration. Asian Indians constitute the third largest group of Asian Americans, and are considered as part of Asian American, yet in practice, Asian Indians are often excluded from the Asian American umbrella due to the popular American identification of the term "Asian" with East Asians (Shankar and Srikanth 1998; Kurien 2005). Therefore, most of the studies dealing with ethnic and pan-ethnic identities of different Asian immigrant groups consider Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2003). Moreover, the identification of the term Indian with Native Americans adds to the problem of Asian Indian identity (Kurien 2005). The category of "South Asian" within Asian American further complicates Asian Indian Americans' racial and ethnic location in the U.S. This creates another type of racial and ethnic identity conflation by masking deep divisions of nationality, culture, religion, and language (Shankar 1998; Shankar and Srikanth 1998).

The technical term Asian Indian that was created in the 1980 U.S. Census, does not consider the complexity of Indian ethnic identity based on linguistic, religious, ethnic, and cultural diversities. The whole history of modern India is marked by Hindu-Muslim

separatist riots (Brass 1996).[6] Even India faced extremely violent movement between the Sikhs and Hindus. Again, India is generally characterized by caste stratification and antagonisms and each region of India has dominant language group.[7] State recognition in both pre- and post-independence periods acted as a critical factor in explaining some ethnic and cultural movements. Brass (1996) asserts that:

> The British gave official preference to the Bengali language in the east rather than to Assamese and Oriya and to Urdu in the north rather than Hindi…in the post-independence period, the government of India and the state governments sought to change the balance of recognition among some groups. Hindi was adopted as the official language of the country and of the north Indian states…(p. 302).

The state also turned a blind eye and took no action against such discriminatory policies of different regional groups and in the post-Nehru period, the state even tolerated inter-ethnic regional conflicts.[8]

The new racial recognition in the new land complicated the ethnic experiences of Indian immigrants. The post-1965 immigrants who predominantly came from educated higher caste/class Indians were transformed into a minority within the prevalent racial/ethnic categories in the U.S. The early immigrants (pre-1950) from the Indian subcontinent were majority Sikh, and they attempted to establish a pan-Indian identity "no matter what the linguistic, subcultural, caste or regional barrier may be at home" (Verma 1980:33). The early immigrants formed new communities with other Indian immigrants and the interethnic alliances between Hindu/Sikh/Muslim men and Catholic/Mexican women often resulted either because of lack of other spousal alternatives or to circumvent the restrictive policies of landownership (La Brack 1982; Leonard 1982; Rao 1994; Shankar and Balgopal 2001).

Unlike the pre-1950 immigrants, the new immigrants brought the diversity of India to the U.S. and resulted in multiple ways to create their Asian Indian identities with no fixed meaning of being Indian (Kurien 2003; Bhalla 2006). On the one hand, Indians demonstrated a commitment to maintain their diverse identities based on their regional, religious, caste, and linguistic differences. On the other hand, to fit fully within American multicultural politics, unitary Indian ethnic culture was equated with Hinduism because of its numerical predominance. In addition, many young progressives by the 1990s claimed South Asian descent by which they preferred to transcend the boundaries of nation, religion, and region. This was an attempt to acknowledge the overwhelming similarities the nation states – India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, and the Maldives Islands – share as far as colonial histories, lifestyles, and values are concerned. Nevertheless, since Asian Indian Americans remained the dominant category, and the term South Asian is often used interchangeably with "Indians" (Mukhi 2000; Khandelwal 2002; Kurien 2003).

Recent research suggests that Asian Indians immigrants (post-1965) use their regional, religious, linguistic, and caste attributes in their construction of ethnic identity (Niyogi 2010). Niyogi (2010) builds on Bozorgmehr's concept of internal ethnicity to understand the importance of sub-national identity (based on religion, place of origin, and language) in the process of incorporation of Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. The concept of internal ethnicity allows us to conceptualize the identity strategies of ethnically distinctive subgroups within an immigrant group (Bozorgmehr 1997). For these ethnically diverse immigrant groups, the pre-migration regional attributes often surpass their national identities and form the basis of ethnic identity in the destination

country. The post migration ethnicity of immigrant subgroups is dependent on the historical experiences in the home land (majority or minority status, and its concomitant subculture). Niyogi's data reveal that "pre-migration attributes manifest as more than a simple continuation of a historical process. Immigrants construct their identities through a symbolic re-interpretation of their sub-group's common history" (p. 45).

Niyogi (2010) cites the examples of first-generation Bengali-Hindus; second generation Bengali-Hindus; first-generation Punjabi-Sikhs; second-generation Punjabi-Sikhs in the Bay area to explain the way sub-national ethnic affiliations counter the monolithic representations of Indian identity in the U.S. She argues that the "[First-generation] Bengali immigrants use Bengali-American fiction to articulate sub-national identity in order to safeguard their class privilege and avoid a racial identity" (p. 126). The first-generation Sikhs use contradictory strategies to construct their Sikh identity in America – maintain the Sikh traditions on the one hand, and on the other, they desire to integrate into U.S. "model-minority" status.

The 'model-minority' status was created to counteract the experience of marginalization in mainstream organizations and to exclude South Asians largely from the Asian American umbrella, either culturally or racially. Therefore, South Asian identity helped in the construction of "public" ethnic identity in the demand for politics of recognition in American multiculturalism (Das Gupta 1999; Kurien 2003).

Situated as "ambiguous non-whites", South Asian identities are increasingly becoming contested and complex in their forms of belonging (or not belonging) in the U.S. On the one hand, South Asian Americans can ideologically remain disengaged from the U.S. racial order because of South Asian experience to resist colonial ways of

thinking. Thereby, "when confronted with non-white ambiguity, South Asian Americans can turn to alternative conceptions of race to interpret their identity" (Kibria 1998:72). On the other hand, this new collective belonging created the possibilities of building a pan-ethnic identity, particularly among members of 1.5 generation, second generation and generations later (Srikanth and Maira 1996; Kurien 2003). Srikanth and Maira (1996) argue that:

> The majority of first-generation South Asians share the nostalgia for the old countries, …but the younger South Asians are fed with the images of these nostalgia, leading them to construct "a place out there" that serves as a sanctum, haven, the polar opposite of North America, and the backdrop against which the younger generation can better understand and define itself" (p. xviii).

The concept of South Asianness had "taken off" in the post 9/11 period. Khandelwal (2002) argues that 'because to American bigots, Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, all look the same – brown – many victims are deciding they have a lot more common than they had previously realized" (Wildman 2001, quotation from Kurien 2003). Therefore, in the aftermath of 9/11, political activism of the South Asians organizations against hate crimes, racial profiling, and arrests of South Asians has increased (Kurien 2003).

Racialization and racial lumping helped in the formation of Hindu pan-ethnic identity among Asian Indians. Pan-Hinduism is a colonial construct. Post-colonialism defined national aspirations with upper caste/class dominated Hindu identity. Since the 1980s, Hindu nationalist organizations in India attempted to create a monolithic Hinduism with the help of mass mobilization of Hindu religious communities to replace the secular developmental ideology. In the transnational context, Rajagopal (2000:467) points out that "Hindu nationalism seeks and promotes transnational affiliations even

while espousing a rhetoric of insularity, cultural pride and self-sufficiency." The immigrants use their Hindu identity in the U.S. by synthesizing different and often opposed Indian Hindu tradition to side-step their problematic racial, religious, and cultural minority status (Kurien 2003).

Kurien (1998, 2001, 2003, 2005) demonstrates that "becoming Hindu" is a way of claiming position in the American multicultural society. The immigrants particularly become oriented towards religion when they arrive in the U.S. She argues that by constructing organizations, i.e., through the process of institutionalization, the meaning of Hinduism is reconstructed. The traditional Hinduism that is largely performed in the family or as individuals, except in festival seasons, transformed into collective practice by developing congregations such as *satsangs* (Hindu religious gathering), *balavihar* (Hindu religious classes for children) to create "autonomous identity" and maintain their "Indianness". The organizations focus on Gita discussion periods (following Bible study sessions), which impart Hindu/Indian values to the second-generation in particular such as, family values, work ethic, and being "pativrata" or an ideal wife.

Williams (1987) argues that "Eumenical Hinduism" or "American Hinduism" advocates for nationalistic Hinduism, and rise above personal beliefs and creeds, parochial languages, or provincial considerations. Kurien (1998, 2005), however argues that these groups also maintain a great deal of segmentation based on region, caste, and sect. Kurien (2005) elaborates on second-generation Hindu Americans in Western University, California. She finds that on the one hand, there is an emphasis among second-generation; to create an inclusive "pluralistic identity" of Asian Indians by inviting Sikhs and Jains in their Hindu Student Council. On the other hand, there is an

increasing faction in the organization – "pro-Hindu" and "moderate". She asserts that family socialization helped second-generation Asian Indians to perpetuate their Hindu identity in the organization (also see Bacon 1996). Within American multiculturalism, these groups promote "formation of reactive and oppositional identity" which thereby reinforces intergroup cleavages. Besides, the participants in this study identify "South Asianness" as a "false identity and maintains "cultural authenticity" ("indigenousness" is being fetishized) that is mandated by contemporary identity politics (Maira 2002; Kurien 2005). She also argues that the differences between South Asian and Hindu organizations are apparent because both are "made in America" to "fit" into American pattern of group formation and ethnic activism (Kurien 2003). Therefore, she asks for a re-conceptualization of non-white and non-Western ethnic communities and groups in multicultural America.

Arguing in favor of pan-ethnic characteristics of Indian ethnic groups and rejecting the contention that there are "ethnic groups within ethnic groups" in India, Verma (1980) asserts that Asian Indians in America are considered as one ethnic group because Indians are conceived as one cultural group - bearer of "Indian culture", a common origin. He adds that "subcommunities of Indians, for example, Punjabis, Gujaratis, South Indians, Bengalis do not form ethnic group either in India or in the U.S." (p. 30). Ethnic organizations help in upholding pan-ethnic identity among Asian Indians in America. He further argues that regional or linguistic groups of India are called ethnic groups because the terms ethnic groups, minority groups, and subculture are often used interchangeably. Thus, in the U.S., all persons with Indian ancestry are considered an Asian Indian ethnic group, even though in India "groups suffer from some handicap"

based on caste, region, and religion forming different subcultures. But, Verma hastens to add that despite the commonality among Asian Indians, their nature of professions demands frequent shifts in residence, making the realization of community formation difficult.

Furthermore, Jean Bacon (1996) argues that Asian Indians have featured both assimilation and community formation as two interrelated social processes, which have helped in constructing pan-Asian Indian ethnic identity with an extended group boundary. Historically, social interactions among Asian Indians are less, and thus families' help in the process of creating shared identity using symbolic resources to provide a common identity with which immigrants could recognize. The shared identity of being Asian Indian is created in relation to an imagined mainstream society, and it helps in maintaining their ethnic boundaries. Bacon also contends that the value standards both in public/community life and the private/family life have helped in the assimilation of diverse Asian Indian cultures in American society. To reiterate, social interactions among Asian Indians are less, and thus families become the prime unit of one's experience of "Indianness". Families generate Indian worldview (selflessness vs. selfishness) as the symbolic resource that helps Asian Indians to form communities in the U.S.

Thus, unlike Verma (1980), who asserts that Asian Indian families are the place where linguistic, subcultural, caste, or regional differences among Asian Indians are taught, Bacon (1996) argues that there are three layered family dynamics which help in the assimilation of different Indian groups. First is the intergenerational continuity, which addresses the issues of how concerns about dating, peer group, hairstyle, education etc. between parents and child are articulated. Second, both generations define them in

contrast to the other, e.g., second-generation organizations see first-generation organizations as models of Indianness, and even families create different models or prototypes to feature their distinct identities. Thirdly, the assimilation process is understood in terms of families' sense of their difference from "the mainstream" (p. 80). Bacon admits the fact that communities of first- and second-generation Asian Indians differ, but finally, "families provide the raw materials from which organizational life distills the "standard experience" of Indians in America" (p. 252).

Furthermore, Bacon (1999) argues that second-generation Asian Indian community formation becomes possible through symbolic resources drawn from American worldview and Indian worldview, as represented by parents. Therefore, second-generation collective ethnic identity which develops in the interaction pattern in public spaces and organizations, and also at immediate social interactions "... is forged, by and large, through a process of constant comparison with the perceived collective character of the "first-generation" (p. 144).

Maira (2002) in *Desis in the House* explains both in favor of maintenance of pan-Asian Indian identity and regional-Asian Indian identity among second-generation Asian Indian Americans (post-1965 immigration). In particular, she portrays the creation of popular culture by second-generation Indian American youth in New York clubs. Her ethnographic research argues that Indian American youth culture is a site where the youth negotiate with the tension between "cool" and "collective nostalgia", and "where second-generation youth perform a deep ambivalence towards ethnicity and nationality" (p. 16). These youths draw from Hindi movies and Indian music, and infuse those with hip hop to create *Bhangra Remix* music style.[9] This *desi* (South Asian) subculture helps Indian

American youth to hold ethnicization and participation in the U.S. racial formation in a delicate balance.[10]

Maira (2002) furthermore contends that the regional Indian identity is visible in the party scene. "The dance floor becomes a space that is claimed and reclaimed by the different regional identifications that have been transplanted to the U.S. and still filter into the second-generation" (p. 53). The regional character of *Bhangra* dance therefore challenges the pan-ethnic character of Asian Indian popular culture. She contends that there are even social cliques among Indian American youth bounded by regional-ethnic identities, and the youths who are brought up within strong regional networks prefer to marry Indians within similar regional background. Thus, she found conflicts among the pan-ethnic, national, and regional identities among second-generation Asian Indian Americans.

Interestingly, like Bacon (1996), Maira (2002) explains that pan-Indian ethnic identity is upheld by immigrant parents in the context of moral codes where Indians are equated with "purity" and American culture as "polluted". Thus, Maira argues "the ideology of cultural purity is infused with politics of nostalgia in diasporic communities, where cultural preservation becomes tied to the reproduction of an immigrant group" (2002:178). Additionally, the pan-ethno national identity is sustained through the bodies of women, and fantasies of female purity. Therefore, female sexuality and sexual behavior create the boundaries of Asian Indian ethnic group. Das Gupta (1997) and Kurien (1999) also argue that the first-generation of Indian immigrants selectively reproduced Indian culture based on Vedic Hindu culture and created new gendered hierarchies. Mehrotra and Calasanti (2010) further argue that first-generation Asian

Indians do not create monolithic identity as "Indians", but rather as "Indian men" and "Indian women" with the support of their families and communities.

Thus, ethnic identity formation of Asian Indians becomes a product of "complicated negotiations among immigrant groups with the host society to create boundaries" (Williams 1987:28). Such an identity is not brought intact from the place of origin, rather created and recreated. Therefore, as an immigrant community, Asian Indians subscribe to a "multiplicity of ethnic identifications" that the host society expects and allows (Das Gupta 1975).

In regard to Asian American pan-ethnic identity formation, rejecting the notion that ethnicity is a matter of choice, Espiritu (1992) asserts that pan-ethnicity of Asian Americans is largely a product of "categorization" for non-whites. She also contends that pan-ethnic identity is not simply an imposed identity, rather shaped and reshaped in the continuing interaction between both external structural conditions and internal cultural factors. That is to say, although pan-ethnicity originated in outsiders minds, today pan-ethnicity is a political resource for insiders. Extending Espiritu's work, Okamoto (2003) argues that political policies alone cannot provide the incentive to create pan-national or pan-ethnic boundary, certain underlying structural conditions must operate in collective action based on pan-national identities. Merging two theories of ethnic boundary formation – competition theory and cultural division of labor theory, Okamoto posits an explanation that "intergroup relations become increasingly complex when boundaries can expand or contract under different structural conditions" (p. 815). In the final analysis, Okamoto contends that the relationship between ethnic and pan-ethnic collective action often are complementary to each other rather than competitive and thus, supports the idea

that identities are layered. Ethnic and panethnic organizing are necessary for a successful pan-Asian collective action (p. 835).

Examining Asian Indian community in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Helweg (2002) asserts about the importance of changing ethnic identity according to time and context which might not be in opposition to each other for some, but for others. He argues that:

> Ajit Singh is an Asian Indian in the United States. He is also Punjabi, and Indian, and a Sikh. As he moves from one group to another, he changes his behavior accordingly. In India, he does not talk about or play the role of Asian Indian. Yet, depending on the context, he may be an Indian, a Punjabi, and a Sikh at the same time…[however], other groups are not so lucky. For example some Muslim groups believe that the woman should remain secluded and completely covered. Those European origins may interpret this as oppression and exploitation while the Muslims may consider it respect and honor (2002: 39).

Moreover, Helweg (2002) argues that as the Asian Indians become diverse in terms of region, caste, religion, the regional-ethnicity develops. Thus, the resentment between regional groups develops within the Asian Indian community. This development of factions among groups is also related to national political development in India. However, while representing Asian Indian community to the host society, they shed their regional-ethnic baggage and become concerned with the need of the pan-ethnic community. Similarly, Brass (1991) argues that, ethnic identity formation in a multiethnic society involves "multisymbol congruence" among groups of people defined initially by one or more central symbols (such as language, religion, territory, color). Helweg (2002) views that various symbolic resources such as marriage, religion, social networks, discrimination, and the issue of Indian "pure" and American "polluted" culture (tied to women predominantly, also see Das Gupta 1997; Kurien 1999; Maira 2002) act to

maintain pan- Asian Indian identity which then passed on to the second-generation immigrants.

Asian Indians compartmentalize their lives in one way or the other to meet with the demands of both their ethnic world and the wider American society. These new immigrants, unlike the old ones, maintain their constant ties with homeland. Friends and families in India influence them in adhering to ethnic values and norms in America. The socio-economic forces of globalization, easy and less expensive technological communication such as internet service and access to international phone calls, and the availability of fast jet travels help Indian American immigrants to maintain close ties with their homeland. The growing transnational interactions between U.S. and India have produced a global Indian community. India government is also encouraging diaspora members for the development of the transnational ties and offering Overseas Citizenship of India. Immigrants have established intricate connections not only with the home country, but also with overseas Indian communities (Helweg 2002; Bhattacharya 2008). The honorable Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in 5th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indian Day) asserts that:

> …[W]e are one family. The whole world is our home…the sun will never set on the world of the Indian Diaspora!... I would like overseas Indian communities to take full advantage of these exciting opportunities that are now on the horizon. I would like you to reach out and invest in a new India. Invest not just financially, but intellectually, socially, culturally and, above all, emotionally…(2007).

In the U.S., Indian diasporic community helps to create ethnic and cultural pride as diaspora members participate in community events such as *Diwali*, *Dussehra*, and India Independence Day Parades.[11] Peer social relations also work as an influential mechanism

for Indian migrants to adjust to the new land (Helweg 2002; Khandelwal 2002; Bhattacharya 2008).

It is important to note that while Indian diaspora community is regarded as the successful and inspiring community in the U.S. (Haniffa 2011), not all Indians want to identify culturally as members of Indian diaspora community. Two events, such as the recent socio-economic situations with its emphasis on Indian immigrants "taking away" American jobs and post 9/11 increasing hostility towards Asians, caused Indians to downplay their cultural ties with Indian diasporic community or not to get identified as an Indian (Bhattacharya 2008; Bhatia 2008). Others argue that America with its multiculturalism helps immigrants to fashion their public ethnic identity as an important cultural capital (Kurien 2005). Thus, Asian Indians can utilize a segmented assimilation framework, which encourages "selective acculturation" whereby groups celebrate model minority discourse as "ethnic pride", and also develop "reactive ethnicity" which helps to deal with "ethnic victimization", and the two in combination tended to strengthen diasporic nationalism among immigrants (Kurien 2005:439). "[T]he process of becoming an American ethnic group has operated at the same time that being Indian, with heightened consciousness of Indian identities and the re-creation of diverse Indian traditions, are becoming possible and strikingly more evident" (Khandelwal 2002).

This chapter illustrates the complexity of Asian Indian identity in terms of changing ethnic relations in America. In particular, the first-generation Asian Indians' diverse ethnic experiences have complicated the question of ethnic identity. However, research on ethnic identity of Asian Indians in the U.S. does not address theory and research in social psychology to illustrate ethnic group dynamics. Most of the research

also focuses on the densely populated ethnic communities or studies the experiences of immigrants' children. Employing Structural Ritualization Theory, this study fills the gap in the literature on migration/immigration studies, ethnic identity, South Asian studies, and sociological social psychology by exploring various dimensions of ritualized practices of Asian Indian immigrants and their complex socio-cognitive processes in constructing ethnic identity.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural Ritualization Theory

Structural Ritualization Theory (SRT) (Knottnerus 1997, 2005, 2009, 2011) examines the role rituals play in the structuring of social life. Through everyday occurrence of personal and social rituals in various social settings, order is maintained in society. Rituals carry symbolic meanings which give significance to human action. These practices are ubiquitous, yet invisible and thus most often we oversee the significance of rituals.

SRT acknowledges that one of the earliest scholars Durkheim in his classic work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* examines the role of ritual in both 'sacred' and 'profane' domains, yet the concept of ritual is underutilized in Sociology. (Various other scholars have focused in different ways on the importance of rituals including Turner 1965; Goffman 1967; Douglas 1970, to name a few).

Conventionally, rituals are understood as pre-modern practices, which mainly occur in religious contexts. Rituals are static and not capable of change and have little

significance to understand full complexity of human behavior. SRT, in contrast argues that rituals are a fundamental component of human behavior and integral part of social processes. These practices are found both in secular and sacred contexts and are subject to modification. Rituals are directly related to all three aspects of social behavior – social organization, culture, and personality structure and may impact different levels of society This approach argues that rituals occur at and impact different, micro to macro levels of society such as in face-to-face interaction and relationships, larger groups and organizations, society as a whole, and the world. Rituals can be both personal and social. In certain situations some rituals may be carried out individually but meanings and themes are collectively shared.

SRT argues that rituals operate at six levels (relationships/interaction, networks, intraorganizational relations, interorganizational relations, societal, global, and the world system) of social structure both across and within. SRT also explains its linkages with other perspectives (like social inequality, social organizations, social psychology, and social theory) with the usage of multi-method research strategy. SRT stresses how ritualization helps in the patterning of social relationship and therefore the formation, reproduction, and sometimes alteration of social structures. Thus, SRT explains the importance of rituals to examine various aspects of social reality and finds an important link to craft sociological analysis (Knottnerus 2011).

SRT provides a helpful framework to understand the dynamics of group processes that are embedded in a larger social milieu. There are a few key concepts to understand the occurrence of structural ritualization. The first concept is "socially standardized" which refers to a regularly engaged in or habitual social practice. "Action repertoire" is

defined as a set of elements of which are socially standardized practices. A "schema" is the cognitive structure. All these definitions help to understand the principal concept of the theory – "Ritualized symbolic practices" (RSPs).

More specifically, SRT focuses on *ritualized symbolic practices* (RSPs) which refer to regularly engaged in or standardized social practices which are grounded in actors' cognitive structures or symbolic frameworks. SRT explains the process of *ritualization* as the routinized interaction sequences and social behavior that occur in various social settings including secular contexts. Rituals are an important aspect of human agency which play a role in the reproduction, and transformation of social structure in groups embedded or nested within larger social environments. *Embedded groups* are bounded groups nested or located within a more encompassing organized collectivity, especially an organizational or institutional system (e.g., informal youth groups within an educational institution, a slave society within American slave plantation system, a problem solving group within a formal organization, women volunteers working in an NGO within patriarchal Indian society, or immigrant groups within host society).

SRT's conceptualization of embedded group is influenced by Berger and Luckman's (1966) social phenomenological approach. They view that the social structure and ritualized behavior of individuals in the wider social environment make up the objective reality for actors in the embedded group. Thus, following Berger and Luckman; Knottnerus (2011) asserts that in the embedded group "people use the symbolic and social resources that they are exposed to in their construction of new behavior patterns." However, these newly constructed rituals are not just mere copies of external social

environment, rather contains elaborate symbolic elements. “Once formed, the rituals and structure of the embedded groups have a direct impact on the habits of thought and action of its members” (Knottnerus 1997:258). SRT also points out that the reproduction of social structure occurs even when it may not be in the best interest of the people and the groups they are embedded in.

Outlining SRT with the influence of Durkheim and David Kertzer’s (1988) treatment of ritual as socially standardized and repetitive symbolic activity, Knottnerus (1997) has used the term ritualization involving ritualized behavior and social interaction. Furthermore, Giddens’ conceptualization of ‘routine’ is similar to SRT’s approach to ritualization in daily life. SRT argues that rituals and habits/routines are not simply dichotomous in nature, but rituals often possess more elaborate cognitive and symbolic elements (Knottnerus 2002).

SRT is also influenced by Simmel’s (1906, 1950) argument that secret societies often possess rituals and hierarchies and these are derived from the social world surrounding them (Knottnerus 1999, 2011). This process takes place even if the outer world is opposed to the groups they are embedded in. Thus, individuals use symbols, actions, resources from their prior experiences and external world to construct a new social reality which may reproduce the existing one. Grounded in these scholarly contributions, SRT provides a systematic investigation and a rigorous theoretical framework to explain that ritualization plays an important role in structuring of social life and is a crucial component of human behavior (Knottnerus 1997, 2002).

According to the formal theory, four factors – *salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources* – play an important role in this process of ritualization.

Salience refers to the extent to which a RSP is considered central or prominent within a domain of interaction. *Repetitiveness* is the frequency with which a ritualized practice is carried on in a social setting. *Homologousness* refers to the degree of perceived similarity (in meaning and form) among different RSPs. The greater the correspondence between different RSPs, the more likely they will have the same effect or outcome. *Resources* are the human and nonhuman materials required for the performance of ritualized practice in a domain of interaction. With the greater availability of relevant resources, it is easier for actors to be engaged in routinized social practices. The theory states that the greater the degree of salience, repetitiveness, presence of homologousness, and the availability of resources of ritualized symbolic practices in the larger social milieu, the greater the rank or relative standing of these RSPs in terms of its dominance or importance in that environment. In essence, the theory argues that higher the rank of RSPs in terms of these four factors, the greater the effect, influence or importance of these behaviors, and the more likely new, yet similar ritualized symbolic practices will emerge among actors in an embedded group. To reiterate an earlier point, such routinized activities is not simply the copies of the wider social milieu, rather the social behavior involves conceptual representation of reality.

To date much research has provided tests, exemplifications and/or elaborations of the theory.[12] In all this research and the present study, there is a basic assumption that drives the theory: ritualization is an essential aspect of human agency and social life in general.

Application of Structural Ritualization Theory in the Studies of Ethnicity

The analytical framework of SRT has been successfully utilized for further theory development and research on ethnicity (Guan and Knottnerus 1999; Guan and Knottnerus 2003; Knottnerus and LoConto 2003; Dasari 2008).

Knottnerus and LoConto (2003) identify and define the ways ritualized practices can be strategically employed by actors to create and uphold rituals to influence the social dynamics and structures of ethnic community of Italian Americans in southeastern Oklahoma. In this research, SRT is used to elaborate three kinds of 'strategic ritualization' viz., ritual legitimators, ritual entrepreneurs, ritual sponsors. Over a period of time different actors who occupied these positions of legitimators, entrepreneurs, and sponsors shaped the ethnic community by choosing and influencing different goals and activities within ethnic groups. This research also argues that ethnicity, a socially constructed category, emerges out of complex decision making and interactional processes. In particular, actors utilize strategic ritualized symbolic practices to achieve certain desired ends including the affirmation of ethnicity, economic needs, and civic solidarity.

The theoretical framework of SRT also analyzed the process of acculturation and marginalization of different generations of Chinese Americans (Guan and Knottnerus 1999). The authors argue that the older Chinatown generation limits their daily ritualized behaviors to the Chinese community, including speaking Chinese, upholding traditional gender based rules, observing longstanding religious customs, following established dietary and dining practices, involvement in family business etc., and is marginalized from the larger society. These older generations thus exhibit a traditional unified ethnic

character. The new generation of Chinese Americans, on the other hand, because of their American education, proficiency in English, upward social mobility, and decentralized residential patterns tend to reproduce significant parts of American mainstream culture. The study also suggests that the new generation continues to participate in Chinese culture within informal social groups and networks creating a cultural dualism or ritual dualism, i.e., a bi-ritual ethnic character. The factors such as ethnic prejudice that existed within host society, occupational choices including scientific and research oriented jobs, and the larger global environment resist complete assimilation of new generation Chinese and help the new generation to enact both American and Chinese ritualized practices in their everyday lives.

The concept of 'bi-ritual' ethnic character has been further studied with regards to a similar Chinese American community but in the context of community protest. Guan and Knottnerus (2003) discuss how the 'bi-ritual' character of this particular ethnic community is a facilitating factor to engage in strategic ritualization. By looking at a community protest against a proposed sports stadium in Philadelphia, organized mainly by American-born Chinese, this study analyzes how the ritualized activities found in both Chinese and mainstream American culture are strategically used by participants to achieve a successful end of the community protest. The strategic use of ritualized activities of bi-ritual ethnic character served to achieve two very different goals including seeking political power through collective protest and expressing a sense of ethnic identity and community.

Dasari's (2008) dissertation focuses on how Asian Indian organizations play a crucial role in promoting and facilitating ritualized practices in order to preserve and

sustain ethnic identity of the immigrant community. He argues that content categories such as food, dress, language, religion, popular culture, and sports and games are the markers of rituals of ethnic significance in Asian Indian organizations. This research provides an analysis of rituals present in local ethnic organizations of a relatively smaller, a less studied, Asian Indian community.

In all the above studies dealing the issues of ethnicity and ethnic identity, the analytical tool of SRT helped to evaluate rituals of ethnic significance in terms of their salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources. SRT contributed in the field of ethnic studies by analyzing various ethnic communities such as Italian Americans, Chinese Americans, and Asian Indian Americans. To repeat, these studies emphasize (a) the ways strategic ritualized practices operate in ethnic communities and in protest movements, (b) the ways unified ritual character of older generation Chinese Americans marginalize them from the mainstream society and the bi-ritual ethnic character of new generation Chinese Americans help them to acculturate in the host society, and (c) the ways rituals help ethnic communities to maintain ethnic identity.

The analytical framework of SRT is further explored in this study analyzing ritualized ethnic identity construction of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants in the Southern Pains regions of the U.S. SRT explains that rituals operate at micro and more macro levels (Knottnerus 1997, 2011). Therefore, in the present study, I focus on the RSPs ethnic agents engage in within single or multiple domains of interactions – e.g., in individual actions, face to face interactions and relationships with immigrants and other members of the host society, in interaction with regional-ethnic and pan-ethnic organizations, networks, and in interaction with the host society.[13] This study also

contributes to the socio-psychological aspect of SRT by focusing on the formation of ethnic identity. Ethnic agents in their everyday life are engaged in multiple dimensions of 'action repertoires that are schema driven' or ritualized symbolic practices and it is the meanings or symbolic component they attach to ritualized practices that perpetuate and reflect the social realities around them. The ranks of RSPs will influence the way ethnic agents see the world around them and the schema or cognitive structures will help shape or influence the behavior of individuals. In other words, once RSPs become internalized, ethnic agents will engage in complex decision making strategies to act out ritualized behaviors reflective of the ethnic group.

The following section addresses a theoretical extension of SRT by focusing on the ethnic identity formation of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S.

Ritual and Ethnic Identity: A Theoretical Analysis

In this study, first-generation Asian Indian immigrants are viewed as the *embedded ethnic agents* (includes actors embedded in ethnic networks, associations, and organizations) within the more encompassing American culture (i.e., host culture). Building upon SRT, I direct my attention to how ritualized symbolic practices (RSPs) involving three dimensions –regional-ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs – play a crucial role in constructing the ethnic identity of actors.

In essence, *ethnic identity situation* includes life experiences of actors involving social, personal, situational, and social-historical factors. Ethnic identity situation is constructed and reconstructed through social (religious, political, and cultural) and structural changes, and the everyday experiences of ethnic agents/actors. The ethnic identity situation provides meanings to the RSPs which help to construct ethnic identity.

Depending on the situation, the meanings of the RSPs can be both fixed and in flux being defined and re-defined by ethnic agents and outside agents (Nagel 1994; Barth 1996; Ryan 2010). The fixed meanings of RSPs can be rooted in the ethnic agents' ties with their homeland (current or historical), region of origin, shared history of migration, and/or informal and formal categorization. However, the continuous negotiation and renegotiation of meanings in the new land brings flux to the fixity (Misztual 2001; Chua 2007; Ryan 2010). To illustrate, the term "Asian Indian" as a separate racial category first appeared in the 1980 census, was consistently defined culturally with respect to "Indian heritage", and was associated with Hindu culture and middle-class success. Indians have also demonstrated a commitment to maintain their diverse identities based on their regional, religious, caste, and linguistic differences. In addition, the term "South Asian" has been in use since the late 1980s that is more inclusive with identifying immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burma, and Asian Indians. But as Asian Indian immigrants are the dominant category, the term South Asian is often used interchangeably with "Indians" (Das Gupta 1997; Mukhi 2000; Khandelwal 2002; Kurien 2003). Khandelwal (2002) argues in her research on Indian ethnic cultures in New York that since the 1960s for Asian Indians in the U.S., activities to celebrate their culture remarkably intensified. The cultural activities drew upon immigrants' diverse experiences including India's regional, caste, linguistic, and religious diversity, the influences of the host country and the city, and overseas Indian communities.

Within ethnic identity situation individual agency and social structures/constraints both contribute to the meaning making processes of ethnic ritualized practices. This

fixity-fluidity dynamic of the meanings of the RSPs can be delineated in three broad dimensions. In turn, these RSPs help to construct ethnic identity. I define the RSPs as,

1. Regional-ethnic Ritualized Symbolic Practices (RSPs). These RSPs are derived from the actors' region of origin.

The region of origin features a sense of real or assumed/fictive kinship or the myth of common spatial and temporal origin and shared ethnic memories or common past(s). The regional-ethnic rituals are thus derived from common language (both gestural and spoken), religion, geography or territory, or cultural practices (Bozorgmehr 1997; Niyogi 2010; Smith 1996; Hutchinson and Smith 1996).

As mentioned earlier, the meanings of RSPs are both fixed and in process. Therefore, both past and present i.e., traditional and new regional kinship ties and/or ethnic memories act as frameworks to create new meanings of regional-ethnic RSPs. The meaning of *region of origin* changes according to the situation, which in turn, alters the meaning of, ritualized practices. Thus, regional-ethnic ritualized symbolic practices can be culturally similar, i.e., based on similar customs, beliefs, practices, and other cultural elements, emerge from geographical proximity of places in immigrants' native land; based on a similar language of communication; and/or relate to a similar religious affiliation. Therefore, regional-ethnic RSPs may attach similar meanings to a more inclusive wider regional category (Barth 1969; De Vos 2004). Regional-ethnic rituals include both pre-migration social characteristics and the cultural heritage of immigrants and post-migration construction of regional-ethnic attributes in the host society.

To illustrate, regional-ethnic dimension of RSPs can be derived from, but are not limited to the following categories.

i. Language: Language provides a sense of historical continuity, a common ancestry or a place of origin. It is considered as major component in the maintenance of a separate ethnic identity (De Vos 2004).

Dasari (2008) argues that among Asian Indians, language is one of the highly ranked ritualized practices in ethnic organizations showcasing regional affiliation. Sometimes, regional-ethnic language reflects the ethnic politics of the home country. In the post-independence period, in India, Hindi was adopted as the official language of the country, largely spoken in the northern Indian states. However, the attempt to impose this northern Indian language on a national level failed in southern Indian, leaving English as India's lingua franca (Brass 1996; Shankar and Srikanth 1998). In the primary findings based on an Asian Indian American community in a small town, there has been repeated reference to knowledge of Hindi language.[14] One participant told me "I am happy that you know Hindi, here there are many people who don't understand it at all"…"Is speaking in Hindi Okay for everyone?" (Participant observation field notes, July 11, 2010).

ii. Religious practices: Religious practices are a powerful way of shaping and preserving ethnic identity; particularly for immigrants to the U.S. Religious practices are intimately tied to historical origin, community, and identity.

As a result of the diverse linguistic and regional-cultural background of Hindu immigrants from India; regional religions have also been maintained. For example, the Hindu temples in America portray clear the distinction of north Indian-south Indian patterns and practices (Bharadwaj and Rao 2011). Similarly, "Swaminarayan Sanstha" is related to Gujarati migration and protects Gujarati regional-ethnic identity through the

use of language, body markings, architecture of temples and shrines, and culinary habits (Williams 1987).[15] Other religions, such as Sikhism (sometimes included in nationalistic Hinduism because of their origin in India), maintains its own religious practices and regional affiliations (Tatla 1999; Maira 2002; Helweg 2004; Nigoyi 2010).

Saunders (2007) describes the life of Guptas who are first-generation immigrants from India, arriving in the U.S. in the 1970s. Guptas religious practices are tied to their region of origin and their caste identity.

> …The Guptas are active participants in their local community of *north Indians* (emphasis added) who are dispersed throughout the metropolitan Atlanta region. Mrs. Gupta regularly conducts a community puja centered around reciting the Sundarakand, a chapter from Tulasidas' Ramcharitmanas. Members of this puja community generally come from Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh or other north Indian locales. Many participants identify themselves as *Baniyas*, the jati to which the Guptas belong, while the rest belong to other high castes…(p. 205)

iii. Cultural practices: Cultural practices such as, dance traditions, clothing style, music, literature, values and beliefs, and customs can be used as regional-ethnic ritualized symbolic practices.

Khandelwal (2002), for example, found that Indian immigrants in New York "[define] their culture in terms of their regional and religious foodways" (p. 37). That is to say, immigrants are defining their Indian identity through their regional and religious food practices. Ray (2004) explains that first-generation Bengali-American ethnic identity is expressed through Hindu Bengali cuisine.[16] He argues that:

> …Fish, rice, various spices, flavors, fats, cuts of fish and meats, cooking utensils, and method of cooking are central to ethnic claims …[i]t is dinner where Bengaliness is asserted against non-Bengali Indian Americans, …*consumption of fish and rice of Bengalis in opposition to the vegetarian diet of many non-Bengali Indians* (emphasis added) (Ray 2004:79-101).

Moreover, elaborating on the "new secular ritual" of Bengali-Americans' annual celebration of North American Bengali Conference (NABC), Ray (2004) mentions that the repertoire of most of the music and dance are derived from the works of famous Bengali poets and professional troupes of West Bengal. Concerning the sartorial display, 20 per cent of first-generation men are seen in white *dhoti-punjabi*, *kurta* over a pair of trousers (common attire for middle-class men on Calcutta streets), and sandals.[17] Almost 80 per cent of women wear the richly colored traditional silk sari with elaborate borders decorated in Bengali motifs.[18]

2. *Pan-ethnic Ritualized Symbolic Practices*: These RSPs are derived from selected features, which denote all members of an ethnic group to both themselves and the members of the wider society. The selection of those features are derived from and influenced by both the society of origin and the host society.

Studies on pan-ethnicity/pan-ethnic identity largely focus on fluidity of ethnic boundaries and meanings. The boundaries and meanings of ethnicity are constructed by both – the outsiders and the insiders. The boundaries help to resolve identity questions and culture provides the meaning of ethnicity (Nagel 1994). Espiritu (1992) notes when a pan-ethnic group is perceived as an interest-group through which resources and political power can be acquired; it becomes the basis for identification. Since the 1960s, adopting the dominant groups' categorization different Asian groups use pan-Asianism as a political device to fight their marginalization and to promote and protect their interests. She also finds that individuals strategically choose from an array of pan-ethnic or culturally distinct nationality based identities depending on different settings and audiences.

Recognizing that ethnic boundaries can shift and change, Okamoto (2003, 2006) focuses on the conditions that encourage the institutionalization of panethnic community. It is not intergroup competition for resources with non-Asian Asian Americans, but rather, Asians find themselves without equal opportunities and fair treatment, and therefore form pan-Asian organizations to attain these collective benefits and create a supportive community. Portes and Rumbaut (1996) explain that ethnic enterprises can be created in response to immigrants' perceived hostility from the host society and can lead to "reactive ethnicity."

Situational pan-ethnic identification is also found among West Indian immigrants. Waters (1990) reports that under some circumstances dark-skinned Caribbean immigrants acknowledge their similarities with native-born blacks both in color and ancestry; at other times Caribbean immigrants emphasize on their cultural differences with native-born blacks. Oropesa, Landale and Greif (2008) note pan-Hispanic identification are derived from skin color. Darker skinned Puerto Rican women, who are relatively affluent and live in areas with fewer African Americans and diverse Hispanic population in NY, embrace pan-ethnic Hispanic identification to avoid a negative "black" identifier.

Roth (2009) explains that transnational migration, the interaction among people here and there, helps to create pan-ethnic boundary. She explains that Latino pan-ethnic boundary is developed in the diaspora occurs though pan-ethnic entrepreneurs in the media and through first-hand interactions among migrants and non-migrants.

Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. urged for constructing unified Indian identity on various occasions. The attempts to create new Indian identity suggest that identity is fluid and, hence can be renewed and reinvented. This new identity creation also indicates

influence of external ascription and immigrants as agents of change (Bhalla 2006). In Indian immigrant community newspapers, readers voiced their concerns and opinions on creating (often contested) pan-Indian identity based on their shared experiences as Indians in the host society. A reader of a diasporic magazine, India Currents, asks for a formation of new pan-Indian identity in the host society:

> …[W]hen we think of ourselves as Indians, we must imagine an Indian nation first…*Through the neat forgetting of such contradictory meanings, we Indian Americans create our identity, our memory of culture…[T]o act collectively meant coming together as people with a shared, even imagined, sense of "ourselves,"* even though we were all hybrids made up of various selves, various identities (emphasis added). Coming together was no natural process. In order for us to act, we had to assert some form of identity rooted in some (constantly contested) notion of unity…Our identity as a community can help us to redefine what it means to be an American, as well as what it means to be a diasporic in the age of brutal multinational capital, virulent, nationalist chauvinism (be it American, Hindu or Muslim), and a fluid international division of labor. And this acknowledgment of hybridity is itself a struggle against forgetting who we are (Rai 1992:0).

With shifting meanings and boundaries, ethnic agents were previously seen as members of separate regional, religious, lingual, and caste groups are engaged in pan-ethnic rituals.

To illustrate the pan-ethnic dimension of RSPs, a few examples of categories from which pan-Indian rituals can be derived are explicated below:

i. Pan-religious practices: Racialization and racial lumping contributed to the construction of Hindu pan-ethnic identity among Asian Indians in America. Immigrants construct their Hindu identity in the U.S. by synthesizing different and often opposed Indian Hindu traditions to side-step their problematic racial, religious, and cultural minority status (Kurien 2003). After 9/11, Hindu American groups reclaimed their "peace loving, family oriented" pan-Hindu identity to avoid Muslim identification (Kurien

2006). An article on Hinduism Today magazine published from Hawaii emphasizes pan-Hinduism that Hindus must follow:

> I am disappointed and saddened to observe many Hindus segregate from and quarrel with each other over the variety of rituals and Deities in our religion. I believe this is a significant reason young Indians my age, both in and outside India, are drifting away from our native culture and religion, unable to make sense of this disunity…*In order to solidify Hinduism as a single unified religion, it is vital that the basic common philosophy behind these various sects and practices be brought to the foreground* (emphasis added). I therefore encourage my generation, especially those who, like me, are abroad and, in a sense, alienated from their native culture and tradition, to study the basic philosophy and ideas present in the Vedas, and to understand that the many sects, rituals, Deities, protocols and other external differences are *not contradictions within their religion but rather are testament to the magnanimity and universality of Hinduism* (emphasis added) (Prativadi 2001:63).

The preliminary data derived from a religious congregation (I call it Prayer Meeting) emphasizes pan-Indian "spirituality". In the congregation, ethnic agents practice Jainism and as well as Hinduism.[19] In India, Jains and Hindus were never conflicting religious groups, but Jains sought to maintain a distinct religious identity by emphasizing on their distinct beliefs, histories, and traditions. However, in the U.S., Jains have adopted a 'Hinduized' Indian ethnic identity (Jain and Forest 2004).

In the prayer hall, there are numerous portraits of *Dada Bhagvan* (Grandfather Lord of a Jain community, Akram Vijnan community) and Hindu symbols.[20] The prayer is arranged as a *satsang* (congregation), local worship groups of Hindus (Kurien 2005). For example, the worship combines Akram Vijan Community's prayers such as "*Dada Bhagvan ki aseem jai jai kar hai*…" (Raise your voice to praise Dada Bhagvan) and the prayers to the Hindu lords "*Om Jai Jagadish Hare*…," bhajan (Hindu devotional song). The congregation observes both Jain religious festivals (e.g., Dada Bhagvan's birthday, Mahāvīra's birthday) and Hindu religious festivals (e.g., Shiva Ratri, Karva Chauth).[21] It

also celebrates India's regional cultural festivals (e.g., Dandiya, Garba, and Gujarati New Year) and pan-Indian festival, such as Diwali, and discusses the significance of Diwali from the perspectives of Hinduism and Jainism.[22] In the Prayer Meeting, people also discuss Hindu and Jain religious teachings focusing on moksha (salvation), ahimsa (non-violence), and peace and tolerance of Hinduism (Participant observation field notes, July 2010-June 2011).

ii. Popular pan cultural practices: Research shows that popular culture (music, dance, festivals etc.) can help form pan-ethnic group identity, despite tribal, regional/pan-ethnic tensions (Sommers 1991; Maira 2002; Knottnerus, Van Delinder, and Edwards 2010).

Sommers (1991) explains that the Bay area's process of 'latinization' is expressed through the celebration of Cinco de Mayo (related to Mexican patriotic holiday), performance of salsa dance (its roots are in Afro-Cuban Music) in a Chicano/Mexican holiday, and 24th Street Cultural Festival (primarily related to Mexican independence). He asserts that despite the tensions within Latino community to express these cultural events as Latino/Spanish, a pan-ethnic identity, Latinismo, has emerged.

Indian popular cultural practices such as classical dance, music, theatre, and Bollywood or Hindi films, Hindi film music and dance are integral part of Indian immigrant community (Mukhi 2000, Khandelwal 2002). Bollywood also shapes and reflects pan-Indian identity in the diaspora (Raganathan 2010, Bhatawadekar 2011). *Desi* cinema or movies based on Indian diasporic community also plays an instrumental role in creating pan South Asian Identity (Sharma 2011).[23] Maira (2002) argues that Indian American youth culture is a site where youth negotiate the tensions between "cool" and "collective nostalgia". Combining music from Hindi movies, Indian music, and hip hop

music they create *Bhangra Remix* music style, a *desi* (pan-Asian Indian) subculture which holds a delicate balance of their ethnicization and participation in the U.S. racial formation.

Espiritu argues that media outlets may act as "panethnic entrepreneurs" who promote "ethnic ideology and keep alive ethnic symbols and values, heroes, and historical achievements" (1992:37). Roth (2009) explains that multinational Spanish-language television networks promote "homogenized" meanings of Latino identity. The television programs act as pan-ethnic entrepreneurs that shape transnational identities of the Puerto Rican and Dominican non-immigrants. Similarly, Indian population is geographically dispersed, but it is connected through mass media. Indian ethnic media such as television and print media that focus on news and film-based entertainment from India created a "virtual community for cultural expression" in the U.S. (Khandelwal 2002).

Diwali festival also celebrates pan-ethnic Indian identity (Mukhi 2000; Maira 2002). In an article on Diwali in an immigrant newspaper, India Abroad, a New York resident writes:

> ...I am not going to hide behind a false veil of becoming an entirely assimilated Americanized person. *My Indianness is there for everyone to see and Diwali is or certainly was an important part of it* (emphasis added)…On normal days, I do things that most New Yorkers do -wake up, eat breakfast, head to work or write from home, meet people, watch Hollywood movies and American sitcoms, discuss politics and sports. But on *Diwali day I start to feel my Indianness, my otherness* (emphasis added)... (Chhabra: 2010).

Maira (2002) also argues that none of the festivals celebrated in Queens, New York, matches the stature of Diwali and even joined by non-Hindu Indians, in many instances.

iii. Practices demonstrating pan-"Indianness":

Pan-Indian ethnic identity is upheld by immigrant parents in the context of moral codes where Indians are equated with "purity" and American culture as "polluted". Thus, pan-ethno national identity sustained through the bodies of women, and fantasies of female purity, which are manifested through concerns about second-generations' dating, peer group selection etc. (Bacon 1996; Maira 2002). Arranged marriage plays an important role to maintain Indian immigrants' social networks. Younger Indian Americans are given more leeway in choice of marriage, "... "[C]hoice" in marriage "meant marrying an Indian from a different caste or region, but even in these cases elements of "arrangement" and familial approval play an important role…" (Khandelwal 2002:151). Prasad (2000) argues that regional-lingual organizations in the U.S., such as Rajput Association of America, Patidar Samaj, Brahmin Samaj, promote caste based arranged marriages.

Also, practices of vegetarian diet, yoga, spirituality, ayurveda (medicine), and henna tattoos are a few examples featuring "pan-Indianness". Research shows that transnational Indian Hindus define 'true' Indian cuisine with vegetarianism despite the fact that most Hindus are, in fact, not vegetarians. Some immigrants even become dedicated vegetarians and more religious to remain Indians (Khandelwal 2002; Saunders 2007). Observation data also show that vegetarian food was prominent and repeated in every Prayer Meeting (Participant observation field notes, July 2010-June 2011). Maira (2002) argues that henna paints have been recreated in the mainstream America as South Asian ethnic emblems.

Mathew and Prasad (2000) argue that a new Hindu American identity developed since 1965 in the Indian diaspora. Hindu organizations in the U.S. raise funds to promote

Hindu heritage such as practices of services, festivals, yoga, music, art, drama, religious publications, scriptural and philosophical research, ayurveda, jyothisha (astrology). In recent years yoga has become popular practices between both Indian and non-Indian Americans. Yoga is interpreted as form of spirituality and/or Hinduism and practiced in various forms including kirtan, meditation, laughter yoga, kundalini yoga, to name a few.

iv. Transnational practices: With increasing transnational ties with homeland, Indian immigrants are engaged in transnational practices. Immigrants are in contact with their families in India by telephone, internet, postal mail, gifts are sent online or with others travelling back home. They also send remittances to family members and invest in the home country (Bhattacharya 2008). Since Indian diaspora conference in 2003, the federal government of Indian requested émigrés for their intellectual, political, social, and financial contributions in India. Even several state (regional) governments woo Non-Resident Indians to invest in their states (Sahoo 2006; Bose 2008).

Immigrants' practices involving frequent travelling, remittances of money to families and communities back home and investment in India are a few examples of Indian transnational activities.[24]

3. *Host Ritualized Symbolic Practices*. A collection/array of dominant RSPs engaged in by most members of host society.

Research shows that an ethnic identity is fully understood in relation to another prominent group identity, i.e., ethnic identity is expressed as a part of their host culture (Phinney and Ong 2007). For example, Das Gupta's (1997) argument on multiple identities of second-generation Asian Indian women in the U.S. discusses the "construction of identities *across* (emphasis in the original) nations and cultures" (p.

588). These women create their identities by "negotiating power relations within and outside their Indian communities" (p. 587). They didn't reject one culture in favor of one – "American" as against "Indian" or vice versa. They created a cultural space by claiming a sense of in-betweenness – *continuity* by fusing existing (apparently fixed) meanings of ethnicity with the negotiation of their place within cultures.

Similarly, to construct multi-ritual ethnic identity; ethnic agents are engaged in ritualized practices derived from the host society. In this process, the ethnic agents may not totally assimilate in the dominant society; but rather utilize certain host RSPs as the framework to organize ethnic experiences. Thus, host RSPs influence their ethnic agents' social and personal experiences. The host practices can be manifested through clothing, food, festivals, sports, recreational activities, political activism etc.

The practice of host rituals varies across ethnic groups. Dhingra (2009) explains how Indian American motel owners create a sense of belonging in their local towns (primarily in Ohio), separate from their co-ethnics, despite facing racial and cultural marginalization from locals and simultaneously affirm distance from their local American community. He argues that "…[the owners of lower-budget motels] conceived mainstream [society's] norms as already inclusive of their own" (Dhingra 2009:1100). To illustrate, to maintain their religious and culinary preferences (i.e., Hindu-vegetarians), the motel owners have created alternate meaning to meat-based restaurants of mainstream culture. One motel owner argues, "I go to Mexican restaurant and eat vegetarian. I go to Taco Bell and get things with beans. Burger King has a veggie patty…" (p. 1100).

Furthermore, because of the transnational contacts and multi-ethnic experiences in the host society, ethnic agents are not only influenced by host community, but other

ethnic groups and transnational experiences as well (Das Gupta 1997; Ryan 2010). Therefore, the host ritualized practices may feature continuities between host and home society. In a study on the performance of Polish national identity through food rituals, Rabikowska (2010) argues that the migrants who wanted to reinforce their Polish 'tradition' acquired their foodstuffs from different sources – "…local Polish or other Eastern European stores, to Asian newsagents and big chain supermarkets…" (p. 396). Moreover, some Polish migrants approved of "hamburgers as 'edible' food only because it was recognized and tested at home…" (p. 395).

In sum, these three dimensions of RSPs – regional-ethnic, pan-ethnic, and host– are involved in the everyday lives of ethnic agents and contribute to their ethnic identity.

Analyzed in accordance with the four factors – salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources – the rank or relative standing determines the importance or dominance of these three dimensions of RSPs in the ethnic identity situation. The higher the rank of the RSP in the larger social milieu, i.e., ethnic identity situation, the greater the impact on cognitions and behaviors of actors and the multi-ritual ethnic identity they construct thereby. Knottnerus (1997) argues "dominant ritualized practices are major sources of meanings that actors use in the construction of their own cognitive schema" (p. 267). Thus, the ranks of these three dimensions of RSPs impact the cognitive structures of ethnic agents.

(4) *Ritual-ethnic Identity Schemas*

The ranks of ethnic RSPs produce an organized cognitive representation – the *ritual-ethnic identity schemas*. Ritual-ethnic identity schemas are mental processes that represent knowledge on ritualized practices and help process information on symbolic

rituals. Based on the ranks of ritualized behaviors, ethnic agents engage in the processes of assessment, judgment, and decision to create ritual-ethnic identity schemas. That is, these schemas provide an analytic lens on how people interpret ritualized behaviors. Ethnic agents may hold multiple templates of schemas to make sense of their social world, and the dominant or important ritualized behaviors influence schemas and ethnic identification.[25] Therefore, ritual-ethnic identity schemas are not just perceptual phenomena; it can serve as an explanatory device of ritual-ethnic identity relations (Howard 2000). Ritual-ethnic identity schemas help in the formation of *multi-ritual ethnic identity*.

In the process of ethnic identity construction, at first, actors are engaged in the process of *assessment*. The actors are knowledgeable about the rituals and the ranks of the rituals. That means; they are aware of the different dimensions and the importance of the ritualized practices and about their expected behaviors as ethnic agents (it is possible that actors may not be aware of all the dimensions of rituals). In the process of assessment, actors know the standardized meanings of the rituals that are expected of them in an ethnic identity situation. The standardized meanings of rituals are derived from the ranks of RSPs, i.e., the standardized meanings reflect the important, dominant ritualized practices.

Actors recognize and interpret the shared and collective meanings of the dominant ritualized behaviors. The meanings of dominant rituals feature the expectations from the ethnic agents in a particular ethnic identity situation. That is to say, the highly ranked rituals impact the cognition of the ethnic agents, which in a given situation become the bases for ethnic identity. The standardized meanings of RSPs are contextual and

temporal, which affect group behavior and the process of ritualization. For example, the standardized meanings of rituals among older generation Chinese Americans living in Chinatowns are different from the newer generation Chinese Americans who are exposed to mainstream American cultural practices (Guan and Knottnerus 1999).

Second, ethnic agents engage in the process of *judgment*. Actors actively choose what meanings of RSPs they will identify with. Even when ethnic agents are not aware of the meanings of dominant rituals, they can subtly influence actors' judgment (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamotov 2004). Actors may hold multiple ritual-ethnic schemas in domains of interaction, but individuals activate more salient schemas which reflect dominant ritualized practices present within a particular setting they are exposed to/engage in.[26] That is to say, actors select rituals in accordance with the symbolic meanings attached to the important rituals to form their identity. Again, special circumstances might completely prevent choosing to use these ranked rituals.

Third, the actors make *decision*s about how do they use the knowledge of ritual? How do they process this information? These decisions involve cognitive strategies or mental processes through which we use that knowledge to construct identity. Actors' decisions are influenced by the meanings and the ranks of rituals. The cognitive strategies to process information are context dependent (DiMaggio 1997). Actors use different ritual-ethnic schemas depending on the importance/domiance of ritualized behaviors in domains of interaction. The dominant ritualized practices help individuals to actively process information. The decision making process results in the formation of multi-ritual ethnic identity in four possible ways:

(A) *Separated or segregated-hierarchical ritual-ethnic identity*, where one or two dimensions of rituals dominate over the others, e.g., actors identify as Indians by attending *Durga puja*, *Kali puja* (worship of Goddess Durga and Kali, regional-ethnic religious rituals) held by regional Indian organizations, once in a year and are more important than participation in *Diwali* festival (pan-ethnic practice). Both of these practices carry different meanings.

(B) *Integrated ritual-ethnic identity*, which means that actors synthesize or combine the meanings of different dimensions of RSPs. Thus, the ranks of the any two or more dimensions of RSPs are blended together to create something new. While this is empirically not the common occurrence but theoretically can be a possible decisional strategy. For example, *Bhangra Remix* itself a British and Indian hybrid, are transplanted and blended with the American influences such as hip hop in the social gatherings to create *desi* youth subculture (Maira 2002).

(C) *Separated or segregated-integrated ritual-ethnic identity*. In this identification process, the meanings of various dimensions of ritualized practices are separate and are differentially or equally ranked, but actors combine or synthesize the meanings and ranks of different dimensions of ritualized practices. For example, immigrants from the western Indian state, Gujarat, know that *Dandiya* festival is a regional-ethnic celebration of Gujaratis and high in rank in the domains of interaction they are exposed to/or engage in compared to pan-ethnic festival, such as, *Diwali*. But, the actor may synthesize the meanings and practices of *Dandiya* festival with pan-Indian rituals such as use of English language, use of both Gujarati and Bollywood music, and use of non-Gujarati food such as *rasam* (a south-Indian food). Thus, ethnic agents identify themselves with distinct

dimensions of ritualized practice(s), yet blend the meanings and ranks of those separate practices.

(D) *Strategic ritual-ethnic identity*. In this identification process, actors selectively use rituals from any of the three dimensions for the purpose of creating RSPs which are different from any one dimension to produce, create, and reproduce rituals. For example, actors buy groceries from pan-Indian stores (pan-ethnic ritual), pan-Asian stores (host-rituals), local markets (host-rituals), and super-markets (host-rituals). However, actors are more likely to shop for regional-ethnic food items, vegetables, spices etc. more than any other food items (if available). Thereby, actors strategically use host and pan ethnic rituals to create ethnic identity where regional-ethnic food practices carry distinct meanings and importance.

To repeat, ritual-ethnic schemas provide an analytical lens on how people assess, judge, and makes decisions of their ritualized behaviors to form multi-ritual ethnic identity. Like all cognitive schemas, they are shared representations of ritualized behaviors. That is why actors' ethnic identity schemas are collectively shared; act as a social schema. SRT asserts that "ranks of ritualized symbolic practices in a social environment influence actors' schemas in embedded groups and schemas provide the basis for and influence individual's action in embedded groups" (Knottnerus 1997:267).

Consistent with this argument, the importance of the rituals in the ethnic identity situation shapes cognitive representations of embedded ethnic agents (i.e., actors embedded in ethnic networks, associations, and organizations) and defining features of the ethnic group. In other words, once RSPs become internalized, individual behaviors become routinized action reflecting practices of the entire ethnic group. Moreover, ethnic

identity schemas are flexible; change in accordance with shifting ethnic relations and ritualization. This multiplicity and variability of ethnic identity schemas suggest that multi-ritual ethnic identity is situational, malleable, and context-dependent.

As discussed above, I provide a theoretical framework of ethnic identity building upon structural ritualization theory. I argue that both agency and structures provide meanings to ritualized practices. I presented with examples three dimensions of RSPs – regional-ethnic, pan-ethnic, and host RSPs. Analyzed in accordance with the four factors – salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources – the rank or importance of RSPs is determined. The rank or importance affects actors' socio-cognitive processes, behaviors, and ethnic identity formation. Dominant ritualized symbolic practices provide meanings that the actors used to construct the cognitive framework of ethnic agents, i.e., the ritual-ethnic identity schemas. Ritual-ethnic identity schemas are mechanisms which help in the formation of multi-ritual identity through the processes such as assessment, judgment, and decisions. I provided examples of Asian Indian immigrants' ritualized practices to illustrate theoretical arguments.

To further present the arguments on ethnic identity construction, I have outlined a schematic model. The model shows that in ethnic identity situation both structures and individual agency provide meanings to the three dimensions of ritualized practices, viz., regional ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs. The embedded ethnic agents in the ethnic identity situation use these symbolic practices to construct their ethnic identity. The meanings and ranks/dominance of three dimensions of ritualized activities affect the ethnic agents' cognitive representation or structures, i.e., ritual-ethnic identity schemas, which results in the formation of multi-ritual ethnic identity (see Figure 1).

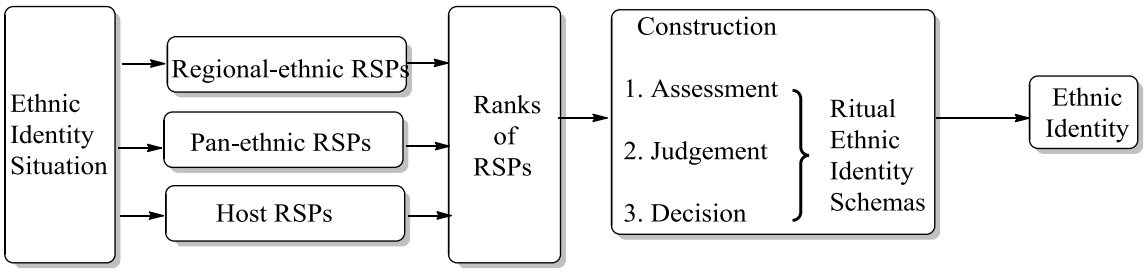

Figure 1. Formation of Multi-ritual Ethnic Identity

In this chapter attention has been directed to theoretically understand how ritualized symbolic practices influence the formation of ethnic identity. I presented a theoretical extension of the original formulation of structural ritualization theory focusing on ethnic identity construction and ritual. This study is motivated by existing literature on ethnicity and Asian Indian immigrants. This analytical tool can help realize the constructivist approach of ethnicity. Presenting the dynamic nature of ritualized behaviors, this theoretical perspective captures the fluidity and contingency of ethnic identity. However, research on ethnicity ignores a more micro level analysis of ethnic identity. This study fills the gap by providing an overview of dynamic and varied ethnic and racial identities and practices of Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. through a framework of ritualized symbolic behaviors. By treating ethnic identity formation as ritualized behaviors, which rest upon cognitive schemas, this perspective suggests a social psychological analysis of ethnic identity.

The next chapter lays out the methodology used for researching how the three dimensions of ritualized behaviors provide meanings to the ritual-ethnic identity schemas and how people in their everyday lives interpret the symbolic themes or meanings of ritualized activities to construct their multi-ritual ethnic identity.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research

In this study, I utilize a qualitative methodology. Research using qualitative methods derive their strength from focusing on situations or people and emphasizing texts and words as opposed to numbers, amount, intensity and frequency; these methods are best suited for pursuing meanings, contexts, and processes (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006; Lofland et al. 2006). Qualitative researchers are interested in the rich descriptions of how participants make sense of the world around them and how this understanding informs their actions.

In particular, sociological commitment to hermeneutics encourages researchers to understand the "complex world of lived experiences from the point of views of those who live it" (Schwandt 1994: 118). The interpretative approach analyzes the meanings that are inherent in social relationships and interactions. Sociological research on ethnic identity relies heavily on qualitative research to uncover how respondents give meanings to their actions and construct their identities.

The social-psychological perspective of Structural Ritualization Theory also provides the explanations for the constructions of ethnic identity. According to the theory, individuals in their everyday life engage in schema driven social actions and it is the meanings they attach to these ritualized symbolic practices that reflect and perpetuate the social realities around them. The ritualized practices are grounded in shared cognitive structures or symbolic frameworks in the domains of interaction and ethnic identities are developed through the interpretations of shared cognitive structures. This study attempts to understand the significance of the three dimensions of ritualized practices, which derive meanings from the domains of interactions present in the ethnic identity situation, for constructing ethnic identity of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants. In other words, this research examines how first-generation Asian Indian immigrants interpret the meanings or symbolic themes of ritualized practices and the interpretations, which affect their ritualized behaviors involved in the formation of ethnic identity. In this study, I am using meanings to also refer to the socio-cognitive processes, the 'participants' perspective', involved with the experiences of ethnic agents which help to construct multi-ritual ethnic identity (Maxwell 2005).

Method

The primary method of data collection is in-depth semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews provide conversational communication between researcher and interviewee with the help of active asking and listening. Interviews also allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words that will help to elicit "deep" information or knowledge about their experiences, meanings, opinions, and interpretations (Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006). Interviews create knowledge as

interviewer and interviewee interact and exchange views through conversation about a theme of mutual interests (Kvale and Brinkman 2009).

The interviews for this research were semi-structured – it is neither an open conversation nor a closed questionnaire. It involved an interview guide that consisted of open-ended questions to allow the conversation to develop, exploring new themes relevant to the interviewees (Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006; Kvale and Brinkman 2009). The interview guide consisted of three main parts – introductory information, ritual and ethnic identity issues, and general background information (Appendix A). I asked participants a number of open-ended questions and added probing questions to elicit more details based on their responses. I also e-mailed follow-up questions to a few interviewees to seek out the nuances of their answers (Rubin and Rubin 2005). The open-ended interview style enabled interviewees to describe their ethnic experiences as Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. This interview process also directed the participants to talk about the meanings and importance of the ritualized behaviors in their lives as Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S. Thus semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed me to create knowledge and explore the issue under study through dialogues.

During the interviews, I used the terms ‘Asian Indian’ and ‘Indian’ alternatively. I noticed that most of the interviewees were comfortable with the term Indian, rather than Asian Indians. Some of them my interviewees were even confused when I used the term Asian Indian immigrants. But I continue using the term Asian Indian in the dissertation to avoid the common use of Indian as American Indians.

I used participant observation technique as my preliminary method of data collection before conducting the interviews. I wanted to observe how immigrants get

involved in various activities within their ethnic and religious communities in the less visible Asian Indian communities. I participated in a weekly religious cum social gathering in a small town community. I also visited Hindu temples a few times and volunteered to manage and distribute flyers. I (with my husband) drove to a city to participate in religious prayers in a Sikh temple. I designed an observation protocol as a method for taking observation notes. I took both descriptive and reflective notes including my hunches, and experiences, and also recorded the physical settings, participants, activities, and my own reactions. I wrote down the observation data right after each meetings in the settings mentioned above (Creswell 2007). The visits to various ethno-religious settings helped me to understand the activities and their participants' interpretations of those practices during and after the meetings, prayers, and gatherings. I must mention that I used this to gain access to the field, to get to know prospective interviewees, to know informants, and to recruit participants for the interview procedure.

My Insider-Outsider Status as a Researcher

My insider status as an Indian helped me to enter different settings and develop rapport with prospective participants with ease. In particular, my status as a married Indian woman helped me to participate in conversations with immigrant Indian women. My conversations with them were primarily on Indian cooking and recipes, gardening Indian vegetables, visiting India and so on. As a Bengali, I also came in contact with many Bengali Americans during festivals. During interviews, my identities such as Bengali, Bengali from Kolkata, Indian, Indian student, Hindu Indian, and married Indian woman helped me to gain access, obtain cooperation and rapport with the interviewees,

and also allowed me to expedite understanding of my respondents. I noticed that my social and cultural similarities opened the dialogue between me and my respondents, which otherwise may not be possible.

I also played the role of an outsider in my research. Being an outsider includes my statuses as Indian student, not a married Indian immigrant/American, Bengali Indian to immigrants who were not Bengalis, non-vegetarian to vegetarian Indians, and Hindu to non-Hindu Indians. I used my both insider/outsider positions in the course of a single interview depending on the situation and responses of the interviewees. My reflexivity as researcher reminded me of both the similarities and differences with my respondents and the research project as a whole. It helped me understand their experiences as Indian Americans, their interpretation of their ritualized behaviors, and construction of their ritualized ethnic identity. My position of both an insider and outsider helped me to select the project, to develop interview questions, and to collect, analyze, and interpret the data (Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006).

Sampling Method

I used convenience sampling, specifically snowball sampling for recruiting participants for the semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews. Snowball sampling helped to expand the sample by asking informants with knowledge of the setting to identify other group members of the population (Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006; Babbie 2007). I recruited my respondents through some of the primary informants whom I met during various Indian cultural and religious programs at Hindu temples in the Southern Plains region. I participated in different religious meetings and cultural programs with the thought that it would be easier to locate prospective interviewees.

I participated in the Prayer Meeting, a weekly prayer session in a small town to build rapport and meet people. I also participated in cultural festivals in two different cities and towns which helped me to get in contact with informants who were well networked with the India Association and also participated in regional festivities. Informants identified prospective interviewees and provided useful referrals. I also found few respondents through my friends and personal contacts. I used different university websites to find Indian names and contacted prospective respondents directly via phone and/or e-mail. These different approaches of finding respondents proved useful to get diverse respondents. I used purposive sampling to avoid over-representation from any one region of India (as indicated by their name).

In this process of finding respondents even with informant's references, two respondents never replied to my repeated e-mails and two respondents did not want to participate because of their time constraints. One respondent agreed to participate, but later told me that he did not wish to talk about his personal life.

Sample

I interviewed first-generation (post-1965) Asian Indian immigrants who are either lawful permanent residents (Green Card holders) or citizens of the U.S. about how do they use and interpret ritualized behaviors to form ethnic identity in the U.S. I interviewed nineteen males and twelve females. Ages of participants ranged from 32 to 75+ years. Except for one female respondent, others provided either their age range or their specific age. Seventeen of them live in a small town and fourteen of them are from city areas. Among the respondents (29 out of 31) with Hindu origin, twenty two of them identify themselves as Hindu, two of them mentioned their Hindu higher caste identity,

one of them identifies herself as spiritual and not religious, one respondent identified himself as Hindu vegetarian, three respondents no longer identify themselves with any religion and considered themselves as atheists. Two respondents identified themselves as Christians. Pseudonyms were assigned to each of the respondents to provide privacy and anonymity.

All respondents have completed college education and most of the hold higher college degrees such as Masters or Ph.D. degree. All respondents are proficient in English language, come from a middle- and upper-class background, and are dispersed in terms of residential pattern. All men are in professional high paying jobs. Among female participants, four participants are stay-at-home mothers, six are engaged full time or part time paid jobs, and two of them are retired from paid jobs. Occupations of the participants are not divulged to protect their anonymity. Not all participants wanted to speak about their income levels, but their class statuses were visible from their occupations. Most of my participants travel to India quite frequently, at least once in every two-three years. Only two of them visited India after seven years, one of them cannot travel because of health reasons, and one participant never visited India after migrating to the U.S.

The majority of respondents (twenty out of thirty one) are naturalized American citizens and two of them have applied for American citizenship. Fifteen respondents have lived in the U.S. for more than fifteen years but less than thirty years, eight of them are staying for the last thirty years or longer, and another eight are in the U.S. for less than fifteen years but more than five years. Seven respondents are from northern Indian regions, eight from the southern parts of India, five from the eastern regions of India,

seven from western states of India, and four of them identify more than one regional area as their Indian root. Basic demographic information was requested at the end of the interview, including gender, age, education, income, region of origin, and immigration status.

I conducted the interviews between February 2012 and June 2012. Participants were initially contacted via e-mail, by phone, and in person. I provided a brief summary of my research, explaining the purpose and a rough outline of the topics to be covered. This process oriented the participants before the interview. When necessary, I attached consent forms via e-mail before scheduling an interview, but participants always signed the consent forms when I met them for face-to-face interviews. Prior to beginning each interview, I reemphasized the importance of the informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of the study. I also told them that they could discontinue participation at anytime during the interview.

I audio-taped all interviews with the informed consent of the participants. Interviews lasted from thirty minutes to two hours. Among the thirty one respondents in my study, four couples were interviewed in the presence of each other. But, all interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis. I kept written records of the settings and the social environment of the interview venue, my interactions with the respondents, and my experiences with them as an Indian, a Bengali, Hindu, non-vegetarian, married Indian woman.

I started conducting the interviews as soon as I received IRB approval. Interviews were primarily in English with some Hindi phrases thrown in depending on the respondents' knowledge of Hindi. I followed the lead of the respondents and use the

language they prefer/seem most comfortable with. Therefore, some interviews were a mix of Hindi and English. In addition, I used my mother tongue, Bengali, if the respondents are Bengali and prefer to have a conversation in Bengali.

Table 1.A. Demographic Information of Interview Participants

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age (in years)	Education
Vidya	F	30+	Ph.D.
Rohit	M	50+	Masters
Priya	F	35	Ph.D.
Krishnan	M	50	Ph.D.
Kavita	F	51	Masters
Meera	F	47	Bachelors
Aruna	F	72	Masters
Bimal	M	53	Ph.D.
Gopal	M	52	Ph.D.
Manasi	F	49	Ph.D.
Mohan	M	75+	Ph.D.
Anita	F	42	Bachelors
Kamal	M	64	Ph.D.
Naren	M	64	Masters
Sadhna	F	NA	Masters
Nirmal	M	52	Ph.D.
Sucheta	F	50+	Ph.D.
Pramod	M	48	Ph.D.
Alok	M	64	Ph.D.
Kapil	M	42	Ph.D.
Navin	M	58	Ph.D.
Ravi	M	56	Ph.D.
Sagar	M	35+	Masters
Anindo	M	48	Ph.D.
Sailesh	M	40+	Ph.D.
Sapna	F	40+	Bachelors
Sonal	F	32	Bachelors
Ranjan	M	48	Masters
Kumar	M	64	Ph.D.
Samir	M	40+	Masters
Rani	F	51	Masters

Table 1.B. Demographic Information of Interview Participants

Pseudonyms	Native Language	Region of Origin	Duration of Stay in the U.S. (in years)
Vidya	Bengali	Eastern India	14
Rohit	Hindi, Kashmiri	Nothern India	21
Priya	Telegu	Southern India	10
Krishnan	Kannada	Southern India	23
Kavita	Tamil	Southern India	12
Meera	Bengali	Eastern India	23
Aruna	Kannada	Southern India	45
Bimal	Bengali	Eastern India	26
Gopal	Marathi	Western India	11
Manasi	Hindi	Nothern India	25
Mohan	Hindi, Punjabi	Northern India	38
Anita	Bengali	Eastern India	15
Kamal	Tamil	Southern India	37
Naren	Gujarati	Western India	39
Sadhna	Hindi	Northern India	33
Nirmal	Gujarati	Western India	26
Sucheta	Tamil	Southern India	26
Pramod	Bengali	Eastern India	28
Alok	Hindi	Northern India	45
Kapil	Hindi	Northern India	22
Navin	Hindi	Western India	36
Ravi	Tamil	Southern India	28
Sagar	Marathi	Western India	15
Anindo	Bengali	Eastern India	24
Sailesh	Tamil	Southern India	25
Sapna	Marathi	Western India	08
Sonal	Marathi	Western India	05
Ranjan	Bengali	Eastern India	15
Kumar	Hindi, Kashmiri	Northern India	33
Samir	Bengali	Eastern India	08
Rani	Gujarati	Western India	25

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed verbatim for analysis. Transcription is "the complicated process of translating oral discourse to written language" (Miller and Crabtree 2004:200). I transcribed the notes and the recordings immediately after each

interview, though due to unforeseen circumstances, not all the interviews were transcribed right away. The process of transcription differs from researcher to researcher. I transcribed the interviews as precisely as possible, including any gestures, silences, pauses, stalling words, and exact pronunciation of the spelled words (Rubin and Rubin 2005).

I also started writing memos with my very first interview to make sure that my project makes sense and if some ideas need to be reevaluated. Memoing is "taking stock of where you are in your thinking about your project by writing down your hunches and your ideas about how your data fits or does not fit together" (Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006: 146, from their personal communication with David Karp). I engaged in the process of data collection and analysis simultaneously. I reevaluated the interview guide after ten interviews to take a close look at my research questions, emerging themes, and events. In the memo, I also included my feelings about the interview, as well as bias detected while reading the answers (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Hessey-Biber and Leavy 2006). After I finished writing my transcriptions, I wrote a summary of the contents of the interviews (summarizing the main points made during the interview) that addressed the research question and concepts, themes, and events that emerged during interviews.

I began coding my interview data while I was collecting data, as soon as I transcribed the first few transcripts, but I did end up modifying them later as I developed more nuanced analytical frames. I changed and modified the wordings of questions after preliminarily patterns of the data were revealed from the transcripts, memos and interview notes. After ten interviews, I revisited coding categories. Maxwell (2005:96) argues that "in qualitative research the goal of coding is to "fracture" the data and

rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts". Apart from coding, data were organized into broader themes and issues. Maxwell (2005) also emphasizes that qualitative data analysis is more than coding (even though usually the central categorization strategy). Therefore "… reading and thinking about interview transcripts and observation notes, writing memos, developing content categories and their application [in the] data, and analyzing narrative structure and context relationships are *all* important types of data analyses…[to] facilitate [analytic] thinking" (Maxwell 2005:96).

I entered the transcripts, interview notes, participant observation field notes, and memos into NVivo, an analysis software program that allows for the coding and sorting of the qualitative data. First, I developed and applied a set of codes that identified the key issues and specific questions from the interview. Then, I worked with new concepts and themes explicitly mentioned by interviewees, concepts and themes indirectly revealed by respondents, and by comparing different interviews. And I also identified the concepts and themes from my transcripts by grouping together concepts that I have already labeled and then reflected on what they collectively mean (Rubin and Rubin 2005). I wrote memos in the NVivo that connected codes to one another and helped me to make sense of the linkages among already developed patterns and themes.

In this research, I defined each dimension of ritualized practices by analyzing literature and secondary data, but also kept in mind the differences in meanings that may emerge during interviews. I identified and described the patterns and themes of various dimensions of symbolic ritualized practices participants engage in from the perspective of

the participants. Then I attempted to understand those categories or themes. The research question of this project inquired how ritualized practices help them to construct their ethnic identity. Interview questions also spoke directly on the various dimensions of ritualized practices (such as individual RSPs, regional-ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs) that are associated with ethnic identification as Indian American. The respondents were asked about their choice of RSPs and identification and non-identification as an Indian. The meanings and interpretations of their ritualized behaviors were noted. Those responses illustrated how participants cognitively process and construct their ritualized ethnic identity.

Validity and Reliability

In order to enhance the overall validity or credibility of my research, I employed three strategies. First, to assess my interpretations and their goodness of fit to the data, I report on negative, discrepant evidence that will run counter to the themes. By examining "negative case analysis", I am able to assess whether to retain or modify my conclusions. This will help to "critically examine the relative strengths and weakness of your [researcher's] argument and alternatives to your [researcher's] argument" (Kvale 1996:242). Second, I use triangulation (Denzin 1970) to reduce the risk of systematic biases associated with one method. In qualitative research the use of multimethod strategies, or triangulation, reflects an attempt secure the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that triangulation is an alternative to validation. The use of multiple methodologies, perspectives, empirical materials, provide "…rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (p. 8). I use multiple and different methods and sources of data, such as participant

observation, observation and interview data, and secondary data on Asian Indian immigrants in the U.S., to shed light on the role of rituals on ethnic identity construction of first-generation Asian Indian Americans (Creswell 2007). Third, I also provide rich data, such as verbatim transcripts of the interviews and detailed observation notes. "In both cases, the key function of rich data is to provide a *test* of one's developing theories, rather than simply a *source* of supporting instances" (Maxwell 1994).

External generalizability is often not a crucial issue for qualitative studies. In contrast, internal generalizability is a key issue for qualitative studies, referring to the reliability of a conclusion within the setting or group studied. To address the internal generalizability of my research, I rely on detailed reporting about my position in the research, "…the central assumptions, the selection of informants, the biases and values of the researcher [to] enhance the study's chances of being replicated in another setting" (Creswell 1994:159). I have also employed good quality tape-recording and transcribed the tape including pauses and overlaps to enhance the reliability of my study (Creswell 2007; Silverman and Marvasti 2008).

In the next chapter, I provide an analysis of the interview data. The rank of three dimensions of ritualized practices and the various decisional strategies of ethnic identity construction of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants will be discussed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I examine data derived from qualitative research with first-generation Asian Indian immigrants to understand the key ritualized practices they engage in. The review of literature and secondary data helped me identify three dimensions of ritualized behaviors, regional-ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs, which need to be observed in the field. Techniques of field work such as interviews, observation, and participant observation help me to explore and expand upon these three dimensions of ritualized practices. I examine how ritualized behaviors influence Asian Indian immigrants' ethnic identity and how important these ritualized behaviors are in their lives. While the focus is on interviews and observations, this study also includes participant observation data concerned with religious as well as social gatherings in their ethnic community.

To analyze the importance or rank of ritualized practices, I first examine the salience of these RSPs based on the centrality of these practices. Then I focus on the

repetitiveness of these RSPs by examining the relative frequency with which they are referred to in the interviews. Next, I address the homologousness of the RSPs by looking at the degree of perceived similarities (in meaning and form) among ritualized practices. Finally, I address what kind of human and nonhuman materials immigrants use for the performance of ritualized practices. Then, I asked a question concerning the influence of ritualized practices on the socio-cognitive processes of immigrants: what are the cultural practices you engage in that make you identify as an Indian?

The Rank of Regional-Indian Ritualized Symbolic Practices

First-generation Asian Indian immigrants are engaged in *regional-ethnic ritualized practices* both in their homes and in the community. Regional-ethnic ritualized behaviors reflect their region of origin "back home" and are important activities in the host society. Regional, linguistic, religious, and caste diversity make India a multi-ethnic society and thus immigrants bring with them an extraordinary diversity whenever they move to a new land. Indians carry their regional identity in their names which also reveal behaviors including native language, customs, beliefs, dress, and cuisine. Niyogi (2010) contends that Asian Indian immigrants use and interpret their sub-national (or regional) identity to construct identity in the U.S. Strong regional networks and regional-linguistic and caste based Indian networks are present in the U.S. Immigrants choose their friends, best friends, marriage partners, business partners from their region based groups (Prashad 2000; Maira 2002; Min and Kim 2009).

(1) ***Language***

> …[W]hat I have discovered, if you are from southern India, you tend to get more closer, if you are from northern India, you tend to get closer, even within the [pan] Indian community. I think the language aspect is most important…(Ranjan, male 48 years).

Language is a powerful medium of connection with community and nation. Following the first factor, salience, that determines the rank of ritualized behaviors, language possesses high degree of salience or prominence in the lives of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants. The use of native languages by Indian immigrants is conspicuous or visible in various social settings. It is also most interesting for the Asian Indian community since India as a nation has 22 different officially recognized languages. India is divided into different states on a linguistic basis and each region of India has a dominant language group. Therefore, a person who traces his or her region of origin in Gujarat associates with Gujarati language, one from Tamilnadu with Tamil, one from West Bengal with Bengali. It should also be noted that in post-independence India, Hindi was adopted as the official language of the country, but Hindi is predominantly spoken in northern Indian states and people who belong to eastern, western, and southern states of India may have little to no knowledge of Hindi.

English is a widely spoken language in the cities of postcolonial India. The middle-class and upper-class Indian immigrants know English and use English with other Indians and American friends (Khandelwal 2002). All of my respondents who speak in regional languages at home (except for one of them) prefer to speak in English with Indians who belong outside their linguistic regions. Kamal (male, 64 years), whose mother-tongue is Tamil, states his preference to communicate in English in the US:

> …[E]ven with Tamils, here you talk to them in English, sometimes. But, when I go back to India, it's Tamil even if they can speak English…

However, given the linguistic diversity, almost all interviewees say that they are either bilingual or multilingual and use multiple languages (i.e., native language, English, and/or another regional Indian language) both at home and at Indian gatherings.

Nirmal (male, 52 years) explains that using language, whether Hindi or English, "[depends] on the person I am talking to. Depending on the context in which we are meeting, it could be English or Hindi…" Similarly, Ranjan (male, 48 years) talks about his preference for using Indian languages:

> …[D]epending on who I am meeting, I have friends from here (America) as well. So, depending on who I am meeting (pause). It's preferably Bangla or Hindi because I can relate to certain things (smiles) which I cannot relate to in other languages…

Rohit (male, 50+ years) also expresses his fluency with multiple Indian languages:

> Personally I know six languages. I know Tamil, if I see Tamil, I will just jump in. This weekend we had this India festival, *holi* (festival of colors) festival. So, so, some where talking to each other and I jumped in and they were actually shocked (smiles) because I jumped in, yeah, I mean I try to sort of speak.

Sadhana (female) also balances her spoken language in accordance with the regional background of Indians:

> …[H]ere again it depends…umm…If there are people from north India, you would tend to speak in Hindi, but since we have many more people from southern India, I think, we are speaking more English than we are speaking. But I have to say (excitement in voice) that many of the people from south India are…umm…they can understand Hindi, so, even if we are speaking in Hindi. Sometimes, they are able to follow a conversation. But I do make an effort if I am around people who do not know my language, to speak English, you know, so that they can feel included…

Interestingly, even with the wide use of English in the Asian Indian community, regional language is one of the most salient behaviors for 68 percent of the respondents (21 out of 31). Even for the respondent, Bimal (male, 53 years) who "feels mother-tongue is not mandatory" spoke to me in Bengali extensively after the interview.

Almost all respondents agreed with the importance of speaking in their own language and made an effort to teach their children the same. Vidya (female, 30+ years), married to an Indian outside her regional-linguistic background, explains that native

language will help her daughter to remain connected with Indian culture and extended family:

> Yes, [native language] is very [important]…umm…probably it will connect you to your roots. There are lot of things which are lost in translation. It's important that you know your roots and language is the number one thing, plus umm…umm…I, being a mother I think, my child should know my language because when she goes back home [India], she should be able to converse with my cousins and their children in the mother tongue, not because they don't know English, they know English very well, but it's just that that connection should be there. I feel it's very important.

Similarly, Meera (female, 47 years) strongly emphasizes knowing her mother-tongue and its importance for remaining connected with grandparents back in India:

> …Absolutely, absolutely (emphasis). Mother tongue about any other culture is very very important. Mother tongue is very very very (emphasis) [important]. I didn't see it that way when I first came here…I see the kids…the people who had already kids and I saw them. They were not involved in our culture. They speak with a thick accent which sounds ridiculous at that time. I used to think that what's the point? What's the point bringing them, dragging them here. They do not enjoy…and the time we came, the internet and all this…umm…umm…the availability was not there…still not there at that time. So the exposure of Indian culture, especially Indian culture…(pause)…So, it was not available at that time, so kids were very much like Americanized…and…I used to think (change in voice) if my child is growing up in this country I am not going to do that and I did the exactly opposite. When I had my child because I realized that is extremely important…(pause)…It gives you some kind of belonging and it enriches you. It enriches you in so different way. And above all, even though it's not…if I would have never heard of that, later I realized, that's the only only he can communicate with our parents…(pause)…I think, anyway there is a huge distance, we cannot go every day, he cannot go and see them every time. But when we go back, if they are saying something,[and] he doesn't understand and he is saying something they wouldn't understand… the gap is even bigger. So, it was very very important to me that he should learn the the…languge…mother tongue…So, that's why it was very important to me…

Meera speaks in Bengali all the time at home. She even corrected her son's Bengali while we were having dinner. Sucheta (female, 50+ years) also stressed the importance of maintaining the relations between the home and the adopted country:

> [At home] we all speak Tamil and they [my children] both speak Tamil even though they are born here. They both fluently because see back home in India, you will understand, I had my grandmother when I was born and she wouldn't speak English So, if she had to communicate with great grandmother, the only way to communicate is to learn Tamil (laughs). So, I made sure that she communicated with because I think, each generation has its own beauty and…so, both my kids, both my girls do speak the language (emphasis)

According to Vidya, Meera, and Sucheta, native language helps to maintain transnational connections with "home." Sonal (female, 32 years) also states that speaking native language "feels home." She says "…I am used to talking in Marathi with my parents and my…umm…my siblings. So, I think that's make me feel home, feel at home." Though Sagar (male, 35+ years) believes that speaking in native language is not important in the U.S. and "is not required to function in this country," he speaks Hindi, English, and his native language at home. He also mentions "[I] speak in Marathi with his parents (who are in India) over the phone ..." Another respondent Pramod (male, 48 years) who started speaking in Bengali even before I introduced myself, told me that Bengali had never been his first language in India. His friends are mostly Americans and he only speaks to his parents over the phone in Bengali. He explains his limited chances to speak the language in the city and the potential loss of language later in his life:

> …[B]ut I found over the years that more and more it's a big struggle because now I haven't really used the language for 30 years, you know, you don't really find Bengalis here. But you know, I try to like use Bengali if I can, but I realize lately that I am losing words like, I can't remember what the word is for a particular word, you know, and I realize that once my parents die, I wouldn't be surprised, you know, when I go back to India, it comes back. Once I am in the household for few days, it (Bengali speaking ability) gets better and better and better. So, by the time I leave, I can speak almost entire sentence in Bengali, right? But, if am not, but, now when I speak Bengali, I have like, I have to really struggle or if I am not struggling, I have to throw English words in which really (emphasis) saddens me. But I realize that that's just the way it is…

Anita (female, 42 years) and Ranjan (male, 48 years) grew up outside their socio-linguistic region in India and are fluent in both their mother tongue and Hindi. In one-on-one interviews, both of them emphasized speaking in their mother-tongue at home so that their children remain connected to their regional Indian culture. During our informal conversation, they were communicating in Bengali with their child with very little use of English phrases and words. When I asked why she thinks mother-tongue is important, Anita responded:

> …[I]f they (her children) do not know their mother tongue, they will not have a very good understanding of their festivals or things related to our own culture…there are certain things which even if you try to translate in another language, it might not give the same meaning as it would when you know, in your own language…

According to Anindo (male, 48 years), the importance of knowing mother-tongue for his son, a second-generation Asian Indian, is not restricted to speaking the language, but reading and comprehending the written language too. He expounds:

> …I have always maintained that my son can speak and understand Bengali, I benefit, we benefit. But if he can read Bengali, then he benefits a lot. Then he has access and nothing we do…nothing we do can substitute for what our writers, poets, dramatists, whatever and obviously I am very very very influenced by one person [Rabindranath Tagore, Noble Laureate] that we all know and if you can read that one person I think he doesn't need to read anything else.

Gopal (male, 52 years) is from a western Indian state and speaks in both his mother-tongue and Hindi (not his mother tongue) at home with his children. He adds that Indian community activities are important ways to remain connected with Indian language and culture. The meaning of mother-tongue, for him, goes beyond using his native language. He says:

> …Umm…again….I think, [mother tongue] has importance you know, because many of those things you consider as a source of your culture, and those things, those scriptures are in your own language even though you try to really see that

> kids, speak [in your own langue], but even then English language dominates….even then we would like as parents to see that at least they are able to read, understand [our language]…so, that is the most important thing…I think fortunately, the elder one [is] doing great…The elder child had a childhood back home, but the younger one finding difficulty in reading even the mother tongue…but we always speak Marathi, Hindi [at home]…always…always…but, kids they speak in English…but we always try to encourage them [by saying], okay I think, [you must] speak in Hindi, or Marathi…

Similarly for Sucheta (female, 50+ years) being multi-lingual helped her children to learn multiple Indian languages including their native language:

> …I learnt about 5 or 6 languages in India and I may not have realized the importance of it then…but, today I have relished its importance because I can speak to anybody and people wonder (voice of exclamation with facial expression)…ooo…how does she know so many languages I mean, I can speak to a Tamilian and Hindi person in Hindi, you know, a Kannada person in Kannada and they think, ooo…how does she know so many languages, and it makes the other person very comfortable speaking that language…I have insisted that my children learn languages…they learn…they know Hindi, English…

Even when children prefer to converse in English, parents speak in ancestral language with their children. Sailesh (male, 40+ years) states "…I try to communicate with my kids in that [native] language; don't ask me what language they talk [back]…" Krishnan (male, 50 years) explains his concerns of not having many Indians in town who share his similar regional origin and thus his children have very little exposure to their mother-tongue. He believes that English is the first language of his children, but similar to the most respondents he wants them to know their "roots." He stresses that language will provide them a sense of belonging and cultural tie:

> …[Y]ou know, as I said they need to know their background, roots is very important psychologically. I feel because they may feel they belong somewhere. So, I think, I don't know how much is true, that's my personal view, But, I don't enforce. You know, once in a while we stress them you know try to learn our own language. You feel, probably not now, but in the future you see, you know we are from the southern state of India [he mentioned that name of the state] of course they are here, the first language is English…

Similarly, Nirmal (male, 52 years) believes that native language symbolizes connections to Indian culture, but never made native-language learning obligatory for their children. I noticed that he was using both English and his native language with his son after my interview finished. He explains:

> Well…I feel the knowledge of the mother tongue is very important, but not as means of communication but more as a means of…umm…cultural understanding…because language is…represents culture…and particularly with the children. So, we have never tried to force the mother tongue or any language or native language on them…but we have generally over the years from the time they were very little…always kept talking to them in the native language…at different points in time… knowing fully well that they are going to learn English anyway…umm…why not give them an exposure to the native as well. We feel or at least I feel that…umm…the culture…Indian culture…native culture enriches them…in so many different ways. Yes, we talk in [our native language] at home and even with the kids and they are comfortable taking [our native language]… the older one is very comfortable talking in [our native language] with us…

Kavita (female, 51 years) agrees that native language is an "important component of her life" to maintain her ethnic ties, but fewer immigrants from her region in the town provide less opportunities to communicate in her native language:

> …I speak in English because half of them [the Indians] comes from speaking Marathi, Telegu, Kannada. So, I speak in English. But I have some friends I have, you know, they can speak Tamil. So of course I talk to them in Tamil too, but it's not pure Tamil anyway. Mix of Tamil and English.

Likewise, Mohan (male, 75+ years) feels most comfortable speaking in his own language. He says:

> …I like to speak in Hindi. Of course if I meet Bengali friends, I don't know Bengali, so I have to speak English…same thing about south Indian. And in general if there are American friends there, just for courtesy sake, we speak in English, so they can be part of the conversation. But if I am speaking to someone who knows Hindi, I don't have to speak to in any other language…
>
> ….(Phone rings)
>
> [After his conversation over the phone with his wife, I asked what his mother tongue is.]

> Mohan: We speak to what the other person is comfortable in. We speak in our [native tongue] and we switch to Hindi, and then we switch to English. But you see how comfortable you feel when you speak in a language that you like. If I have to speak in a language which is not native it's easy. But, it's still not the same thing. Some people think that these are Bangalis and Bangalis are so narrow minded, they speak their own language. They are not narrow minded they feel comfortable, so, what's wrong with it. If Bangalis are so, Gujaratis and so on, Nothing wrong with it because they feel more comfortable. So, it's okay. Socially you want to interact with your own kinds. So, doesn't make you narrow minded. People have very wrong notions about it, but as long as you say that you meet only Bangali and you don't like anyone else that is wrong. Diversity should be there, but you have Bangali friend most, it's natural. Like, I get Tamil and Telegu guys here and now have to "how are you?" "fine". Then afterwards "how are you?" then you …" What do you talk about? You have to make sentences every time. You don't know Tamil, you don't know Telegu. The poor guy is uncomfortable; I am uncomfortable so, conversations become very very difficult. But, I…I don't have any problem with languages my friends for from all walks of [life].

Immigrants, whose children are young adults, state that speaking ancestral language at home is "extremely important to stay connected" with Indian culture. Navin (male, 58 years) acknowledges that regional language helped his kids to preserve ties with the homeland and "maintaining those ties will keep them more secure in their upbringing." He continues:

> ….We tried to have our kids at least learn a little bit of Hindi and…umm…to the extent I mean they understand. They also can speak a little bit. They can speak until the help arise (smiles). So, they can manage in an emergency. We talk in both Hindi and English. My wife tries to speak more Hindi. It's basically, you know, I speak in Hindi, they respond in English and then obviously, I mean, subconsciously you know it switches to normal English. But…but many conversations originate in Hindi…

Rohit (male, 50+ years) also speaks in his native languages such as Kashmiri and Hindi at home. He continues to explain how his daughter claimed her Indian identity through learning regional language later in her life:

> …[Native language]…umm…that's makes you feel connected, to some extent proud. I will give you one example. My own daughter she grew up here, born here everything. No, she grew up here, But never spoke, forget about [native

> language], never spoke even Hindi, but she picked it up and I can see how she is bonding [with the culture] (pause)…Also she speaks now native language and…umm…and even in her professional career, she wants to go to her native state in northern India So that, I think, I think…umm… knowing mother tongue is critical. At home…umm…we speak Hindi, English, and our ancestral language whatever comes out with. I will just speak with kids it's a mixture of them. Depends on (pause) how strongly I want to convey the message of something…(smiles)

Aruna (female, 72 years) couldn't pass down her native language to her children because "there were not many Indians" and people from her region of origin when her children were growing up. Later on, his son visited India and "overcame the language [barrier]."

Kapil (male, 42 years) is stricter in teaching regional language to his daughter, though he thinks that regional-language is not "mandatory" to learn. He says:

> So [I speak in]…it's a mix of Hindi and English and actually once in a while what we will do is…we will pick a day and I will only speak to them in Hindi and I respond if they speak in Hindi. I would imagine that I don't know any English that's an interesting exercise with them…so…

Manasi (female, 49 years) speaks both in Hindi and English at their U.S. home, but does not think passing down mother-tongue to the next generation is important. This is also related to her upbringing in a predominantly English speaking home in India. She says:

> [My husband and I speak] both Hindi and English relatively fluently, but we grew up in a family were our parents speak English…that's how we grew up even back home. So, it's not a huge shift for us…speaking that way…and…umm…, but then the kids go back [to India]. When they go back to India, they speak English. Again, there is no pressure that no one's going to understand me if I go back…you know….how people…their grandparents talk to them in English…so on…

She emphasizes her children's symbolic and selective use of regional-Indian language:

> It's nice. I think for my peace of mind. It would be nice to say if my children can speak the language. I think it also provides us sort of with a special way of communicating with each other that other people don't share. So, I have noticed that my children will rely on it more so when they are in a different setting and they want to say something to me…smiles and they don't want others to find out…so…that's where it sort of becomes something unique. My children don't

> speak their mother tongue fluently. I mean they know the greetings, they can answer very simple questions, they can understand most of it, but they don't speak it…umm….but it sort of provides them a sort of what's uniquely theirs…you know certain phrases, certain….that they can act to….umm…I think, definitely if it can be done and they are good without doing it. I think, it certainly provides a very unique contribution and I have not been good about doing that…(smiles)…It's not critical but I think, it's important…

Only Samir (male, 40+ years) and Sapna (female, 40+ years) believe that English is the only language their son needs to know. They speak in English at home. When asked whether native-language is important to him, Samir promptly answered:

> "No, it's not. That why our son doesn't know any native language. Since childhood we have been speaking to him in English. He learnt some Bengali after interacting with my parents…So…so, he knows some Bengali…

Thus, with an exception of few participants who speaks English at home, regional-Indian languages are salient ritualized behaviors that first-generation Indian immigrants use in their homes, in community, and in communication with their friends and families who are in India. Use of native languages is prominent, conspicuous, and noticeable in various social settings.

Second, repetitiveness is concerned with the relative frequency with which ritualized behaviors are performed. Using native language is a repetitive behavior for Asian Indian immigrants. Though all of the first-generation immigrants I interviewed are bi-lingual or multi-lingual, 68 percent immigrants (21 out of 31) speak every day in their native languages at home. Immigrant parents speak with their children in native language to make their children feel connected with their culture.

7 percent (2 out of 31) immigrants consider English as their first language. Both Pramod (male, 48 years) and Ravi (male, 56 years) attended Western style schools and English was the primary spoken language even before migration. The use of the English

language as a post-colonial Indian language is evident in their experiences with language in India. Ravi noted that:

> "At home we speak English. [In India] almost always [I] spoke in English. We found it is just easier to speak in English. Except our relatives…at home we spoke English almost naturally [and] with my friends in school and in college even though we shared the same mother tongue."

Pramod doesn't speak his mother-tongue every day in the U.S., but explains that language recreates the memories he left behind:

> I don't know, if [native language] is important from a practical standpoint…I don't need it, I don't use it. But I think, it adds sort of a richness to my life. It adds richness to my memories that are very different, you know, very very (emphasis) nostalgic for me and it's interesting because when I was growing I never sort of realized it, thought about it, didn't really matter, but it adds an element to my life that I find very interesting…

Transnational ties play an important role for keeping the language alive among immigrants. Interestingly, immigrants, such as Pramod, Sapna, and Samir, who are not regular native language speakers in the U.S., talk to their parents in their native language over the telephone. It has become possible with the forces of globalization and increased accessibility of communication and travel, which has enabled Indian diaspora members to maintain transnational connections with India (Purkayastha 2005, Bhattacharya 2008).

Third, the use of regional languages is homologous and not limited to everyday conversations and familial ties with people's ancestral country, but is also present in other activities such as reading books, writing, watching movies, televisions, internet browsing, and community activities. Transnational connections have enabled Asian Indian immigrants to stay connected to their regional-ethnic origins in the homeland. With the growing use of cultural resources available in the media and internet, immigrants are engaged in regional-ethnic rituals in the U.S.

Mohan (male, 75+ years) expresses his flair for writing poetry in Hindi and Urdu. He showed us his *shayeri* (poems) written both in Hindi and Urdu languages. Both of these are widely spoken languages in northern Indian states. He says:

> …I have written a book which would come out. I like Urdu and now it's being published in Hindi. So, I have a word processer in Hindi and Urdu. So, I will show you in my I-pad after we get done. It's ready. The poetry ranges from my childhood. It starts how I used to feel (recites the lines in Urdu). I still remember that and then it shows on as you grow, *jawan hote hain*, [I] become romantic (recites in Urdu). It goes on, then marriage. I go through the whole life in poetry (recites in Urdu). When I am getting married I say my beloved is going to come to me and then as you grow old, then you get into this ritual. [I write in] Hindi and Urdu both (recited his poetry Urdu)…

Anindo (male, 48 years) explains how reading the noted Bengali author and Noble Laureate is his everyday ritualized activity:

> I read almost every day…pause (2-3 seconds). Only one author, Rabindranath [Tagore]. I keep few of his books beside my bed (speaks in Bengali), I open a random page and read a page or two before [I go to sleep] and there I find new understanding…

Gopal (male, 52 years) and Kumar (male, 64 years) also read books on Indian philosophy and religion in their native language.

The growth of satellite television and availability of other media also allows Indians to subscribe to television channels in their own languages. Kavita (female, 51 years) watches regional language television channels every day and more on weekends:

> We have this, you know, Sun TV (Tamil language television channel). So, we do…if it is…weekends we are able to watch more than [weekdays], you know. On week days, we do, we try to listen, and you know, then by 8' clock I have to be here. 7:30 in the morning the news comes, may be I just listen to the headlines, you know, headline news…

Likewise, Priya (female, 35 years) frequently reads regional language newspaper published in India:

> …[I read newspaper] 2-3 times a week, if possible every day. You know sometimes you won't get enough time at least the main news kind of at least 2-3 times a week. I read Telegu newspaper. English newspapers…not really that much I go through because actually I did my schooling actually in my native language, not in English medium. So, that's why may be more prefer. [I am] comfortable in that language, that's made me like stick to [Telegu newspaper].

Priya also wants to watch more Telegu movies in theatres. Her family travels to the nearest metropolitan city to watch regional language movies:

> Do we get Telegu movies that often here? May be, but we watch sometimes in Dallas, when we go. But if we get the chance, we definitely love to go and watch it. Yeah…

Access to on-line media allows for much easier transnational ties that cross national boundaries. Meera (female, 47 years) engages in the ritualized activity of reading Bengali newspapers which is not limited to news published form West Bengal, India, but is connected to the Bengali-speaking community of Bangladesh.

> Yeah, *Anandabazar* (Bengali newspaper) I read every day. [I also read] *Robibashorio* (a Bengali weekly paper). Sometimes [in the] internet there are some other newspapers like *Porobash* or some other like, I forgot right [now]. They, these are mostly comes up from Bangladesh, they write pretty well. So, I read…There are lots of youtube videos about stories or kobita (poems), *gān* (music), *othoba* (or) *tomar natok* (drama). So, I spend a lot of time on that also (laughs).

I was invited to have dinner with Meera (female, 47 years) and her family. During dinner we talked about Bengali music, musicians, and cinema. Afterwards, Meera's husband wanted us to listen to Bengali songs, and watch clippings from old Bengali movies. Meera talked about old Bengali cinema artists and their acting skills. Her husband also shared his keen interests in old Bengali cinema.

For Meera (female, 47 years) and Kavita (female, 51 years) use of regional-language is homologous with watching television and occasional reading, but the limited

availability of native-language books has made them frequent English language readers. Both explain how migration resulted in the decline of reading books in their native-languages:

> Meera: I what I am noticing that…(pause)…I am to read Bangla, since I have stopped reading Bangla after I came to this country…pause…it takes me time…takes me time to…when I go back, I always buy story books…my sister always gives me some books….it takes me time to finish those books….as it is I have to concentrate even more than same Indian story, but if it's written in English, I think, I…(pause)…finish it much quicker than go back and read Bangla…

> Kavita: You know, it's I [read both in my native-language and English] …yeah…But nowadays readings become slow down because you don't read [native-language] books that much, you know. Back home at least the magazines I used to read [a lot], but now, you know, it takes [long]…I haven't (laughs)…Yeah…that's true…there is not much time, you kind of, you know, so, completing a book is a problem for me (laughs). I like to read…I may start off, but I may not [finish], if it's a [native-language] book. But if it's in English you know, then I am able to read…So, I can finish up the book quick….you know, that motivates because. But if it's [native-language], then I can get stuck…(laughs). [It] takes forever to complete…yeah…I remember a book…you know…my husband and I…, we both wanted to read it. [But] the old Tamil words we couldn't understand…you know…It was so difficult. [We] read few times to understand even the sentences you know…(surprise in her voice). This is the language I have been speaking…? It's my language and my mom's [language] you know…you know…We are so used to talking in the language. [Reading in native language] becomes hard…you know…

Living in a small town in the U.S., Priya (female, 35 years) says that a small town provides limited opportunities for maintaining her regional-ethnic religious ties. Therefore, she takes the advantage of the mass media of the globalized society. She says:

> …I love to… I hear online. Here nobody is here to go there. At least in our place (India), may be if it is a big place [in the U.S.], then may be chance to go there. But, in here, we don't get that much opportunity. So, I hear some discourses online. Discourses from Telegu person like *Chaganti Koteswara* [religious leader]. I love his discourses actually (smile in her voice). He is very good in…I got some knowledge through his discourses only…

Therefore, for first-generation Indian immigrants, the different RSPs of using regional language including speaking the ancestral language, reading books, reading internet materials, and watching regional-language movies and videos involve regional-ethnic connections with the homeland. All the regional ethnic behaviors exhibit high degree of homologous to each other in that Indian Americans are recreating their regional-ethnic ties in their adopted country.

Finally, immigrants require resources to practice their ancestral languages. Family, friends, ethnic communities, and regional-Indian festivals serve as resources for conducting the ritualized behavior. The respondents who are married to Americans do not speak in their mother-tongue at home. They rely on extended families, friends, and regional-Indian festivals to speak in their native language. The primary resource of retaining the regional-Indian languages comes from family, where immigrants communicate in their languages every day. Regional community gatherings or friends from the same region are also important resources, which allow immigrants to speak in their own language. Kapil (male, 42 years) prefers to talk in Hindi when he meets his old friends or people with the same regional background:

> [If I meet] older friends, then it's mostly Hindi. They are newer people, I end up meeting, then I don't know what region of India, they are from, then it's mostly English, but usually you can gage every easily whether they are comfortable in English and Hindi, then I can switch back and forth…

Sapna (female, in her 40s), a multi-lingual, states that she speaks in her mother tongue, other regional Indian languages, and in English depending on the group she is with:

> Oh…umm…for me it's an advantage because I speak so many languages, I adapt to whichever group, I am with…so, for instance when I am with the Bengalis I am always speaking Bengali. I never speak any other language and they treat me as one. They don't even feel that Oh!…she is a non-Bengali. Of course I speak in Marathi and then if it's the…the bigger Indian circle, it's Hindi, English,

> whatever the language they choose. So, I can…if there are 3 people sitting here, I can speak three different languages with them in just one conversation. That really helps. I don't really feel…umm…at a loss…(smiles)…

Similarly, Anindo (male, 48 years), Meera (female, 47 years), Ranjan (male, 48 years), and Anita (female, 42 years) prefer to speak Bengali if they meet Bengalis. Mohan (male, 75+ years), Alok (male, 65 years), and Kumar (male, 64 years) speak in Hindi when they are with Hindi speaking people. For Gopal (male, 52 years) and Sonal (female, 32 years) both Hindi and Marathi are preferable regional languages when they participate in pan- or regional-Indian community activities. Manasi (female, 49 years) and Rani (female, 51 years) uses both Hindi and English when she communicates in Indian groups. She responded:

> Hindi…(after a pause)…It's Hinglish actually now…(laughs). It's English and Hindi always mixed (chuckles).

Vidya (female, 30+ years) also uses Hindi, English, and her native language depending on the group:

> I would say [I speak] mostly Hindi and English…depends on the group…Because if I come across a group from South India, mostly they will, unless they are Telegus, they talk Hindi…Mostly south Indians won't [talk in Hindi] and same thing with someone else who is not good with talk in Hindi…So, I think, it's English mostly, sometimes Hindi and people from [my state], of course [my mother tongue].

Naren (male, 64 years), married to an American, speaks in the regional-languages according to the Indian groups or South Asian groups he meets:

> Most of the time, it comes out because of our cultural backgrounds, English becomes the common thread…umm…And that's by default…umm…If I think somebody is [from my region], then I will probably start conversation with them in [my language] or if I think, they can understand Hindi…then, you know…It's amazing when you are talking to Pakistani, you talk to them in Hindi…

All other respondents also speak in their regional languages in regional- or pan-Indian community gatherings or with people who are from a similar region of origin.

For a few of the interviewees books written in regional language are resources in keeping the culture alive. Transnational resources available through media such as the internet, movies, CDs, DVDs, MP3s, regional-Indian television channels, and movies in theatre as well as easy communication with family over the phone and frequent visits to the home country are the resources for the ritualized practice of using regional-Indian languages. Thus, language possesses a high degree of resources.

(2) ***Food***

Regional-Indian food is a visible or prominent ritualized behaviors engaged in by the first-generation Indian immigrants. For Indian immigrants, food is intimately tied to rebuilding their 'home' and a sense of belonging. Ray's (1998, 2004) research shows that breakfast and dinner enable American Bengali immigrants to do this and "refuse to be the simple ethnic other or the assimilated American" (p. 105). Similarly, my study finds that references of regional food habits and cooking regional food are conspicuous in 55 percent of the respondents (17 out of 31). But it is important to note that 45 percent respondents (14 out of 31), cook and/or eat regional food at only night and their morning and afternoon meals are "American" including bread, cereal, sandwich, fruits, and salad. Two respondents eat regional-Indian food both at lunch and dinner and one of them eats regional-Indian lunch and American dinner, "salad and soup." And regional-Indian food is extremely important in their lives.

Alok (male, 65 years) says that his dinner "…[E]veryday is [Indian] (laughs). [I] come from U.P. [Uttar Pradesh, a Northern Indian state]. It is mostly vegetables, could be

a meat dish, could be *chapati* (flat breads), rice, pickles, *dals* (legumes) you know, all those things…" Likewise, Kavita (female, 51 years) who is from South India explains her affinity for rice and south Indian foods such as *idli* (rice balls), *dosa* (pan cake made of rice and lentils), and *upma* (made of dried semolina):

> [In the] morning, usually everyday [I have] bread (laughs).That's the easy thing to fix. Right? So, bread and peanut butter (laughs), that's my favorite. Even all year through you know when I come to work that's the easiest thing to bring, you know. But in the weekends we prepare some [south] Indian breakfast, for example if it's a long weekend I can make *idli* or *dosa* something. So, I make *idli*, *dosa* and then *chapatti* (Indian flat bread). So, I make *idli dosa* and then chapatti you know, roti I do make. Breakfast you know, *upma*, *upma* is very easy to fix. So, that I do it. And then, there are some exotic [food]. I am not that very good at that, but…but *upma* and *idli*, *dosa* more common in the breakfast that I make, and occasionally make *puri* [fried bread], you know. In dinner mostly we have [south] Indian food and then afternoon you know, sometime [I] bring from home, sometimes we go to some restaurants …umm…But then [at] night mostly Indian food would be most common (voice lowers). I have to have rice (voice high). You know at least once a day, if not at least once in two days.

Aruna (female, 72 years) who is also from Southern India says that her breakfast is dominated by *idli*, *dosa*, and *upma*, and lunch is not-Indian. But, dinner is always a traditional south Indian vegetarian diet such as *sambar* (spicy lentil soup), *rasam* (tamarind, tomato soup), and yogurt with rice:

> Okay…rice [everyday]. Our breakfast, some toast and then I usually make either dosa or upma, and idli. These are the three staples and around lunch, we have something like…umm…sandwich made of either vegetable(s) or some cheese and things like that these are very minor meal and eat around like 9:00-9:30 [pm] and we invariably eat rice everyday. Then make *sambar* or *rasam*. You know what they are, right? And then one vegetable and yogurt is a big deal…That's it…
>
> Interviewer: *Every day?*
>
> Aruna: Pretty much every day, if not *sambar*, some other kind of *dal*…

She continues to explain the importance of regional-Indian food in her life:

> I am accustomed to the taste and it's funny, you know…umm… when I retired; I used to travel a lot...umm…If I stayed more than 4 or 5 days, I was I was literally

> starving for *rasam* (smiles). So, before I went I will make *rasam* and put it in the refrigerator so that it would be there when I came (smile in her voice) and umm…so….and then sometimes if I stayed sometimes, you get very tired and our meetings were intensive you know, then you don't want to go out and find the place and some of the companions I like to go. Otherwise you have to go by yourself. So, I had a tiny rice cooker that I took with them. It's two cup or less. Panasonic makes one of them and then I used to go and get some rice and some vegetables, some cook them together. Sometimes if I remembered I take some spice. That's it. Yogurt my staple so, it works well…

Another respondent, Meera (female, 47 years), describes the importance of Bengali cuisine in her everyday meal, although breakfast and lunch are American:

> …It's [everyday food] very American in the morning, very Indian at night (laughs). Till lunch it's American. Indian is very much like *Macher jaal aar bhat* [fish curry and rice] (laughs while speaking).
>
> Interviewer: *Everyday?*
>
> Meera: Absolutely. I have to eat fish everyday (laughs) it's kind of. At night, [like Bengalis] *rooti* [Indian flat bread] and *torkari* [vegetable curry], we have to eat something Indian. I prefer, but in the morning like the way omelet, some protein, fruit, in lunch salad and stuff like that, but at night definitely Indian.
> Indian food very much important very much important to me…to…because I think, that's the best tasting food in the whole world, best tasting food. Indian food is the best (laughs). It's very (emphasis) rich very (emphasis) aromatic as it's almost like there's a poem behind it. It's a poetry behind every dish almost…

Vidya (female, 30+ years) tries to avoid rice, which is considered the staple Bengali food, because of health reasons, but it is hard to avoid the regional culture that Indian immigrants bring with their food-related behavior (Khandelwal 2002). As a Bengali, she eats a non-vegetarian diet, particularly fish and meat. This explains why she needs some animal protein in her everyday meal:

> …I try to see that I have my servings of fruits, my veggies and my yogurt. And other than that I try to eat at least some form of meat or, and egg or something because I have always grown up eating fish or chicken or something. If I don't eat that I think, it's mental for me, I feel I am weak, it's physiological. If I am making typical *macher jhol* (fish curry), of course I will eat rice, but I don't cook every day, sooo, like I try to eat *rooti* (flat bread, *roti*). I do have Indian food like the dinner I try to see that I am having *dal* (legumes) and then veggies also, like the

> cooked veggies and the meat also. Most of the times it is chicken which are cooked, or if we bring from outside depending on my schedule.

She also explained how she struggled to cook "mom-made" a Bengali vegetable curry, *mocha* (banana flower):

> By the way I have to tell you this *okhane giye ami mocha kine prochur mocha ranna korar chestha korlam, she aar holo na* [I tried to cook mocha, but couldn't make it]. [I wanted to cook] because I miss the one which my mom used to make. *Onek kal khaini* [I didn't eat it for a long time]. So, that's the traditional thing which I really was craving for. [It] didn't work out well…

First-generation immigrants' food rituals are not restricted to their "authentic" regional food, but include their close Indian neighbors who mostly use the similar food ingredients, i.e., *masala* or spices. In America, Indian grocery stores primarily sell Northern Indian, Southern Indian, and Western Indian food ingredients. The available packaged curry *masala*s in the Indian grocery stores also reflect regional-Indian food dominance. Bimal's town does not have an Indian grocery store and he has to rely on a small-sized international food market with racks full of Northern Indian and Southern Indian foods. Sometimes he drives to a nearby city to find sweet water fish, a Bengali staple diet. He explains the co-existence of both Bengali cooking and Northern Indian food in his diet:

> …I will say I probably eat Indian food at least once or twice a week, but it depends, just depends if I have the time, energy to do it (smiles)…
> Bengali food tends to be most of the time…umm…north Indian styled food…umm, but I cook Bengali food as well. So, sometime I will cook fish curry, sometimes I will cook *dal* in the Bengali way, but, if I am using a packaged food (pause). By necessity (smiles) [I cook in] north Indian style…so…
>
> Interviewer: *How important is Bengali/Indian food?*
>
> Bimal: Very important (smiles). Honestly out of 10, 11 (laughs)
>
> Interviewer: *Why?*

> Bimal: Because it's the…I like all kinds of food. But I do…I cannot go without [it]. If I go without Indian food for a month, I will have problems, I will have withdrawals.

Anita (female, 42 years) also lives in a small town and drives 2 hours to a nearby city to "stock up" on spices, rice, wheat, Indian snacks, and vegetables. Like the other first-generation Indian Americans I interviewed, her family have a western breakfast and lunch, but the dinner is Bengali and Northern Indian. Though she says that both Bengali and Northern Indian food are frequently cooked at her home, the important food still is Bengali *bhat* (steamed rice) and *dal* (legumes):

> …[W]e eat Indian everyday almost at night. But…umm, for lunch we try to have just something light so, we have adapted to more of western food [for breakfast] Mostly cereal and oatmeal (laughs little) [At night] *Bangali* (Bengali), mostly Bangali, Bangali aar (and) North Indian, *mane amra to rooti-tuti-o khai* (we also eat Indian flat breads) (Pause). Basically Indian, *Bangali* and also other stuff, mostly north Indian, not much of the south Indian…
> Oh!!I think, it is important because whenever we go on a trip and we never get Indian good for 10 days, when we come back home we are craving for *dal* (legume) and *bhat* (cooked rice) (laughs) I think Indian food is quite important to us…

Ranjan (48 years), Anita's husband, who grew up outside West Bengal, expresses his affection for Bengali food even though westernized or American diets are salient in the breakfast and Northern Indian foods are part of their palate:

> Morning is typically a very short…umm...Breakfast, cereal or whatever, western style breakfast…lunch again, most of the time she packs Indian lunch. [D]inner is *ami bolbo* (I will say) almost 90 percent of the time is, 90-95 percent of the time, it's Indian food. Occasionally pizza hoi (occasionally, we take pizza), occasionally pasta hoi (occasionally, we take pasta) (smiles), but Indian food: *dal, bhat, torkari* (vegetable curry), that's the best…

Traditional Bengali food practices also change over the seasons, "primarily for reasons of availability, lack of refrigeration, and the cycle of the local growing season" (Ray 2004:58). In America, it is difficult to transplant the same foods because of the changed

seasonal content, but for Ranjan, the salience of Bengali food rituals evokes nostalgia, such as relating monsoon season with *kichuri* (stewed rice, dal, and vegetables).

Bhat (steamed rice) and *dal* (legumes) are considered as quintessentially Bengali diet. Anindo (male, 48 years) thinks that he has become more *bheto* (rice-eater) after migrating to this country. *Bhat* has replaced *rooti* (flat wheat bread) in his Bengali American dinner. Ray (2004) also quotes that "…[r]ooti has replaced by rice as the carbohydrate anchor of dinner in the U.S." (p. 58). Anindo narrates in Bengali the importance of Bengali food such as rice, lentils, and goat meat curry:

> …*ami to bhat chara* (I cannot live without rice). *ami ekhane eshe onek besi bheto hoye gechi* (I have become more rice-eater here). Back home we used to take rooti in dinner like other Bengali family….umm…Now I eat *rooti* very infrequently may be in the weekends. In the morning I need some *bhat*. I have become more *bheto* here. But favorite food of all time, obvious in Bengali communities, *bhat, dal*. Just *bhat, dal,* followed by Bengali style *panthar mangsho* (goat meat curry) and not in North Indian style. It should have *jhol* (stew) and large sized *aloo* (potato). When my son asked what our family tradition is, I replied that we always keep goat curry potato for the last bite. I learnt it from my father and even if my son forgets it I keep one for me. *Shei ta hocche amader family tradition* (This is our family tradition). That is one family tradition I have institutionalized (smiles)…

Rice is also a staple diet for migrants from Southern India. Sucheta (female, 50+ years) self identifies as a vegetarian and cooks "healthy" South Indian foods such as *dosa*, *idli, vada,* and *paratha*. Her regional-Indian ties are strongly felt by eating rice every day. She says, "rice is very important to keep that happiness (laughs). So, I am so incomplete, I cannot eat bread or of course the next is *rotis* [flat wheat bread]." She packed *idlis* for her daughter's lunch in school and offered me *idli* and *chutney.* She insisted that I should eat as I am a guest in an Indian house. It is striking that though she and other first-generation immigrants have comfortably made their breakfast American or westernized, they do not

identify with American food and their regional-Indian connections are celebrated with food rituals.

For respondents who trace their region of origin to Northern India their dinner is mostly comprised of *rotis* [flat wheat bread]. Manasi (female, 49 years), who lived in different Indian states and identifies herself as Northern Indian, states that their Indian food has remained the same in the U.S. as what they ate while growing up in India. She also offered me and my husband Northern Indian *masala* tea, *samosa* [vegetable turnover] and *dahi vada* [lentil balls, usually made of lentil, gramflour, or potato dipped in yogurt]. She explains:

> Manasi:…[Our dinner] is a lot more likely what we ate in India. I lot more likely what we ate in India. So, it will be *dal* (legumes), *chawal* (rice in Hindi), *sabji* (vegetable curry) kind of things and basic vegetables and… umm…may be a little more meat than we ate in India because the children eat more meats and in India we ate meat may be once a week. I will have something here for the children, but my husband and I eat mainly vegetables, roti and stuff like that…
>
> Interviewer: *How important is Indian food to you?*
>
> Manasi: …Very. I don't think, I could manage without it (laughs). That's far more important than we think. I mean yeah like our Indian food, we eat it, we eat it the way we did with our hands and when I entertain I will cook only Indian….

Rohit (male, 50+ years) looked hesitant when I asked about his regional-Indian food-based behaviors. As he lived in several cities and towns in India, outside his home state, the "authentic" regional food has changed. Despite the changes in his food habits, it is still Northern Indian dinner every night in his U.S. home. He states:

> Every night it is India because [my state's] food is not. Let me put it this way, it is not authentic [regional food] anymore because authentic [regional food] is imposed by…umm…it is…it is…umm…I would say Northern Indian. So, I eat home cooked food basically Indian food that's what it is. And dinner definitely is [Northern] Indian…

Another respondent, Sadhana (female), also from Northern India, emphasizes that she does not cook Southern Indian breakfast such as *idli* and *dosa*:

> Well…you know we don't eat three big meals like we do in India. So, breakfast is pretty much. So I won't say it's Indian. So, I am not cooking a hot *dosa, idli* kind of thing…

On the other hand, Priya (female, 35 years) confirms that she cooks Southern Indian *toor dal* almost every day and Northern Indian cooking is an occasional ritual:

> …Most of the times [I cook] Telegu food, but I make sometimes North Indian food too, kind of special dishes like *matar paneer* (sweet peas with farmer cheese) with or.., but those are party kind of, not regular. Regularly it's Telegu [food]. We do some *sabjis* (vegetable curry). Traditional just the s*abjis,* cooking some *dal, toor dal* (pigeon pea). Actually it's *toor daal*…

Krishnan (male, 50 years) maintains the food practices of 'back home.' In the U.S., his family's dinner mostly includes non-vegetarian Indian food which has its roots in his region of origin. After migration his food has become more American "meat-based" compared to his pre-migration experience, but still he cooks Indian non-vegetarian food. He says:

> We do it LOT of Indian food like *dal*, *chapati*, rice, but, you know, we do eat meat. Yeah we do, especially I (laughs)…[I] like it…I have always been non-vegetarian, family background. We always…basically goat and chicken, but not every day even there. May be rarely, but you know may be once [in a week]. Now people are eating in India, too much meat. Even when I was there, the family would eat [meat]… We never ate, but now I think, I don't know, now when I went to India, they are eating [meat] almost every day. We never had [meat] every day [while growing up]. Once in two weeks or may be, yeah. Now, I guess, what happened also lot of, I see a lot of chicken everywhere. They are trying to do westernized too…(laughs)…nothing wrong what I meant is, when I was growing up we ate meat but very rarely…not every day. Basically we ate *roti*, *dal*, and curry. That's all… I prefer Indian food because, even some Indian food, that is actually mistake.

A high degree of salience of regional-food is featured even in the dietary habits of immigrants who do not identify themselves as Indian any more. Ravi drives to the nearby

city once a month to stock up Indian food items. Though averse to partaking in the South Asian community and "no more identifies as an Indian," Ravi emphasizes the importance of South Indian food in his life:

> …My preference is South Indian vegetarian food. If I don't eat that at least thrice, three or four times a week, I am miserable. So, on a daily basis, my wife, who learnt cooking from me so that she can make food for me (smiles and laughs). [She] makes a superb south Indian food, vegetarian food. She didn't grow up as vegetarian, so she has become vegetarian…

Likewise Pramod (male, 48 years), whose friends are mostly Americans, only eats fish at the restaurants, and the consumption of 'mom-made' Bengali fish curry is limited to his frequent India visits. He became nostalgic about home, food, and belongings. While his weekend ritual includes Bengali and Northern Indian cooking, when I asked him about his diet he quickly responded that it is not Indian and Indian food is not important because he doesn't cook Indian food regularly. He also contextualizes cooking regional-Indian food with the adaptation of American 'one-dish meal' as against traditional Bengali or Northern Indian cooking. He was reluctant to show his connection to Bengali community and "…don't feel a real compulsion to engage in what I will call cultural practices," but it is the weekend Bengali or North Indian meal that highlights the complexity of his ritualized identity. His affinity to Northern Indian food intake comes from his upbringing outside West Bengal. He also replicates the pattern of seasonal food rituals of Bengalis, such as cooking cauliflower curry in winter season. He explains:

Pramod: Probably what I will do, I cooked on Sundays. So, I cook on Sundays and would probably eat that couple of times during the week, you know, so, it's also very much a one dish meal. It will be like, *keema chawal* (ground meat, traditionally chicken or goat, with rice) or like *dimer dalna* (egg curry) which will last like 3 days. But, *keema chawal* is not really Bengali. Ethnically it would be much more like a North Indian dish. The dish that is probably in my mind is a Bengali dish is *dimer dalna*. So, the two Bengali things that I think, that will show up you know,

over time if I am cooking and partly because, part of the restriction is what I know how to cook. I don't cook every day. So, you know, for one person I don't cook that much. You know, so, so…umm…*dimer dalna* would be like most common Indian, not Indian, Bengali dish and then dal. Mostly *moonger dal* (Green gram legumes) than *masur dal* (Lentil) because *masur dal* Bengali style is very *patla* (watery), right? So, that is not substantive enough for me because I want more protein because I usually eat one dish meals. I am not going to cook five different things, you know, so, and then, you know, I might make *kopir torkari* (cauliflower curry) in the season for something you know.

Interviewer: *How important is Indian/Bengali food to you?*

Pramod: Obviously it isn't because I am not eating that much. I think if it is really that important to me I would make the effort to. That's what would happen, even if I don't cook, I would go to India Palace to get some. So, obviously my body has over the years adapted to where I don't need it…I do shop for Indian groceries, but I shop for it purposefully like I would shop for it I am going to eat that. I am going to make it, so I will go buy it, you know, but it's not like buy groceries and then start cooking Indian (food). I will go the other way round. So, I am going to make *dimer dalna*, so, I am going to get the ingredients one time, go buy it and cook it. But, it's probably once a week, though. So, I would say, I cook something Indian once a week not Bengali though, necessarily. [North] Indian [food] once a week.

For all of the respondents for whom regional-Indian food holds a central or prominent place in their lives, regional food rituals are a private affair, practiced at home (Ray 2004). However, 2 out of 31 respondents who engage in regional food-based behaviors noted that their lunch, most of the time, consists of 'leftovers' from regional-Indian dinner and 2 respondents, who are in paid jobs, go home for lunch. As mentioned earlier, regional food-based behavior is primarily seen in the dinner table of Indian immigrants' households. The first-generation India immigrants in the Southern Plains region recreate their memories and their regional-Indian ties in their everyday lives. The data strongly suggests regional Indian food-based RSPs possess high degree of salience.

The second factor determining the rank of RSPs is repetitiveness. 45 percent (14

out of 31) respondents cook and/or consume regional-ethnic food at least once a day and 1.0 percent (3 out of 31) of them cook and/or consume regional-Indian food is at least three times a week. Respondents who are staying with their children replied that the frequency of Indian food intake is much less for their children. Manasi (female, 49 years) who cooks Indian food at least 4 -5 times a week states:

> …[D]inner for my husband and I at least 4-5 days a week it's Indian food and the kids will eat certain Indian food. I would say for kids at least 2 or 3 days in a week, they will eat something Indian. it may be very selective, could be chicken or something like that….umm…But it's probably a mix of [Indian and American]….

Priya (female, 35 years) who cooks Southern Indian dinner everyday states:

> …I cook in the evenings, but lunch I prefer to take in a box and evenings, kind of… With the kids, I have to. Something, not may be regularly all the items. Something I cook regularly, they may eat some kind of noodles…

For Vidya (female, 30+ years) and Kavita (female, 51 years) dinner is "mostly" regional-Indian. Meera (female, 47 years), Anindo (male, 48 years), Anita (female, 42 years), Ranjan (male, 48 years), Sucheta (female, 50+ years), Alok (male, 65 years), Sadhana (female), Ravi (male, 56 years), and Sonal (female, 32 years) consume regional-Indian food at least once per day. Though Mohan (male, 75 + years) states that his diet has changed with his age, he offered me *matthi* (crackers), a Northern Indian snack, home-made spicy peanuts, and tea and also asked me to visit later for *paratha* (flat bread in oil). This suggests that regional-Indian food based behaviors are highly repetitive.

The material resources for regional-Indian food are available in Indian grocery stores. The respondents, who live far away from the city, drive almost an hour at least once in a month or two months to buy Indian groceries from ethnic business stores. Some of them buy Indian vegetables from other Asian stores or international food-markets

available in their town or in the nearest cities. Kavita (female, 51 years), who lives in a smaller town, wishes "…I wish we could do more [grocery shopping], but, you know once in at least two months…." Priya (female, 35 years) even travels to the nearest metropolitan city to "stock up" for three months. She explains "if we go to the city [near to us]; we shop for one month. If we go to the [larger city] we shop for three months (laughs little). Anita's family visits different cities quite frequently to buy groceries:

> "…[W]e usually shop about every two months or so. We do big groceries …So…because we live in a place where there is no Indian store, we have to shop. We have to basically drive out somewhere to shop…so…We generally do it little bit in bulk….

Viya (female, 30+ years) buys Indian vegetables from a Vietnamese store:

> …All the Indian vegetables whenever I go [to the city], I buy from Vietnamese place. I buy all the Indian vegetables from there.

Bimal (male, 53 years) is the most infrequent visitor to the city to buy groceries and depends on the local ethnic and international stores. He says:

> ….Once a week, two weeks, three weeks, depends on when I run out of spices… grocery wise that's really spices or packaged food…once a year I might [go to the city to buy Indian grocery], but otherwise the [local ethnic store] is fine for most practical purposes. I can get what I need from there…

For the respondents who live in larger cities, the resources are much easily available, and they buy dry foods and spices at least once a week. Some even go to nearest metropolitan cities where more Indian grocery stores are available, but most of them depend on local grocery stores or other ethnic stores for vegetables. Among the respondents who live in the larger cities, only Rohit (male, 50+ years) and Pramod (male, 48 years), and Aruna (female, 72 years) shop at a local Indian grocery store, but others prefer to travel to the nearest metropolitan city that has more Indian grocery stores because of a denser Asian Indian community. As Meera (female, 47 years) mentions:

> …[D]ry stuff, I usually shop every 4 months and like vegetable or bean almost every week or every other week…We go to the [larger city] [and] shop from there. Very rarely I shop from Indian grocery from [our city]…

Similarly, Manasi (female, 49 years) travels a long distance to buy Indian spices:

> [It]depends on how much I stock up. I would say at least once a month [I buy Indian grocery] may be twice depending on. I mean if I make a trip to the [larger city] and I buy more then I don't need to go as often. I don't do a lot of fresh Indian vegetables. I mean I buy from the local store rather than going to the Indian store to buy fresh vegetables, but the basic spices and the lentils and *dals* all of that I will get from the Indian store, and the tea and things like that…

Mohan (male, 75+ years) states that it is not necessary to go to Indian stores because he can find Indian vegetables and other food materials in non-Indian ethnic stores. He infrequently travels to the nearest metropolitan city to buy Indian spices, lentils, and wheat flour:

> ….[W]e buy them from Mexican store also chili, peppers, and even sugar cane you can get there. It's expensive, 3 dollars or something. Then green garbanzos. I love them. Then you have lemons, we have store. I need lemon every day. So. I get…so…there are this shop Mexican and then this American and for Indian daal and all those things you see, we go once in a while here in [the larger metropolis]. So, we buy in bulk which stays with us. Same thing about wheat flour that you can pick up here. You don't even now a day's need to go to Indian store. Other stores keep it too. Vietnamese and all that and then Pakistani and that's it. And oil of course we use Canola or olive oil for which we can get from Sams or wherever…so, that's it…

Immigrants also grow their own Indian vegetable garden. During my visits to the Prayer Meetings in the small town, I saw women exchanging Indian vegetable seeds to grow in their gardens. Two of them even asked me if I were interested in growing some vegetables. Three of my interviewees also do Indian vegetable gardening and one of them even refrigerates Indian vegetables for extensive use. Mohan (male, 75+ years) states that he grows the vegetables he needs. "[W]e grow our own vegetables in our garden, *lauki* (bottle gourd) and *tori* (ridge gourd). This year, we haven't planted yet…all kinds of

things…" For Rohit (male, 50+ years) gardening is his recreational activity: "…[W]hat we have this time. We have lot of *mirchi* (green chilies) (smiles). Lot of Indians eat *mirchi*. We have lot of *byangan* (egg plant) and *dhania* (coriander)…" Priya (female, 35 years), who lives in a small town with no Indian ethnic store, relies on home-grown Indian vegetables:

> Actually we do have kitchen garden. So, at the end of the year may be sometimes after summer we get…we store some of them and the other stuff we go with regular [Indian] vegetables, whatever we have it here. But sometimes…when we go to Indian stores, we get Indian vegetables…

Therefore, the data indicate resources are readily available the forms of ethnic business such as Indian grocery stores and other ethnic stores, and immigrants' effort to grow Indian vegetables in gardens. The high degree of resources of contributes to the overall rank of regional-Indian ritualized dietary behaviors.

(3) ***Regional-Indian Popular Cultural Practices***

Regional-Indian popular cultural practices are one of the visible or central ritualized practices in social settings or domains, i.e., possess high degree of salience. Various forms of popular cultural practices based on immigrants' region of origin such as music, dance, literature, movies, and festivals are routine activities of first-generation Indian Americans. Ravi (male, 56 years) states that South Indian music is a visible marker of his ethnic identity:

> …I am very much into Indian *Carnatic* music (music of southern India). It's an integral part of my life. I have to listen to it, almost every day and for me *Carnatic* music is intriguing and some of the composers were geniuses because they combine literature, poetry, spiritual thinking, and music…

Anindo (male, 48 years) gets extremely displeased by the portrayal of Indian culture through Bollywood music and dance in the pan-Indian Diwali programs. Therefore, he prefers to participate in his regional festivals:

> …[W]e participate in entertainment events, and cultural events to the extent that we get something out of it. We either participate in Bengali or international [festivals] because the Indian ones are become very stereotyped, and less Indian and more Bollywood only. *tumi kono ekta Diwali function-e gele, shobai kintu oi Bollywood gaaner sathei nachche* [If you attend Diwali function, everyone is performing Bollywood dance and music]…okay…I don't have a problem with that *kintu* [but] if that is all there is to it…*bujhte perecho* [understood], there is no variety…and and…anyway…

Anindo listens to both Bengali and Hindi music. He also talked about Bengali music, musicians, and cinema. He appreciates old Bengali movies more than the contemporary ones. He also reads Rabindranath Tagore, a famous Bengali writer and Noble Prize winner everyday. He says:

> I like to watch good movies. I like good Bangla movies…I like… Music is a very very important to me. I listen to Bengali music, notun purono [both new and old Bengali music] like that…*purono to botei* [obviously old music]…umm…[I listen to Hindi music too]. I used to remember lyrics of thousands and thousands of songs, which was one of my experience…Yes, I read almost every day (pause) only one author Rabindranath.

Mohan (male, 75+ years) writes poetry in both Hindi and Urdu. He also feels most comfortable speaking in his own language. He says:

> …I have written a book, which would come out…thousands of poems in Urdu. I like Urdu…and now it's being published in Hindi…

When asked about music, Gopal (male, 52 years) promptly expressed his interests in Marathi music:

> Oh…yeah…I regularly listen to Marathi, classical or old songs and a….not really those *ragas* (Indian classical music) and those things….

Vidya (female, 30+ years) remains updated about Bengali movies and the regional movies of her husband's region of origin. When I asked her about the movies, she started discussing contemporary Bengali movies and Bollywood movies directed by Bengali directors. She also asked whether I had any suggestions on recently released Bengali movies:

> Hyan (Yes in Bengali). I do watch Bengali movie, I watch [his regional] movies with him [my husband]. I see most of the... I have seen most of the good Bengali movies. Last one I saw was *Antaheen* (recently released Bengali film). I try to watch all Aparna Sen movies. I love Aparna Sen movies. I regularly watch…We watch in the weekends.

Priya (female, 35 years) collects both Telegu and Hindi movies. She also wishes to watch regional movies in theatres, but regional movies are not screened even in the nearby city. She states:

> We don't have any channels here, but we always get some movie collection somewhere. Whenever friends meet, we get…collect from them. When we go to somewhere, we get some CDs or DVDs whatever in shops. The recent movies possible…we do…we watch quite often. We watch both Telegu and Hindi movies…

Kamal (male, 64 years) and Kavita (female, 51 years) both subscribe to Tamil channels. Kamal says:

> We subscribe to Indian channels…Sun TV…so, sometimes we watch the movies…we watch sometimes the news, the election news or something like that…

As I will discuss later, the majority of respondents attend pan-Indian cultural activities or celebrations in the community. Nevertheless, moderate to high degree of salience of regional/local Indian popular cultural practices is featured both in public regional-Indian community activities or private gatherings. The respondents are engaged in various forms of regional cultural activities at home or attend regional-Indian religious festivals where

they get a chance to showcase their regional cultural identity (discussed in the next section).

Except for two respondents who admit reading Bengali literature and listening to Carnatic music every day, it is difficult to determine how frequently immigrants engage in various forms of regional-cultural practices. However, most of the respondents perform the activities 'regularly.'

(4) ***Regional-Indian Religious Practices***

India is home to major religions in the world and there are several different varieties of each religion in India based upon the regional-linguistic origin. Religious practices are also complicated by religious sect and caste. For Indian immigrants, "religion serves as the major sub-ethnic boundary marker" (Min and Kim 2009). Asian Indian Immigrants' regional-Indian religious and festive practices become visible through their participation in various regional groups within the Asian Indian community as well as in their religious behaviors at home (Verma 1980, Mathew and Prasad 2000, Maira 2002).

42 percent of Hindu (13 out of 31) respondents in my research emphasized the prominence of their Hindu religious and/or festive behaviors. This suggests that religious practices performed by first-generation Indians are highly salient or prominent. There are many regional-Indian organizations in the U.S. that hold their own religious and regional festivals. Indian immigrants do not always get together in pan-Indian festivals, both religious and non-religious. Likewise, the immigrants I interviewed actively participate in regional-cultural events and religious festivals more than pan-Indian religious festivals. Vidya (female, 30+ years) states that she only attends the regional religious festivals:

> I have never attended any religious meeting. Religious festivals, whenever, there is the *durga puja* (worship of Goddess Durga), I make it a point to attend, not so much for the *puja* (worship) as such but for the, you know, meeting all the people, having fun, and then of course offering *puja*, but of course, that becomes secondary sometimes. As I said, I don't believe much in the [pan-Hindu Indian] group thing…umm…that's pretty much it…the *durga puja* and *kali puja* (worship of Goddess Kali), that's all I attend…I [also] started *Ganpati puja* (worship of Lord Ganesha) from this year [at home]…

Meera (female, 47 years) comes from a religious Bengali family, but her interests in religion waned away after her marriage with a non-believer. She stresses her interests in attending and taking an active role the regional religious festivals, but religion per se is not important to her:

> [Y]ou see me while I go to the *durgo pujo* (worship of Goddess Durga and festivity) stuff…I take…umm…I take really really active part in *pujo*, preparation and everything…I….I like the festivals. I like being part of a festival, or the festive mood or the festive activities around because it is so colorful, so enriched, so beautiful (emphasis), so different, so diverse that I really enjoy that. That is important to me, but religious practice or…it's not at all important (emphasis). I think by participating in their [Bengali] *pujo*. Since I don't do anything at home, participating in their pujo is like helping them around…mostly…

Hindu religious practices at home are effective for maintaining regional-ethnic cultural traditions and identity (Kurien 2007). Anita (female, 42 years) for instance performs religious practices everyday at home that she learnt from her mother and grandmother. The second-generation also receives a ritualized training of regional Hindu practices:

> Religious practice…I think I follow my own Hindu religious practices and I try to maintain whatever little bit we can do over here. I try to like…like we have a place of worship in our house…so…every day after taking a shower, I try to also…I try to teach the kids that they need to go and just pray a few lines before [evening snacks]. They do it in the evening after they shower and before they eat. Generally they take the shower, then they do their *proman* (worship) and then they come to eat…so … pause…And other than that there are certain religious practices which I try to do at home like some of the main *pujo* like little bit of *Lokki pujo* (worship of Goddess Laxmi), little bit of *Saraswati pujo* (worship of Goddess Saraswati), in our house…just, you know, just so that we can do our own little bit of prayer. Another thing because of our base in North India, sometimes do the *Ramayan pat* (Chanting of Hindu epic)…pause…because it's more of my

> family, my grandmother was very much into *Ramayan pat* and she had her group stuff like that. I have grown up into that…so…I try to maintain that, but any special occasion or for like some…my father-in-law, my dad's death anniversary stuff I usually do at my home…

Priya (female, 35 years) follows the traditional religious practices in her U.S. home which were learnt in Andhra Pradesh. She describes the practices followed in India and the practices she maintains in the U.S.:

> We are from Southern part of India, we are from Andhra Pradesh. We are Telegu people…umm…We do celebrate kind of all the festivals…umm..Starting from like…*Vinayak Chaturthi*…you [North Indians] call it *Ganesh Chaturthi*. And then comes to August month…it comes as…*Sharavan Masam* (a regional Hindu festival). Its mainly for girls…umm…we do small sort of *pujas* (worships). Sravan Masam is mainly kind of what we have done is decorating I mean ourselves getting ready (smiles) with all traditional dresses and…umm…those kind of stuff…and *Varalaxmi puja* and…umm…next *Dussera* (Hindu festival). *Dussera* is a big festival. All the nine days my mom used to, not used to, now itself she does *pujas* for the deity… and we have ours some festivals only related with the Telegu people like kind of may be in the Tamil also do things. *Sankranti* (harvest festival for Hindus) or *Pongal* we call it. Sankranti we call Telegu, like Thanksgiving here you know when the harvesting is done, they celebrate the *Sankranti*…there…it comes around January. *Makar Sankranti* and…umm…*Ugadi*…*Ugadi* is the new year for Telegu people. It's actually it varies, either comes in March or April. Telegu Calendar…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you celebrate religious festivals at home here?*
>
> Priya: Here it depends. If it comes on weekdays, it's kind of tough. But still we do at the evening at least. What the main thing… thing we do in the *Ugadi* is…we make one kind of *Chatni*, we call *Ugadi Pachadi*. That is the combination of six tastes, like sourness, sweetness, hotness and everything. We have all those 6 ingredients with 6 tastes. It resembles like all happiness, sourness….in life…you are welcoming it means. You are welcoming every aspect of the thing…it resembles and the evening we have it call *Panchang Shravanam* (recitation of lunar almanac) the *Panchang* (lunar almanac). Do you know the *Panchang*? You know, it says *Panchang Shravanam* is an…umm…all things that are going to…prediction of things that are going to happen in that year. And it also has all the calendar for the whole year. Telegu calendar for the whole year, its stars and dates…

Bimal (male, 53 years) performs his religious ritual everyday at home. He still maintains his regional-Indian identity in his daily morning religious rituals:

> …[I] don't have the time or the energy or what you need to do. You do it something in a implied version of what you like to do it (smiles). Back home in India, you know, we have *puja* (worship) room. I don't have a *puja* room dedicated for *puja* here at home, but I have a little place where I have the idols that I worship like *Kali thakur* (Goddess Kali) and *Durga thakur* (Goddess Durga)…and umm…and I do that every morning when I am there or not travelling then I do my normal 5-10 minute in the morning *puja* and worship….

Bimal mentions that his busy schedule as well as the distance prevents him from attending the festivals organized by the regional-Indian community. Also, he does not want to participate in the community festivals primarily because the regional-Indian festivals in the U.S. don't recreate his memories "back home:"

> Well, I can [attend the community festivals], but it is difficult. It is not on the town. I have to go to the cities and we do sometimes…sometime I do. I take my kids and go there, but it's not the same. It's very different and also frankly, I am much more interested in…umm…part of celebration is being with family friends…so…it's not necessarily just the *puja* (worship) part and I know some people but not many in the cities so….we don't…I don't do that…

Krishnan (male, 50 years) states that the community festivals are organized based on Northern Indian festivals, but at home he follows regional-Indian religious practices:

> At home [in the US] we do exactly what we are. Our background would be culture…when we go out it's little more, kind of a more generalized. I can't describe very well. It's not strictly what we do at home. Probably North Indian influence. That prayer everything they do…yeah...at home it's different little…little different. Mostly at home [we pray in our language]. That's the major difference. Our language…there are some different practices. We like to do different way what other people, because they are bringing different cultures… [O]ur home god is *Bhawani* (Goddess *Bhawani*), we don't miss that because that's where I feel I have a connection…my father, my grandfather, they all…

Sadhana (female), who also attends pan-Indian religious events, narrates the importance of her every day religious practices and her devotion to a select few deities.

> It is very important. It is very important (emphasis added) for my own personal happiness, I would say…Yeah…I do it every day. I have dedicated a room. That's my *puja* (prayer) room, I call it, and… yeah…It's a part of my daily routine to do my daily prayers…I am more of a *Devi Bhakta* (devotee of Goddess Durga), so, but I do both, it's both *Shiva* (Lord Shiva) as well as *Vishnu* (Lord Vishnu) … But

> all of them, but…but more *Devi Bhakta*…*Devi* and *Hanuman* (Lord Hanuman) to whom I offer prayers to…

Similarly, Sucheta (female, 50+ years) has turned a bedroom into a prayer room and she showed me scriptures in her own language.

Sapna (female, 40+ years), who married outside her regional-linguistic background, believes that religious rituals are important ways to make her son aware of Indian traditions. She follows both her husband's and her own regional-religious practices both at home and in the community. Though she doesn't believe in routine visits to Hindu temples, she attends regional-Indian religious ceremonies held in temples and considers her home as a temple, a traditional Hindu belief. She states:

> Umm…not really I wouldn't say that we have. See, my parents are very religious, but I am not overtly religious…so, I like to…it's more of the memories that I want to continue you know, like my husband mentioned, it's also more for the sake of the boy. For our son because we have already as youngsters, our whole childhood. We have experienced the joys and you know, the whole traditional thing. So, I personally don't miss it too much, but we are active participants wherever we have lived so. We have been to the *Kalibari* (temple of Goddess Kali). Not so much for my [my regional] group because they were. I don't believe they had a huge group. But, recently like after moving to Tulsa, we have participated in all the Bengali functions and most recently in the past couple of years…I have formed a very good friend circle in my [regional] side. So, I have been able to experience the *Ganesh puja* (worship of Lord Ganesha), *Gudi Padwa* (New Year for *Maharashtrians*, people from Western Indian state, Maharashtra). *Gudi Padwa* is actually the last week. We are actually right now planning something to. It will be later, but it has to be something…for convenience, yeah…so, yeah..I am getting a good mix of both cultures…and…pause…yeah…I am very much in touch…
>
> Well…Like I said, I am not overtly religious. But we will…when its start of anything, any new beginning its *Ganpati* (Lord Ganesha), exam time, yeah…We tell him, you know, we always do anything, any new embark or something good…or something important. So, we follow those traditions. But not to the point where I am doing *puja* everyday and *puja* pat and he has to learn these *shlokas* (chanting) and all of that…So, not a fanatic…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you visit temples?*

> Yeah…on occasions…like, first of the year, we go to the *mandir* (temple) for *Ganpati puja* (worship of Lord Ganesha)…umm…*Durga puja* (worship of Goddess Durga) on occasions held at the temple, so…yeah…we go there. All the traditional what do you say, the key…umm…festivities that we have in both our cultures, we will attend those, but I won't go on my own that okay, this week I am going to the temple…no…no…we don't do that. Because to me I feel…our…your house is the temple and you don't have to make a show off how much you believe in God to go to the temple. I don't need to go anywhere, I can sit in this chair and think off whoever I believe in and that's more than…pause…the act of just going there and pretending to do something…so, I don't believe in that…

Sonal (female, 32 years) also hails from a religious family and believes in maintaining regional-religious practices. Her goal is to remain connected with the country left behind through regular religious activities, but she fails to recreate the place and the people of her homeland. She says:

> Ours is a very religious family…umm…so we had all kinds of celebrations, but the major festival was always *Ganpati* because we are Maharashtians. So, *Ganpati* was a big thing. I was…I am also religious, so I always participated in all the festivals. Umm…I tried to celebrate everything here (in the U.S.) because that's the way we get connection between U.S. and India. So, I try to celebrate most of the stuff but sometimes I find it hard because…umm… back home…umm…I came…I come from big family. So, here [in the U.S.] I, my husband and I. Sometimes, I feel that there is a disconnect. The way I used to celebrate the festivals earlier and now, yeah… but otherwise I celebrate everything. I celebrate *Ganpati* [at home]…

Anindo (male, 48 years), who identifies himself as an atheist, is an active participant in regional-ethnic religio-cultural festivals. When he migrated in the US as a student, he sought opportunities to be involved in regional-cultural festivities. During our long conversation he stated that he wanted to remake the memories of Indian cities, his childhood, and his participation in regional festivities. He still faces deep conflict of belonging to two places at once. I have also seen him actively organizing and taking part in cultural activities in Bengali-Indian religious festivals. He explains:

> I go to only *Saraswati pujo* (worship of Goddess Saraswati), *Durgo pujo* (worship of Goddess Durga), *Kali pujo* (worship of Goddess Kali) in the city. Again, these are only outpouring of the energy and enthusiasm and just good natured, good spirited conversation or interaction with people which is the social part of me…absolutely loves or enjoys being participating…*durgo pujo ba ittadide kori ki amra, she nach, gaan, natok, jai bolo na keno* [We perform dance, music, drama in durgo pujo and so on]. It's a way of expanding yourself, exercising your creativity, reaching out to people, touching or interacting in different ways and finding out in different ways what you can and what you cannot… and you know, may be it's a…It's tough and you [and] at times feel like it's not worth doing it, but at times the pleasure and satisfaction you get out of it…it's…so, you have to bring yourself to do it and like anything else in life, what you get depends on what you give.

Samir (male, 40+ years) has travelled in many countries before he decided to settle in the U.S. Though he comes from a religious family, he has lost interests in religion and is continuing regional-religious activities primarily to inform his son about Hindu Indian values and traditions. He states the reasons behind attending religious festivals:

> …[This city] was a different experience because [name of the city] being a small community is a very tight community, very well tight-knit community. So, we have been more active here than any other places. So celebrate *saraswati puja*, we celebrate *durga puja* and for *kali puja* we go to other places and that was partly the reason for that was also to introduce our son to some of the ritual that he is going to experience…so…and also the social…It's not that I am religiously part of do that. I don't have the religious drive that may be my parents have, but it was more of a social…partly social, little bit religious…may be the religious percentage went down and then the biggest part was may be I wanted my son to experience that…
>
> …Since we are in a very tight group, I [make sure not to] miss *Durga puja*. So, even if I am travelling I try to be there. So, like *Saraswati puja* was here. I had a busy schedule, but I made sure that I was in town and then I was here for *Saraswati puja*. So, it's important for me to use that social opportunity to meet the friends that we have…

Both Anita (female, 42 years) and Ranjan (male, 48 years) miss not only Bengali religious festivals, but also the festivals, which were part of their upbringing outside their linguistic region. Now they only actively participate in major Bengali religious and cultural activities. Ranjan says:

> [After migration] I have either cramped everything within certain amount of time. So, that was the big shift in focus…There are a lot of festivals we are not able to continue with…Holi is one of them…pause…typically Punjabi-der ekta festival hoi [Punjabis have a festival] Lori. I haven't come across any person who celebrates it even though they are from that part of that part of India…so…now, there are certain festivals which can effect…fallen off the radar if you. *But amader nijeder festivals guno* [But we celebrate our own festivals] we definitely try to do those…umm…And, just because our…well…my upbringing has been in [outside Bengal] so, all the northern Indian festivals like Diwali – a must (smile). *Durga pujo, Kali pujo …Kali pujo barite kora hoi na jodio*….but…umm…. *mane barir modhye korte para jai kori…je gulo community-te kora hoi, shegulo attend korte cheshta kori…*[We don't celebrate *Kali pujo* at home, but we try to attend the relgional festivals celebrated in the community]

Ravi (male, 56 years) has stopped believing in Gods and doesn't attend temple. His beliefs in religion have changed in the last 8-10 years when he decided to be an American citizen. His family celebrated both regional-Indian and pan-Indian festivals at home before his child moved to another city for college. He states that his daughter is in the university Hindu temple committee, performs *puja*, and takes keen interests in Indian culture. When asked about his religious activities, he responded:

> I have suspend this believe in them [Gods]…so…but my wife is moderately religious. She does…even till three four years…even now, mostly for our daughter, not necessarily as religious thing, you know as a cultural thing, we used to do festivities at home. [My child] has now moved to college, but as long as [my child] was at home, we did 4-5 important ceremonies…at home. Like, *Vijayank Chaturthy*, *Krishna Jayanti*, and you know *Diwali* and then, the during that *Dussera*…so, *Makar Sankranti*, we call it *Pongal*…we do five of those…(voice lowers)

For all the respondents mentioned above, regional-religious RSPs exhibit high degree of salience. Immigrants have a strong sense of 'home' and nostalgia that they try to recreate through participating in festivals. Immigrant parents also wish to instill the values, traditions, and memories to the next generation (Maira 2002, Silva 2009).

Repetitiveness is concerned with the frequency with which RSPs are performed. The regional-Indian Hindu religious behaviors are performed occasionally in regional

organizations, and/or regularly with their friends who are from a similar regional background, and/or at home. Except for one respondent, others stressed how they celebrated regional religious festivals in the special days of the year. Though first-generation immigrants always celebrate on weekends and mention that "[you] have to adjust your time based on particular day of a week," it is the ritualized religious functions and festivities, which become important vehicles for re-living their heritage. Therefore, in regard to the frequency with regional-Indian Hindu religious behaviors are performed, there is a moderate to high degree of repetitiveness.

Regional-Indian religious practices demonstrate high degree of homologousness with regional cultural festivals. There is often a permeation of regional cultural activities such as music, dance, and literature in the regional-Indian religious performances. The regional-religious activities are also performed in regional languages. As a lot of respondents mentioned that they attend religious festivals not for religious reasons, but as a cultural festival and celebration. Meera (female, 47 years), who is spiritual and not religious, noted that she participates in religious activities because of the festivity around religion. She says, "any religious practice[s] (emphasis) as such it's not important at all to me (emphasis)…at all, but I like the festivals. I like being part of a festival." Similarly, Pramod (male, 48 years), though a self-acclaimed atheist, enjoys Bengali-religious festival "back home" because of the friends and family. He described the overlapping of his religious and cultural practices:

> …Of all my Bengali things that I have enjoyed other the years, *Durga pujo* (worship of Goddess Durga) is my favorite thing, but clearly it's not important enough to me here that I go attend it, you know. I would fundamentally describe myself as an atheist. So, if I am atheist, it's really not about the pujo, it's about the friends and the family. And then if my friends and families are not part of the pujo, for what I am going to *pujo*. So, it's from that standpoint that it's really

> something I enjoyed back home and that I went back to India during *pujo* couple of times, and I had a great time… [I] describe myself as a non-practicing atheist (smiles). But I will go to a [Durga] *pujo*, and I will sit, if anybody says it's time for *anjali* (offering flowers with chanting to God), I will do it…you know…Not that I think of one way or the other, but also not vehemently on the other side…So, I am clearly not (emphasis) a believer in god but I am not vehemently like, some people are like, there is no god. I am a communist or whatever it is. I am not…I see it as a cultural experience and I participate in it…but I really don't, you know…

Therefore, regional-religious RSPs are interpreted beyond mere religious observances and are a major part of regional-cultural activities in the Indian immigrants' lives.

Summary

First, regional-ethnic RSPs exhibit high degree of salience or prominence in the first-generation Indian immigrants' ethnic identity. It is worth noting that 83 percent (26 out of 31) respondents are engaged in various forms of regional-ethnic RSPs. The respondents described their regional-ethnic experiences "back home" which primarily consisted of festivals, food, family, and people. With India's diverse regional-linguistic backgrounds, language and food are the most salient or conspicuous regional-Indian practices among the first-generation immigrants in the Southern Plains region of the U.S. There is a persistence of regional languages and regional foods in the lives of these immigrants. Regional-Indian cultural practices and religious practices are also present, but to a lesser extent, among the immigrants who live in sparsely populated Indian communities. It must be remembered that though regional-ethnic RSPs carry the characteristics of pre-migration experiences, they are shaped by the Indian immigrants as well as by the host society.

Indian immigrants migrating to the U.S. after the 1960s come from different language groups. English as well as a regional language is spoken at home. Even with the

wide use of English among Indian immigrants, my respondents prefer to speak in their native languages when they meet someone from their own language group. The desire to speak in one's own language is obvious when all of my Bengali-American respondents spoke to me in Bengali even when I started the conversation in English. Immigrant parents speak in native languages to teach their children the same. Increasing transnational ties also created urgency among immigrants to make their children aware of their language and culture.

Though every respondent agreed that their everyday breakfast and lunch is comprised of western or American food, regional-Indian food is the most important part of in their lives. Immigrants who live long distances from the cities, do not mind travelling just for Indian grocery shopping. At times, they procure Indian vegetables from other ethnic stores or grow Indian vegetables at home.

Moreover, regional-Indian cultural practices and religious behaviors are also prominent for the immigrants. With an exception of the few immigrants who live in cities, both regional-Indian cultural practices and religion are predominantly private behaviors.

Second, regional languages and the eating of regional-Indian food are highly repetitive ritualized activities. The respondents are also engaged in regional-cultural practices regularly. Moreover, regional-Indian religious practices are part of their daily activities, and/or are performed several times a year. Therefore, some of the regional-Indian RSPs occur quite frequently while some others are others are engaged in less frequently. Despite these variations the overall high repetitiveness of the RSPs contributes to the overall in high rank.

Third, regional-ethnic RSPs also possess high degree of homologousness with each other. Regional-language is used mostly with regional-cultural activities involving music, dance, and literature, movies and television programs. Regional languages are featured in regional-Indian religious festivals, events, and prayers. Immigrant parents also insist on teaching their children both regional languages and their heritage through cultural and religious activities at home and in the community.

Finally, regional-ethnic RSPs require resources to maintain the language, food-based practices, regional-cultural practices, and the regional-religious practices. Increasing transnational contact via phone, internet, and frequent visits to India are providing resources for the continuing use of languages. The data demonstrate that there is a high degree of resources to perform regional-Indian RSPs. Immigrants read regional language newspapers published from India, watch regional-language films, read books, write, talk to their family and friends in India. Regional organizations and friends from a similar regional background allow them to continue their native language use. In spite of the dominance of English language among U.S.-reared children, first-generation immigrant parents primarily converse in their native languages and emphasize learning the same. Frequent contact with friends and families even help their children to get exposure to ancestral languages.

Immigrants eat regional-Indian food at least once in three weeks, most of time it is the dinner. Indian grocery stores, other ethnic stores, and home-grown vegetables provide the immigrants the necessary resources for regional-Indian cooking. Primarily, women take cooking responsibilities and cook almost every day that I will discuss later in the section of pan-Indian RSPs. As mentioned earlier, books, media, music, drama, and

dance performances in regional organizational events help to uphold regional-Indian cultural practices. Regional-ethnic events and ceremonies as well as pre-migration religious experiences and memories provide the necessary resources for maintaining regional-Indian religious activities.

The analysis of data shows that the regional-ethnic RSPs of Asian Indian immigrants are high in rank. They are salient, repetitive, homologous, and typically are supported by both human and non-human resources.

Table 2. Highly Ranked Regional-ethnic RSPs practice by First-generation Asian Indian Immigrants

	RSPs	Percent of First-generation Indian Immigrants (out of 31 respondents)
Regional-ethnic RSPs	Language	68
	Food	55
	Popular Culture	26
	Religious Practices	42

The Rank of Pan-Indian Ritualized Symbolic Practices

Indian immigrants are continuously negotiating with their diverse religious, ethnic, linguistic, regional, and caste diversity to create a pan-Indian identity in the U.S. The first-generation immigrants, who came to the U.S. after 1965, are the primary initiators in creating a "new Indian identity" (Bhalla 2006). They engage in various ethnic practices both in the public and private domains to construct a pan-Indian identity (Bacon 1996). Transnational contacts have aided their efforts in creating a pan identity of plural India. Therefore, immigrants create their identity both in the adopted society and in the imaginary Indian diaspora. Based on interview data, I have loosely categorized these pan-Indian ritualized practices as religious, popular cultural, behaviors showing pan-Indianness, and transnational behaviors, though these categories share elements that inevitably blur their distinctions.

(1) *Pan-Indian Religious Practices*

Religion is intricately tied to ethnic life in the U.S. Indian Immigrants have created a pan-Hindu identity to "fit in" as an ethnic community in the U.S. (Kurien 1998). Hinduism is the majority religion of India. Hinduism does not have an organized structure. It has no single sacred text or clerical order. In the U.S., Indian immigrants are re-creating "Indianness" through re-inventing their faith to answer queries about Hinduism to their children and to create distinctive cultural boundaries from the mainstream American society (Khandelwal 2002). This suggests that Hinduism has been renegotiated in the new country. Aruna (female, 72 years) talks about the newly found Hindu devotional song, which she learned after joining the Hindu temple group in the U.S.:

> I was in India, till I was 26. Then came here [in the U.S.]. I have never heard *Jai, Jagdish, Hare* (Hindu devotional song) kind of …I did not know *Jai, Jagdish, Hare*. I mean I was very well trained in music, but when I came to United States in [19]67, the first thing everybody sings is *Jai, Jagdish, Hare* and of course…

In this study except for 2 respondents, 29 respondents (94 percent) trace their roots in Hinduism. 58 percent (18 out of 31) of first-generation immigrants consider pan-Hindu religious practices as highly salient or prominent behaviors. The respondents practice Hinduism as a way of life without any formal structures. They consider Hinduism as an important part of their lives. Both Rohit (male, 50+ years) and Anindo (male, 48 years) are influenced by Hindu philosophy, a feature of pan-Indianness (discussed in the next section), although none of them find worship of domestic Hindu deities important. When asked about how important religious practices are, both of them state in detail about the centrality of pan-Hindu practices:

> Rohit: I think it's philosophical that's matter, but as it is Hinduism is more of a way of life…so…it's not…it's not that regimented…If I …if I…umm…feel like going to the temple, I will go. If I…I don't have to…if it is…umm…*Diwali* or *puja*, some *puja* day….yes…I will do it. But it's not…it's not forced on me. I take it as a… I take it [Hinduism] as a way of life. How I …how I…(pause)…observe it or live it, but nothing…(pause). There is nothing structured…I mean…Routine thing like you have your small temple [at home]…[I] just go and…(pause)…not any praying just stop there for a moment. That's about it…nothing…nothing very elaborate…

Anindo not only believes in Hindu philosophy, but takes keen interest in Buddhism as well.

> Anindo: Well…I have to clarify one thing. I am a non-believer, but I think depending on the interpretation, I will be considered religious…which is a… If you look at Hindu traditions, six main *dhara* (paths) of Hindu philosophy, out of which two is actually atheistic and one is hedonistic. [Hinduism] is a set of beliefs, sort of philosophy and…umm…I am obviously VERY influenced by the openness in the Hindu religion, including people who came up with the fold…*joto mot, toto poth* (there are as many paths as there are opinions)…whatever…So this openness that there is not "a" way or "the" way. but there are ways to find

> whether you call it god, whether you call in salvation…whether you call it nirvana. It's in that sense; obviously it is very important to me…

Kapil (male, 42 years) similarly emphasized the 'openness' of Hinduism. Though he attends groups on Buddhist spirituality because of its popularity in the U.S., he identifies himself as Hindu:

> Spiritual practices have been very important and I think, part of that has I think. I have roots of my spiritual practices do align with…I am looking at Hinduism more as philosophy of life rather than a religion…umm…The spiritual practices of Buddhism rather than the dogmatic practices. So, I have identified myself as a Hindu ever forever. I don't think that identity is going to change. So (pause)…so…any new spiritual experience or practice or exposure fit in that [Hindu] framework…

All of them see Hinduism as a cultural expression. The point that definitely comes across in conversations with these respondents is the salience of pan-Hinduism.

As noted by the researchers, temples have become the most public expressions of pan-Hindu identity. Temples accommodate multiple deities from the different regions of India. Hindu temples are the cultural, religious, and community centers, a gathering place for residentially dispersed and diverse immigrants (Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2012). Most of my research participants, who live in small towns far off from the city, do not visit temples or get involved in their activities primarily because of long distance, but participate in festive days or special worship activities. Krishnan (male, 50 years) is not involved in regular domestic worship, but religion is important in his life and visits temple quite often compared to other respondents. He says:

> Well, I am a Hindu…umm…We got to temple, we go. Whenever, there is important occasion, we never miss. We go to temple. In home we pray. My wife prays every day. We have a…every Indians has small [praying area]…figures [deities]….So, she prays. I also pray. I pray [in the] weekend, not very long, but, I do, we do believe in…umm…culture. Yes, I do believe in religion because religion is very important for me because that really allows me to…umm…focus

> myself, relate myself, you know, I want to belong to somebody. It's very important….as I said, it gives a grounding to you…Yeah..
> ….[T]emples used we visit very often. Now we are visiting probably once in two months…depending upon…Just we came back from last [festival]…There was *Shiv Ratri* (worship of Lord Shiva)…there are many…My wife specially wants to go. We go very often. It's [temple] not very far...

Temples also provide transnational ties for members. Temples bring speakers from India or some temples bring *gurus* (religious preachers) to live in the U.S. and be spiritual leaders (Dhingra 2007). Gopal (male, 52 years) is a believer in all religions and has a secular, multi-religious, and multi-cultural view of India, but visits temple on special occasions such as religious discourses on Hinduism and festivals. He describes another version of "Indianness:"

> Umm…yeah….particularly my family you know, we always believed that …umm… as a human being you know, and when you are part of the broader society, whatever your religious, this thing as at home…at society level, as a human being, as humanity should be emphasized more rather than being an Hindu or Christians or Muslim. We are human being, humanity, those are very important, otherwise, you know. Those practices and those values, they are the main source of your awareness….very important…
>
> …Many people they regularly visit temples, we hardly been into that because we believe that every where that power is there, what is important is to respect people or love people whether he is an Indian or American or any religion. This is how we [practice religion]…
>
> [We visit temples] probably once in a three months. In case if some good lecture is there, discourse in there. We hardly miss any saint or any person. We always go there. Not [that] a idol is there and you just go and worship it, we are not in to that kind of thing. Somewhere you have an opportunity to listen to good thought we hardly miss them. [We attend religious meetings]. Good to really listen to people and be with them. Sometimes those celebrations going on…like…umm…(pause)….umm…mostly whenever some *Sadhu* (holy man) or some saint comes you know, we go there…

Manasi (female, 49 years), does not visit Hindu temples regularly or elaborately worship deities at home, but holds a special lunch in the temple to familiarize her children with Indian culture. When asked about the importance of religion, she replies:

> …[B]ut I think the other part that we do which is I…I…go to the *mandir* (temple) you know, twice a year we will do lunch at the temple with the *bhajan* (devotional song) lunch . And that my daughter knows we will always do and we will go for that. My son may or may not come help…

Aruna (female, 72 years), lives in a city near to Hindu temple, participate in temple activities and attend all temple festivals. She wants to resume her regular temple visits:

> Umm…Now a days, I have not done. I would say may be once in two or three months….But…umm…6-7 years ago every (emphasis) evening…every evening and then…umm…I have helped them with different activities as volunteer and then something had to be information…brochures have to be done…or something…I did that, but not anything [now]. They have got a lot of young people. Besides, I don't have the energy to do it, but I think I am going to start going more often. Umm…you know, usually I used to go to *prodoshon*. It's a 13^{th} day of moon. *Prodoshan* is just the beginning of the night. It's between…time between the evening and the sunset and that's the time they do *Shiva puja* (worship of Lord Shiva)…I used to always attend that and they did what is called *Rudram* (hymn devoted to Lord Shiva). It's beautifully and it's kind of sinks into you and then…umm…first Saturday, they do *Vishnu puja* (worship of Lord Vishnu) and….umm….I used to go to that, but now days I am not going and then once a month *Ganesh puja* (worship of Lord Ganesh) which comes on the fourth day of this…umm…So…I go over that…and then any major festivals….and…(pause)…

Aruna also practices act of worship or *puja* at home incorporating the learning from temple priest. When asked about the importance of her religious practice, she responds:

> My religious practice basically is….number one, meditation. As soon as I get up in the morning, I have to say my little you know, I have a sequence of things that I have to say. In the puja room [is] one of our bedrooms and I pray there. And not everyday, but at least once a week or so. I lit a lamp. I am not a great believer in sitting there and putting flower and all that. To me, mental focusing are more important and remembering and…umm…Then I like to read a lot of the *Vishnu Sahasranaman* (thousands of names of Lord Vishnu) and some days I actually read the *Rudram* and like that…different *Kanakadhara stortam* (hymn devoted to Goddess Laxmi) and I am quite familiar with all these. I am familiar how to read them from our *acharya* [temple priest]. There is an intonation while you read that…it's becomes easier and musical. So, that's the reason why I do that…and other than that…umm…I think, on festival days, you make any dessert or anything like that you offer it to [God]…He keeps telling me…you know, in India, the practice is you feed some animal in the morning like Goat or something…We talked about it but we have not done it. So, there is a bird feeder but that's not the same thing…(laughs)…

Priya (female, 35 years) showed her frustration when asked about participating in religious ceremonies or festivals. She says:

> …In town where we go? (frustration in voice). We celebrate in home. If somebody is doing group together…like, we had like a *holi* (festival of colors) festival…umm…Last weekend, the ladies club party…they celebrated *holi* kind of together. We attend all the parties…they do…but may be kind of yearly…it happens may be…three-four times…not for all the festivals they do…some of the festivals. I would say rather [these festivals are] social…not religious…Two days back, actually…last week… [we celebrated] *Shiv Ratri* [in town]. It was more religious, but not the traditional way we have [in India]. Last year actually on *Shiv Ratri* (Night of Lord Siva), I went to the City temple. Tthey did *Abhishekam* (Hindu religious rites) with *Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam* (worship of Lord Shiva). [It was] kind of a more traditional way of celebrating *Shiv Ratri*. And we like to go to temple actually. They do more traditional way. [If] our schedules permits may be sometimes weekend (chuckles).

Temples thus provide an ethnic community connection. Immigrants Naren (male, 65 years), Ranjan (male, 48 years), and Anita (female, 42 years) visit a temple or participate in Hindu festival days in temples. When asked whether they attend temples:

> Naren: I usually [visit temples] when there are religious festivals…umm…at least I will bring it to my kid's attention…and let them know what it's about. But, I am not a very ritualistic person. Seems like *Shiv Ratri*, umm…umm…I will go on *Janmashtami* (Celebration of Lord Krishna's birth), *Ram Nabami* (Celebration of Lord Rama's birth). So…you know, things like that…
>
> Ranjan: Temples…again…umm….because of proximity we don't visit very often, but we try to visit for the important events, like *Ganesh pujo* (worship of Lord Ganesha), *diwali function* (festival of lights). The temple in [the city]…we try to do that…new year…[On] important occasions [we visit temples]…
>
> Anita: Umm…we try to go two or three times in the year, but we are visiting a new place and then the temple we might,but in [the city near to us] we try to go 2-3 times in the year. We make it a point to go there after my father-in-laws death anniversary, we usually offer *puja*…So…go definitely in July and other than that…Sometimes if we come to know if special *pujas* are going on in the temple and it's a weekend, we make it…we try to attend that *puja*. They have their south Indian *pujas* sometimes…

In the U.S., Hindu Indian immigrants created new practices such as *satsangs* (congregation of truth) *and balavihar* (child development) that typically do not exist in

India (Kurien 1998). The respondents in my research, who live in small towns, have also created small religious groups in their town and have also organized private religious gatherings. They organize these groups to maintain community ties as well as to pass down Indian heritage and culture in Indian American children. However, unlike the large Indian communities, these gatherings are more informal. These gatherings included chanting and devotional songs. When asked if he attends religious meetings, Saliesh (male, 40+ years) responded:

> Yeah, we do. Within town we have small group. Essentially friends get together and spent a day of a week…umm…doing some…basically chanting of some of these holy names from some of these scriptures. And there is another group. I also participate…not very often these days…but I do. They basically talk about *bhajans* and those kinds of…So, I try to go. There are two activities that happens in the town. I try to participate in it. And on the first one where we do the chanting and all, I take a more active role because there aren't very many champions of it. I don't go [attend the second group] there regular[ly]. It's happening regularly. There are enough champions to sustain it…so…even without we participate…

Sailesh states the importance of the small religious groups in which he participates with his family:

> I mean bunch of families get together once in a while and spent may be half an hour introducing kids some of these activities that's it. So, again, like we strive to keep up with some of these traditions because…umm….If anything that our kids are going to take away, at least I believe, it should be part of those traditions. It's good part of these traditions many and most…

Priya (female, 35 years) Sadhana (female) attend Hindu group events that are organized in the community:

> Priya: …Every weekend, we do *Vishnu Sahasranama* in a group in our town. Thousands of names of *Vishnu*…And one more thing, we have a ladies group with a *Lalitha Sahasranama* (thousands of names of Goddess *Lalitha*) also, but we do once in a month together, Thousands of names of *Lalitha*. In India, I know that by heart. I know the whole *Sahasranama* by my mom by hearing. I do by myself here to [in the U.S.]…every Friday I try to do that at least every Friday. It's good for the kids…But they are not really into that because sometimes don't

> come and sit with me. They are too young. It's kind of lengthy (smiles). I am trying to teach my daughter some of them like *Bhagvat Gita* (Hindu holy text) and she is…she knows some *Astakams* (chanting) like *Krishnaashtakams* (chanting of the Lord Krishna), *Laxmiashtakam* (chanting of Goddess Laxmi)…something and she is learning *Vishnu Sahasranamam*.She is half the way…umm…The good thing that helped is…we do chanting every weekend in the group, right? There are some kids…some other kids. They will come and sit. They do chanting. So that helped the kind of motivation for her too…so…
>
> Sadhana: We have …umm…Once a month we do, what we call *Lalita Sahasra naam* which is the thousand names of the *Devi Lalita* and that's a women's group that I have started here and we also have *Vishnu Sahasranaam* which is the thousand names of *Vishnu* and that has been ongoing when we came here and…It's …umm…it's done once a week. So, whenever I go these and then once a week we also have *Prathana* (prayer) which is you know a get together and I try and you know, go in Indian clothes…

As mentioned above, these groups are also gender specific. Women have formed a separate chanting group. Like Krishnan (male, 50 years) says:

> … If you need religious meetings, there are a lot of small groups here, *sahasranama*, I don't because I am busy, but my wife attend[s] those, she won't miss those. My kids go whenever they want to go…yeah…she drags them along. They go because they want to see their friends and play (laughs). That's the trick there (laughs)…

Sucheta (female, 50+ years) hosts religious festivals at her home and invites the Hindu community:

> I cannot celebrate it with the same vigor, like *Ganesh Chaturthi* (worship of Lord Ganesha) in Bombay is like processions and showering and dancing and all that. We don't do that…we don't do *Garba* (regional Indian festival) here. If there is a *Garba* somebody does, I do participate but I don't organize it myself, but I do have a lot of religious practices in my house in the sense, I conduct *puja* (worship), if you know, once a year, I have *satyanarayan puja* (worship of Lord Narayan), or I have *Akhand Ramayan* (reading of Ramayan, Hindu epic, for 24 hours). So, I do all that. Soooo, we practice that in the sense that it is generally peace for the whole community not just…It's a way of saying thank you to God…

Kumar (male, 64 years) also talks about organizing religious festivals at home and with Indian friends in the community. He states:

> ….For example, it's *Shiv Ratri* on 19th of February and what often happens is…we don't do anything at our home per se, but we might…people, our friends and us might get together and might have a party or whatever, but there is nothing specifically religious. Although…umm…Sometimes (pause) might be reading of the *Ramayana*. My wife did one of that. There was somebody who came over and he read it and so, we just participate and there is nothing that. There is no specific [religious] ritual…

Navin (male, 58 years) have incorporated the pan-Indian devotional songs, learnt from the pan-Indian gatherings (combing both Jain and Hindu practices) in town, in their every day domestic worship. He says:

> We are more family oriented…religious family and that's we have continued. Having some religious support is certainly source of strength…umm….and so, it is very important. We pray every evening. We do an *aarti* (worship)…every evening…since, [Mr. X] introduced us to the *mantra* (chants) that he recites, we recite that also…umm…We try to do that without fail and when we are in the town before going to that we make sure that has happened…umm…I think it also brings regularity…umm…,but primarily it gives peace and source of strength. So, it is very important…

Mohan (male, 75 + years) organizes Hindu religious meetings at his home. He, along with few other Hindu Indians, has created a congregation to train the second-generation about Indian culture and Hinduism. When asked about the importance of religious practices, he discussed a "secular" version of "Indianness" and then described about organizing Hindu religious congregations:

> Oh! We have a big temple that celebrates not just one, but quite a few[festivals] …[A]s far as religious practices go…since 1980…our kids were little and we were worried that we must also get something of our culture…so we used to. I used to teach kids every Sunday and other friends said that we want our kids to learn. So we formed a loose group – *Ramayan* and *Gita* group. But basically the idea was to imbibe the values in kids who feel proud of not to ashamed of where they are from...their culture…and we used to essentially tell them make the best of both the worlds…western culture has so many good things…so has eastern culture…
>
> I am so happy to say, I was the one who used to kind of lecture them here…Every 10-15 minutes. We will read *Ramayan* and *Gita* and I will expound on it…say…this is what it is…Ram was like respect his parents and then relate to

> modern times and Krishna you must fight for it as a duty when something is very wrong. Do your duty and don't worry. Study, but what you get as a grade is not in your hand. What is in your hand, you do that best. They [my children] grew up very nicely and they have go on to national debates because they used to read there also that and picked up those qualities….great debaters…doctors, engineers…so…they did very good. We still continue every week…once a week…same practice. There aren't many kids left because our generation kids are grown up. Newer one somehow is not interested….umm…So we have discussions…

In sum, the various forms of pan-Hinduism such as the emphasis on Hindu philosophy, visiting Hindu temples, participating in Hindu religious congregations, organizing religious worship at home, and participating in pan-Indian religious prayers are conspicuous in the lives of Indian immigrants. While even some of the respondents define themselves as Hindus; think that their religious behaviors do not reflect traditional Hindu practices. Indeed non-Hindus explained that in the U.S., unlike India, Indian culture is practiced only with Hindu religious festivals.

The second factor determining the rank of pan-religious practices is repetitiveness. 71 percent (22 out of 31) of the respondents attend Hindu temples and 2 respondents attend church. Respondents who did not emphasize the importance of religious practices also go to other public places of worship, such as small-group pan-Hindu religious gatherings as well as temples. The respondents in this study who live in small towns usually attend Hindu temples on special occasions, averaging three to four times a year. The respondents from small towns cannot visit Hindu temples frequently because of the distance they are required to travel. As Sadhana (female) mentions "…That was about once month [we visit temple] because we don't have a temple here in town. It's in another city. So, I would say, may be once a month sometimes, once in two months…" Navin (male, 58 years) says that whenever he goes to a new town, he visits a

Hindu temple. He attends a pan-religious group every week. Gopal (male, 52 years) attends temples only for religious or spiritual lectures. Sadhana, Navin, and Gopal are the organizers and regular attendees of various small group pan-Indian religious gatherings.

For Kishnan (male, 50 years), Anita (female, 42 years), Ranjan (male, 48 years), and Naren (male, 65 years) temple visits are limited to religious festivals. Sucheta (female, 50+ years), Vidya (female, 30+ years), Sagar (male, 35+ years) live in a small town, yet attend temple for worship at least once every month. Vidya and Sagar stated that traditional Hinduism is not important in their lives, but attend public worship places and religious festivals.

The temple's importance as the cultural and community center allows respondents and their families to make more frequent visits. Sailesh (male, 40+ years) goes to temple on special occasions, but his wife and daughter visits temple in the city every week for his daughter's dance recital. Similarly, Priya (female, 35 years) attends temple every week for her daughter's dance lessons. Rohit (male, 50+ years), who lives in the city, visit the temple almost every weekend, but he also attends community activities in the temple. He says:

> …When we have time [we visit temple]. Generally it's weekends…umm…It's nothing planned…like, two weeks back we were at the temple. Last week we were in temple because we organized for a health camp. So, it was nothing to do with religion but it was… Since you are there, so pray for few minutes. That's about it…

Kumar (male, 64 years) attends Hindu temples, not for the spiritual experience, but "do[es] it as a social thing. May be in two-three months…" Nirmal (male, 52 years) attends temples for their beautiful architectures. Nirmal says "…I do go to temples from time to time more as a means of seeing something like beautiful; artistic. There are some

very beautiful temples…" Both Sapna (female, aged in 40 years) and Samir (male, 40+ years) attend temples only on the days of religious festivals and do not like to make temples as their regular worship place. For Samir, visiting temple also brings back the memories of his religious upbringing:

> …[We visit temple] on occasions…not…like every week. So, if there is something like *Shiv Ratri* or something…those kind of special occasions and I do out of memory of what I did with my parents. It's not that I have a strong urge that I follow the calendar…umm…

Among the people who live in cities, Alok (male, 65 years) and Mohan (male 75 + years) attend Hindu temples on the days of religious festivals; Aruna (female, 72 years) visits temple quite frequently and plans to resume attending every evening; Manasi (female, 49 years) attends special religious festivals whereas Pramod (male, 48 years) describes attending temples as a social experience. When asked how often do you visit Hindu temple – his response was, "I will visit a temple, but purely as a socio-cultural experience, you know, like for instance, I have a very good friend and his daughter had a *Bharat Natyam* (Indian classical dance) recital at Indian temple. So, I went to it, because of that not because I am religious, but you know…But at the same it's kind of interesting that I describe myself as a non-practicing atheist…"

Meera (female, 47 years), Sonal (female, 35 years) and Anindo (male, 48 years) never attend Hindu temples, Rani (female, 51 years) attends temples very rarely, Ravi (male, 56 years) has stopped visiting temple 8-10 years back, and Bimal (male, 53 years) attends "temple in the U.S." not more than once a year just for festivals. Kamal (male, 64 years) and Kavita (female, 51 years) who are identify themselves as Christians attend public places of worship, but miss the experience 'back home'. Kavita prays at home, but does not attend church regularly and when asked about the importance of religious

practices, Kamal replies "…[W]e go to church, it's an American church and that's about it…" In this case, attendance of church does not recreate their experiences of India.

Other than visiting temples, a number of respondents also participate in pan-religious meetings organized around both Jain and Hindu religious practices every week or at least once in a month, or attend small-group weekly and/or monthly Hindu religious gatherings. They also attend private religious gatherings organized by friends or family. Despite the variations in attendance at temples and religious groups, first-generation Indian immigrants experience a high degree of repetitiveness in terms of participating in pan-Indian religious practices.

Pan-religious ritualized practices are homologousness with pan-Hindu festivals. Most religious activities and cultural events are intertwined with each other. It should be noted that pan-Indian religious practices are related to Hindu festivals only. As Mukhi (2000) noted "Indianness is being equated to Hindu and vice versa….[and] the celebration of festivals [in the U.S.]…only underscores Hindu [festivals]…" (p.75). The festivals in which respondents participate primarily include *Holi* and *Diwali*. 81 percent (25 out of 31) respondents, irrespective of their region of origin and religious beliefs, participate in pan-Indian festivals.

Respondents also wear ethnic clothes in Indian cultural events and in public places of worship. With an exception of five male respondents; all male and female respondents practice traditional Indianness through clothing. One of the ways women maintain their Indianness is through wearing *sarees* or *salwar kameez* in the community events while the men are allowed to wear collared shirts, trousers, and such. Even among five men who responded that Indian clothes are important to them, three of them wear

Indian clothes at home "for comfort." However, for women clothing is a "repository of Indianness" (Mukhi 2000:161). Vidya (female, 30+ years) addresses the importance of Indian clothing during religious festivals. When asked about the importance of Indian clothing, she replies:

> Yes, [I wear Indian clothing], especially when there is a religious festival, I definitely feel like wearing Indian clothing. Somehow I feel I am close to my home and…

Sadhana wears Indian clothes at the small pan-Indian religious groups every week:

> …[I wear Indian clothes] at least once a week. *Where?* You know, when we are getting together. We have little groups that we get together for chanting, so, I try and wear my Indian clothes then…

Therefore, the presence of pan-religious practices is noticeable in pan-Indian popular culture such as pan-Hindu festivals. Both in religious and non-religious pan-Indian and regional-Indian festivals women wear Indian clothing. The importance of ethnic clothing in community events, both religious and non-religious will be discussed in the next section.

Informal religious groups and Hindu temples are the resources required to perform pan-Indian religious practices. The Hindu respondents may worship their family God and Goddesses or offer prayers to their deities popular in their region of origin, but the public places of worship in small town Hindu communities feature pan-Indian religious practices. The temples also invite Hindu Indians with diverse regional backgrounds. Transnational ties with India also provide the resources to organize spiritual or religious lectures in the temples and in the pan-Indian religious groups.

(2) ***Popular Cultural Practices***

Popular culture involves the most prominent type of pan-Indian ritualized behaviors among the first-generation Asian Indian immigrants. 100 percent (31 out of 31) of the respondents engage in various ritualized forms of popular culture such as music, dance, festivals, parades, movies, literature, television, and print media. All women respondents have encouraged their daughters to learn Indian classical dance, *Bharat Natyam*. *Bharat Natyam* is not only popular throughout India, but has become a very popular "Indian dance" which is defined as a "refined, exalted, and authentic" form of Indian culture. The origin of authentic Indianness is rooted in Hinduism (Mukhi 2000). Therefore, Priya (female, 35 years) takes her daughter for *Bharat Naytam* lessons every weekend at the Hindu temple. She has also started learning the same. Aruna (female, 72 years) "forced" her daughter to learn *Bharat Natyam,* though she "wasn't interested." Sucheta (female, 50+ years) showed me the brochure of her daughter's first *Bharat Natyam* recital in India. She said, "…my daughters are trained in Indian music and dance." Rani (female, 51 years) is a trained *Bharat Natyam* dancer. She no longer practices it regularly, but dances at home with Indian music and showcases her talent at Indian community events.

Indian Hindi films have also defined Indian culture. Though Hindi is predominantly spoken in the northern Indian states, the Hindi film industry (popularly known as Bollywood, named after Hollywood) is a big industry based in Mumbai, India. Bollywood films are widely popular in India and in foreign countries. Almost all Indian cultural and religious festivals in the U.S. show performances based on Bollywood songs and dances. Manasi (female, 49 years) participated in the Asian American festival and

her daughter performed a Bollywood dance on TV. Manasi thinks that participating in these activities help her to maintain Indian identity, pass down her ethnic identity to her offspring, and educates the mainstream community about Indian culture as well. Anindo (male, 48 years) doesn't want to participate in pan-Indian functions such as Diwali because Indian culture is "stereotyped" with "too much" Bollywood and "everyone performs Bollywood songs and dances." Anindo prefers to watch Bollywood movies at home. Rohit (male, 50+ years) is not fond of Bollywood movies either, but attends "authentic Indian" classical dance and music programs. He says:

> ….Not so Bollywood, but more authentic Indian fine arts. Yes, classical music and then classical dances and…(pause)…umm….(pause)…Some of these what you call improvisations. I love those, but not Bollywood per se. That doesn't mean that I don't watch Hindi movies. I do, but it is just time pass. I am not a huge Hindi movie fan, but yes, I do watch authentic Indian classical. That…that's one of the reason why…that was the reason why we started this [Indian cultural] foundation here. Not only for personal thing but also we wanted to…(pause)…showcase best of best…best of Indian music and dance to not only Indian communities but also to the wider audience. But yes, I do watch Indian shows…

Manasi (female, 49 years) was wearing a t-shirt with the imprint "India Rocks." She is an active member of the Indian community. She participates in pan-Indian community events which display "authentic" Indian culture. She dislikes Bollywood *masala* (Hindi word for spices) movies, but listens to Bollywood music which belongs to the Indian popular music industry:

> [W]e will definitely go for any music concerts anything like that. There is more…I mean that's more what we enjoy doing and we will do it… [We attend] every concert. If we are in town we are there. So, anything associated with the fine arts is something we really enjoy. So, we will do that…umm…[But] if there is some Bollywood actor in town we wouldn't. It's just wouldn't be something that would interest us…
> We do listen to a lot of Indian music…Bollywood…some of the sort of semi-classical. Sometimes we get some instrumental music. The family will send us recent music….and we load it up and play it in the car…my children. My

> daughter specially will listen through the phone. She chooses her songs and listen to those song. So music, we do….

Navin (male, 58 years) also enjoys attending Indian musical concerts and travels to see popular Hindi film stars when they have a show:

> I go to Indian concerts. We…I have been to *Asha Bhonshle* concerts, *Lata Mangeshkar* concerts, movie star concerts. I have been to Dallas, Chicago…even when I was a grad student; we went to see *Mukesh* and *Lata Magheshkar* (popular Indian singers of Bollywood). In fact I have been to the concert; it was one of *Mukhesh's* last concerts. And we saw *Kishore Kumar* in Chicago in a concert. So that's something I love to do…

Anindo and Meera both listen to Bollywood music and watch dance programs based on Hindi film songs, but don't attend pan-Indian community programs because of the overemphasis on Bollywood performances. Similarly, Rohit (male, 50+ years) enjoys Indian television programs based on Hindi film songs, but doesn't like Hindi films. Meera (female, 47 years), Sonal (female, 32 years), and Rani (female, 51 years) listen to Indian Hindi music (especially, Hindi film music) on the radio every day.

For Krishnan, Kapil, and Pramod watching Bollywood movies is not a regular activity, but they engage in occasional movie days when friends gather at a home. Krishnan says that he was a "Bollywood movie addict" before migration, but he has lost interest in films. Krishnan, however, listens to *Kishore Kumar* songs every day and stores them in his I-phone. Kapil finds mainstream Hindi films "entertaining." Pramod, who doesn't identify as Indian any longer, not only watches Hindi films in theatres, but reads news on Indian film industry. He says:

> [I read Indian] newspapers, but I don't read it as much for real news (emphasis on real) because the real news doesn't impact me that much anymore. I really read it for like fun news you know. So, I will go and see what's going on in cricket, what's happening in Bollywood. It's funny that I really don't watch that many Hindi movies. I watch may be two Hindi movies a year, but whatever may be Big Hindi movies…like, last year or so, I watched *3 Idiots*. I think, last year I think, I

> saw *Delhi Belly* (laughs). Usually, I see what every the big *Amitabh Bachchan* or *Shahrukh Khan* movie is…If it's like a *Amitabh Bachchan* movie or *Shahrukh Khan* movie or a *Salman Khan* movie…I watch it (emphasis). I generally try to watch it in the theatre and watch…

Many respondents, who "detest" contemporary Hindi movies, listen to classical Indian songs or old Hindi film songs. All of them assume Hindi film occupies a subordinate position compared to Indian classical music. Ravi listens to "only one form of music," i.e., classical South Indian music every day. Alok and Kumar responded that "unlike other Indians" they don't subscribe to Indian television channels.

Gopal thinks otherwise. He thinks that popular culture is not only entertaining, but asserts Indian culture. The leading popular entertainment, i.e., Hindi movies, classical music, and television program pervade his everyday life. He says:

> ….Indian television is so (emphasis) entertaining… to a certain extent they reflect your values, your culture and then so…We have those Indian channels you know, every day we watch…into those TV serials and those things…regularly…at least 5-6 times, you know with whole family, they sit and they enjoy, you know…And secondly, as a parent you must able to impress the whole atmosphere…look, the good thing is there, but everywhere those learning opportunities are there…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you watch Bollywood movies?*
>
> Oh…yeah…(with conviction)...yeah. Me and my wife most of the good things we learn from Hindi films. People always talk so much about these things, but no…I think, there is so much to learn from all those things like, *Guide* [Hindi film] all these huge pictures [films] you know. With those *adhyatma* and spiritual thinking…Our Indian films, they represent our culture…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you listen to music?*
>
> Oh…yeah…Marathi, classical or old songs…and a….Not really those *ragas* [classical music] and those things….

Anita (female, 42 years) and Ranjan (male, 48 years) agree that Indian entertainment is very important to them. In response to the question on the importance of Indian entertainment, Anita says:

> [Before I finish the question]….Yeah…I think, it is very important…we have…dish network and we have subscribed to Indian channels and I will…I cannot do without it (laughs)…like…yeah…On a regular basis we watch we watch serials, Hindi soap. We have Indian channels and we all enjoy watching…the Hindi soaps and all…you know, the *Sa-Re-Ga-Ma* [Hindi musical show] and stuff like that…musical program stuff. We do watch this quite a bit…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you watch American channels?*
>
> I am more into Indian (smile in her voice) (chuckles). Indian channels I watch more. English channels they [children] watch more. I think, the only thing I watch in English channel is weather and news. I do not really watch any English shows (laughs)…

Ranjan performs musically in Indian cultural events. He is also a devout Hindi music listener:

> ….Although I don't really like the soaps [Hindi television shows]…umm…at times they are boring. [But] Hindi music…That's my way of relaxing. At the end of the day if I get a chance…That's my way of relaxing…

Therefore, Indians experience the varieties of musical performances including Hindu devotional songs, classical and semi-classical music, and Hindi film songs. When I entered Naren's house, he was listening to Hindi *bhajan* (devotional songs). I saw his library that primarily holds books on Indian (Hindu) philosophy. He is a trained singer and who say that "[Indian] music is very important." He watches Bollywood movies that are based on "social issues" and remains updated on Hindi films. He also watches Indian television shows while he visits his family. Kumar listens to *kirtan* (Hindu devotional songs with dance) regularly. He says:

> …Have you heard of an American singer called Krishna Das? Krishna Das is an American and he is enormously popular. He sings. He goes to churches and halls and tens and thousands of Americans show up. He does *kirtan*. These are all Hindi or Sanskrit *Kirtans*. Even these things have become a part of the U.S., a part of the West…

Aruna (female, 72 years) took training in music in India and she learnt Hindustani

classical music in the U.S. She also sings at Hindu temple occasionally. She says:

> …We formed a little group and [our teacher] couldn't drive. So, we decided one of us will go and get her once or twice a month. She will stay as a guest in our house and all my friends will schedule classes and come and take it. It worked out very well. We did it for 8 years…she is a…she taught me so much…Hindustani music. I knew Carnatic music fairly well, but she taught me Hindustani music and the difference between the two. She is very knowledgeable herself. I sing in the temple once in a while…yeah…But I am not doing it as much as I should…you know, you really have to do *riyaaz* [practice]….and …umm…A teacher from Madras [Chennai, a Southern Indian city]…he was the dance teacher but he was also very very well trained in music. So we convinced me that he should teach us some South Indian [music]. So, that was a very good experience also. And he is a task master. It's not easy to learn from him (smiles).

She continues saying how important Indian music is in her life:

> I have lot of CDs. Music is my favorite thing. I spend lot of time with music. We used to go to [Indian music concerts] even [we had to travel to another city. Not any more…only if it is in the city…

Aruna and Sucheta (female, 50+ years) both have collected CDs and DVDs on Hindu epics such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and on Indian history. Aruna has also collection of mainstream Indian movies. She says:

> I love (emphasis) Indian mythology and everything. The *Mahabharat* series they make…I have all of them and I have *Ramayana* and now I am collecting *Chandra Gupta Morya*. That serial is coming. *Chanakya* was fantastic. It was every good. I loved it. Then I like old movies a lot…like what is Satyajit Ray and things like that. In fact my son sent me a whole set of Satyajit Ray movie (smiles)…

Immigrants also take pleasure in reading Indian literature based on history and Hindu spirituality. Aruna (female, 72 years), Kumar (male, 64 years), Naren (male, 65 years), Gopal (male, 52 years), Mohan (male, 75+ years), and Anindo (male, 48 years) have personal libraries on Indian history and Hinduism. Mohan has also published a book on science and Hinduism recently. Aruna (female, 72 years) mentions that western perspective provides a biased view on Indians. Therefore, she wishes to write on Indian history in the form of a children's book:

> Nowadays my reading is almost always on Indian history or…umm….or has history related to that…like I was reading Alexander a lot because I was interested in the Moryan history. It doesn't matter to me whether it's written by Indian. Of course there is a little bias. If something is written by Indians or non-Indians for example, if you read the English authors…British authors on History, we are always looked themselves very good and they make Indians look like the *buddhus* [stupid] or weak links and all that which is not at all true because if you read the horizon of early Indian people…wow…I mean they were daring and umm….Another thing that interests me is these "foreigners" had a tremendous physique. They are very tall and all these things, but the Indian youth who are not especially tall or bigger anything had mastered their muscles and body control and used…umm…intelligence, you know…In their attacks and thing and they were absolutely fearless. And even the Brahmin teachers, they were very well trained and they could stop somebody in cold. But you know, it was not their usual thing…so…those are things I like to read and…umm… And I am hoping to write. I want to write early Indian history in a way children can understand. So, I am working on it. I enjoy it…

Kumar (male, 64 years) has published many books on Hindu philosophy and History. He regularly posts his writings on blogs and websites: He says:

> Well, personally, I studied all the texts, the Vedic Texts and others, *Upanishads* or the *Puranas.* So, all the *sutras* and all that... So I know all the texts very well…

India Day Parades, celebrations, festivals are also considered as activities representing pan-Indian culture. Respondents celebrate Indian culture at their home and in public. The form and content of *Diwali* (festival of lights) celebration varies in terms of regional, caste, familial, and community affiliations. However, in the U.S. "pan-Indian aesthetic" is represented through *Diwali* festival (Maira 2000). Though *Diwali* is primarily a Hindu festival, this festival represents the image of a whole Indian subcontinent. Kavita's experience with *Diwali* in India is different from diwali celebration in the U.S. "...[I]t didn't differentiate me much from [the] rest of the people even though the majority of them was Hindus as Indians." Vidya and Sagar have started *diwali puja* (worship) recently. They invite Indian friends and families and celebrate at home. Priya and Krishnan perform diwali festival at their home following their regional

religious rituals and also participate in community *Diwali* festival, which is more a "social event." Bimal puts on Indian clothing only during *Diwali* function in the community. Pramod remembers *Diwali* because it "is still quite prominent [in the U.S.]." He also wears ethnic clothing only in the *Diwali* festival.

Manasi feels obligated to attend Diwali function at the community. She has to show her distinctive cultural background in public and "has had to take time out for the festival to be Indian" (Mukhi 2000). In the homeland, she did not feel the same pressure because the identity was taken for granted. She says:

> I feel like religion and the way it is practiced once you move out of your home country. You tend to become more ritual oriented. So, you tend to make it a more public thing…something for the children to identify with. I think definitely with festivals, I feel more pressure to attend community events than I did before…So…always…it always feels like Diwali which is typically an event we will do at home. I feel like I have to finish up with the puja (worship) early and then have to (emphasis) go to the temple because everyone is gonna be there and expects to see us. So, it's not done the same way as we used to do at home and I think, it's really because that's one community place where everyone can get together… umm…I do think, that's a huge shift for us…It's not as personal as much as based on an organization setting…umm…And mainly, I think, for the children…that they get a sense of identity what it's like [to be Indian]…

Ranjan and Anita attend *Diwali* function at a friends' house every year. Kamal, a non-Hindu, organized Diwali on a few occasions at his home and invited friends. He also attends *Diwali* functions at a friend's place or in the community.

Sadhana, Priya, Alok, and Sucheta not only celebrate *Diwali*, but also *Holi* (festival of colors) in the Indian community. Anita and Ranjan also won't miss any opportunity to celebrate their Indian culture. Kapil misses Indian festivals that he celebrated before migrating in the U.S., especially *Holi* and *Diwali*. Celebration of Indian festivals in the U.S., does not recreate the experience of the homeland:

> …[A]s far as the festivals or traditions are concerned…Yes, there is a big change. Here like the *Diwali* and *Holi* is not celebrate like the same way as in India. That's something I actually miss. In fact, this *Holi* I was in India and I celebrated Holi after 18 years. So…in the way it's celebrated….umm…Some of the getting together is duplicated in the U.S. that's not changed much. It's [the change is] much with friends rather than families because there is no extended family around…

Saliesh agrees and explains that though there is no "real social hindrance" in the U.S. [to participate in Indian culture], but "[*Diwali*] is not the same of what it is back home…"

Rani (female, 51 years), however, reports that she is celebrating more Indian festivals in the U.S.:

> Actually, you know what after coming here, I feel we celebrate…I specially celebrate more…umm…because it wasn't the same in my house while growing up and...umm…Here you know how we celebrate, we have a club here and we celebrate different festivals…*Holi*, *Diwali*. We have a ladies club of Indian origin. So, we meet, you know, once a month and like, recently we celebrated Holi…yeah…We just have get together and…umm…wish everyone. [We] have [take] traditional food and just socialize…

Gopal (male, 52 years) and Sadhana (female) also think that they are getting more opportunities to participate in Indian festivals and celebrations in the U.S. compared to their homeland. Some regional-Indian festivals represent pan-Indian culture such as *Garba* (a Gujarati round dance) and *Dandiya* (a Gujarati folk dance with sticks), the dance forms of the state of Gujarat, which are performed in the pan-Indian community. Most of the women respondents, who live in smaller towns, organize and participate in *Garba* and *Dandiya* festivals. Though it is the public and secular demonstration of Indian culture that defines Indian identity in the foreign land, Indianness is also equated with Hindu festivals and vice versa (Mukhi 2000). One non-Hindu respondent describes it succinctly:

> I have never grown as part of [Hindu community]. *Diwali*…it's a more social event back home. But here, they are making it religious. So, it's a kind of I find,

> it's a barrier you know [to be part of Indian culture]…being a [non-Hindu], you know…

Rohit (male, 50+ years), Manasi (female, 49 years), and Mohan (male, 75 +years) are active organizers and participants of Indian community events. They organize Indian cultural and social events various times in a year. Manasi says:

> ….I am actually very involved with the Indian community with the India Association. So, we have set up the language class. We have set up the India fest. We do like a adoption camp for kids from India who is been adopted from India. There is an agency known as children international and they do adoption from Calcutta. In fact, they work with an orphanage with Calcutta. So, every year they do like…umm…heritage camp for the kids who are adopted from India and kids come from all over the country. They get about 50-60 kids and families and we help them run the camps. We will do like a cooking segment, dance segment and music and language and stuff like that. So, we help organize that….

Though cricket is a sport, when I asked the respondents about their Indian entertainment, three male respondents answered that "cricket is very important" to them. All of them consider cricket as part of Indian culture. Saliesh (male, 40+ years) says:

> I am a great fan of cricket. Movie is not that much. So…yeah…anything to do with cricket is something I follow. Not as much as I used to do when I was a student…umm…still follow some of them…(smiles)…

To Bimal (male, 53 years), both cricket and Bollywood are important. He says:

> Cricket is important and Bollywood is important. Those are the two…about everything else, I don't care (laughs). I coach cricket. In fact we have lots of Indian boys that…umm…Here that we coach them how to play cricket and I run that coaching camp because I want my kids to have the opportunity to play the game that I love to play. We have… we get some American students, some Indian…

Similarly, Anindo (male, 48 years) talks about his keen interest in Indian entertainment, i.e., cricket. He described cricket as "one of the shared" practices with his son:

> Cricket is very important to me. *ami ekhono raat jege jege khela dekhi* [I still keep awake at night to watch cricket]. Even after India is losing and stuff like that I still keep awake all night long…umm…Because of my work I have very little [time]…Me and my son are going to play cricket tomorrow. I play cricket to the

> extent possible, but that's also one of our shared things. In our living room for the first 7-8 years at this house, [it was empty]. [Me and my son used to play cricket and soccer]. [I] read *cricinfo* (website with news on cricket) everyday (smiles) because I like to play cricket a lot….

Pramod (male, 48 years) reads cricket news every day and talks with his father over the phone on "*khyelai ki hoyeche*?" [What's happening in sports?]. In India the meaning of sports is popularly equated with cricket and he interpreted cricket similarly.

Participants also engage in reading literature and press media published in the home country and by Indian immigrants. The respondents said that reading fiction and non-fiction literature written by Indian-American writers and/or Indian authors, and press media are important ritualized behaviors that help them to maintain ties with the immigrant community as well as with the home country. Literature and print media allow Vidya (female, 30+ years) to maintain both her regional-Indian identity and pan-Indian identity. She reads ethnic fiction and non-fiction by Indian authors as well as blogs that are written by Bollywood personalities. She says:

> They are pretty important to me. Actually when Indians do well and books are very close to my heart, so, like when Jhumpa Lahiri got the Pulitzer, I was very happy, more proud because she is a Bengali and same thing with that some other Bengali guy…The two blogs, I always read Amitabh Bachchan and Shobhaa De…Shobhaa De for the gossip purpose (smiles) [and] Amitabh Bachchan for being Amitabh Bachchan. I believe he would a better writer than an actor. So, those two blogs I read every day…

Sonal (female, 32 years) stopped reading in her native language after migrating to the U.S. She follows Indian English news media everyday and reads literature on Indian immigrants and other Indian non-fiction. She states that literature and movies on Indian diasproa are important to her:

> …I like to read those kind of books because there is a connect between…I can relate with the characters. So, that why I would love to…I love to read Indian authors. But most of them are based in either US or in UK. But they will they

> write something which I can connect to ….Jhumpa Lahiri or Vikram Seth or so…. I like their novels…then…umm…(pause)…that's it. Even the movies which have some backgrounds of Indian…umm…I like to watch those things. Recently, I finished a book by Ruchika Devikar it's more on diet. I like that kind of stuff also. Then I also read about Black Friday, it's a novel based on the Mumbai Bomb Blast. Currently issues, some health related because I am eating Indian foods…so…I just want to get an idea of what kind of stuff I am eating and how healthy it is.

Indian immigrants take a keen interest in reading Indian diasporic literature and movies. Samir (male, 40+ years) only reads Indian American authors because he can "relate to immigrant experiences" of the fictional characters. Pramod (male, 48 years) is an avid reader of Indian diaspora literature. Though he identifies himself as an American, immigrant literature helps him to remain emotionally connected to the homeland. Fiction on immigrant experiences provides the prototypes of Indian Americans with whom he shares history, culture, and language (Niyogi 2010). He candidly states:

> ….You know, I have been, one of my favorite books is Suitable Boy, Vikram Seth's…I mean I love that book. I actually have it on my facebook as my favorite book…then there's this…umm…there's this…umm…There is a guy called Rohinton Mistry, I don't know, if you know him or not. He is actually, he is from Bombay…but…umm…But now, he is settled in Canada, you know, umm…amazing. So, I really like books written by members of the Indian diaspora because you know, then of course, you have Jhumpa Lahiri, who is just amazing...just amazing…And I really like reading books who are part of the Indian diaspora, especially authors who have moved back to overseas because I see in their writing sort of my life in a way. You know, their experiences are the same…You relate to books because you relate to the characters and the story. So, yes, that is actually I would say my biggest connection to India…but really most of them don't write about India…most of them write about their life here…immigration and you know, I really enjoyed reading Monica Liz's book Brick Lane…I really like reading about India. I like reading travel books and I like reading travelogues and there could be a whole genre of books that's about Indian history…
>
> I do relate a LOT (emphasis). I do see a lot of similarities when I read Jhumpa Lahiri's. It's about in my life even though I don't necessarily call this is me. I can relate to the *kaka* (uncle) and *mashi* (maternal aunt) and *pishi* (paternal aunt) and the characters in it…you know, that's my aunt…So, so, to the extent I really enjoy, I must relate to it, that's why I enjoy it. I really have a deep sense of nostalgia…

Likewise, Nirmal (male, 52 years) is more interested in reading Indian American authors writing about immigrant experiences:

> If I come across a book, which has an Indian author, I am more likely to pick it up and…umm… So, for instance, the last time I went to India, I picked Jhumpa Lahiri's book…umm…about the immigrant experience, the new one…Unaccustomed Earth. So, I picked up that and I read that. I liked it…

Sapna (female, 40+ years) explains that immigrant literature doesn't always portray her immigrant story, but she likes to compare her experiences as an Indian mother with the fictional characters. Meera (female, 47 years) quickly replied that Indian books are "very important" and "Jhumpa Lahiri is [her] favorite [author]." She always reads books in English in the U.S. and reads books in her native language when she travels to India. Kapil explains that books on Indian American immigrant experiences are important to him because "[he] can identify with some of the experiences that they [the characters] go through…"

Rohit (male, 50+ years) reads on Indian English newspaper every day and keeps "up to date about Indian politics, economics." He jokingly says "my sister she is a journalist…she sometimes gets surprised that I have more update about India…what's going on there…" He visits an Indian community online everyday to promote the cultural events of their Indian community. Gopal keeps abreast with Indian news and says, "…most of the time I keep a [track on] what is happening back home. Being a son of farmer I would like to see what is happening [in India], you know…" I also had an extended talk with Pramod and Kamal on current socio-political situation in India. Both of them expressed their opinions about India's political situation after interview recording finished. Bimal, Alok, Nirmal, and Rani also subscribe to India Abroad, an expatriate newspaper, to learn about news on Indian Americans and India.

From the preceding discussion and examples, it is evident that first generation Indian immigrants are engaged in an array of highly prominent pan-Indian popular cultural practices. It is worth noting that all the respondents in this study indicate that various ritualized forms of popular culture such as Indian classical music and dance, watching Hindi films and television channels, reading Indian litearature and newspapers, participating in festivals, and playing and/or following cricket are conspicuous behaviors.

First-generation Asian Indians frequently engage in various forms of popular pan-Indian cultural practices. Respondents listen to Indian music almost every day. Anita, Ranjan, Rani, and Nirmal listen to Indian music, primarily Hindi film songs, while driving. Anita also watches Hindi serials "on a regular basis." Ranjan listens to Hindi film songs every day when he comes home from the office. Meera, Sonal, and Rani listen to an Indian radio station that air Hindi film songs. Rani says:

> ….I sometimes have my net book open and it's *raga* 24 hours…*raga* online…you can continuously look at Indian songs. I do that and…umm…I have some radio channel…Hindi channel. Indian channel from the TV (husband adds). So, I sometimes have that on…listen to the latest music…

Mohan plays on his harmonium (Indian musical instrument) "… one of the *ragas* (Indian classical music) and that takes care of my meditation *puja* [every day]…" Naren also practices Indian classical music and/or listens to devotional music almost every day. Priya and her daughter learn *Bharat Natyam* every weekend.

Watching Indian television or movies and reading online Indian newspapers and Indian expatriate newspapers are repetitive behaviors. Except for three respondents, who got news about India from their spouse, other respondents read online newspapers published about India in English. Mohan (male, 75 + years) explains his morning rituals: "I read in the morning when I get up, the first thing in the bed I do is look at Times of

India and listen to what's going on. You can play videos what Anna Hazare [social activist of India] says and all that…" Respondents own or rent DVDs, CDs, subscribe to Indian television channels and watch via internet streaming. Navin (male, 58 years) watches Indian television almost every day:

> Film is important enough that we watch a fair amount of Hindi TV every evening at home. We subscribe to Indian channels through satellite. So, we watch Indian TV, I would say 5 days a week…at least. We watch some Indian [Bollywood] movies not as much as I would like…

Mohan (male, 75+years) listens to Bollywood music every day while he exercises. He showed us some of the recent Indian Bollywood movies and music clips on his i-pad. After the interview, he is going to watch a new Hindi movie on the Indian television channel:

> …We watch a lot. I mean we have almost all the channels from India…umm…satellite dish…[Indian] news and Zee TV and Sony…you name it. And we every evening we watch some of these Indian operas…soap operas. My wife loves them. I watch them after dinner before we go to bed we watch for an hour…

Vidya and Sagar watch either Bollywood movies or regional Indian movies every Friday night at home. Rani and Nirmal watch "a lot of" Bollywood movies. They also watch Bollywood movies with friends and family. Bimal, Anindo, and Meera watch Bollywood movies once every month. Meera and Anindo never miss Hindi musical programs aired once a week. Gopal is an avid viewer of Bollyood movies and Hindi television programs. He watches Hindi television programs everyday with his family. Only two respondents, who have Indian television channels, do not watch Bollywood movies or mainstream Hindi television programs. They watch only regional television channels. Therefore, pan-Indian cultural practices via electronic media are experienced in the privacy of the immigrant's home or in private gatherings.

68 percent respondents (21 out of 31) participate in pan-Indian cultural festivals, especially Diwali every year. All four respondents, who replied that cricket is an important part of Indian culture, play and watch cricket matches frequently, or keep themselves updated on the latest "match" [cricket] news.

I have observed that popular-cultural practices exhibit high degree of homologousness with transnational practices, i.e., the ritualized behaviors involving contact with the home country (discussed in the next section). That is, the respondents are engaged in popular cultural practices that are similar to and consistent with transnational practices which constituted pan-Indianness. The mainstream Bollywood cinema has attracted Indian diaspora since the mid-1990s. Bollywood has become one of the most important ways to reconnect with the Indian identity (Bhatawadekhar 2011). The respondents in my study listen to popular Hindi film music, watch dance shows on television that are based on Bolllywood choreography and songs, and watch Bollywood movies. Respondents also attend Indian community events and performances that incorporate Bollywood elements. Even when three respondents expressed their apathy for contemporary Hindi cinema, they still watched old Hindi movies quite often in the privacy of their home. In sum, practices involving press media, television, cinema, and literature help the first-generation Indian immigrants create a sense of Indian community in the U.S. and maintain their ties to families and communities in the homeland.

Only 10 percent (3 out of 31) respondents expressed an aversion to popular Hindi film music and dance. As one respondent replied, to understand Indian cultural framework, one has to know Sanskrit. He says, "I think, if a person knew Sanskrit, then it is much easier to understand the Indian cultural framework…" Another respondent

defined mainstream Bollywood movies as "pain" and the only form of Indian culture he practices is Indian classical music. They identify Indian culture as sanskritized, Brahmanic, and derived from Hindu upper-caste aesthetics.

23 percent (7 out of 31) respondents disagree with the projection of Bollywood entertainment as Indian culture, but they watch Hindi film, music, and dance at home. Some emphasize that classical Indian dance, music, and literature represents a refined urban pan-Indian culture, which should be portrayed to the West (Khandelwal 2002, Mukhi 2002). However, except for one respondent, everyone enjoys some form of popular Bollywood *masala* (means following the same formula of Hindi film) movies.

The popular cultural practices and pan-Hindu practices exhibit high degree of similarity and complementarity. The choice of Diwali as the performance of Indianness excludes other religious festivals such as *Eid* (a Muslim festival) or *Baisakhi* (a Sikh festival) (Mukhi 2002). Ranjan (male, 48 years) mentions that he hasn't "seen anyone celebrating *Baisakhi* or *Lohri* (festival of harvest, popular in northern regions of India) [in the U.S.]", but he attends Diwali festival at his friend's house who organizes a grand party and fireworks. Therefore, Indian festivals are a performance of Hindu culture *per se*.

The resources for Hindi Bollywood movies are available in CDs and DVDs at the Indian shops, are screened at the theatres, and are distributed worldwide. Internet streaming also helps in the process of resource distribution. Due to the advancement of the World Wide Web, Indian immigrants at different diasporic sites can experience Indian television broadcasts such as TV serials, talk shows, advertisements, and news and musical programs etc. Respondents agreed that it is easy to keep in touch with news of

India and Indian communities in the U.S. via online print media, online Indian communities, and expatriate newspaper. Indian communities, friends, and family also help to recreate the meanings of Indian festivals and celebrations. Diwali festival has been well established as a celebration of authentic Indianness. Indian communities also organize Indian music and dance shows with both local talents and celebrities from India. The growing transnational ties with India have strengthened the availability of both human and non-human resources required for the performance of Indian popular cultural practices.

(3) *Practices demonstrating Pan-Indian Values*

87 percent (27 out of 31) respondents engage in various ritualized activities every day to maintain their pan-Indian values. The Indian community, friends, and families play a crucial role in maintaining and passing down the shared 'desi' identity of this diverse and residentially dispersed community (Bacon 1996, Bhalla 2006). First-generation immigrants engage in multiple behaviors including maintaining family values, food related behaviors, Hindu spirituality, and the such. In this process there is a continuous effort to distinguish between the categories of "Indian" and "American." My interview data indicate that there were quite a few ways Indian immigrants participate in the behaviors showing Indianness.

(3.1) *Food-based Behaviors*

The first highly salient behavior featured among the respondents is the concept of Indian healthy diet, vegetarianism, and home-cooked meals. In India, vegetarianism is related to regional and caste identities. Many Indians are vegetarians, but not everyone. Even when respondents are not vegetarians, they mention "healthy" home-cooked Indian

food-based behaviors and emphasize vegetable consumption. Respondents maintain that Indian food with its blend of spices is healthy unlike the mainstream American "greasy" diet. Indian culture is largely centered on preparing and eating meals at home. Eating at restaurants is not popular among the immigrants (Khandelwal 2002). The emphasis on Indian food-based behaviors has been recreated in the host society to construct their pan-Indianness. Except for two respondents, 97 percent (29 out of 31) emphasized the importance of home-cooked food and responded that at least one meal in a day was cooked from scratch. When asked about how important is Indian food in their life, 48 percent of respondents (15 out of 31) stressed either the importance of healthy Indian food or healthy Indian vegetarian diet.

Ravi (male, 56 years) who explains that his practices are influenced by American society and hasn't identified himself as Indian for the last 8-10 years, emphasizes the importance of a vegetarian diet in his everyday life. South Indian vegetarian food is his preferred Indian food. Therefore, despite his adjustments in the host society and self-identification as American, he has maintained a vegetarian diet, a pre-migration behavior. He says:

> I am…I have been a vegetarian all my life because of my Brahmin upbringing…so, so...yeah…just basically vegetarian food. [I] don't eat anything…[I] don't even eat eggs. It was kind of difficult when I first came to this country. In United States, now, vegetarianism is like a definite option for many people. It's not an issue any more. It's used to be an issue when I went to school 25 years back. So, even we had to see in our beans to see that they didn't put any bacon in it…you had to be careful…but you know. But, it's not an issue any more, everyone is just respectful. I have a large group of American friends that I play golf with who are local [Americans]…who are beef eating…beef eating…and beef eating [Americans]. That's all they eat (emphasis). You throw in a few other animals in between, but they exclusively eat beef.…but you know, they all respect my choice. You know, they understand. When we have a get together of some stuff like that they always make sure that I have strict vegetarian options…

So too Gopal (male, 52 years) emphasizes the importance of a healthy Indian vegetarian food in his everyday diet. He also mentions that his food habits have changed with time, but he retained a vegetarian diet migrating:

> Okay, again this thing with time gradually…umm… gradually change you know, the way you develop that kind of awareness. So, particularly as a family, we …fortunately we have been…umm…we having been reading about the…what might be the best for your body and…umm…those things…so, [we are] vegetarians. No oily, no greasy [like American food] and what is really good for your body and all those things. We like to see that the food habits…umm… become the culture of the family and [I have] let the kids also know. Oh! This is the things…so crucial you know, like the body is the main thing and so, [needs to be] disciplined and…umm…(pause). [We take] Indian lunch and dinner…umm…two *chapatis* (Indian flat bread), rice, then green vegetables, but this no oil, not that much. Again, the way you understood and the way you look at it, you know, the vegetarian food, we always feel that very close to a healthy kind of a practice and…umm…So, I consider it [Indian food] is very important.

Sadhana (female) emphasized home-cooked food. When I asked about her every day diet, she promptly replied:

> We are vegetarians (smiles). Yeah… So, it's a vegetarian diet. And…you know, home cooked food. And it's Indian…It's Indian…

Similarly, Sucheta (female, 50+ years) explains vividly how Indian food is different from American food. She states that home-cooked healthy Indian food is an important activity of everyday life and she also prefers healthy American food. She says:

> Food part of it, see culturally, I am telling you the difference between two foods is we eat is warm or hot and lunch especially I cannot take something very cold. It doesn't satisfy me. So, you don't feel that you ate a lunch, unless you have a soup along with it (laughs)…Yeah…[American food] is not fulfilling because there is no rice in it…so…(laughs)…That is culturally I am telling you, how we are acquainted to [Indian food].

> To our family, YES, yes (emphasis). [Indian food] is very important to eat because…not only Indian, I also cook all healthy (emphasis) American food…soups with all the vegetables in it and tomato juice and I cook that. So whether it's American or [Indian] I put a lot of importance to eating *healthy*…(emphasis).

Interviewer: *How would you define healthy?*

> Sucheta: Healthy is not a lot of say the cheese and my definition of healthy is not lot of grease in it. You know, like the restaurant food is floating in oil. It tastes very good…(laughs)…because of grease in it. [When] I make food there is not lot of grease in it. Like my home cooking, I am sure in your house it [is the same rule]. If you home cook the food, it is not very greasy. So, I make sure that the food is not greasy. So, those are the things I make sure whether it is Indian or American…and most of our Indian cooking if you have learnt from home, it is not that so greasy. *Dals* (legumes) are not [greasy], only the *chonks* [the preparation of spices] require oil, other than that. I define healthy and with a lot of vegetables, fiber, and a lot of fiber in our [Indian] food…

Kumar (male, 64 years) also emphasizes the importance of healthy Indian food. He became vegetarian after his marriage. He says:

> Umm…well…What's important is good food. It doesn't matter if it's ethnic. And I find a lot of American food not all that good because I am a vegetarian. Now, I wasn't vegetarian until may be 20 years ago because [people from my region of origin] are not vegetarians, are non-vegetarians. But ever since I have become vegetarian, clearly, there is not that much of good food (emphasis) that one can get in restaurants. [By good food, I mean] well cooked…nicely cooked. Now there is a few stores in the city called whole foods. [They] have some great Indian dishes and of course, there are Indian restaurants, although not in our town.

Naren's (male, 65 years) journey with food is different from the other respondents. He started his life as a vegetarian in India, became non-vegetarian when he migrated to Europe because of a lack of options for vegetarian diet, and now he is on a vegetarian diet for the last 10-12 years. He believes in a "balanced" diet with carbohydrate and protein. Though his wife cooks all kinds of ethnic foods such as Mexican or Italian at home, 60-70 percent of his meals are home-cooked Indian food. While explaining how Indian and American values are different, he states:

> …If you can explain to somebody why you are a vegetarian that's an Indian value…you know… [My wife] is American, but she understands Ayurveda, she understands Ayurvedic cooking (use of Indian spices and vegetables) and she probably knows more about Ayurvedic cooking than most Indian people do…umm…And it's primarily because… umm…we take the time to go to classes

> together and things like that where she gets the understanding of what it is about…

Mohan (male, 75+ years) maintains a strict diet that includes the use of Indian spices. He prepared Indian tea for me and my husband. Though he is not vegetarian, he puts an emphasis on eating vegetables and home-cooked food for healthy living. He states:

> I don't take any medicine….like…I am a strong believer…of trying these home kind of thing. So my diet in the morning starts with…these days as I have grown. Earlier I did other things. Now I have a fixed routine. First thing in the morning is of course the water…drink water. I take half a spoon of cinnamon and turmeric and all that with honey and then put some lemon you know in water and drink that. Then there are certain thing… garlic, ginger and things like that…black peeper. I have made some things of them. So I take a spoon [of] *chavanprash* (jam like mixture of herbs and spices) and all that. [In] my breakfast I take one egg omelet…yellow I throw away…that has you know cilantro, garlic, onion, tomatoes, and I like green peppers…making one. I like half grape fruit…and lot of fruits. I have a bowl full of fruits…not one kind. I keep papaya, mango, you name it…grapes and strawberries…and pears and all kinds. And put yogurt on. And then have a cup of tea as well. That's it. Now I am done for the day. Dinner is 6:00-7:00 or so…In recent times, I will take salad or something…dinner is one *chapatti* (Indian flat bread) and vegetable. My wife is vegetarian…[I take] yogurt. I like very much…what else…salad…and vegetables…that's it and now a days I am taking a glass of milk…skimmed milk…you see…with turmeric and all before I go to bed. And that's it. I love it. It's the diet that you eat is not that you eat it because you want to live but you must also enjoy. If you eat it and you feel bad about it. It's not going to help you. I am in sync with it. My wife says "how can you eat this food every day?" then I say, "I love it". If I don't have grape fruit, I miss something. So I must have…have the grape. I must exercise. I must do the thing. In religious *ram nabami* (birth of Lord Rama), she won't let me eat the egg…so I innovate, you know …garbanzo flour, you know water and then put cilantro…omelet basically…

Nirmal (male, 52 years) and Rani (female, 51 years) are also vegetarians, but Nirmal became a vegetarian after marriage. When asked about the importance of Indian food, Rani responded:

> It's very important…yeah (laughs)…very important. Because without that I don't think I can survive, especially in this country and we are vegetarians, not many choices for us (smiles)…

Sheetal (female, 32 years) and Saliesh (male, 40-50 years) also emphasized that their diet is strictly vegetarian. As for the question about their everyday diet, both emphasized an Indian vegetarian diet. Sheetal replies that "[Our meal] is mostly vegetarian because I am vegetarian. And it's typical Indian food." Navin also mentions that his family is vegetarian and his wife cooks at least one Indian meal every day, usually the dinner. He says that "Umm…the primary meal is dinner and which consist of chapatti…we are vegetarians…so…umm…vegetables, dal (legumes), rice, and chapatti (Indian flat bread)…"

Immigrants who are not vegetarians also emphasize "eating healthy." Krishnan (male, 50 years) has been a non-vegetarian throughout his life and thinks that Indian food is healthy, but not so much vegetarian Indian curry. In discussing the importance of healthy Indian food, he says:

> Health wise [Indian food] is really important. If you ask me health, it is really important. If you ask me health, I prefer Indian food because, even some Indian food, that is actually mistake…people think pure vegetarian is healthy…actually I feel….they eat a lot of oil…curry they have lot of oil…I have seen many [vegetarian dish]. It's soaking in oil…you know, when we make in back [home] …here…Indian we never [put] our *ghee* (saturated butter) or oil nothing…in fact we are very conscious…[In the U.S.], we use olive oil most of the time…yeah…if my wife has to make little bit oil…it's olive oil…yeah…so, for health reason we are…but, yeah…I like tastes you know, I like other spicy food…so, that's why I like Indian food…

He also states that he is not happy adapting to the more meat-oriented food choices of America. He therefore tries to maintain a limited consumption of meat. He states:

> My wife is more like a vegetarian type, but she eats [meat] once in awhile…not like strict vegetarian…but, we would prefer more *dal* and rice and curry and those things because of that I end up cooking on Sunday. So, we eat may be in two days, three days…not every day meal is meat…small amount is meat and that's why it lasts three days. We have no restriction. Lot of things we eat is Indian. Whatever the meat I cook, I will make Indian curry…(laughs)…But you know, because of the kids, you know I also like to do in summer barbeque…yeah…we

> do…kids love to do that. Every week, may be follow one week, miss one week, I have to barbeque. Again we grill chicken or turkey that's all…beef is not at home. Not because of religious but because of health reason and my kids like to…once in a while we go out and ready to eat whatever they want. They like to have fatty food like cheese burger…

Vidya (female, 30+ years), a non-vegetarian, emphasizes the importance of eating healthy. She responds:

> Umm…everyday diet…I usually try to have…I always bring the health aspect first. I try to have three servings of fruits, so, my day starts with a banana and then I try to have an orange or an apple or something for lunch. I try to see that I have my servings of fruits, my veggies and my yogurt. I do have Indian food like the dinner I try to see that I am having daal (legumes) and then veggies also, like the cooked veggies and the meat also. Most of the times it is chicken which are cooked…

Sapna (female, 40+ years), a vegetarian, is married to a non-vegetarian and cooks non-vegetarian food for her family. She thinks that she has limited dietary choices in America. She says: "I am a vegetarian first of all. So, I have very little choices [in food] per se…" Like Sapna, all female respondents are primarily responsible for the home-cooked meal. Except for two respondents, all interviewees emphasized preparing and eating home-cooked Indian meals.

Immigrants also cook other ethnic foods at home, but non-Indian cooking is an occasional behavior. When I asked my respondents, at restaurants what kind of food they order, the vegetarians said that their choice is restricted to Mexican, Thai, Chinese, or Italian vegetarian food. The respondents who live in a small city, with the non-availability of any Indian restaurant, rely on other ethnic foods to satisfy their vegetarian taste. I will discuss the importance of a vegetarian diet in public places, outside the Indian community, in the section on host ritualized behaviors.

Thus, the references to food-based ritualized behaviors are highly prominent or central in the immigrants' lives and contribute to the overall rank of the ritualized practices involving pan-Indian values.

The second factor which determines the rank of ritualized behavior is repetitiveness. As most Indians prefer eating healthy home-cooked meals and the vegetarians do not find many options in the restaurants, home-made food is served at least once a day. The healthy diet is comprised of Indian spices, vegetables or fruits, freshly cooked food, and/or less meat consumption. Indian identity is also redefined by vegetarian dietary practices. The respondents, who identify themselves as vegetarians, maintain their dietary practices both at home and in public. They eat Indian vegetarian food at least once a day. Therefore, food-based behaviors defining pan-Indianness occur quite often, almost regularly.

Homologousness refers to the degree of perceived similarity within a myriad of ritualized symbolic practices that immigrants engage in. In India, preparing meals are primarily women's role and it is unusual to see men in the kitchen. In America, immigrant Indian men 'learn' to cook, especially when they live alone. Married Indian men take part in the preparation of food occasionally, but the key cooking responsibility still lies with women. As Kavita (female, 51 years) recounts:

> My husband can cook too. He is a very good cook still I like to do the cooking. I would rather cook for him. I love him. I like to cook for him. He does cook for me…This is how we are raised. Women folks cook…Right? But, here [in the U.S], it's not…you know…So, that's something I feel, I don't want to switch because [of]…equal rights, man and woman share the work fifity-fifty, you know…not like that. Like we grow up in a woman's role…take care of things at home. So, I like to do that…and I have no complaint or anything (laughs)

The married male respondents, except for three of them, stated that their wives cook at least one meal almost every day. But the male respondents, who are not married, do not cook Indian food every day.

First-generation immigrants maintain a high degree of homologousness between Indian women's duties and food-based pan-Indian behaviors. Relocation into a different culture demands immigrant men to participate in food-based behaviors to some extent, but immigrant Indian women still uphold the pan-Indian practice of serving fresh healthy meals every day.

As a result, women are the primary resources for maintaining food-based pan-Indian behavior. Women transplant the gender-based culture to the U.S. Immigrant women also assume more responsibility given the absence of the support from their extended families and the unavailability of help from cheap-labor available to every middle and upper class home in India. As Sadhana (female) says: "…I am cooking my own food…I did not cook in India…people do things for you there…" Again, Hindu temple activities and pan-Indian religious events serve vegetarian food prepared by women and help maintain the pan-Indian values.

(3.2) *Behaviors involving Indian Family Values*

First, research suggests that first-generation Indian immigrants believe Indian family values and parenting make their culture unique and different from Americans (Bacon 1996, Khandelwal 2002). Asian Indian immigrants' beliefs in the Southern Plains region are not different. They are engaged in the behaviors for upholding Indian family values that are central in their lives. They assign high priority to preserving their family, regional, and cultural ties both in the U.S. and with India. Alok (male, 65 years) stresses

the importance of family among Indians. He says:

> "…[O]ur family is very important. Our children are very important. Education is very important of children…umm…So, most Indians are family oriented. So...I think, we put the emphasis on those. That everything else is kind of second to those…

The emphasis on parenting homogenizes immigrants from diverse religious, caste, and religious backgrounds. Adhering to family values help define them as Indian (Bacon 1996; Khadelwal 2002; Mehrotra and Calasanti 2010). Rohit (male, 50+ years) strongly believes in the role of parents in transmitting Indian values to the next generation:

> See…what at least this is my [opinion]…umm…(pause)…[My] belief as a parent….umm…(pause)…you give certain values to your kids. You tell them okay, these are the boundaries…(pause)…But within those boundaries, you gave them the freedom. You have to give them space…(pause)…in Hindi they say *sanskar* (values). You give *sanskar* to the kid…This is right, this is wrong. Let them flourish. That's my [opinion]. If we have done good parenting, we will be able to tell our children…okay (pause) this is right, this is wrong, or they will then make the right choices…

Krishnan (male, 50 years) laments that he has less time to spend with his children and his only leisure time activity is spending time with family:

> Other than that I really really like to spent time with kids. [I] am looking forward to tomorrow. I also look forward tomorrow. I just take them and go out…go to small restaurant or shopping. We have small gene pigs. We go to Petco. You know, spend time with them or take them to movies, some kind of thing. Kids' movie you know, we love that…umm…Spend time…all my time with them. Doesn't get much time…yeah…that's the have. Other than that…I am not in to all this. I don't know about other things here…

Saliesh (male, 40-50 years) thinks that "parenting" is the only "activity" he has:

> Just raising kids kind of…I think, like I said we are trying to do. We grew up…at least I grew up with…umm…parents emphasizing the breadth of talents and umm…When I try to carry it forward I extrapolate to my kids generation, it ends up…umm…being 2 or 3 activities other than school everyday…right? So, my wife and I share the times when we take each kid to places. That consumes plenty of time. My kids both of them learn vocal…right? And… umm…my daughter, she is into dance and cello practice. My son, he has…he is in too many activities…umm…In addition to vocal, he has violin, flute and…umm…He is

> into basketball, soccer. In India you can step out and play. Here you have organized games. That's how you generate competition. So, you have enrolled. So, that's takes like 2 or 3 times a week. We have games and those…and…umm…three times I try to teach them [religious] scriptures that I learned…

Gopal (male, 52 years) also emphasizes socializing his children in "Indian" ways:

> As a parent you must able to impress the whole [Indian] atmosphere…So, we are so fortunate and the kids are [well trained].

Vidya (female, 30+ years) thinks that all countries have drawbacks and India has its set of social disadvantages such as the caste system, corruption, disorganized political and bureaucratic systems. She thinks that it is the importance placed on family values that makes India different from America:

> ….The bad thing about this county [America] is there is no family structure…You cannot blame the education system of this country all the time. You talk to the psychologists, most of these kids come from broken home. You need a family structure in this country (emphasis). Your dad cannot keep on having fun. Your mom cannot keep on having fun and cannot expect the child to be secure and grow up. That's one thing I really do not like in this country. So, if my child is growing up, I have to make sure that she does not get influenced by those kind of people and then, you know, they do drugs. They are not studying. I really want her to do…You don't have to study all the times, you can be good in music…something constructive, do not go in the destructive part because you have one life and use it. Do something nice. [To me] family life very important. It is very important.

Navin (male, 58 years) describes how Indian values are different from American values. He emphasizes that Indians are collectivist, family-oriented, and involved in social relationships. These values define Indians:

> …I think, being kind of more eager to help or in case of somebody else needing help, being less aware of one's personal space…umm…is a kind of a unique Indian trait…umm….You know, being more connected to family…umm…I think it boils down to that. What others consider here to be personal space…don't violate it. But, with being an Indian…even if somebody ask for me, we will volunteer and getting involved…umm…I think…those are the primary things that come to mind…

Vidya (female, 30+ years) similarly states the emphasis on parenting and education makes Indian culture different from American culture. Indian culture asks children not to overspend unlike the American consumer culture. She says:

> …[T]he amount of attention that our parents give us that's very important for a child to grow up. Parenting, education- those two things are very critical for me. Our philosophies also about money I think help us a lot. We are always been taught, don't spent if you don't have the money. It's not that I can put it in my credit card and think about it tomorrow. Lot of the Indians are doing these days kind of pains me because we are brought up in this very nice culture (emphasis) and these people are forgetting that and picking up the bad things of the western world and not the good ones. You know, there is a lot of good things you can learn, here, they are hard…people are hard working, they are disciplined, they are VERY systematic and organized. I think in any culture it is always easy to pick up the bad things because it's easy. Another important thing our parents taught us or Indian parents Indian families emphasize is very important. So, I am VERY proud of that part of my Indian culture.

Anindo (male, 48 years) discusses how he learned to practice thrift since childhood and he passed the same value down to his son. Bimal (male, 53 years) also emphasizes education and professional advancement:

> [I bring] some math books and other things [from India] because the math system here is not right. [It] is not as good as what I believe back home what we had….

Vidya (female, 30+ years) also thinks that she is going to teach Indian culture to her daughter which emphasizes education. She is against teenage dating because it interferes with education and career development. She also condemns divorce after marriage. She provides her opinion about finding an "educated partner":

> You know what, I would do, what my mom did for me. My parents…they did a love marriage. So, for my parents, they brought us up saying well, I still remember distinctly when I was in 7^{th} grade, my mom telling me you know, you can pretty much marry whomever you want, but just do not marry a guy who is not educated because you know, how it is in India growing up in an upper-middle class household, education is everything. So, do not bring a guy whom we cannot introduce to our society. That's all she told me and she also said, you know, the mindset they had was do not mix up dating with studies. If I come to know that you are doing something which are interfering with your studies, I will stop it,

> but, if I hear that yes, you have done that at a reasonable age, where you can make a standard decision, you can think you can make a decision, I will be fine with it. You are more than welcome to do the thing which they call love marriage. But she didn't say anything about not marrying within the caste or going outside and marrying, she didn't have any such problems.
> So, if I were to…first of all I do not want to choose for [my daughter]. I want to give her freedom to make her own choices, but I will teach her these things are right and these things are wrong. Her [choice] will be different from mine; she is grown up in a different country, in a different era. I will let her choose which she wants to do. I am not going to tell her that you have to marry a [person from your home region], you know, ours is a mixed marriage. Indian or an American I don't care. But I think, I am going to emphasize, make sure, you know, once you are marrying, stay in the marriage...make sure you think twice before marrying…

Sucheta (female, 50+ years) also believes that the Indian and American worldviews are different. She emphasizes that maintaining family ties and stability in marriage are the primary features of Indian society. She vividly states why Indian marriages don't typically end up in divorce like American marriages:

> So, the differences are there. So, the thinking is very different. There are going to be whether love marriage or arranged marriage. How we carry it with us what was taught at home, you know, because we also saw our parents fighting, but they never broke up and, you know, the first thought that comes is, you know, if I go away from this house what happens to the kids. And that is a cultural (emphasis) thing that has been incorporated. I cannot say, Oh! let my kids go. Half time they will stay with their father, half time with their mother. And I see those kids also, I have seen in school. But after looking at those children, I think that was not the best solution, you know.
> That is how the Indian marriages last even though they are arranged (laughs). The trust is SO important, you know.
> I tell my kids also, you go out, I don't have a problem, but tell me and go out , then tell me and go, I don't want somebody to come and tell me Oh! I saw your daughter with somebody here or somebody there. I don't want that. If you tell me properly I will tell you what to do and what not to do. Yes, but don't do it on this way and they don't do it also (with confidence). That's the best relationship we have. That is trust, I mean the whole family revolves around trust, you know.

Kamal (male, 64 years), however, thinks that second-generation immigrants are not carrying out well the "model-minority stereotype." They are not aware of their ancestral origin and Indian values and practices:

> Well, [pause (3-4 seconds)]…Well we are all immigrants here…and…umm…We are somewhat different from other people. We are more like Chinese…even Chinese have been here for a long time…whereas we are here only for the last 40-50 years may be…the numbers are increasing. We are different in the sense that mostly the cream of the society. Once you settle down here, I see people, they raise their children here who don't know ANYTHING about where they come from…who don't CARE to know. It's very sad. They have to be taught who they are and they should be taught. How wonderful it is form them to be here. But unless they know their own history, they have nothing to be proud of. It's very sad. These kids…many of them, don't do well in school and even other things; because they have no pride in themselves…umm…It's a very sad thing…

Krishnan (male, 50 years) feels that the emphasis on education and family distinguishes him as Indian. Both Krishnan and Kamal identify themselves as culturally similar to "Chinese" in their attempt to cultivate suitable educational fields and careers for the second-generation:

> …Again there are lot of small small things separates me [from Americans] you know…umm…culture wise…I have lot of importance to my family. My family comes first. I want to make sure my kids go to…I want my kids to go to…we push kids to go to higher education. That's an Indian thing, or a Chinese thing…you know, if my daughter doesn't do very good in school, I do not talk to her for a day..because this is the time you know, I believe you know, we need to have some influence on them…it's important…umm…I don't allow them to do whatever they want. No, I don't want them to do. There are some restrictions they have so that for their own benefit I feel. That is another influence of Indian culture. We want them to go to…I keep saying, it's good if you become a doctor…If they can't handle that's fine. I am very open minded, but from the beginning…I have some guidance for them. If you want to go to medical school you have to be strong in biology…give some help, but it's all really…We shouldn't be forcing at all. I know that because I see everyday students here…if they don't have that mindset to do that they never do that, they fail. I am going to help them more. My parents were not much educated I know, I am lucky I am going to school even. So, you know, at least they have me. I can as much as…help them which is good, which is bad…yeah…study is important you know. If she gets a bad grade, I really don't like it. I know it pressurizes. If I leave [them] alone [they will never understand]. That's probably another Indian feature…

Most respondents of this study are educated and in well paying professional jobs. For the second-generation Indian American, the pressure of living up to the model-minority

image in American society is reinforced at home by the immigrant parents and the Indian community (Maira 2002). In the religious meetings I attended, immigrants discussed extensively childrens' career plans usually as engineers or doctors. One respondent told me that she always feels anxious about the future of her daughter who is pursuing a career in the humanities. She also added that in the Indian community there is a pressure among second-generation Indian Americans to pursue medicine. Therefore, there is an emphasis on following the class values of Indian Americans and maintaining the middle-class American status.

Secondly, the point that definitely comes across in conversation with the respondents is the high degree of prominence of the behaviors involving parenting. Parenting involves passing down family values, religious values and cultural beliefs and practices. For Asian Indian immigrants, parenting doesn't always involve traditional endogamous arranged marriages, but parents prefer to set their own expectations and standards. 61 percent (19 out of 31) respondents accepted the fact that second-generation Asian Indian Americans would date and select their marital partners following the American norm. But, unlike the Western system where dating is believed to be a purely individual behavior, in many cases Indian parents (and also the community and friends) remain involved in the choice of partners (Mukhi 2000, Ternikar 2008). Navin (male, 58 years) thinks his U.S. reared children will chose their own life partners following American norms, but also suggests that parents' opinions and involvement in their children's marital choice is critical. He also prefers someone with the same cultural background. When asked what he thinks about dating practices in the U.S., he says:

> Pause…umm…It's inevitable…umm…So, we just have to accept it…umm…I…I think…parents have a duty to guide them…guide their children but in the end

have to accept what they bring home…(laughs). We have been that age group ourselves…

Interviewer: *Do you get involved in the choice of your children's dating/marriage partners?*

Well…umm…I would say they inform more than ask (laughs)…plus that is every Indian parents' story…parent have a choice to comment but whether that have any impact that…umm…(smiles)

Interviewer: *Do you have any preference for your children's life partner/dating partner?*

Well…yes…nationality wise I believe that to having that Indian spouses would be slightly more likely sustain than American spouses. One bigger thing that I share with them is that…umm…If you are not already in love with someone, then the apriori probability of success goes up if the backgrounds are similar and that's what we can try to increase is that apriori probability can be increased. Before you get married try to think about the compatibility issues again…again, now in a different light because now you are thinking about a specific person…not just looking at an open pool. You are looking at a specific person you try to increase your compatibility because the cost of…the emotional cost of breakup is very high…Sooo…That's kind of how I introduce them…

Alok (male, 65 years) looked a little uncomfortable in answering this question. He does not whole-heartedly favor dating because of the "negative aspect" associated with sexual promiscuity. He mentioned that his daughter has chosen her partner, but he "arranged" their meeting. Like Navin, he also thinks that since elders have the lived experiences, they can guide the younger generation in terms of marriage matters. He talks about his preference for Hindu Indian life partners for his daughters:

I think, it is good to know other person…umm…there are good things and bad things…(smiles). And…umm…(pause)…coming from India….we are more conservative…in terms of dating…But if you live in America, I think, it's important that you need to meet your future wife or husband…so…from that point of view, it is good….

Interviewer: *Explain negative aspect of dating?*

> I am from old…old…system, you know, dating to know people is good. But beyond that, you know…I am more conservative. But it is happening in India any way…so it is…time…time is changing. Our children are all grown up here…so…One is married…so…she found on her own…(laughs). I mean we introduce her to people who are here, but ultimately they have to make decision….
> As parents we are…we look at things differently…because we look at the whole picture. But when person who is involved in dating…they may look at differently. They may not have the broader perspective….
> We will prefer them to marry within our own religion…preferably from…if they are from similar [regional] background….so…But beyond that, you know, it's difficult to control…

Anita (female, 42 years) also feels the same way about dating practices. Like many other Asian Indian immigrants, she approves exogamous marriages within the pan-Indian community. She prefers her daughter select a partner from within the pan-Indian community despite regional or linguistic differences. Though she agrees to dating, it is the pre-marital sexual relationship that disturbs her the most:

> I think, I am pretty open to it…umm…I think, a person needs to just know their limits and more with it. The person has to I think, specially living here or anywhere else. They need know they want to spend their whole life with someone…need to know that person. So, I think I am pretty open for it… …umm…I don't want to be biased…but…yeah…I would really like it…if it's…(pause)…it's somebody from India…but…umm…umm…As long as the person, you know, [who] tries to keep up with their own traditions and culture…I think, it's fine…

Krishnan (male, 50 years) had an arranged marriage and would like to see his daughters getting married within the Hindu community. He accepts dating because his children are growing up in the U.S. He thinks that getting to know someone before marriage is helpful, but won't allow his daughters to cross the "limit," i.e., he doesn't accept pre-marital sex.

> I don't know…just I said, it changes from person to person…I…I think I support that really because that helps people to get to know each other a lot…umm…But also there are some drawbacks that you know because of the background of culture. I come from different background (laughs)…Yeah…I don't mind…I

> mean, I don't…let them date, you know, get to know each other…I think, I feel that's very important really…
> I will not stop [when my kids grow up]….but, there is a limit also…umm… you know, dating …meeting going you know, dinner, lunch, movies, be friend is not bad at all. I don't mind…(pause) (was trying to find out how to frame the sentence, after probing question, he jumps in) you know, beyond that staying together…borderline…(laughs)…I am not ready for that…(laughs)…
> See there are lot of change in Indian now. I can see people go out, dating. I think, they are dating a lot time. So, it's a new concept for me, but, you know, that's what happening in India. I think, if it's healthy things fine…but, for us, it's hard to accept.
>
> Interviewer: *Do you get involved in the choice of your children's dating/marriage partners?*
>
> Yeah, of course…they are my children. I want to make sure they make a right decisions. I won't leave them themselves. No, no…because (laughs) because obviously I have more experience. I know the things…the way it happened. So, I would rather involve and see, you know…I will try to advise them…I won't let them do whatever they want…no…
>
> Interviewer: *What about religious preferences…?*
>
> …I personally feel that (pause) they [Christians] impose their own thing on everybody. They are not very broadminded…

Kavita (female, 51 years) holds a similar view, i.e., she approves dating, but without sexual relationships. She believes in the semi-arranged marriage where children have the right to accept or reject their potential partners introduced to them their by their parents (Ternikar 2008). She says:

> I think, you know, having a choice, you know…I am not against it…in the sense that…. yeah boys and girls if they an opportunity to get to know some people and Thereby they can take a decision with whom they want to spend their life with….That is good I think, you know. But, you know…we are raised in a …back home, you know, parents take initiate who is [going to be your partner]. But then you know…of course it's personal life. The background, where I come from, it's not imposed on anyone…I think…I am not against arranged marriage at the same time not against dating…But then, you know the ideal situation would be parents taking [initiative in arranging marriages]…put up their son or daughter. Usually that's the way it is done anyway…Right? Even if though the elders may looking no? but if the boy or the girl agree to that …then it's fine…in fact it works…then

> you know…at the same time it's kind of (pause little) not having any boundary in [sexual intimacy].

Rani (female, 51 years) also talk about "balance" in dating relationships. She approves dating relationships without "physical intimacy."

Mohan (male, 75+ years) arranged "introductions" for his son's potential marriage partner. He said that his son made the decision about his marriage after talking on the phone and going out for dinner. He approves dating which doesn't encourage sexual relationship and thinks that parental guidance is necessary. He also believes in the sanctity of marriage. He also stresses how arranged marriages help people find culturally compatible partners:

> I think, that….umm…(pause) it's not a bad idea if you approach it properly, but marriages you can never really find out unless you marry and live with the person. It's always a gamble. The only way to find out whether you would be compatible or not…I like ancient Indian culture…and the way they did it…to find out what out what kind of *sanskar* or values the girl has and the boy has and that comes from the family. So…people used to go to see what kind of parents they have…Do they fight all the time and all that. The kids…the way they were raised…are they too ultra modern….too backward…all those things are important in the long run. Values…values are very important to be compatible. If your values are different from the partner, it's difficult. But dating and going out on a date on a dinner…you never find out the values much because everybody tries to put up a different face and it's all artificial…people have not only gone on dates for years, but they have even lived together. Living together before marriage and after marriage is very different. Before marriage, no commitment no dependence….nothing. You do your thing and he does his things. Then you come together and you have your own space. After marriage the space narrows to the point that you step on each other's toes and so, unless you really love each other…it cause problems. So…my personal feeling is they think it's very essential in the sense that you must know something about the other and like even my marriage when I got married. Of course, I knew the family how the parents where and all that fortunately and how they were raised. So I was confident that they are very nice.
> As young age, when you start dating you are not mature enough to [take decisions]. Parents try to tell them…Geez…don't rush into it. They don't listen…sometimes they do…but…dating is also…is also a gamble. But it gives you some information if you can analyze and look at it in a proper perspective which is rare. And you must also take others opinion when you decide on it,

> especially your parents. If they are broad minded and they don't force you to do things. You can learn from other's experience before you get into this…

Sadhana (female) thinks dating is very important for her children meeting prospective life partners. She remains involved in a limited sense and prefers a second-generation Indian as the suitable life partner for her children. Later she added that though she does not mind accepting non-Indian partners, but she won't allow a person from "certain religions." She states:

> I think it's [dating] very important for second generation Indians…extremely important…
> I am very (emphasis) close to them…so yeah…I always know what's going on…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you have any preference for your children's life partner/dating partner?*
>
> You know, it would be nice if they can find somebody who is a second generation Indian, who is being raised here…that would be ideal, but we are open to them as long as we feel that they would be compatible…and it would work… professionally, that's very important to us. Family is very important to us. It could be a non-Indian if they have all those other you know**….**we would be quite happy. But, I think, it's extremely (emphasis) important. I am one of those mothers who believes that children should date…Yeah…because they are not going to have arranged marriages and I do not believe in those shaadi.com sites either…you know…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you have any religious preference…?*
>
> Certain religions, probably, I would be more open to than the others, just because the worldviews are so different. So with extreme religious people, it would be extremely difficult, I think. You know, if the children want to do it, then that would be another thing…But you know, (thinks a while), I think, our children kind of know, what is involved.

Both Ranjan (male, 48 years) and Sagar (male, 35+ years) disapprove teenage dating practices of American culture, but accept that their children are going to follow American culture and select their own marital partner. Sagar, however, would like to remain involved in his daughter's partner choice. Sagar adds that as Indians value education, he

would prefer an 'educated' heterosexual partner for his daughter:

> I think, it's very very immature, they start at a very early age where they have no clue what is right and what is wrong for them. Plus their…it's considered to be cool…which I don't…which I don't approve off. Because there is an…there is an age for everything. So…at the right age you are supposed to do the right things. When you are in your teens, you are supposed to. You are supposed to get a decent education, concentrate on that…what you want to become in life, so, I don't necessarily approve of the dating practices here. So, I prefer that guys and girls start dating when they are probably in their late teens or not even that…may be in early 20s. Once they have achieved some kind of basic education and accomplish something in life, like a basic bachelors degree, something like that, then they can of course date and spend time with each other.
>
> Interviewer: *Do you get involved in the choice of your children's dating/marriage partners?*
>
> I don't think first of all, she is going to ask me to choose because…umm…in this country…I mean, that's not the norm that she would ask me to choose…probably she might have ask me if she found a partner that what do you think about him…and then I might approve or disapprove or something like that…Yeah, I would definitely like to get involved and…umm…in the choice or her partners.
> I don't have any preference in terms of nationality, but education wise definitely, I want her partner to be at least her equal or better than that in terms of educational qualifications and something since education is such an important part in our lives. Especially, middle class and upper-middle class people growing up in India, so, yeah, I mean in…educationally, he has to be very…umm…he has to be accomplished and he has to come from a good family…

Naren (male, 65 years) did not allow his children to date until they were 18 years, but he did not disapprove of the American dating system when his daughters became adults. He believes that parental control can't stop "finding the souls" and, unlike Christianity, Hinduism can help explain how life partners are destined to meet. In response to the question about his opinion on dating practices in the U.S., he adds:

> Umm…sigh!...umm…Let me put it this way. I have two daughters. One of them found her own husband and one of them went through shaadi.com (Indian matrimonial site)….okay…umm…Both my girls and my son will tell you that there was a rule that I had made that they are not allowed to date until they are 18 at a minimum. There are two things going on. Number 1…umm…the hormones are just kicking in at the time and at the same time the level of maturity to make the right decision is not there. And so…until they get to the point where you can

actually sit down and talk to them and make them understand the consequences of the each action that they take, you really shouldn't give them the liberty to go out and make those choices…and that was the only reason why we did that…
I do practice astrology and…umm….you know, how to read charts and stuff. For example, when [my daughter] got married…she came and said dad, can you look at [my husband's] chart…compatibility and they did that. So…it's their choice…umm…My personal belief is that the soul will always find its partner… And you can tell me what is it you are looking for…If you can harp on what is there you are looking for…then they form an image who their soul mate should be. And if you do that…doesn't matter if they go out. They know what they are looking for and they will stay with that…

Do you have any preference for your children's life partner/dating partner?

I really don't…Everybody has a same blood type. So, once you gets past the skin…what makes us all is what makes us function…the blood…and if that's the same type. What's the difference does it make if we have what the skin color at the top? See…that's the part of Hinduism the people don't understand is the western religions…umm…They [Christians] have taken a stance where they think religion and science will never come together. Okay…because one believes in evolution and the other one believes in you know the divine plan. Well, there was a divine plan. When you look at our [Hinduism]…You go to the temple here and you look at the nine *avataras*. The first one is *matsa avatara*…okay…now when you think about evolution what was the first thing that was out here? First, there was water…okay…So first life has to be something in the sea. The second life that comes is *kurma avatara*, Tortoise. What is tortoise capable of? Existing in water and land. So that's we have very symbolic manner said that you know we embrace science and religion even before there was a separation of science and religion. And I mean…you go down and it goes up to *narshima avatara* and then it comes it *baman avatara*…okay…So when you study the progression, the human…when we came into the human form…umm…or the mammalian form, there were hard mammals and when the human came. He kind of was pygmy at the beginning and then he started growing tall. This is the same principal when you go to temples and you look at a statue, most of our statues in temples are big. When you go to *Ramleela* and you see that big statue *Ravana* and big statue of *Ram*. Why? So that our minds can fathom that I can be bigger than what I am right now. If that thought comes in then we can subconsciously start working on it. It doesn't have to be physically bigger. You can be spiritually bigger, you can be mentally bigger, you can be emotionally bigger and you can be physically bigger if that's what you want…you know…That was part of the evolutionary process. Evolution is going to continue. It's not going to stop. It's still going to continue and that's what our religion fosters…okay…It's got to continue…(pause)…

Priya (female, 35 years) also believes in fate in the choice of marital partner, but would like to see her children getting married to educated Indians, preferably from their region

of origin:

> We obviously prefer like good education means will be better right? So, I don't have this person. I don't have kind of …umm…criteria that this person needs to be a engineer or doctor or particular thing. But…well educated should be good… I prefer to be an Indian…obviously (laughs). If it's kind of Telegu, it would be great…(laughs)…But I don't know at that time…these are not in our hands too…

Gopal (male, 52 years) thinks that dating is not part of Indian culture. He won't approve living together and plans to be involved in his childrens' choice of marital partners. He believes marrying a non-Indian would lead to cultural incompatibility and future marital troubles. In the question about his opinion on dating, he says:

> I don't know, the way it is happened here. But this is what I have heard people…young people they have…This is how they get the chance to know each other…umm…(pause)…Again anything which helps people to know better before they take the final decision, not a bad idea. [But] formal kind of a dating… it is not the part of our Indian culture. I will definitely like my kids to concentrate on what they are supposed to do this particular time…
>
> Interviewer: *Do you have any preference for your children's life partner/dating partner?*
>
> Oh!…yeah…In general you have some kind of a your own structure of your thought about this subject, you know. This is so important subject…umm…In Indian culture you know, parents always…umm…they take initiative in helping…umm…having a proper kind of a short listed candidate for your kids. Let them have the choice you know, and they may consider…So, likewise, pause…umm…as a parent definitely we would like to have someone with a good understanding and…umm…good those values and particularly compatibility is there. Then the issues would be less, you know, that's why we always like to emphasize on the complexity of the whole thing you know, interpersonal or inter those things. So, if you are…if you have the partner from the particular community and then…umm…not much compatibility issue. Like for example, your are Maharashtrian [from the state of Maharashtra] and you marry a person from Holland [Netherlands], you know, now, Holland have different culture, different way of thinking and what what we believe that. What you are today is the product of thousands and thousands of lives you know…and then you get. So you have a connection of those things. So it becomes so challenging if your choose a partner with a different kind of thing. So, we always like to really educate our kids, ok, dear, this is one of the scientific ways of understanding the …so…Why to really invite complications, you know…

> Interviewer: *What about marrying someone outside your regional background, but within the Indian community?*
>
> You know, probably it would be less you know, that one marries Holland person, but one marries an Indian…probability would be more because you will have more challenges…You want your kids to be to be not having many complicated situations, they require to be resolving. As a family, we always believed that the person should (emphasis) take the decision. We are there just to help them…guide them…taking their decision whether it is a marriage or anything…

Kumar (male, 64 years) believes that cultural compatibility becomes important after marriage. Though he approves dating, he would like to see familial and/or culturally similar heterosexual life partners for his children:

> Yeah…[my children] do dating. Well, my views are that they should get to… get to know people of the other sex and then see whether they found somebody they want to get married. Of course, we do discuss with our children…all of these…I do think that your family or cultural background become an important thing after you got married. Prior to marriage it may not be that important because it's you know very focused encounters…We sort of do discuss the importance of cultural compatibility. But I also do believe that irrespective of what one's ethnic background may be, there are always wonderful people in all ethnic groups…right, right, so I think, I am quite open minded about it…But I do have strong views that such and such person come from a cultural background were this person has closed views about the world…

Kamal (male, 64 years) favors both dating before marriage and arranged marriages, but he questions the American practice of dating multiple partners. He asks:

> [Dating] is wonderful, but how much dating? Do you want to date thousand people to get that one person. I don't think so…so…I don't think with a reason…arranged marriages are they good? Yeah…why not? That's fine…they work very well. What about dating and love marriages [means self-choice marriage; a popular term among South Asians]. Fine, if it works. But…umm…if you are not compatible for any reason, then it's not worth it…

Aruna (female, 72 years) describes the plight of restricting her son's dating and "fun" associated with it:

> Boy…(promptly)…I have gone through that…not myself…my children…(laughs)….Okay…With my son, it was a very (emphasis) difficult thing. Our rules to them are absolutely meaningless. We used to live in a two

> storey house. You know, the house was so big that I didn't know what was going on in the rest of the house. I would be cooking or something… and then all of a sudden, there would be this girl from school. This high school girl…she would just stash up the steps to visit him in his room. I mean it would give me a heart attack (elated voice) and…umm…It used to really upset me a lot and then I would talk to him and he had a frame of mind at that tim [that] we are Indians and we are a very orthodox. You know, we don't understand this thing, but to me it was very unacceptable. It's emotionally difficult to accept that and then there are parties in the night, for example swimming parties in the night at some places. We had a swimming pool too and I said why don't you have it at home? No…they have to go to somebody else's house. And…umm…I don't know whether they know their limits or not and girls here are very aggressive, but what I have to realize is…aggressive means they also knew when to say no…so…I don't think I needed to be that worried about it. But I couldn't help it. And another thing is…umm…dating is one thing and somehow dating, party and all that is combined with drug practices…drug culture…He has never tell me if he did…but, he went through rest of his life smoothly and he is fine. And…the third thing that was a major problem that he decided to marry a …umm …and they lived together for 2 years before they got married. I did not have an idea…any idea…and he knew if they…probably I would scream or do something and his father would be very angry…he never told us anything…umm…but the girls' family knew…And of course I was not say no or anything like that, but we wanted to meet. I really liked her a lot. She is so matured and she had so much respect for our customs and things like that…

Aruna continues describing how American values are different from Indian values. She now worries more about her daughter's marriage and future:

> ….And they agreed to have an Indian marriage. So, we had a wedding here. And her parents and the whole family came and she comes from a good family... [But] for example, she will not touch anybody's feet to do *namaskara* (Indian greeting, shows respect to elders) and it's not acceptable to her. I don't want to force her to do it, but she has no problem with her son doing it. And because of that…touching the feet part doesn't…umm…you know appeal to her. She is not disrespectful or anything like that and she will follow all out whatever practices I have…umm…and when I go here…I went there 2 or 3 times, she takes effort to make me vegetarian food….get some Indian food or something. So…umm…I have been pleasantly surprised and with that. I can't complaint anything about…[However], the day I married…there was nothing like my money and your money…blah and blah… It's still his account and her account and it's very different…it's not a problem…it doesn't affect me…and they are both verrrrrry together in bringing up the child…they bring up the child…there is absolutely no…and they discuss it everything together…umm…they do anything…in other words…They have a clear understanding what kind of…And now my daughter, she is dating somebody…and…umm…we have some concerns. I have nothing

> against him, but I am even more concerned about her than my son…Because may be she is a girl, I am more worried about her…

Except five respondents, all others are concerned with American society's dating norms and want to monitor their childrens' choice of partners.

Third, research shows that Indian immigrant women are the bastions for maintaining and passing down Indianness (Khandelwal 2002, Maira 2002). In this study, ritualized practices involving gendered Indian values are one of the most salient features of this immigrant community. Sucheta (female, 50+ years), came to the U.S. as a graduate student. She started working in paid jobs but quit her job to look after her daughters, to train them in Indian culture that she learned from her mother. Her lessons of transplanting Indian culture to her daughters largely reflect gendered ethnic behaviors in Indian family settings (Mehrotra and Calasanti 2010). She told me that she does not want her daughters to follow Indian culture as much as she did because she thinks it is "not always possible in America." She says:

> When I was a grad student I was busy, you know, adjusting to my new life, which is a married girl, also a student and also you know, managing groceries and being responsible for everything…As far as my home was concerned it was always Indian food, Indian habits of praying which was like I said I came from a home that was culturally rich and traditional and religious. So, I prayed, I kept my mother's habits. Let me put it that way…that was the first time I was given a chance to independently maintain my mother's habits…You become more responsible and that is the time you think back…and see, Oh…what did my mother use to do this festival, what did my mother do at this festival because when you are there at home like India we don't get out of the house until we are married. We live with your parents, no matter how [old you are], you can be 25 [years] and live with your parents, so the culture is very different. So, I lived with my parents all along till I got married. When *Ganesh Chaturthi* (Festival of Lord Ganesha) came, what did my mother do. I may not have done 100 percent of what she did, but because of the ingredients and certain things that you don't get, but I did imitate [my mother] may be about 50 percent of what she did and I tried to maintain it. So, after I graduated, then I got a job but once my children came, this faith only strengthened and it became stronger. So, I wanted my girls also to see what their mother does just because I had gone through that experience…umm…I

> have trained both my [daughters] and both of them know dancing and music and they pray before they leave home and I have given them a very good culture. I am also teaching them, I am also taking care of the house, cooking from scratch, making sure that I wanted to give them what my mother gave me, fresh food every day, so, I have to make sure I do that. It's a lot of work. Then I also do my prayers in the morning and you know, I try to maintain, because if they don't see me pray and I tell them to pray, they will not do that. So, they have to see that their mother practices what she preaches (laughs)…And kids are very smart about learning that…ooo (I see)…She is only telling me to do that, she is not doing it herself, so, I make sure I also pray to god every morning. I also do everything properly and cook food from scratch, make sure that it is warm and nice. That's why I quit my job…

Sucheta and Priya, despite their education, assign primacy to their roles as wife and mother. They both understood the challenges of rearing children and taking care of their families in the new social and cultural milieu. They emphasize following the gender-based behaviors and rules observed in their home in India:

> Priya: You know, I came right after my marriage. That itself is a big change you know in life whether you were in India or you were in America, it's not a…The first your responsibilities everything. It's a big transition…so (pause)…Obviously I kind of change…yeah…more responsibilities…right…you know, back at home if there is any kind of festival or *puja*, the main portion will be taken by parents and we just participate and we just eat whatever mommy makes (laughs) and we do whatever mommy says…(smiles)…right? But, after coming here, I had to do by myself everything. If I was in India, I might be following…umm…in-laws or…But here, like right after I came here as I told you. So….yeah…I learn how to learn and how to know everything…smiles… [I have] kids .You have to teach them right? (smiles)

As mentioned before, women Indian immigrants consider Indian dress as an integral part of preserving their culture. Despite regional, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences women state that the *sari* and/or *salwar-kameez* are important markers of their ethnic identity. In the U.S., unlike India, most women respondents do not wear Indian clothes every day, but in public festivals or in private parties Indian women are seen in colorful ethnic dress.

Except for one respondent, all other female respondents state that Indian dress is important to them. Vidya (female, 30+ years) says that "when there is a religious festival, I definitely feel like wearing Indian clothing somehow I feel I am close to my home." Priya (female, 35 years) and Manasi (female, 49 years) always wear Indian clothing at Indian community gatherings and festivals. She was wearing a *bindi* (dot on the forehead, sign of femininity) and *sindur* (vermillion, symbol of a marriage) with a western outfit. Manasi wears Indian dress at all types of parties. She says "I always wear Indian clothes…be it a wedding, a Christmas party, anything like that I will wear Indian…" Meera (female, 47 years) loves to wear *saree* and says that "…every chance I get, I wear Indian clothing and I think, I am complete (emphasis) with Indian clothing…" Anita (female, 42 years) says "…I mean I can't do without ethnic clothing… Indian clothing…I think, it is very important." Sucheta (female, 50+ years) was wearing a *salwar-kameez*, a gold chain (a symbol of married woman) and *bindi* during the interview. She also had a holy *bindi* on her forehead which she applied after *puja*. She wears Indian dress every day and doesn't want to maintain two wardrobes, both western and Indian. Sucheta narrates the incident which helped her to switch from western clothing to Indian dress. She says:

> …So, it was Christmas time and you know, how the teacher had told them to make a list…umm…of all the clothes, of all the gifts they want from Santa. They said…oo…we want scarf like [me]…(laughs)…So, I said Oh, my goodness, here I am thinking whether they accept it or not accept it or not or what. Then I said, wow, so, they really like innocent minds and they liked it. Then finally and slowly I opt out of my jeans and t-shirt and now I wear only my Indian clothes and …umm…My kids also they wear Indian clothes and I mean they wear appropriately for the occasion. If they go for an Indian, they wear *salwar kameez*…

Sadhana (female), Rani (female, 51 years), Sonal (female, 32 years) and Sapna (female, age in 40s) wear Indian dress in the religious and cultural gatherings of Indian communities. Sapna takes "pride" in wearing traditional clothes. Only Aruna (female, 72 years) explains that she cannot take care of her *sarees* and thus it is not important to her anymore. She says "Indian dress used to be [important]…until…even 5-10 years ago…umm….I never went in meeting other than saree in Indian functions…"

Anindo (male, 48 years), Ranjan (male, 48 years), and Mohan (male, 75+ years) think that Indian clothing is important to them. Anindo dislikes western formal wear in Indian occasions and "like(s) to take every opportunity to wear it." Rohit (male, 50+ years) wear *kurta pajama* everyday at home, but doesn't always wear them during Indian gatherings. 45 percent (14 out of 19) of male respondents replied that Indian clothing is not important to them. When asked if Indian clothing is important to him, Rohit replied "… majority of Indians wear western clothing. I don't know whether you can call it western even because it's all over the world…"

As previous research shows, Indian immigrants are one of the few immigrants who have continued to wear traditional dress. In particular, clothing is one way women are expected to keep and practice traditional Indianness. First-generation Indian women strongly believe that Indian clothing is salient in their lives and related to their identity.

The emphasis on maintaining Indian values such as the importance of family and marriage, education, and maintaining of religious and cultural ties in second-generation marriages is embedded in their everyday behaviors. As I have noted, 64 percent (20 out of 31) of respondents state that importance of ritualized behaviors involving pan-Indian values in their lives. Indian women symbolically express Indianness through ethnic dress.

Two women respondents wear traditional dress every day and one of them wears Indian clothing every week in Indian gatherings. 75 percent (9 out of 12) of women respondents put on Indian clothes in Indian community functions and/or private gatherings and one of them wear Indian clothes in the American workplace.

Indian women actually engage in the public display of Indian identity. Therefore, Indian immigrant women's role as a culture bearer possesses high degree of homologousness with Indian cultural and religious activities.

Finally, Indian communities, both religious and cultural, provide important resources for ideal "semi-arranged" marriages for the second-generation. Socialization into religious and social values in families helps ensure that first-generation Indian immigrants' offspring won't select undesired dating and marital partners. Transnational ties through internet match-making websites also provide important marital resources. The image of the model-minority and the desired career path of second-generation Indian Americans are also reproduced during first-generation organizational events and women wear ethnic clothing all the time at Indian cultural and religious events. Therefore, family, friends, Indian communities, and transnational ties prove to be important resources for the first-generation to create and maintain ritualized pan-Indian behaviors.

(3.3) *Behaviors involving Hindu Spirituality and Indian History*

29 percent (9 out of 31) of respondents state that they are spiritual and do not practice religious rituals. All of them define Indian civilization, traditions, and culture as involving various practices of Hindu heritage such as Hindu scriptures and philosophy, yoga, music, ayurveda (herbal medicine), and astrology (Mathew and Prasad 2000). Their spiritual practices play a prominent role in explaining their pan-Indian identity.

When asked about the importance of religious practices, Kumar (male, 64 years), who migrated to the U.S. 33 years ago, explains how he was taught with Hindu spiritual beliefs in childhood and still possesses those beliefs. He doesn't practice Hindu religious rituals, such as idol worship at home or in a group, but he studies *Vedic* texts (Hindu holy texts), *Upanishads* (Hindu scriptures), and *Puranas* (Hindu scriptures) regularly and maintains a library at his home. His experiences of pan-Indian philosophy are based on Hindu upper caste aesthetics (Mukhi 2002). His spiritual practices are also based on his regional background in the home country. He listens to Indian (Hindu) classical music and devotional music (*kirtan*) at home. He says:

> …[O]nce you know what [religious ritual] is, then probably the performance is not that important. And…so, we are not ritualist at home, but we do talk about all of these. Personally, I don't [do rituals]. I do some yoga and *asans* (exercise)… but that really more of exercise. No, but…that's not all because yoga also means meditation… means *Dhyan* (meditation) and that *dhyan* means understanding the very inner architecture of your psyche. So I do all of that. It is difficult to define Indians because the fundamental difference of philosophy. The fundamental difference is between *Shruti* and *Smriti*. *Shruti* remains same, our philosophy remains same. *Smriti* is an outward cultural thing. Indian experiences change…practice change. Different *smritis* take pride in what their forefathers have done. Therefore, Indian worldview is not fundamental unlike Church or Mosque. Hinduism is private. Yoga is turning the gaze inside…Ritual is a sacred theatre which structures an individual and community with the world…Indians do not understand our own culture, Sanskrit is important (emphasis added).

Naren (male, 64 years) is also trained in Hindu spirituality since childhood. He is a trained Hindu astrologer or *jyotishi*. He was born in the Brahmin caste, but does not identify as a Hindu Brahmin any longer. After his marriage with an American, he engaged in both Hindu and Christian religious rituals. He explains that Indian culture is primarily based on Hindu spirituality and values:

> ….We have a very rich heritage in culture and people misunderstand culture from the standpoint of what we eat, what we dress and so forth…umm…Culture has more to do with the state of mind…the way you think. And if you are going to

> mold that part then you really have to take out the time to educate your kids…or whoever you are with…umm…My wife is a perfect example. She is American, but she understands ayurveda [herbal medicine], she understands ayurvedic cooking and she probably knows more about ayurvedic cooking that most Indian people do…umm….and it's primarily because…umm…We take the time to go to classes together and things like that where she gets the understanding of what it is about…you know…that's the part of the thing that I think, we get caught up is we think that culture is taking our kids to the temple. Culture is…a culture is taking the time to telling what am I all about…where my value systems are coming from…and what does it mean to you…you know…you don't have to follow it…but this is what it's all about. I meditate every day. I do my *japam* (meditation with beads) regularly. I like to read...umm…religious and spiritual books…umm…so that I have a better understanding of the things…umm…that I do regularly…umm…And that's probably what needs to happen [I attend religious discourses]. It's all about faith and if somebody is not going to talk about faith, they better leave that and kill themselves. And some of the older…umm…umm…*gurus* that came here like Swami Vivekananda, Paramsansa, Yogananda…they were the same way…Paramhansa is in fact my *guru* (religious teacher)…
>
> .

Priya (female, 35 years) is also Swami Vivekananda, a Paramsansa devotee and she has "turned more spiritual." Hindu philosophy helps Mohan (male, 75 + years) to understand Indian culture. He reads *Upanishads* and *Puranas* every morning. He then spoke about his deep involvement with Hindu spirituality. "In the morning as I said when I go to my meditation I have to read something…So, I read…I have lot of books there and so…I picked up whatever from my…then I try *Gita* (Hindu holy book)…then *shlokas* (verses) …like this morning, I was reading in *Gita*…" He then explained the meaning of several *shlokas.*

When I entered Rani (female, 51 years) and Nirmal's (male, 52 years) home, I noticed photographs with *mantras* on Hinduism and Buddhism in a digital photo frame. They both talked about the relation of Indian culture with Hindu spirituality. In response to the question on the importance of religious practices, Rani replied:

> ….I don't go to the [Hindu] temple or anything. [I] don't worship an idol…umm…because I think my temple is within and we try to. I try to connect to

> inner self…and we have you know dialogues in the house and so…It is spiritual you can say, I am more spiritual than [religious]. If being religious is related to worshipping an idol or something…then I don't. Yoga if that is meditation…I do yoga everyday and *pranayams* (meditation)…

Nirmal feels that it is important to connect to Indian culture, which he does through spiritual dialogues.

> ...I feel very very connected to the spirit of India or India is just a label…but, to a very ancient spirit…which is…umm…inward looking and…the…which is about the transcendent. So, it's about cultural connection…umm…and it's about realizing something much deeper about oneself…And if you want to call that a religious practice…in my mind that is very much a religious practice…is to…umm…to…to realize that connection…

Alok (male, 65 years) thinks that Indian heritage "binds everyone together" in a foreign land. Among the eight respondents who said that practices related to Indian [Hindu] heritage are important, five of them do not identify as Hindu.

These behaviors based on Indian culture and spirituality are quite repetitive. Meera, Rani, Sailesh, Mohan, Kumar, Naren and Sadhana meditate every day. Five of them also read Hindu religious texts regularly.

In regard to homologousness, the pan-Indian Hindu identity that developed since 1965 in the Indian diaspora has helped define Indianness. 25 percent of participants interpret Indianness with Hindu culture, i.e., Indian culture and civilization is viewed as Hindu. Therefore, the practices on Indian spirituality and culture are moderate to high degree of homologousness with pan-Indian religious practices, or Hindu practices, in particular.

Finally, there are sufficient resources needed to perform various behaviors based on spirituality and Indian history. With the increasingly transnational connection, resources concerned with Hindu philosophy are widely available on the web. Some of the

respondents maintain their personal libraries on Hindu spirituality in their homes.

(4) *Transnational Practices*

For Indian Americans, ethnic identity is increasingly influenced by transnational contacts with the homeland. The prominence of the transnational practices is reflected in the significance of maintaining contact with the home country. All (100 percent) respondents describe how maintaining ties with their friends, families, and communities in India is important to them. Gopal (male, 52 years) points out that connections with family and community in India help to maintain his ethnic identity:

> [The] most important practice as an Indian is, talk to parents, talk to your people back home…This is a daily practice…every time….I speak to my village people you know on a regular basis and I, I….so…being in touch with people….yeah…and here [in the U.S.] also….(pause)…as an Indian you know, (pause)….at society level [I] attend [Indian community] functions….

Vidya (female, 30+ years) says that her everyday telephone call to her family in India is one of the important activities in her life:

> One of the important things…something which I need to do every day. I usually try to call home every day because I want to talk to my folks everyday even if it is like *kemon acho, bhalo achi* [How are you?, I am doing good]. I do that every day…

Seven respondents indicate that their parents visit them in the U.S. at least once in every two years and stay with their family for an extended period. First-generation immigrants' parents, in particular, play an important role in passing down ethnic rituals such as language, religion, and popular culture. This suggests that transnational practices not involve pan-Indianness, but also maintain regional-Indian ritualized behaviors. Sapna (female, 40+ years) and Samir (male, 40+ years) have "consciously decided" not to teach their son native language, but the son "picked up" their native language from his paternal grandparents, who visit them every summer. Similarly, Krishnan told me that he is not

worried about teaching his kids the native language because he noticed that "when [they] go to India, stay there couple of months…[his children] enjoy learning much much more words [in native language] and after coming back 6 months, they forget everything…" Sapna also mentions that she doesn't need to go to temple to know about Hinduism, but "[she] can just pick up a book and learn it or [she] can talk to [her] mom [who stays in India] and get that or when [her husband's] parents are here in the [U.S.], [she] [has] discussions with them…"

The communication revolution has not only increased interactions via telephone or international travel, but through inexpensive and fast internet access as well. Second-generation Indian Americans are also connected to their ancestral origin and families. Manasi's (female, 49 years) son is connected to her extended family in India via a popular social networking site. These frequent transnational contacts with her family help her to identify as Indian:

> …Most of our family is in India…So…we go at least every other year or the family comes every other year…So…they meet with someone in the family every two year…So, pretty close interactions with family members and my son is on facebook and connected with his cousins and uncles…I mean…they are facebook with him, we are not…he is connected…umm…

Transfer of remittances is another way of maintaining a connection with the homeland (Bose 2008). Except for two respondents, interviewees indicate that they remit money as gifts to their families, for investment in India, and to help community and sponsor education. Immigrants also remain emotionally connected with their families. They send gifts on special events such as birthdays, marriages, anniversaries, medical emergencies, and festivals through internet to their immediate and extended families. Frequent travel to India also helped them to deliver gifts in person.

The ritualized practices of sending remittances and gifts to one's family have significant meaning for first-generation Asian Indians. Sucheta (female, 50+ years) says, "….I do send my gifts to India. That is again, my way of saying thank you to my mother…for her birthday, for her anniversary and my nieces and my way of saying …mostly to my mother I do…" Ravi is also thankful for his mother's contributions:

> …I sent money home to my mom, even though she probably doesn't need it. It's just an appreciation for how much she did for us bringing us up and I like to always…you know…

Manasi's family owns property in India and frequently sends money to India. She also sends her family gifts on occasions. Naren (male, 64 years) sends money to voluntary organizations to support social causes:

> [I send money to]…most of them are organizations that most of the money that goes to India. I don't have any relatives there….but…you know, there are some organizations that support children's causes and so…that's where we will support…

Mansai and Alok (male, 65 years) are actively engaged in Indian community based services in the U.S. which support both the social and economic development of India. Manasi organizes a camp for the children who are adopted from India. She says:

> …There is an agency and they do adoption from [India]. In fact…they work with an orphanage with [one city]. So, every year they do like…umm…heritage camp for the kids who are adopted from India and kids come from all over the country. They get about 50-60 kids and families and we help them run the camps. We will do like a cooking segment, dance segment and music and language and stuff like that…

Alok (male, 65 years) was an active participant of an education program that benefits underprivileged education and development in India. He plans to start this program in the U.S. city he currently resides in:

> ….[I] help local community through donations or you know, food drive, all kinds of things…so… Actually, I was quite a bit involved in *Ekal Vidyalaya*

> *Foundation*. This is a concept started through VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a Hindu nationalist political organization]…Okay…Although they are associated with VHP, but it is independent organization. So…the purpose of that is to… open schools in tribal areas in (India) where access to education is very limited. So they identify localities [in] tribal areas where there is no access to education and then they provide resources and open a school. And there is no restriction that the person has to be Hindu or Muslim or Sikh or Christian…anybody…[They provide] basic education…read and write. How to take care of community or your children in terms of health and then economic empowerment…

Kavita (female, 51 years) and Kamal (male, 64 years) also send money to families who need financial help for their children's education. Kavita says:

> ….[We send money to] some families may not be even related, but we try to help them. For them we send [money] on a regular basis. At least every few months. At least once in six months we try to send them. We helped in getting them some degrees…Yeah…some people they don't have…they cannot afford. So, help them to get some degrees…some bachelors degree...something, we do that. But the kind of commitments you make once in few years you know (laughs). One person means for the next three years, you have to be you know see that they get the degree. So, you keep sending money once in six months, you know, particular family, you know, help that child get a degree. We do that…

The respondents are mostly affluent Indian Americans and some of them travel to the homeland at least once a year. They can re-live their pre-migration experiences and memories by participating in various cultural practices in India. Pramod (male, 48 years) was reminiscent of the festivals that he participated in during his childhood in India. He told me that he doesn't enjoy festivals in the U.S., but"…[he had] been back to India during *pujo* [festival of Goddess Durga] couple of times, and [he] had a great time…" Similarly, Bimal (male, 53 years) and Kapil (make, 42 years) also visited India during the festival season.

Three respondents also indicate that they encourage second-generation Indians to travel to India for higher education. Two respondents explain that their children lived in India to learn about Indian culture "in an immersive way." Another respondent's

daughter was admitted to a college in India to learn about Indian history.

From the preceding discussion and examples, it is evident that first generation Indian immigrants are engaged in an array of highly salient transnational practices.

The growing communication technologies and purchasing power of first-generation Indian Americans have made it easier to engage in repetitive transnational activities with their home country such as remittances, sending gifts, investments, and travel. All the participants in my study are engaged in various forms of transnational activities. Ravi describes his frequent trips to visit family, "…I actually leave clothes in India now. I just take one suitcase…take it in…move on…That's it…don't take anything. I just leave clothes in India…" Except for two respondents, all other respondents visit India frequently. Immigrants also travel to India to attend special family events such as weddings, anniversaries, religious festivals, and so on. Ravi (male, 56 years) went to India to perform a ceremony for his forefathers. And Sadhana (female) visits India on special occasions such as a wedding in extended family.

Transnational activities possess high degree of homologousness with regional-Indian language, regional-Indian popular cultural practices, and pan-Indian popular cultural practices. The visits of the family back and forth help first-generation immigrants to pass down the native language and regional culture to the second-generation. Priya (female, 35 years), Meera (female, 47 years), and Vidya (female, 30+ years) think that their children must learn their native language in order to speak to their grandparents. Priya states "obviously when we go back to see our parents [and] they also will come with us and [my parents] want to maintain that relation [with their grand children]. [My kids] should know the [native] language at least…"

Transnational exchanges via literature, music, dance, films, television, and print media help create and maintain both pan-Indian popular culture and regional-Indian popular culture. 55 percent (17 out of 31) of respondents indicate that they subscribe to regional-Indian television channels and Hindi mainstream television channels. Bollywood cinema and diasporic literature create emotional and nostalgic transnational relations with the homeland and a sense of "Indianness" (Ranganathan 2010, Bhatawedkar 2011). Pramod (male, 48 years) describes the importance of Indian diasporic literature that makes him nostalgic, "…I really enjoy reading the book written in English and, you know, like the guy saying stuff in Hindi…in between and in a different language and sort of like tickles me and sort of enjoy that part, you know, …umm…because then it lends…it gives a sort of authenticity…" Some (7 out of 31) interviewees even attend dance and music concerts predominantly featuring Bollywood.

Resources for transnational ritualized practices are easily available in this highly mobile and globalized world. Respondents (7 out of 31) told me that they "pick up" books from India when they travel. Rohit (male, 50+ years) brought back books on Indian history for his children. He wants them to know about Indian history and colonial rules. Sailesh (male, 40+ years) buys children's storybooks, Hindu scriptures from India "every time [he] goes to India." Saliesh mentions that "I grew up with *Amar Chitra Katha* [Indian stories for children]…I make sure my kids grow up with *Amar Chitra Katha*…" Therefore, transnational contacts allow the first-generation Indians to transmit ethnic behaviors and practices to the second-generation. The respondents travel to their homeland and see their families frequently for extended period and both central (i.e.,

federal) government and state governments of India are opening up opportunities for remittance-driven investments.

Summary

All (100 percent) of the participants engage in various forms of highly salient pan-Indian ritualized behaviors such as pan-religious practices, popular cultural practices, other forms of practices demonstrating pan-Indian values, and transnational practices. Pan-ethnic RSPs help first-generation Indian immigrants constructing an Indian identity. The first-generation of Indian immigrants create different meanings of Indian culture and Indian community in the host society. First, the respondents, who interpret Hinduism as a traditional Indian culture, are creating pan-Indian practices through Hindu scriptures, epics, and music, both in private and public places of worship. The emphasis on Hinduism, the dominant religion, allows for the creation of a pan-Indian identity. Pan-Indian Hindu practices integrate the diverse Hindu groups and exclude Indian minority religious minorities. Pan-Hindu practices also help to establish a distinct Indian cultural heritage in American society.

Second, Hindi films, their music/dance forms, and television shows are the most prominent pan-Indian popular cultural practices. Bollywood provides emotional connections with the homeland and represents "how India looks, thinks, and behaves" (Bhatawdekhar 2011). Classical dance and music and folk dances also help define an authentic Indian identity. Some participants represent their Indian identity through the practices of classical music and dance, which are rooted in Hindu civilization. Indian festivals, in particular Diwali, also help to portray a pan-Indian identity. Respondents engage in the Diwali celebration in the public places to commemorate Indianness. Immigrants watch movies on Indian diaspora and read Indian books and expatriate

newspapers, and print media published in India. In this increasingly globalized world, continuous interactions with the homeland help to recreate a distinct cultural identity in the adopted society.

Third, an array of ritualized practices indicating pan-Indian values is quite conspicuous in the lives of Indian immigrants. Indian immigrants are engaged dietary practices focused on healthy home-cooked food and a vegetarian diet, which represent Indian culture. Participants indicate that Indian dietary practices are prominent activities that emphasize the distinctiveness of pan-Indianness in the host society. The women respondents, in particular, emphasized preparing home-cooked meals at least once a day.

Other prominent pan-Indian ritualized activities involve the passing down of Indian values or *sanskar* to their children also help first-generation immigrants to maintain their Indian culture. First-generation immigrants interpret Indian culture with an Indic Sanskritic "refined" image of their homeland involving spirituality, the land of an ancient civilization, and wisdom (Mukhi 2000). Most of the respondents do not prohibit dating behavior of their children, but are not in favor of the dominant culture's approved dating age and engaging in pre-marital sexual relationships.

There is also an emphasis on living up to the "model-minority stereotypes" for second-generation Indian Americans. Both men and women respondents indicated that Indian cultural reproduction is mostly "wife's job" or "mother's job." Women also become the cultural ambassadors by wearing Indian clothes in the community events (Das Gupta 1997, Kurien 1999).

In addition, Indian immigrants engage in an array of salient ritualized practices that indicate pan-Indian Hindu identity. The respondents' state that the activities such as

reading Hindu scriptures and philosophy, listening to Hindu spiritual discourses doing yoga, practice of herbal medicine and astrology are a few very important aspects of pan-Indianness.

Finally, transnational practices contribute to a sense of commitment to their families, friends, communities, and organizations. Transnational ties are also maintained through popular cultural practices such as Bollywood, classical and folk music, and dance and diasporic literature and print media. These highly salient activities in the transnational spaces help the first-generation immigrants feel a sense of belonging with their homeland and create a distinct ethno-national identity in the host society.

Therefore, various forms of pan-Indian ritualized are visible, prominent, and central activities of Asian Indian immigrants in the Southern Plains region of the U.S.

Pan-Indian ritualized behaviors possess moderate to high degree of repetitiveness. Depending on the practice respondents engage in pan-Indian popular cultural practices every day, several times in a year, or once in a year on special occasions. Many practices demonstrating Indianness, i.e., Indian values, beliefs, and norms, are present in Indian immigrant's everyday behaviors. Popular-cultural practices and pan-Indian religious practices occur more frequently compared to transnational remittances, travel, or investments. Repetitiveness of all the pan-Indian RSPs determines the overall rank or importance of ritualized behaviors.

Pan-ethnic RSPs are homologous with each other and also with regional-ethnic RSPs such as language and regional-Indian popular culture. Popular cultural practices such as Bollywood and Indian dance/music forms help maintain connections with the homeland. The tie with their country of origin is maintained through communicating in

the native language over telephone, via internet, or through frequent travel. Pan-Indian religious practices and pan-Indian festivals are featured together mostly because of the portrayal of Indian culture through Hinduism. The behaviors involving spirituality and Indian history also represent Hindu culture.

Finally, the family, community, and organizations provide the resources to maintain a unified Indian identity. Ethnic organizations and local communities facilitate the public display of pan-Indian RSPs. Both home and private gatherings provide immigrants the resources to engage in pan-Indian practices such as music and dance, films, home-cooked food, gendered-behaviors, etc. The availability of resources such as literature on immigrants, *desi* films, DVDs, and CDs, and transnational contacts help first-generation Indian immigrants to engage in pan-ethnic RSPs both at home and in public.

The data clearly show that the pan-ethnic RSPs are high in rank. They are salient, repetitive, homologous, and typically are supported by both human and non-human resources.

Table 3. Highly Ranked Pan-ethnic RSPs practiced by First-generation Asian Indian Immigrants

	RSPs	Percent of First-generation Indian Immigrants (out of 31 respondents)
Pan-ethnic RSPs	Religious Practices	58
	Popular Cultural Practices	100
	Practices demonstrating Pan-Indian Values	87
	Transnational Practices	100

The Rank of Host Ritualized Symbolic Practices

71 percent (22 out of 31) of respondents suggest that they engage in various kinds of American ritualized behaviors (including food, clothing, cultural festivals, recreational activities, and so on). They are an important part of their immigrant life in the U.S. Data indicate that American cultural festivals exhibit a high degree of salience. 32 percent (11 out of 31) of them state that American festivals such as Thanksgiving and Christmas (Christmas is widely celebrated in India) are important to them. Meera (female, 48 years) stresses that American festivals are very important. She explains in an excited tone why American festivals are important to her:

> I LOVE Christmas, I LOVE Thanksgiving and everything is very important to me because I think since he [her son] is growing up in this country, it's a privilege. It's a privilege to do all these things with him so that he will also feel that he belongs here also. It's not always my thing, my thing, my thing (voice raised), but for me I do everything, I do thanksgiving at my house. I do Christmas. When he was young we always used to get Christmas tree. I had to do all the work, but I did….because it is…I think, that's the exposure I am giving it to him since he is growing up in this country. In Christmas…depends who is doing it…if I do it in my house; I do it totally in American way, totally American way…

Bimal (male, 53 years), married to an American, discussed how his cultural identity changes according to the situation. While regional-Indian religious and cultural events are important to him, at the same time he celebrates American festivals in "American ways." He says: "…all the American festivals [are very important]…we celebrate…so…Easter, thanksgiving, Christmas…big deal…" Naren (male, 64 years) emphasized that he participates in "selective" American celebrations. He doesn't allow his children to participate in an event which "doesn't mean anything", but thinks that "everybody should celebrate Christmas…so…umm…so…4th of July this country got its independence and it is no different than celebrating Aug 15th (India's Independence Day)

January 26th (India's Republic Day)...same thing…" The celebrations of patriotism help him to oscillate between an American identity and an Indian identity. Vidya (female, 30+ years) reports that she has started Thanksgiving celebrations at home "because those things [American festivals] are important growing up here…" She invites friends who are primarily Indians and cooks "authentic" American meals. She feels the need to follow dominant cultural expectations and to "assimilate" in the dominant culture. Therefore, it is not only in public that immigrants are following the dominant society's norms, but it has also entered the private lives of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants.

However, almost every Hindu Indian immigrant parent indicated that they engage in the festivals of the dominant society "because it's important for [their] kids to know that they belong here in a addition to belong to India…so, we made sure they do Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, as much as they do Indian festival" (Saliesh, male, 40+ years). This comment is indicative of the kinds of answers given by first-generation Indian immigrants to the question about participation in American festivals.

The data suggest that Indian cultural beliefs and practices are dynamic and have evolved. The changing definition of "Indianness" was articulated by Anita (female, 42 years) and Manasi (female, 49 years) who celebrate American culture with Indian cultural elements. Both of them wear Indian clothes in Christmas parties and Thanksgiving dinner and serve Indian food even when they are with American friends. For Kavita, an Indian Christian, food involved an adjustment when she celebrates Christmas or Thanksgiving with American friends. When I asked about the preparation of Thanksgiving food when she invites her American friends, she chuckles: " [A] lot of times we do it in American way…the typical Thanksgiving…we bring the Turkey

and…[I] make the Turkey taste Indian (laughs)…Yeah…We do that…people love it…you have to only tone it down…" Navin (male, 58 years) celebrates Thanksgiving at home "within being vegetarian" and takes part in Christmas gift exchanges because "others do it." His family started Thanksgiving celebrations when his children were young and have continued the same. Aruna (female, 72 years) said that her family's Thanksgiving dinner is the oldest among Indian families in town and everyone talks about their party. She organizes a potluck style dinner and everyone brings vegetarian food. She also attends Christmas at a friend's house. The participants who are vegetarians indicate that their dietary restrictions don't allow them to consume the traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Except for five participants, others put up a Christmas tree at home, but said that they "don't do the religious part." Kavita mentions how she adjusts to American rituals being an Indian Christian:

> Christmas…back home you know, we used to have services. Even Good Friday we used to have Holiday, but here you know, it's not holiday. So, those are important days, you know…being Christian…[I] go to church, you know. But here they don't have services on Good Friday and at first it was hard for me. It's very strange. Here our Indian community…among Indian community…the Christian community is so small…may be in [bigger cities]…

Four participants stated that American festivals are not important for them. Sadhana told me that they celebrate American festivals now, but never celebrated Christian festivals when their children were young because "[she] wanted to raise them knowing that was not a part of our [Hindu] festival, you know, that was not one of the festivals…so, I wanted them to be really raised with the tradition…" Sapna (female, 40+ years) also notes that the celebration of Thanksgiving and Christmas is more "symbolic" and she participates "passively." Her family "won't put up a Christmas tree or

anything…but…umm…we will do something. We will use the tree in the house to put a gift under it…you know…"

American cultural practices including dietary practices, recreational activities, and clothing possess higher degree of salience for a few participants in this study. 12 percent (4 out of 31) of participants suggested how important it is to them to follow American cultural behaviors that are different from Indian culture such as drinking beer with friends and family, cooking food without Indian spices to avoid the smell in their house and clothes, and dating following American rules. However, that doesn't mean they don't engage in regional RSPs and/or pan-ethnic RSPs to affirm their ties with their ethnic group.

The respondents in this study are economically successful and uphold the model-minority image. Their professional achievements and more secure economic condition help them to be part of the mainstream and acculturate. Kapil mentions that over the years the importance of celebrating American festivals has increased. Kapil, Pramod, and Ravi said that their friends are mostly Americans and therefore, it is important to act in American ways. For Samir (male, 40+ years), it is the professional requirement to follow American culture in terms of food and dress. He comments that the host society's cultural activities are important to him because they help him to "assimilate" in American society:

> People do come to America…take the benefits of the American system whether its education, whether its schooling…But, they still want to be as if they are living in India…I find that very hypocritical…And…Do you want the kid to be raised as an American? Of course…Indian values have to be there…

Vidya also expressed the need to "assimilate" in American society. Vidya (female, 30+ years) and Pramod (male, 48 years) talked in detail about how they adhere to American values of hard work, honesty, and discipline. Thus, Indian immigrants' assimilation as

model minorities or structural integration in American society contributes to high degree of salience of ritualized host cultural activities.[27]

A few male participants explained that exercise and sports such as racket ball, basketball, and tennis are the important activities that they have learned after migration. Respondents also indicate that like Americans they engage in several recreational activities such as such frequent travelling, long-drives and road trips, hiking, and camping. Kapil (male, 42 years) laughed aloud before elaborating on how he started taking dancing lessons: "I did nothing for the first 40 years of my life…and…umm…I think, like most Indians of my generation think, you know, that [men] cannot dance… and I started learning dancing more as a social activity…my friends would go and…it's being very enjoyable… it took about a year to come to the point where…Now I don't care what people would think…"

Five respondents said that they love American foods such as steak, hamburger, and pizza. As Kapil (male, 42 years) said "…I mean I like Indian food but doesn't necessarily have to be Indian food…umm…I…I can enjoy a good steak…umm…you know, as much as anybody else. In fact that's one of my favorite foods…" In regard to the question about the importance of American or other ethnic food, Rani (female, 51 years) smiles and answered: "Oh!!…that must be very common to all the Indians (laughs)…Taco Bell…wherever you find…umm…vegetarians…beans…umm…and beans, cheese, salad or pizza…umm…or Chinese or Thai…that's our favorite Thai…because you know, it's spicy…for our taste…laughs little…we like it…" 80 percent (25 out of 31) of respondents said Asian food and/or Mexican foods are important food choices outside the home, given the similarities with Indian food, i.e., "something

with rice and curry." A few participants also occasionally make Thai, Chinese, or Mexican foods at home. I tasted home-made Thai food at one participant's home.

In this worth mentioning that wearing western clothing is highly prominent activity of the Indian male immigrants. 97 percent (30 out of 31) of male respondents reported that they always wear Western clothes even in India. Therefore, clothing was never an adjustment for them. Four female participants indicate that they behave in American ways when they go out with American friends. In particular, all of them suggest that they dress like Americans when they "go out." Three participants also said that it is important for them show their community participation in American society. They engage in interfaith organizations, take an active role in their children's school activities, and help organize camps. On occasion, female participants display Indian culture in their children's schools. Thereby, by sharing their culture with mainstream Americans first-generation Indian immigrants adapt to the host society (Dhingra 2012). Even though all the respondents are either American citizens or permanent residents, only two respondents stated that they are American in the cultural sense too. They maintain Indian values, but also practice American culture and are the "only non-whites in rodeo shows." Therefore, "with regard to being American, first generation Indians are clearly operating within complex, multiple, situational, and gendered spheres of identity" (Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2012:55).

Secondly, the host ritualized practices the participants engage in are moderate to high repetitive behaviors. The participants, who said that the host society's festivals and celebrations are important to them organize these events in their homes or attend the events at friends' houses once a year. 64 percent (20 out of 31) of participants indicate

that though American festivals are not important to them, they organize or attend them once a year. As mentioned earlier, 97 percent (30 out of 31) of participants indicate that everyday breakfast is comprised of American food. 32 percent (10 out of 31) of respondents play sports or exercise regularly, and/or frequently engage in mainstream community activities. 39 percent (12 out of 31) of participants listen to news and/or read mainstream American newspapers and magazines everyday. As Aruna (female, 72 years) mentions: "…I am very involved in the American politics (smiles)…."

Third, host RSPs are usually practiced in tandem with the pan-ethnic ritualized behaviors and indicate moderate to high degree of homologousness. Gopal (male, 52 years) suggested that he replicates the ritualized practice of *seva* or selfless service to the poor and suffering, a concept rooted in Hinduism, by routinely participating in the rituals of civic engagement predominant in the host society (Brettell and Reed-Danahey 2012). He says:

> [I]n a village environment [in India] people always lived in a very close as a community. As a kid, you….you are always encouraged to do some kind of services, you know….[Here, in the U.S., I participate] in a charity service…So, mobile meal is one kind of program there [in the U.S. town]… It was so satisfying you know, being a part of a society you know, being able to really help them…

Two other respondents indicated that they are involved in "charity" programs with the Hindu temple as well as in the mainstream society. The value of social responsibility in the U.S. is homologous with the pan-Hindu ideology of *seva*. Ravi (male, 56 years) explains that how playing golf with Americans is similar in meaning and form with his experience of playing cricket back home: In response to the importance of golf as a ritualized behavior, he says:

> …Why do I play golf? Basically, in India, when we grew up, I used to play cricket a lot and the camaraderie I had…and it was funny that I had a lot of

> friends built around cricket and then I had a whole team of relatives who would just play cricket and we all had a team to ourselves, so there was this connection…brother-brother connection was kind of a deal…So, it took me a while, but only when I came to [this state], I found this one big group of people who are… who all play golf and we have this incredible connection with each other…they welcome me…and I feel the same way I feel about them [Indian friends and relatives] as I do with my…when I grew up…so that's just been great for me…just been great…

Fourth, the participants do not necessarily celebrate American festivals with their American friends; rather most of them celebrate American festivals with their Indian friends. As Priya (female, 35 years) said she misses Thanksgiving celebration with her Indian friends. Therefore, both host society and Indian community provide high degree of resources to engage in host ritualized activities.

Summary

Analyzed in accordance with the four factors salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and resources – the above discussion shows that mainstream RSPs such as food, dress, festivals, recreational activities, sports, and civic engagements are highly ranked or important behaviors of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants.

Table 4. Highly Ranked Host Ritualized Symbolic Practices engaged in by First-generation Asian Indian Immigrants

	RSPs	Percent of First-generation Indian Immigrants (out of 31 respondents)
Host RSPs	Festivals	32
	Sports and Community Services	32
	Music and reading newspapers/magazines	39
	Food (Breakfast)	97

Formation of Multi-Ritual Identity: Assessment, Judgment, and Decision

Evidence from the study indicates that all three dimensions of ritualized behaviors – regional-ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs – are present in the ethnic identity situation. Pan-ethnic ritualized practices (i.e., pan-Indian religious practices, popular cultural practices, food-based behaviors, behaviors involving Indian values, history and spirituality, and transnational practices) are higher in rank than the other two dimensions of RSPs. Pan-ethnic RSPs are followed in importance by regional-ethnic ritualized behaviors (i.e., food, language, regional cultural and religious practices). These are primarily private activities and are performed occasionally in regional-Indian community gatherings. Finally, host ritualized activities (i.e., festivals and celebrations, food, values and norms, sports and recreational activities) exhibit less salience, repetitiveness, homologousness, and use of resources than the two dimensions of ritualized behaviors.

SRT argues that the higher the rank of an RSP in a social milieu, (i.e., ethnic identity situation), the greater the impact on the cognitions and behaviors of actors. The dominant ritualized behaviors provide the meanings that immigrants use to construct cognitive schemas. These schemas provide the analytic lens to interpret and create their identity.

In the process of ethnic identity construction, at first, actors are engaged in the process of *assessment*. They are aware of the different dimensions and the importance of the ritualized practices and their expected behaviors. The respondents in the study are engaged in the process of *assessment* that helps them to identify the three dimensions of highly ranked ritualized behaviors that they perform in various social settings. The array

of highly ranked ritualized behaviors explains the standardized meanings of rituals. That is to say, Indian immigrants recognize and interpret the shared and collective meanings of the dominant ritualized behaviors.

Second, ethnic agents engage in the process of *judgment*. Actors actively choose what meanings of RSPs they will identify with. Actors select ritualized behaviors in accordance with the symbolic meanings attached to the important RSPs to form their identity. The respondents show that whether or are not they consciously aware of the meanings of dominant rituals, they can subtly influence their choices about ritualized behaviors they want to identify with.

As the analysis of the rank of RSPs indicates first-generation immigrants constantly negotiate with multiple rituals. Respondents described how they choose from an array of dominant ritualized behaviors that help in forming their ethnic identity. For instance, Vidya (female, 30+ years) describes how she has adapted to the changes in the timing, style, and content of Hindu regional festivals. She says "…one thing that struck me is everything here is a weekend story when I initially came to this country…but right now I have adjusted to that pretty well..." The choice of her ritualized behaviors such as regional-Indian festivals, food, dance, and music are influenced by her pre-migration experiences. She also celebrates two festivals in her U.S. home, that is, Diwali, the most prominent Hindu Indian festival in the U.S. and Thanksgiving, a popular American festival. The participants, Sagar (male, 35+ years), Krishnan (male, 50 years), and Alok (male, 64 years) say that they wished to follow Indian pre-migration practices in the U.S., but with "less [limited] opportunities" present in the adopted society; they participate only in pan-Indian or regional-Indian community activities. Anindo (male, 48 years) and

Meera (female, 47 years) feel that they had to "create opportunities" to continue participating in the regional-Indian festivals and performing music, dance, and theatre in the community. A few participants, speaking about the changes in their cultural practices, said that U.S. provides more opportunities to participate in pan-Indian festivals.

Naresh's (male, 64 years) identification of himself as an ambassador of Indian culture is derived from pan-Hindu values and practices. He thinks that ritualized behaviors involving Hinduism help him to create his distinct identity in the U.S. Whereas for Kavita (female, 51 years), a non-Hindu, the emphasis on Indian immigrants' Hindu religious practices in the U.S., forces her to befriend Americans. Even when some male respondents stressed their model-minority status and social networks with American friends or culturally "assimilated" Indian friends, it is still important for them to maintain transnational ties, engage in regional-Indian and pan-Indian ritualized behaviors. Manasi (female, 49 years), who identifies as an ambassador of Indian culture and an active participant of the pan-Indian community, thinks that she practices different rituals "depending on the situation and depending on where you [she] are at….It's so subtle that we don't even pay attention to it. I may have community involved in India, but in a different way and the focus has shifted here." Manasi's response about the choice of ritualized behaviors sums up the contextual nature of the ritualized practices and the selection of rituals in accordance with their symbolic meanings.

Finally, they make decisions on how to use rituals that help them to define who they are. Again these rituals involve regional- and pan-ethnic ritualized practices and host/mainstream ritualized practices. As they make decision involving the formation of ethnic identity actors use three types of decisional strategies.

First, in this study 55 percent (17 out 31) of respondents indicated that they form what I refer to as a *segregated-hierarchal* strategy for constructing a multi-ritual ethnic identity. Here, one or more ritualized behaviors are more important than the other(s) for defining one's ethnic identity. Gopal (male, 52 years) explains how the pan-Indian ritualized behaviors such as transnational ties with his family and community and cultural activities help him to identify as an Indian. Rohit (male, 50+ years), on the other hand, believes that his everyday behaviors such as eating regional-Indian food and listening to Bollywood music define him as an Indian.

More precisely, 29 percent (9 out of 31) of respondents indicate that pan-Indian practices involving pride in Indian culture (i.e., Hindu spirituality, history, morals, values, parenting, and higher education and achievement) shape their Indian identity. All of them discussed the practices that make them different from Americans and how the practices reflect Indian high culture. The decisions to define themselves in terms of pan-Indian culture show the dominance of pan-ethnic RSPs. For example, Naren (male, 64 years) explains how pan-Hindu/Indian values and practices define him as Indian:

> …What are the values that …umm….I got from my parents…umm…what are the values that my country stands for…umm…what is…umm…what is it that I can bring from our culture that would enrich this culture here [in the United States]…okay…Those are the values that I need to keep… music is one way of doing that…understanding of our spiritual heritage and being able to explain it that's another way of doing that. You know, people say Hindus worship all these gods. We don't worship all these gods. We worship one God… non-violence for example is very Indian value…umm…non-prejudicial…that's a very Indian value…umm…umm….The words that comes out our Vedas and why it comes out…those are Indian values…umm…You have to label it as such but if you can explain to somebody why you are a vegetarian that's an Indian value…you know…umm…umm…You can bring to the people…so…that sort of thing…umm …making them [Americans/Christians] understand we don't worship the whole lot of Gods. There is only one God…yeah…So, being truthful that's and Indian…very Indian thing. Because we have been brought up to think that there is a theory that your *karma* that says that if you do something wrong,

> you will pay for it…okay… which is in contrast to this culture. Here it says, if you do something wrong either you go confess it or understand that if your accept Jesus Christ, and then all your sins are forgiven. We don't believe in that…Nothing is forgiven…you know… (chuckles). A lot of my friends…when my kids were growing up…we had a rule, whatever is on the table you eat that…If you don't like it it's your choice…you can go hungry…but…I see a lot of the parents here I was growing up with if their kids want to go and get a hamburger they will go get a hamburger. Not in my house. And, when the kids grow up why they become so westernized. Where were you when they needed it? You were stressing the wrong things…

So too Kumar (male, 64 years) describes how pan-Indian Hindu culture involving yoga, classical music, and Hindu scriptures define his Indian identity. By practicing Hinduism, first-generation Asian Indian immigrants create a separate "superior" culture to counter their minority status (Kurien 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005). In this regard, Kumar notes how Hindu culture has been accepted by the mainstream "….Hindu ideas or Indian ideas have already transformed America in a fundamental way…You know, you look at yoga for example, for even food, vegetarianism and so many other things…" Indian superior culture is also defined in terms of educational achievement and transmitting morals and values to the second-generation. This also indicates to some that Indian culture is better than western/American culture.

Two male participants also expressed their distinctiveness through regional-ethnic behaviors involving language, clothing, literature, music, and norms. As one participant explains, "[the] notion of Indianhood is very much regionalistic…" And, both of them discuss the importance of regional Indian values and practices that are different from pan-Indian identity involving Hindu beliefs, the quest for materialistic possessions, and popular Indian cultural forms like Bollywood.

Indeed, first-generation immigrants remain engaged in pan and regional ethnic practices in spite of their economic achievements. Participants think that these ritualized

practices define their distinct ethnic identity, despite America's racial categorization. As Rani (female, 51 years) replied with a smile, "…I look Indian (laughs)…I don't really do anything special which will identify me as an Indian…Whatever I do, is Indian..." Manasi (female, 49 years) has decorated her house with Indian artifacts, curtains, pillows, and maintains ties with her family and friends back home, but the most important practice is community involvement. She is the carrier of Indian culture, which is expressed through pan-Indian community participation and civic engagements in the host/mainstream society. She says: "…Like 9/11 stuff…Everyone was…Oh! My Gosh! The way we are going and how we are going. I want my child to play a role in saying. We are not somebody you have to be scared of. The local Muslim neighbor we have is okay to be…you know, around and stuff like that. So, I think, in terms of larger changes and understanding of social structures I think, community involvement is very important…" The reason for her to express a pan-Indian identity can be understood in terms of phenotypical characteristics of a country where "race matters." Sucheta (female, 50+ years) also discussed how both regional- and pan-Indian cultural practices involving wearing Indian clothes and *bindi* (the dot on the forehead), decorating with Indian artifacts, idols of gods and goddess, the use of tiled floor instead of a carpet and *rangoli* (decorative design made on the floor), food, and "habits and thinking" define her as Indian. Then she quickly added she allows her daughters to participate in American and other ethnic festivals, "…but I stick within my boundaries, in the sense, I will not eat non-veg food. I will not do what is not acceptable…." Their Indian identity is important because "you cannot be American." For her, both regional-Indian practices and pan-Indian practices are equally significant and carry similar meanings. These remarks clearly

indicate that racialization can be crucial for the formation of ethnic identity (Purkayastha 2005).

To fight racialization as foreigners, three male participants have adopted the strategy of selective assimilation. This process of assimilation has helped first-generation Indian immigrants to maintain their sense of being a "superior" culture of economic and educational success, which provides them the status of a model-minority. They maintain frequent transnational ties, involving both pan-Indian and regional Indian RSPs, but identify as Americans because of their highly successful model-minority status. One of them explains why he is American, "People do come to America…take the benefits of the American system whether it's education, whether it's schooling…This country becomes stronger when people assimilate in this country…it's when…you came here because it is a better country…You can do more things… but…when you come here and you still want to stay where [you came from], you are not successful…" All of them endorse their ethnic identity while being comfortably situated with their middle-class identity as "margins in the mainstream" (Kurien 2005; Purkayastha 2005; Dhingra 2007).

References to various forms of pan-Indian and regional-Indian ritual practices defining their identity are constantly negotiated. The importance of multiple dimensions of rituals in the ethnic identity situation helps create varied ways of thinking about their ethnic identities. The decision to form a hierarchical multi-ritual ethnic identity allows first-generation immigrants to develop salient ethnic schemas that help them to define how they are distinct from others. The schema (or cognitive representation) of how they are similar to and different from others varies as the rank of the rituals change in accordance with the situation.

Second, while some respondents create a segregated-hierarchical multi-ritual identity, other individuals employ a *segregated-integrated* strategy to construct the ethnic identity. These respondents indicate that they engage in multiple dimensions of ritualized behaviors that are separate, but combine various dimensions of certain ritualized behaviors in their daily practices. That means the initial practices are not static; they integrate or synthesize the meanings and ranks of different RSPs. Note how some immigrants combined the meanings of different dimensions of ritualized practices involving, for example, the American norm of dating with the Indian norm of parental involvement, serving Indian food and wearing Indian clothes on Thanksgiving and an mainstream community events, and so on. The way the meanings of dominant ritualized behaviors are synthesized together in their ritual-ethnic identity schemas, show how ethnic identity is malleable.

19 percent (6 out 31) of respondents suggested that they form what is referred to as a *segregated-integrated* ritual-ethnic identity. Aruna (female, 72 years) says that she maintains pan-Indian and regional-Indian practices at home and in public. She follows American values and norms when at work, but always carries her Indian identity and wears her Indian style gold nose pin. She explains how both racial and ethnic differences are questioned in the mainstream even when she follows American norms in public:

> I wear a *nauth* (Indian style gold nose pin). Today I took it off because I have to go out somewhere…otherwise I will wear. Most of the time, they [people] ask you where are you from and I don't think with or without I look different at all. They would know who I am (smiles). And, they [people at her work place] are always shocked…how come you speak English so well. I said, I spoke English since I was 4 years old …(laughs)…right? However, [I thought] my children might…umm…umm…sometimes [my children] got upset…oh!…their mother is different looking. [My daughter] herself wore it for many years….and…then…umm…when she was doing some job, and people there asked her to take it out…they said…she looks too exotic….and then…umm…and

> that might be distracting. So, she came and she was upset about that…she said…I should have the freedom to do what I want to…you know, I said, but you are growing [at work] and then why do you want to disadvantage yourself…okay…it's not a big deal…so, she took it off…

Aruna does not abandon her ethnic/racial behaviors in the mainstream; rather ritualized practices involving jewelry and clothing are integrated with one other to form her ethnic-identity.

Similarly, Sapna (female, 40+ years) is engaged in regional-Indian, pan-Indian, and host ritualized activities. She has "completely adapted to the American ways" and maintains "…[her] Indian values…" as well. She explains:

> I don't have any qualms about saying that I am originally from India….that I am Hindu…umm…I do let them [non-Hindus] know to make it a point that I am not Christian. I have maintained my Indian identity to a degree but not so much that it interferes with my American lifestyle. I want to adapt their (American) good things and I want to keep my original (Indian) good things and blend it all and present myself… like I said, if I am at an Indian event, I am totally part of that, but if I am in my day-to-day life because my interaction is always with Americans, I am truly an American…

Her "blended" ethnic identity clearly indicates how she interprets her identity through various ritualized practices instead of choosing one over the other. Bimal (male, 53 years) also talked about adapting the "best of both worlds." He listens to Bollywood music "all the time" on his i-pod, plays cricket, and has a "lotta" collection of Hindi movies. He believes that his town does not offer many opportunities to express an ethnic life which is not "California or New Jersey." In describing his "desi" practices in his everyday American life he said:

> …It is easy to challenge to retain some degree of cultural identity, yet mesh with American life…Yes…because you have to work at it. It's overwhelming in the…umm…in the environment…It allows you to integrate seamlessly with the…with the America culture…pause…but…keep a little bit of India somewhere in there…You have to work at it….

Similarly, Anita (female, 42 years) states that she does not limit regional-Indian and pan-Indian practices in private; rather she expresses multiple dimensions rituals in both the public and private spheres:

> One major thing is the clothes I wear…I try to wear Indian [clothes] even if I am having a Christmas party at home and I have people from here over. But I try to keep some [north and east] Indian food as well…and of course everyone enjoys it. That way I can identify myself as an Indian… although they have come for Christmas and they may be Christians, but they can enjoy and at the same time we can maintain our own identity… Definitely we really hold stuff like *Durga pujo, Saraswati pujo* [Regional-Indian religious festivals] really important. So…I think, those things really help to…(pause)…make yourself felt that you are [Indian]… …You know like we live in a small place where …Of course there are more Indians now than before...like my daughter did an Indian dance. It was the first time anyone did an Indian dance in the school and it was really appreciated…but…I think, these are things which have you know, like, you know you make yourself identified as an Indian and at the same time you are not standing out. Yeah…we like…as a…(pause)…umm…I am with the school PTO…so…once we…we usually do 2 or 3 lunches in the year for the teachers and there are quite a few of us…Indian moms in the school. So…so…once we did a Indian themed lunch for the teachers with table decoration in Indian style and everything and like things like that. I think people appreciate it…

In forming a segregated-integrated multi-ritual ethnic identity respondents define their identity on the basis of multiple dominant ethnic schemas that may hold different or conflicting meanings. It is important to note that even with the use of diverse and different ethnic schemas, immigrants make sense of, synthesize, and express differences through ritualized behaviors in a way that show how they have adapted to the American society. An ethnic identity based on all three dimensions of highly ranked practices, regional-Indian RSPs such as food or regional-ethnic religious practices, pan-Indian or *desi* behaviors such as Bollywood movies and music, clothes, fashion, and religious practices, and host ritualized behaviors involving for instance civic engagements and values and norms of American society, allow first-generation immigrants to negotiate diverse rituals to create an integrated, yet distinct ethnic identity.

Third, in forming a *strategic ritual-ethnic identity*, immigrants selectively use RSPs from any of the three dimensions for the purpose of creating an ethnic identity. 23 percent (7 out of 31) of the respondents indicate that in the process of constructing a strategic ritual-ethnic identity, they perform ritualized behaviors of the host society, but select the rituals in a way that create, accentuate, or reproduce certain ethnic behaviors.

For example, Kavita (female, 51 years) thinks that pan-Indian values and practices involving women's role in society, are more important than the other dimensions of ritualized behaviors. She describes how she redefines the meanings of Indian value attached to Indian clothing when she puts on western clothes. She says:

> …I am still Indian …you know…I made some adjustments after coming here. I didn't do things before I am doing…umm…It comes to even dressing up, you know. I am more conservative in my dressing because…you know, I am not used to…You know, what I am saying…umm…I am not used to even wearing sleeveless [tops/blouse]. So, that's something I never done back home and here also I don't do it…not that I am against people doing it (chuckles). It's my choice, you know… kind of wearing you know low neck…[I am] not used to that. Wearing even short skirts, I cannot do that…pants is okay. As long as I am fully covered I am okay…(laughs). We [Indians] still the [value] modesty …

Respondents who define their ethnic identity through practices involving a vegetarian diet, a pre-migration behavior, strategically chose their distinct food-based behaviors. Most of the participants who are vegetarians indicate that they do not eat out because less vegetarian food options exist in town. Saliesh (male, 40+ years) talks about the importance of cooking vegetables and meat separately, following Brahminical Hinduism:

> …I prefer to go to a place where they make special accommodations for vegetarians….like…umm…not touching the meat with the vegetables. Right? Some Italian restaurants here, they kind of take good care of you. Thai restaurants…they have this vegan option. Right choice(s) are there; they even make it really separate and they kind of take good care of me. That's what I think…

These narratives show how Indian ritualized behaviors help create an ethnic identity even when first-generation immigrants engage much of the time in the host ritualized behaviors. Respondents enact distinctive ethnic-ritual behaviors in the host society, as they strategically construct their identity.

The three types of strategies and their use by respondents are summarized in the following table.

Table 5. Three Types of Decision Making Strategies in the Formation of Multi-ritual Ethnic Identity

Types of Multi-ritual Ethnic Identity	Percent of First-generation Immigrants (out of 31 respondents)
Segregated-hierarchical	58
Segregated-integrated	19
Strategic	23

In closing, this discussion has focused on the formation of multi-ritual ethnic identity. I suggest that first-generation Asian Indian immigrants assess, i.e., identify ethnically relevant RSPs and their ranks, judge and activate salient ritual-ethnic schemas, and then make decisions about using these dominant ritualized behaviors to create an ethnic identity. While the three types of decision making strategies are conceptually distinct, in reality immigrants oftentimes construct an ethnic identity following several of these types. In other words, immigrants can use cognitive strategies to create an ethnic identity in more than one way depending on the importance of ritualized behaviors in various domains of interaction. Overall, the formation of ritual-ethnic identities of first-generation Asian Indians in the U.S. signifies the importance of retaining and celebrating

local/regional Indian behaviors, creating pan-Indian behaviors, and participating in host ritualized activities.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Contributions to the Research

The intent and purpose of the study was to address the role of ritualized symbolic practices, involving regional-ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs, in the ethnic identity formation of first-generation Asian Indian immigrants in the Southern Plains regions of the U.S. The analytical framework of structural ritualization theory provided a means to critically examine the influence of important ritualized symbolic behaviors in the cognitions of first-generation immigrants which help them to create a ritualized ethnic identity. This micro-sociological (i.e., social psychological) analysis of ethnic identity formation provides an in-depth understanding of how immigrants retain their pre-migration behaviors, negotiate with their post-migration ethnic behaviors, and adapt to the behaviors of the host society as they form a multi-ritual ethnic identity.

Structural ritualization theory defines RSPs as regular or routine activities that are symbolically grounded. That means, RSPs are different from casual or habitual behaviors because ritual activities are defined and shaped by symbolic themes, or in other words,

they involve cognitions and meanings. This study examines three types of ritualized symbolic practices: regional-ethnic RSPs, pan-ethnic RSPs, and host RSPs. For Indian immigrants, regional-ethnic RSPs, such as the use of ancestral language and the preparation and eating of their food are highly ranked ritualized behaviors that recreate their pre-migration experiences. Even with the frequent use of the English language, immigrants speak in their native tongue at home and often pass it down to the second-generation. Furthermore, transnational family and community ties, frequent travel, and the media are helping the first-generation to retain their native langue. First-generation Indian immigrants celebrate their regional ethnicity at the dinner table. Food based on regional-Indian origin is prepared and eaten almost every night and more on weekends. The meaning of regional-Indian food is not restricted to "authentic" food of the region of origin, rather food with similar cooking ingredients are also included in their dietary habits. That means the immigrants also re-interpret the meanings attached to local/regional-Indian food.

Pan-ethnic RSPs are the most important behaviors that are created and negotiated, given the linguistic, religious, caste, and cultural diversity among Indians. Results indicate that first-generation Indian immigrants recreate the meanings of a unitary Indian identity by engaging in pan-Hindu ritualized behaviors, popular cultural practices, pan-Indian practices involving values, norms, history, spirituality, vegetarianism and so on, and transnational practices. The immigrants engage in both public and private expressions of pan-Hindu practices by attending temples and religious events, learning Hindu scriptures, music, and dance. Popular cultural practices, such as the music, dance, movies based on Bollywood and classical Indian music and dance (predominantly tied

with Hinduism), are the important ritualized behaviors that provide a sense of connection with the homeland. The celebration of Diwali, a Hindu festival, is also an important marker of pan-Indian identity. The practices involving values of parenting and family, spirituality and yoga, a vegetarian diet and the belief in peace, and education are important ritualized behaviors that project the superiority of Indian culture over American culture. This claim of superiority of culture over others (in the host society) allows first-generation Indian immigrants to see themselves as the model-minorities in the U.S. Finally, transnational connections with families, friends, communities, and organizations help to create a sense of cultural ties across borders. These common practices make it easier for first-generation immigrants to come together in the mainstream society as one group.

Host ritualized behaviors involving food, cultural festivals, and civic engagements are important practices, but most of the immigrants carry their ethnicity even when they participate in the mainstream. For example, they are not "ethnic others" in their everyday breakfasts and lunches, but it is important to them to celebrate the in "otherness" through food and women's apparel during American festivals. Indian immigrants follow American norms and values and participate in mainstream community activities, but they also share their distinctive culture with the host society.

These highly ranked practices have a great impact on the cognitions and behaviors of immigrants. Dominant ritualized behaviors provide meanings for constructing multiple ethnic schemas. These schemas help immigrants to evaluate their behaviors and, then, make decisions for constructing one or more of three types of multi-ritual ethnic identities – segregated-hierarchical, segregated-integrated, and strategic.

Highly ranked pan-Indian practices are the most prevalent behaviors, indicating the superiority of Indian culture, such as its values for parenting, the family, spirituality, morals, higher education and achievement. They help construct a segregated-hierarchical ritual-ethnic identity. Indian immigrants also construct segregated-hierarchical identity by engaging in both pan-Indian popular cultural practices and regional-Indian practices that show their distinctive cultures to the larger Indian community and to the mainstream/host society.

In forming a segregated-integrated ethnic identity, immigrants not only separate their ritualized behaviors, but combine the meanings of certain RSPs in their everyday life. In particular, Indian women encounter the differing or conflicting meanings of multiple dimensions of RSPs and create a separate, yet synthesized version of ritual-ethnic identity.

Immigrants also strategically engage in host ritualized activities such as cooking and eating vegetarian food and wearing "modest" western clothes. Women for instance often do so in order to reproduce certain Indian values and experiences.

Stated somewhat differently, findings indicate that in the process of ethnic identity formation, first-generation Indian immigrants negotiate with their distinctive pan-Indian cultural practices that separate them from the others, retain and alter their regional-Indian cultural practices to celebrate their internal cultural variations, and bring their ethnicity into the mainstream/host society through selective pan and/or regional-ethnic ritualized practices.

In carrying out this analysis, I would like to stress that social (religious, political, and cultural) and structural factors (economic conditions, demographic changes, and

political developments) influence the situational and fluid qualities of first-generation immigrants' identities. But what I also suggest is that ritualized behaviors are an integral part of ethnic communities such as these. Social and structural factors certainly helps provide meanings to ritualized behaviors. What this study explicitly identifies are the actions, interactions, and socio-cognitive processes of the immigrants involving three dimensions of ritualized processes in the formation of ethnic identity and, more generally, social life.

In recent years, sociological studies on ethnicity have increasingly focused on a social constructionist perspective in explaining ethnic group behaviors and identity as fluid, emergent, and situational. This study is in a certain way consistent with such a perspective, given the contention that the ranks of the three dimensions of RSPs are changeable in various situations and the emphasis on actors' interpretation, choice, and decisions to create different forms of ethnic identity. Of course, in the present study, more specific attention has been given to the various decision making strategies involved in the development of the ritualized dimensions of ethnic identity. In doing this, broader concerns are also highlighted dealing with the ways that ritualized activities and decision making contribute to the structuring of culturally distinct and diverse identities and their integration in the mainstream society while maintaining ethnic ties.

This study draws upon and contributes to social psychology and its study of identity. It specifies in detail the socio-cognitive processes (e.g. assessment, judgment, and decisions) that operate in ethnic identity. This study incorporates ethnicity into identity formation and identifies processes and adds rituals to the study of these issues.

With a focus on less researched Indian immigrants, compared to the ones more extensively researched; this study enhances our empirical knowledge about a dispersed Asian Indian community in the Southern Plains region of the U.S. Such communities have received little, to no attention, by researchers. At the same time this research provides a theoretical basis for understanding multi-ritual identity. As such this study involves empirical and theoretical study of first-generation Asian Indian Immigrants. Multi-ritual ethnic identity is not, however, exclusively rooted in Indian ethnic identity; rather it can include other ethnic groups who claim multiple ethnoracial identities.

The approach taken here emphasizes the key role of rituals in the structuring of social behavior. Thus, SRT helps us to analyze the complex ethnic identity formation of Asian Indian Immigrants which often goes unaddressed in research on this topic. Therefore, the analytic potential of this perspective expands our ability to understand identity construction not just within Asian Indian Immigrants experiences in particular but other ethnic groups as well.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

There are limitations to this study. Generalizability continues to be criticized in qualitative research because thirty one first-generation Asian Indian immigrants may not represent the entire population of first-generation Indian immigrants in the U.S. (or for that matter even in the Southern Plains region). While this sample may be too small to generalize the findings to all Indian immigrants, this research provides an information-rich case which describes the experiences of Indian immigrants that readers can relate to and then determine whether the findings can be transferred to other groups with similar characteristics (Creswell 2007).

Moreover, some of the interviews took place in Bengali, while several others were bilingual. Even with a clear presentation of questions in English; some meanings were not clear to interviewees. However, I have used thick descriptions of the data to ensure that interpretations were consistent with the data.

Also, analyzing oral data from religious and social events of the Indian immigrant communities could have added richness to my study; however, I left them out of my primary data to keep the data source consistent and more or less homogenous.

The respondents in this study live in sparsely populated Asian Indian communities in the Southern Plains regions of the U.S. Because of the limited logistics available, i.e., finance and time, this study examines an immigrant population in cities and towns that have more visible Asian Indian population.

I have also considered "ideal" Indian minorities with higher education and income. If the study had included less successful and/or lesser educated first-generation Indian immigrants, it would have explored other dimensions of ritualized behaviors and actors' choices and decisions.

As mentioned earlier, this study considers first-generation Indian immigrants (post-1965) who are either citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. In subsequent research and theory development, it would be useful to conduct studies on how ritualized behaviors help in the ethnic identity formation of second-generation Asian Indians and Indian immigrants in the U.S. who are on temporary work visa (an H1B or work permit that has to be renewed after three years, and is valid for a maximum of six years) or dependent visa.

Based upon the above findings, I would like to explore how ritualized ethnic identity formation is gendered, i.e., how gender differences influence meanings and use of ritualized behaviors in the formation of ritual-ethnic identity. While comparing different first-generation Asian Indian immigrant groups was not the intent of the study, in the future. I would also like to conduct a historical comparative analysis of other Asian Indian groups (or non-Indian groups) either in the same or different regions of the U.S. It should be possible to determine whether these groups have followed the same patterns, such as actors' making similar choices and engaging in similar rituals to form an ethnic identity. Future research also might address whether or to what degree ritualized practices reinforce a communal orientation, i.e., the effect of rituals on community formation. Finally, future research could be conducted to ascertain how Indian immigrants' position as a racial minority and hostility in the host society influence their ritualized behaviors which in turn affect their ethno-racial identity formation.

NOTES

1. First-generation Asian Indian Americans in this study refer to post-1965 immigrants who are either citizens or lawful permanent residents of the U.S.

2. Punjab is a butterfly-shaped region located in the northwest portion of South Asia bordering India and Pakistan. The people from Punjab are known as Punjabis. They have a distinct language and culture.

3. Indian and Asian Indian are used simultaneously to refer to immigrants from India. Indians are referred to as Asian Indians in America. This term helps to avoid confusion of identifying Asian Indians with Native Americans, where the latter are popularly known as Indians in everyday vocabulary.

4. A person who follows Sikhism. Sikhism was offshoot of Hinduism, a religious and military protest against Muslim rule in Punjab (Horowitz 1975).

5. Gujarat has the longest coastline of any Indian state, has supported trading and business traditions since ancient times. People from Gujarat are known as Gujaratis and speak Gujarati language. Gujarati emigration to the U.S. expanded rapidly after the 1965-legislation changes. The central district Kheda was densely populated, but highly educated because of American influence and involvement in the Universities. In the U.S. they are mainly into business of motel, real estate, and retail trades. They are by tradition religious people who maintain a prominent worship center at homes and support Hindu

and Jain temples. Both Punjab and Gujarat has returnee enclaves and encourages emigrant investment.

Kerala is a small coast located in the south-west coast of India. People from Kerala are known as Keralites and they speak Malayalam language. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India and Keralite women are more noticeable in medicine and nursing profession in the U.S. In Kerala about one-fourth of the population are Christian.

Tamil Nadu is extreme Southeastern portion of Indian Peninsula and also the forth state to become hub in the U.S. Tamils speak Tamil language which is one of India's ancient languages. Much of ancient Tamil culture is still alive in the form of Carnatic music, Bharat Natyam dance form, and folk music.

Bengal is located in eastern part of India joining Bangladesh and India. They are known as Bengalis. British divided Bengal in religious line, majority Hindus were located in West Bengal, India and East Pakistan (later changed to Bangladesh in 1971 with its independence from Pakistan) became Muslim country. Unlike Punjabis, British depicted Bengalis and people from south India as weak, effeminate Hindus which Americans adhered (Rotter 1994). However, most Bengali migrants in the U.S. hail from families working in the service sector and are highly educated. In this study Bengali refers to people who trace their origin in Indian state of West Bengal (Ray 2004).

6. Hindu is a person who follows Hinduism and a Muslim is a person who follows Islam.

7. Caste is a system of stratification found is India. This system of stratification is usually rigid, birth-ascribed, permitting of no individual mobility, and ranked aggregates of people (Berreman 1960). Caste is also defined as a hierarchy of endogamous groups, organized by division of labor.

8. Pandit Jahawarlal Nehru was an Indian nationalist leader and statesman who became the first prime minister of independent India in 1947. He held the post until his death in 1964 (BBC history).

9. Bhangra music traditionally involves three instruments: the dhol and dholki (drums) and the thumri (a stringed instrument). The lyrics traditionally celebrate the beauty of Punjab, village life, and women (Maira 2002).

10. Desi literally means "one from the country" or "of the homeland." The term can be applied to people or the culture originating from the countries in South Asia: India, Pakistan, Srilanka, Bangladesh, or Maldives (Niyogi 2010).

11. Diwali (also known as festival of lights) and Dussehra are Hindu festivals.

12. Studies include slave societies on plantations (Knottnerus, 1999), informal student groups in a school (Knottnerus and Van de Poel-Knottnerus 1999), problem-solving task groups within a formal organization (Sell, Knottnerus, Ellison, and Mundt 2000), Spartan youth in an institutionalized training system (Knottnerus and Berry, 2002), elite class golfers of late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Varner and Knottnerus, 2002), and urban educated upper and middle class women NGO volunteers within patriarchal Indian system (Mitra and Knottnerus 2008). Structural ritualization theory has also been used to issues of race and ethnicity (Knottnerus 1999; Guan and Knottnerus 1999; Guan and Knottnerus 2003; LoConto and Knottnerus 2003; Knottnerus, Van Delinder, and Wolynetz 2002; Knottnerus, Van Delinder, and Edwards 2011).

13. Domains of interaction refer to a bounded social arena containing two or more actors. These actors at least for some time interact face-to-face. RSPs may be influenced by single or multiple domains of interaction.

14. Before the collection of interview data I attended several prayer meetings, held in a small town, to build rapport with Asian Indian immigrants and to get aware of their community activities. Preliminary data are derived from a religious congregation which I will call “The Prayer Meeting”.

15. Gujarati are people from the state of Gujarat, India. Gujarat is the longest coastline of any Indian state, has supported trading and business tradition since ancient times. People from Gujarat are known as Gujaratis and speak Gujarati language. Gujarati emigration to the U.S. expanded rapidly after the 1965-legislation changes. The central district Kheda was densely populated, but highly educated because of American influence and involvement in the Universities. In the U.S. they are mainly into business of motel, real estate, and retail trades. They are by tradition religious people who maintain a prominent worship center at homes and support Hindu and Jain temples.

16. Bengalis are people from the state of West Bengal. People of Bangladesh are also Bengalis. But for this study we will consider Bengalis of West Bengal, India. Bengal is located in eastern part of India joining Bangladesh and India. British divided Bengal in religious line, majority Hindus were located in West Bengal, India and East Pakistan (later changed to Bangladesh in 1971 with its independence from Pakistan) became Muslim country. Unlike Punjabis, British depicted Bengalis and people from south India as weak, effeminate Hindus which Americans adhered (Rotter 1994). However, most Bengali migrants in the U.S. hail from families working in the service sector and are highly educated. In this study Bengali refers to people who trace their origin in Indian state of West Bengal (Ray 2004).

17. Dhoti-punjabi, kurta are traditional dress of India. However, styles and patterns of dhoti-punjabi and kurta differ from state to state. Author particularly refers to the traditional Bengali style of Dhoti-punjabi, kurta.

18. Sari/ saree is a length of cloth draped around the body, worn by women in India (and also in Nepal and Sri-Lanka). Saris are found in different varieties of silk and cotton. The style, material, patterns, and ways of draping saris differ from one region to the other. Usually saris are 5.5 to 6 yards in length and worn over a short/ long blouse and matching long flared skirt.

19. Subscribing to the religion of Jainism that predates Buddhism in its challenge to Brahminical orthodoxy of the first millennium BC (Iyer 1999:104). Historically, Jain-Hindu did not have religio-ethnic conflict like Hindu-Muslim or Hindu-Sikh.

20. "Akram Vijnan Community" within Jainism worships Dada Bhagvan. This community follows Akram Vijnan Marg, which was a highly innovative religious movement founded by Ambalal Muljibhai Patel. They believe in the efficacy of the practice of *jana bhakti* (the magical acquisition of salvific knowledge through devotional surrender to its source). This community differs from traditional Jainism where their main focus is on spiritual devotion. They consider Dada Bhagvan or the disciplines A. M. Patel of as the grandfather lord, who has realized his inner ultimate self. This cult was first developed in Bombay (King and Brockington 2005: 198).

21. Lord Mahāvīra is the founder of Jain religious teachings. "Shiva Ratri" is a Hindu religious festival. On this day Hindus worship Lord Shiva. "Karva Chauth" is one of the more popular religious festivals and fasts kept by the wife to pray for the long life of her

husband, a practice widespread in the whole of present-day Punjab and most of Uttar Pradesh (Chowdhury 1990:263).

22. Traditionally, Dandiya and Garba are celebrations of the state of Gujarat, India.

23. Author describes desi films as, movies created by and/or for South Asian immigrants, capable of reaching large numbers of people regardless of their educational level, economic status, or linguistic proficiency. Most are produced in English or with English subtitles and are easily accessible in most areas, either in theatres, video rental stores, libraries, or via Internet movie sites (Sharma 2011:127). Bollywood refers to Indian Hindi Film Industry, named after Hollywood.

24. In this study, I have used diaspora synonymously with transnationalism.

25. See Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov (2004) for a discussion on ethnicity and schema.

26. See Roth (2012) for a discussion on racial schemas.

27. Structural integration defined as a type of integration that is marked by one's level of access to economic and educational opportunities (Purkayastha 2005; Bhatia 2008).

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APPENDIX I

INDIA

APPENDIX II

U.S. POPULATION OF INDIAN DESCENT

Year	Number of Immigrants
1820	1
1830	8
1840	39
1850	36
1860	43
1870	69
1880	163
1890	269
1900	68
1910	4713
1920	2082
1930	1886
1940	496
1950	1761
1960	1973
1965	2602
1970	27,859
1980	164,134
1990	815,447
2000	1,332,691
2010	2,843,391

Courtsey: Mukhi 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau. Until 1947, India included the areas that are now in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

1. Tell me briefly about yourself.
2. From your childhood memory in India, how did you participate in cultural practices, ceremonies, religious practices?
3. Do you find any changes in your cultural practices, ceremonies, religious practices in U.S.A from India? Please explain.

II. RITUAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY ISSUES

1. Do you think knowledge of mother tongue is important in the U.S.A? Please explain.
    a. What language(s) are spoken at home?
2. What is your preferable language of communication when you meet Indian? (probe for regional, pan-Indian languages).
3. What does your everyday diet consist of? (probe for regional food, non-vegetarian

    food, vegetarian food, American food).

4. How important is ethnic food in your diet? Please explain.
    a. How often shop for Indian groceries? From where do you get the items?
5. How important is ethnic clothing to you? Please explain.

6. Tell me about the importance of your own religious practice in the U.S.A? (probe for the language(s) used during religious practice, ethnic clothing, and food during religious practice).
    a. How often do you visit temples/attend religious meetings/religious festivals?
7. How important are Indian books (in content and author) to you? Please explain (probe for language and author).[both fiction and non-fiction books] (how many newspapers? Name them). *Is this only limited to Indian newspaper?*
    a. How often do you read non-Indian (in content and author) books?
8. How important is Indian entertainment media (television channels, movies, radios) to you? (probe for regional and Hindi movies, television channels, radios)
    a. How often do you watch/listen to non-Indian entertainment media?
    b. How often do you read news? (probe for regional, pan-Indian, host or diasporic websites and their subscriptions, if any)
9. How do you remit money/send gifts to your family in India (probe for regional, pan-Indian, diasporic, and host media/websites)?
    a. How often do you remit money/send gifts to your family?
10. What kind of recreational/leisure-time activities you engage in? How often do you engage in recreational activities? (probe for unique, regional, pan-Indian, host recreational activities)

11. In what ways your personal cultural practices differ from practices in group? Please explain. (Is there any difference in cultural practices you do at your home and in a group?)
12. Can you tell me how you feel (what's your opinion) about the dating practices in the choice of marriage partners?
    a. Do you get involved in the choice of your son's or daughter's dating/marriage partner? (if participants' have children)
    b. How important is your involvement in the choice of your children's dating/marriage partner (probe for caste, regional ties, pan-Indian characteristics such as occupation, education)
13. How important is to you to celebrate/ participate in any non-Indian holiday/festival

    such as Thanksgiving, Black Friday, Christmas, New Years Eve, 4th of July,

    Halloween, St. Patrick's Day etc.?

14. What are the cultural practices you engage in that make you identify as an Indian?
15. On what basis do you choose the rituals/the cultural practices? Please explain.
16. How do you decide on the cultural practices you are going to use? Please explain.
    a. Are all the cultural practices you engage in (including at your home here in U.S.) equally important to you? Why?
    b. What is (are) the most important practice? Please explain why?

c. Are you engaged in any new cultural practice in the U.S. which is not practiced in India?

17. Is there anything else you think is important you want to tell me about your cultural practices?

III. GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Religion
5. Region of origin
6. Mother tongue
7. Level of education
8. Occupation/source of income
9. Income level
10. Immigration status
11. Duration of stay in the U.S.A
12. How often do you visit India?

APPENDIX IV

IRB APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Friday, February 10, 2012
IRB Application No	AS1213
Proposal Title:	Multi-Ritual Ethnic Identity: An Analysis of First-Generation Asian Indian Americans
Reviewed and Processed as:	Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/9/2013

Principal Investigator(s):

Basudhara Sen
73 S. Univ. Place Apt. 3
Stillwater, OK 74075

David Knottnerus
413 Murray
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia H. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX V

SCRIPT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS FACE-TO-FACE

SCRIPT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS FACE-TO-FACE

I am Jhumi (Basudhara Sen), pursuing PhD in Sociology in Oklahoma State University.

I am doing doctoral research on cultural practices/rituals of first-generation Asian Indian Americans. First-generation Asian Indian Americans are defined as immigrants from India arrived in the US after 1965 who are either permanent residents or citizens of the U.S.A. Therefore, you are eligible to participate in the research project.

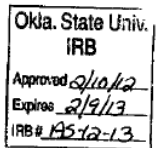
The purpose of the research is to gather opinions of Asian Indian Americans like you about how do cultural practices you are engaged in help you to identify as an Indian.

I am asking you to volunteer in the interview that is audio recorded. The interview will take place in your home, office, or other convenient location. The expected duration of the interview is 1 hour.

The tapes and written notes will be in my possession in a locked file cabinet in my office. The audiotapes and written notes will be accessed only by me. Your name will not be connected to any of the information you provide during the interview. I will use numerical identifiers instead of names. The tapes will be destroyed immediately after they have been transcribed and reviewed. Although there are no planned follow up procedures, I may contact you for clarification if necessary. I will maintain the contact information in a locked file cabinet separate from that holding my audio-recorded and transcript materials. I am the only person who will have access to the contact information. The contact information will be destroyed immediately after transcription. In reporting my data, direct quotes may be used from the interviews to illustrate points but they will not be attributed to any specific person. No information provided by respondents will be able to be linked to any particular individual.

This research is expected to contribute in understanding the construction of ethnic identity of Asian Indian community residing in the Southern Plains region of the United States.

Would you be willing to participate in an interview?



APPENDIX VI

SCRIPT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS VIA PHONE

SCRIPT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS VIA PHONE

I am Jhumi (Basudhara Sen), pursuing PhD in Sociology in Oklahoma State University.

I am doing doctoral research on cultural practices/rituals of first-generation Asian Indian Americans. First-generation Asian Indian Americans are defined as immigrants from India arrived in the US after 1965 who are either permanent residents or citizens of the U.S.A. Therefore, you are eligible to participate in the research project.

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This research is expected to contribute in understanding the construction of ethnic identity of Asian Indian community residing in the Southern Plains region of the United States.

Would you be willing to participate in an interview with me?

APPENDIX VII

SCRIPT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS VIA E-MAIL

SCRIPT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS VIA E-MAIL

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Basudhara Sen (Jhumi), pursuing PhD in Sociology in Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.

This is regarding my doctoral research on cultural practices/rituals of first-generation Asian Indian Americans. First-generation Asian Indian Americans are defined as post-1965 immigrants from India who are either permanent residents or citizens of the U.S.A.

The purpose of the research is to gather opinions of Asian Indian Americans about the cultural practices they are engaged in that help them to identify as Indians.

You are asked to volunteer in the interview that is audio recorded. The interview will take place in your home, office, or other convenient location. The expected duration of the interview is 1 hour.

The tapes and written notes will be in my possession in a locked file cabinet in my office. The audiotapes and written notes will be accessed only by me. Your name will not be connected to any of the information you provide during the interview. I will use numerical identifiers instead of names. The tapes will be destroyed immediately after they have been transcribed and reviewed. Although there are no planned follow up procedures, I may contact you for clarification if necessary. I will maintain the contact information in a locked file cabinet separate from that holding my audio-recorded and transcript materials. I am the only person who will have access to the contact information. The contact information will be destroyed immediately after transcription. In reporting my data, direct quotes may be used from the interviews to illustrate points but they will not be attributed to any specific person. No information provided by respondents will be able to be linked to any particular individual.

This research is expected to contribute in understanding the construction of ethnic identity of Asian Indian community residing in the Southern Plains region of the United States.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to me and we can set up a time to talk.

Thank you.

Regards,
Basudhara (Jhumi)
405-334-7393

APPENDIX VIII

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Multi-Ritual Ethnic Identity: An Analysis of First-Generation Asian Indian Americans

Investigators:

Basudhara Sen (Jhumi), MA, Department of Sociology, Oklahoma State University.
J. David Knottnerus, PhD, Department of Sociology, Oklahoma State University.

Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to gather your opinions on your participation and involvement in cultural practices/rituals as an Asian Indian American. You have been asked to participate because you are a post-1965 first-generation Asian Indian immigrant from India who is either a permanent resident or a citizen of the U.S.A.

Procedures:

I will conduct a one on one interview with you that will take approximately 1 hour. The interview will be audio-taped and written notes will be taken on your responses. You will be asked to answer questions regarding your opinions and experiences about:

- the ways you engage in cultural practices as Asian Indian American,
- the ways your personal cultural practices are different from your engagement in cultural practices in groups,
- how important is it for you to celebrate American or non-Indian culture,
- and your opinion about the cultural practices that help you identify as an Indian.

Although there are no planned follow up procedures, I may contact you for clarification if necessary. I will maintain the contact information in a locked file cabinet separate from that holding my audio-recorded and transcript materials. I am the only person who will have access to the contact information. The contact information will be destroyed immediately after transcription. This is anticipated to occur by December 2012.

Risks of Participation:

There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

The benefit from participating in this research is that you will get to give your opinions about a very important topic pertaining to Asian Indian Americans residing in the Southern Plains region of the United States.

Confidentiality:

The tapes and written notes will be in my possession in a locked file cabinet. The audiotapes and written notes will be accessed only by me. Your name will not be connected to any of the information you provide during the interview. I will use

numerical identifiers instead of names. The tapes will be destroyed immediately after they have been transcribed and reviewed. This is anticipated to occur by December 2012. The notes and transcriptions will remain in a locked cabinet file until the conclusion of my research and then be destroyed. Although there are no planned follow up procedures, I may contact you for clarification if necessary. I will maintain the contact information in a locked file cabinet separate from that holding my audio-recorded and transcript materials. I am the only person who will have access to the contact information. The contact information will be destroyed immediately after transcription. This is anticipated to occur by December 2012. In reporting my data, direct quotes may be used from the interviews to illustrate points but they will not be attributed to any specific person. No information provided by respondents will be able to be linked to any particular individual.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

Compensation:

Participants will not receive any compensation in exchange for participation.

Contacts:

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer or want to discuss your participation in this study, please contact the following:

- Basudhara Sen (Jhumi), Department of Sociology, 431 Murray, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-334-7393
- Dr. J. David Knottnerus, Department of Sociology, 431 Murray, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-6105

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may also contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:

Your participation is voluntary there is no penalty for refusal to participate. Please feel free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project any time, without any penalty.

Signatures:

VITA

Basudhara Sen

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION AND RITUAL DYNAMICS: AN ANALYSIS OF FIRST-GENERATION ASIAN INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE SOUTHERN PLAINS REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Biographical: Born in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, on May 26, 1982, daughter of Alpana Sen and Arup Sankar Sen.

Education: Graduated from Carmel High School, Kolkata, India in 2000; received Bachelors of Arts in Sociology (Honors) from Presidency College, Kolkata in 2003; received Masters of Arts in Sociology from University of Calcutta, Kolkata in 2005; completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2013.

Experience: Worked as Graduate Teaching Associate in the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State University since 2008; part-time lecturer at Vidyasagar School of Social W ork in Kolkata, India; employed by Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, India; worked in various non-governmental organizations in Kolkata, India.

Professional Memberships: Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) International Honor Society for Sociology, USA; Golden Key International Honor Society; Mid-South Sociological Association (MSSA); Southern Sociological Society (SSS); American Sociological Association (ASA)