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Negotiating Identity Among Second-Generation Indian Americans: A Collaborative Ethnography

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I. Introduction

How much of your identity is determined by your ethnicity?

> "Its hard to say…there's a little of it everywhere through things I do on a daily basis. I want to say it's 50 percent personality, 50 percent in my daily habits. I have it incorporated in everything." --Zarah, Second-Generation Indian American

> "Well I guess since I moved here at like such an odd age, like I wasn't born here, but I was raised here [and] I feel like a lot of my identity is just a mesh of things." –Nive, first-generation Indian American since age 12.

Do you feel that your culture differs from your parents' culture?

> "I have a lot of different cultural influences on me growing up rather than just in India. Just especially from what I hear about my parents' culture. It's a lot different here from when they were growing up." –Ravi, second-generation Indian American

Identity provides a narrative for the self. It is a process that informs one's perception of reality. Identity is not a final state of being but is rather a fluid process with shifting borders and cognitive boundaries. For some second-generation Indian Americans, ethnic identity is a small part of how they conceptualize the self; for others, being second-generation Indian American is very significant in their everyday lives. As children of immigrants in the U.S., second-generation Indian Americans have constructed a culture distinct from both their parents' culture and broader American or Indian culture. Within this newer second-generation Indian American culture lie multiple subcultures that are experienced and negotiated by the individual. This study is meant to challenge the notion of ethnic identity as fixed or bounded and to suggest that ethnic identity is not a final state; it is not fixed or immobile, but is a mode of identification that is being constantly shaped both by the individual and by society. With the collaborative nature of

this study comes an effort to allow participants to shape the project's research questions. In an increasingly globalized world, it is necessary to critically examine the categories in which we (social science researchers) place people and to conceptualize identity as a process rather than a fixed essence. Concepts like *assimilation* and *multiculturalism* can be used to better understand what it means to be second-generation Indian American but only if they are used tentatively and questioned as necessary.

The Indian community in the U.S. is a diasporic population that emphasizes maintaining communities and homes that help define the local as a distinctive community (Clifford 1994). Inspired by the work of Clifford (1994), Hannerz (1990), Ghosh (1989), and others, I explore how Indian Americans in Atlanta connect to others to form their own identities, or narratives of self. I define identity not as one's distinctness from others but rather as one's connection to others and how one works to define these. In this introductory chapter, I address negative stereotypes about Indian Americans in an effort to highlight how U.S. culture sometimes marginalizes this group and to suggest that one's identity is partially determined by the internalization of these notions. However, ethnic identity can be determined by a combination of exposure to racism, one's family and socioeconomic background and both intra- and interethnic interactions, as I discuss in greater depth below.

Profile of Research Population

The Indian population in the U.S. is currently the fastest growing of all Asian American groups. According to Sahay (2009), immigration into the United States from India in 2005, as recorded by the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services), was approximately 2.3 million, in contrast to only 815,000 in 1990 (Sahay 2009: 159). Part of the recent influx of these groups

is thought to be a result of the H-1B holders and their families who have helped stimulate economy for the last several years (Indian American Center for Political Awareness). In 2004, Atlanta ranked 12th in the highest concentration of Indians (IACPA). Many metropolitan areas throughout the country have provided Indians with interactions with American communities that have brought them great personal and financial success. Generally, educational achievement among Indian Americans is high (see U.S. Census 2000: "Educational Attainment" graph; U.S. Census 2005).

Stereotypes and Marginalization in the U.S.:

Study Participants in Conversation with the Literature

Indian Americans often face racial ambiguity when dealing with a majority white population. Sinha (2004) states that many Indians feel the South Asian category does not usually fit into American categories of race: Asian, Black, White, or Hispanic. Racial ambiguity can marginalize groups of people because it seems that in the U.S., one needs a distinct category to be understood. This suggests American culture's anxiety and discomfort about racial Others that do not fit the white/black dichotomy. Indeed, it is possible that this dichotomy is at least partially to blame for the fact that South Asians in the United States – fitting into neither side of the dichotomy – have received so little attention to date in the social science literature (see Shankar and Srikanth 1998). People of Arab descent in the U.S. are one such group that is now a notable target for discrimination perhaps due in part to a broader American anxiety about those who do not fit easily into the white/black binary. One Indian Comedy Tour comedian (2010) talks about being in airports where airport security officials will ask him what time it is 'just to hear his accent' and supposedly to verify whether or not he is Middle Eastern. Now, he says, he

tries to mess with the security officials by using a fake 'foreign' accent to confuse them. In this way, he uses their ignorance to his advantage.

For Indian Americans, the current scholarly literature focuses largely on the marginalization of the individual in school settings, the perceived differences between "European Americans" and "Asian Americans," and Asian Americans' supposedly vulnerable position vis-à-vis the "black-white" discourse of the U.S. (See Ng, Lee and Pak 2007, Lei 1998, Jo 2004; Thus, Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Furthermore, literature merges groups of South Asian Americans with other Asian Americans, lumping large cultural groups together despite major differences between South and East Asian cultures and ethnic identification (Purkayastha 2005). South Asian Americans' position in U.S. society is often problematized as a group that is victimized or *marginalized* by other majority groups (Ng, Lee and Pak 2007). "Cast outside the periphery of normalcy," Asian Americans are seen as victims of fear and are not recognized for other cultural adaptations (Ng, Lee and Pak 2007: 95). It must be noted, however, that Indian Americans transgress these dominant meanings and create newer identities through their everyday lives.

Abboud and Kim (2005) state that members of a racialized group can come to internalize the myths about cultural difference themselves without examining the larger structural formations of how racism is lived in the everyday (Abboud and Kim, as cited in Ng et. al. 2007). However, it must be noted that not *all* Asian Americans feel racialized in a negative way. The interviewees with whom I spoke, for instance, did not indicate that cultural differences between themselves and their European American peers made them feel victimized as the literature would predict. In fact, none of the participants were familiar with the phrase 'model minority,' but upon my brief explanation of my understanding of the phrase, they were familiar with the

stereotypic representations (perceived as both positive and negative) of Indian Americans and other Asian American groups by broader American culture. The second-generationer's identity as Indian American is reflected in part in dominant cultural representations, and this must be taken into account to understand identity.

It has been suggested by scholars that among Desi communities, wealth is a topic of intense conversation (see Shankar 2008). According to some reports (e.g., American Enterprise Institute 2009, U.S. Census 2010), Indians are the most financially successful 'minority' group in the U.S. However, many attribute their economic success not to how much money they make but rather to how much money they save. Indian frugality is a widely heard stereotype among both Indian Americans and non-Indian Americans. Ravi, a second-generation Indian American attending college in Atlanta, mentioned that many of the arguments he had with his father growing up were about money. His father wanted him to save money, while Ravi wanted to spend his money like the other college kids his age on "being social." In fact, most Indian Americans are well aware of their stereotype of choosing careers based solely off of how much money he/she will make. One first-generation Indian American comedian on the Indian Comedy Tour (2010) jokingly stated, "The other day I told my grandmother that I've decided to become a prostitute. She said, 'How much money you going to make per trick?' and I replied, 'Ten thousand dollars.' She told me, 'Good job. Happy screwing.'" Other stereotypes of Desis include that of being 'cheap.' All five comedians (all of Indian American ethnicity) on the Indian Comedy Tour mentioned this: "Indians only go out to restaurants if they need napkins" or "Every Indian family knows that when the soap dispenser gets really low that instead of buying a new one your dad or mom just fills it with water, shakes it, and sets it back on the counter." The point of mentioning these jokes is not to legitimize what Indians and non-Indians say about

Desis, but rather to point out that the stereotypes are widely recognized and negotiated among Indian Americans themselves.

In *Suburban Sahibs* (2003), Kalita confesses that she belongs to the very group she studies ethnographically. Her father emigrated from India to New York City in 1971, where he did temp work at Citibank. Then, her father was transferred to Puerto Rico, and then to New Jersey, where she grew up. Her family was the only nonwhite family in her area. Her non-Indian peers talked about "IFS" or Indian Food Smell, and she and her siblings made an effort to mask the smell of her home before friends came over. She also talks about her personal experiences. She discusses her embarrassment when her parents would show up in full Indian sarongs at her school functions growing up. She secretly wanted them to wear dresses and suits like the other parents at her school. Other instances of anxiety regarding perceived marginalization were expressed by some of my participants. In my study, Ravi mentioned that he was embarrassed to speak Hindi in high school around non-Indians and would evade those who did to avoid stigmatization:

> *Did you ever speak Hindi at school, like what did that mean for you and your friends?*
>
> Not really…I tried to stay away from people who spoke Hindi because it was like a sign of them…just coming from India. And so I differentiated myself from--my friends were [Indian Americans] whereas not just Indians, because [in] my group of friends, those Indians were kind of stigmatized. Because…I guess it was like we thought they were embarrassing or something. And I guess now it's not like that for me like I like to meet Indians as well is Indian Americans, but at that time with my peer group, it was like, 'They're so funny, they're still wearing Indian clothes to school, and they're speaking in Hindi, they're obnoxious and embarrassing.' And so like I tried to…not associate with them as much.
>
> *How was it embarrassing? Were you afraid of being judged? By whom?*

> … I guess by other peers. People at school. You know people bully and make fun of people…non-Indians. Like other people in my class….and other Indian Americans.

Kalita (2003) continues to talk about what she experienced growing up in an all-white neighborhood where she and her family eventually found a large South Asian community in the city in which they resided. Most Indians of her generation have heard themselves described as "ABCD" for American Born Confused Desi. She points out that her area's high school yearbook had over seven pages of graduating Patels alone. Today, a huge Navratri celebration is held every year in her hometown, and over 60,000 Indians pass through. According to Kalita (2003), some of the most common Indian immigrants include those from the states Punjab, Gujarat, Kamiataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu (Kalita 2003: 7). Kalita herself is Assamese (northeastern India). She notes that while community is found among South Asians in the U.S., caste, class or language often separates them. Kalita says that when she went to college, she re-discovered her own 'Indianness.' My participants felt a bit of a change when they went to college, as they were in contact with more people in general, and were able to connect with other Indians more easily. Ravi expressed this during ethnographic interviews: "[In college] I think that I started going to more…Indian parties…" However, Zarah expressed that she didn't feel any reconnection with her 'Indianness':

> …When I was in high school the overall Indian population in my school had grown significantly, to the point where there might be two or more Indians in the same class, whereas when I was much younger there was just me probably. So in that sense no, [going to college] hasn't made a huge difference. Because in high school a lot of the Indian kids used to hang together and it used to be an overall majority Indian group. With me it wasn't like that. I had the people I hung out with and then outside of that I also had my other friends because I took AP classes, and so we had them in classes. At

> the university level I still had my classmates and then I had my friends I'd meet at the mosque that I'd hang out with also. So it's pretty much the same still I would think.

I have found through doing ethnographic interviews that many young Indian Americans in the Atlanta area grew up in predominantly white areas with a small south Asian population, and for many, "Indian" identities were only expressed at home. But, when many of these young people went to college, their identities as Indian Americans were re-formulated. Many joined Indian student unions or religious organizations that gave them a new way of being Indian American. Others joined South Asian student groups, which contain a broader range of cultural backgrounds. By examining this commonality among second-generationers, I am attempting to show that Indian Americans have created a culture distinct from either "Indian" culture or broader, non-Indian "American" culture. However, it must be noted that experiences as being second-generation Indian American vary individually. I have therefore made an effort to gain input from participant-researchers, loaning out small video cameras as an effective way to allow individual experiences to shape the project's research questions (see Methods). I am deeply grateful to those who took out the time to speak with me regarding their experiences. As a result, I learned that negotiations of identity among Indian Americans and between Indian Americans and Indians are at least as important as the negotiation of mainstream stereotypes, as discussed in Chapter III below.

II. Methods

The overall methods of this project are rooted in the principles of collaboration and transparency. As a researcher who is studying a group outside of her primary culture, I wanted to make sure I made a positive effort to give my participants a voice in the project. I had immense difficulty in recruiting members for the study, partially due to recommendations of Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board regarding CITI training, discussed further below. I was aiming to have around six "participant-researchers" who would be loaned small video cameras to document their own lives, but I ended up having only one participant-researcher (whom I interviewed) and two other interviewees whom I personally interviewed. Ravi, the participant-researcher, was able to recruit others and interviewed four more people, including a friend, a cousin and his two parents. Below is a description of the project's basic procedures.

Ethnographic Interviews

Ethnographic interviews took place on the campus of Georgia State University. An exact location was coordinated with the participants, but they took place in a semi-private location in the Anthropology department. No one else was present for the interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted around 30 minutes. Fortunately, I was able to film the ethnographic interviews. If a particular participant didn't wish to be filmed, I had the option to use hand-written notes and/or audio recording devices to document the interviews. However, each participant I interviewed consented to be filmed and to use his or her real name in the study. I asked each participant prior to the start of the first interview question whether or not any audio or visual recording devices may be used, and he/she signed the informed consent form for

interviews. If a participant didn't wish to reveal his/her identity, I had the option to use pseudonyms to protect her/his identity. I also asked for some follow-up interviews with the participant-researcher, Ravi.

Self-Ethnography through Video

In collaboration with GSTV (Georgia State Television), I loaned out a small handheld video camera (similar to the popular Flip camera) for my participant-researcher, Ravi, to document his experiences in relation to being second-generation Indian American for approximately one month. The video camera was small in size and relatively unobtrusive, especially in comparison with more commonly used video equipment. These convenient video cameras can record up to two hours of footage on their internal memory card. The user can permanently delete any and all videos easily. As detailed on the informed consent form for video cameras, participants could delete any unwanted video clips from their cameras before returning their footage to me. As detailed on my informed consent form, all other returned data could be used at my discretion. I anticipated that people might film their interactions at home, at school and with their friends and would treat the camera like a 'video diary.' However, Ravi used the video camera to document interviews he had with his friend (also a second-generation Indian American) and with his parents. As a participant-researcher, he was given great creative control with the video camera in hopes of gathering information in a collaborative way. However, Ravi also had to follow the IRB guidelines, using my research question list as a guide when interviewing others *(See Appendix B for List of Research Questions).*

If a participant-researcher wanted to interview another person, such as a family member or friend, he/she was instructed to obtain written consent. I provided extra copies of the consent

forms for the interviewer to have available to distribute to anyone else he/she filmed. Such interviewees were fully informed about the nature of the project. If anyone was interviewed or featured in the footage that had not given the statement of consent on film, the footage in question was to be deleted and not used for this project. However, no circumstances like these arose.

The Blog

In addition to the traditional written thesis, I also created an interactive web site so that my data could be accessible not just to anthropologists but also to the rest of the academic community and the public. The blog contains videos (shot by myself or my primary research participant, of those people who gave consent to be filmed) that demonstrate points made in the written portion. Visitors were able to comment but there were limited comments overall. Further publicizing of the blog was achieved through Twitter. Through creating a visual project that is public from the very beginning, it was my goal to achieve transparency as a researcher and to increase visibility for the field of anthropology. Also, the blog site will remain a cultural artifact that can be easily shared and distributed. The web site currently located at: www.kellyshonorsthesis.wordpress.com and the Twitter username is #followmythesis.

Visual Component

After amassing data through ethnographic interviews, self-video documentation, and audio data, my plan was to create a short documentary. Ultimately, due to time constraints and recruiting challenges, it was not possible to complete a full stand alone ethnographic film. However, I have embedded short video clips into the digital thesis that is posted on the blog site,

still using the visual data collected to supplement the written thesis. All participants agreed to the use of their images and their real names in both the written thesis and the documentary footage. *(See Appendix A for Informed Consent Procedures.)*

Ethical Considerations

Anthropologists and documentary filmmakers have much in common, but perhaps most strikingly, they are both "professional intruders" on the lives they study (Shaefer and Furst 1996: 512). With the rise of new technologies in the global world today come new opportunities for anthropologists and documentarians. In gathering data, the ethnographer is no longer bound solely to pen or paper, nor to bulky recording devices. However, newer opportunities in the recording and sharing of ethnographic data through film bring about new ethical responsibilities. Because I have recorded my participants using *both* video and audio documentation, information is potentially more contextualized than it would be if it were simply written into a manuscript on a typewriter or computer. Furthermore, video can be made to be easily shared and available to non-anthropologists. It is in these two ways that film is of value to anthropologists and coincides with the guidelines expressed by the AAA. However, the very fact that video can be easily shared raises additional ethical dilemmas. With whom should the documentary be shared? How should the film be distributed? And, perhaps most importantly, *who needs this research?* (Zavisca 2006: 20). One should not create a film simply for the "exotic" or "other" qualities of his/her participants. At all times, the ethnographer should be able to answer with confidence and ethical sensitivity the questions aforementioned. There is an overall assumption that showing positive images of people unfamiliar to the audience will have a humanizing effect (Ruby 2005: 3). However, it has been pointed out by the infamous Martinez study (1992) that many of these

films may actually have the effect of reinforcing audiences' ethnocentric notions about "the other" (Ruby 2005: 3). In carrying out an ethnographic film project, one must consider the particular social/socio-political context in which the film is both viewed and distributed. For my project, I needed to explain to my participants in detail where and how their information would be used, and I provided on the blog site a disclaimer that states that the information provided is not meant to generalize the experiences of all Indian Americans.

Furthermore, we (anthropologists and filmmakers) must be cautious about using words like "subject" to refer to our research participants. I have been careful to use the word "participant" instead of "subject" throughout this prospectus to speak of persons involved in research. "Subject" denotes power the researcher may or may not have over his/her research participants. However, using "participant" to describe persons involved in research may be too passive, connoting a person's submissive integration into a research design. I have also contemplated utilizing "informant" to refer to research participants, but have concluded this connotes a hidden, covert operation that remains confined around the researcher and her/his colleagues. Perhaps there is another word that would better account for the contributions of persons studied in research. "Key research consultants" may be a fitting term to describe the roles of such persons, but this needs to be deliberated among research professionals across the disciplines. For example, "consultants" may imply too much passivity or imply that researchers are using their participants in an unfair manner. Language in all aspects of research, from implementation to informed consent protocols to the write-up has strength and power. In order for research to be useful and accessible to all, anthropologists and other researchers must learn and use language that is precise and inclusive.

By combining the footage from my own gaze and from the other participants' through

self-ethnography, I have used the gaze in such a way that mine is not the only frame of reference. This was be a more reflexive, holistic, and all-inclusive way to study a culture in order to include research participants in a more direct way. However, I do recognize that participants may not have had the same interest I did in the same subject matter. Still, perhaps this was a small way for them to at least feel more directly included in the research process. After all, research should ideally benefit the participants just as much as the researcher, and this is one way I became closer to becoming ethnographically holistic and reflexive. As per the regulations of the GSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), written data were to be stored on my home computer, away from the GSU campus under a password-protected file (as these are the normal regulations of the IRB so that confidentiality is less likely to be compromised). Most audio data were to be transcribed to create an easy way to analyze data. Video and audio data were to be analyzed for the purposes of the written thesis, but only those who have chosen to be identified would be identified with their real names. In all other cases, individuals were to be identified by pseudonym, or their experiences were to be discussed in group form. This issue did not come up when I conducted the study, however.

Collaborating with Participants, Cooperating with the IRB

Collaborative ethnography has been defined as:

> An approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process… [and it] invites commentary from our consultants and seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic text as it develops (Lassiter 2005, as cited in Rappaport 2008).

Collaborative ethnography in my project's context allows for *multilocality* and *multivocality* (Rodman 1992). Traditionally, the ethnographic locale in anthropology is fixed or immobile

(Foucault 1980). Space is a frame of reference that is locally produced. In returning the ethnographic gaze to the research subjects, I am perhaps "returning control of the meanings of 'place' to the rightful producers" (Rodman 1992: 644). Thus, the locale of my project escapes some of its fixedness, allowing the emic perspective to determine the project's locale. Now, in theory, the location and context of the project is more specific and more grounded in emic perspective. Participant-researchers are able to steer the project to include what they view as important within the context of the research questions, as they are able to take the video equipment into the places they view as important, such as their home, religious institution or hangouts. As Joanne Rappaport (2008) from Georgetown University, and others, have cited, "Collaboration is not only a moral choice for progressive ethnographers but a choice that makes for good ethnography" (Lassiter 2005, as cited in Rappaport 2008).

By allowing the participant-researchers to document their own lives, I facilitate a way for them to shape the context of the overall project. While the initial interview is seen through the gaze of the ethnographer (myself), the Flip video portion places part of the ethnographic gaze in the hands of the subject. The subject then becomes the 'participant-researcher' guided by the original research questions but empowered to present a more emic perspective. In documenting the experiences of the participant-researchers through self-ethnography through video, I was able to create a visual component that supplements the theory-laden written discourse of my thesis. My audience is less bound by the interests of academics in anthropology because they are supplemented with a visual narrative form with which they are more familiar: video.

However, in creating collaboration that hangs between disciplines (documentary film/journalism and anthropology), messy bureaucratic regulations and conflict arose. While some regulations for research involving human subjects may be necessary to maintain a

conscious awareness for the ethical treatment of human subjects, the rules provided by Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) have been an overall hindrance to the development and implementation of my project. The IRB protocol focuses too much on planning and foreseeing implausible ethical issues and does not allow enough room for flexibility, ongoing judgment, and engagement with research as projects develop. Furthermore, excessive, long-winded legalistic language in the informed consent templates they required me to follow created a hierarchical relationship between the participants and myself and encumbered my goal of creating a 'collaborative' ethnography. While Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations are motivated by an actual goal of protecting human subjects, at least some of their processes of evaluation and approval are part of an institution's self-representation (Bradburd 2006: 485).

The consent form is an institutional symbol in an existing cultural context (Shannon 2007). Its protocols and formalities may be interpreted differently in different cultural contexts. Plattner (2006) states that if academic researchers do not like the way the [IRB] regulations are applied, they must be actively engaged in designing appropriate review mechanisms suited to ethnographic research (Plattner 2006: 526). For my project, the faculty principal investigator (PI) and I made sure to allow flexibility in the research protocol, where possible. For instance, we listed that for recruitment of study participants I could recruit people by word of mouth, which allowed me some leeway to locate potential interviewees in informal, serendipitous ways. At the same time, as described below, IRB guidelines and our own efforts to anticipate IRB responses significantly limited our flexibility.

Bureaucracies perceive IRB protocols in the larger sense as objective, as methodological, as the 'ultimate' arbiter of ethical standards. Jennifer Shannon (2007) notes how "the

anticipation of review" shaped her research design on Native American groups (Brenneis 2005, cited in Shannon 2007). By requiring her participants to voice-record their consent during interviews instead of requiring them to sign informed consent forms, she provides an instance in which there is an opportunity to bring "the moment of ethnographic observation into the moment of bureaucratic participation" (Riles 2007, cited in Shannon 2007). She became engaged in bureaucratic participation with the IRB when she invoked reluctance of Indians to sign documents, thus bringing to light an identity of shared oppression by federal institutions. She asserts she performed an important recognizable act of ethical commitment in the eyes of the community (Shannon 2007). Her collaborative non-participatory reorientation of ethical research practice became an "unanticipated moment of analytical insight about the nature of a virtuous bureaucracy and its impact on fieldwork relations" (Shannon 2007: 235). She points out also that we are not only co-participants with our 'research subjects,' but also bearers of documents, institutional representatives, cosigners, and consent brokers (Shannon 2007: 237).

Because of my commitment during my undergraduate career to both anthropology and journalism, it was my intention to utilize skills acquired in both majors for my honors thesis. However, when working under both pretenses, I had to be sensitive to the fact that the disciplines do not fully recognize the value of the other's goals. Today, within the growing field of visual anthropology, questions are raised about the value of journalistic film to the field of anthropology: How does film fit into anthropological research? What power, if any, does it give the anthropologist over her/his 'subjects'? When and how should informed consent be used in project proposals and implementation? After all, a person's acknowledgement of the presence of a camera does not imply informed consent (Anderson and Benson 1988). These two separate but equal goals of 'telling the story' (journalism) and 'analyzing the data' (anthropology) can

provide a messy intersection when a theoretically simple project suddenly becomes a 'research study' under the watchful eye of the institution.

IRB protocol procedures and approval processes vary by institution. At some universities (like GSU), all disciplines are to report to a singular IRB. According to GSU's web site, current IRB members for the university include those from Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Education, and Economics, among others, but no one represents Anthropology directly. After presenting my thesis prospectus at this year's Southern Anthropological Society (SAS) conference, I was approached by a professor from Davidson College who was certain I should get a journalistic exemption for my project, and I wouldn't have to worry about strict IRB regulations because I was taking a journalistic approach. GSU's IRB protocol web site indeed states that research that is "Voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes" can be submitted for expedited review, but there is no such 'journalistic exemption' for any research project involving human subjects at Georgia State. When I submitted for this type of expedited review, however, I was sent a list of simple amendments (four points in total), and I was under the impression that these were all of the changes needed. The faculty PI and I made the changes and submitted the forms back to the IRB. Then, three weeks later, the IRB responded again and gave us a new list of changes to be made to the procedure. Perplexed, we e-mailed to see why. The response we received was the following:

> *Expedited studies are reviewed by two independent reviewers. Luckily this second reviewer caught several items that were not see[n] in the first review. The IRB office is always happy to help with suggestions. We are also open to hearing your solutions. In this case, the reviewer is correct that these videographers would be consenting and interviewing participants. You could have them CITI trained and listed on the application. With the small number, this could be an option. Otherwise, you could have the videographers only shoot places or situations in which people are not identifiable or*

in which there is not expectation of privacy.

The point of the project originally was to have participants film others (and get their oral consent on film). How was I expected to complete a written and visual thesis that focuses on personal experiences of being Indian American when "the expectation of privacy" is the number one priority? For the purposes of getting the project approved by the IRB quickly, the faculty PI and I even contemplated not allowing the participant-researchers to film others, but this did not contribute to the goal of giving the participant-researchers full creative control in a collaborative effort. In the end, the principal of collaboration took precedence over sacrificing the goals of the project for a speedy approval process. In order to film other people, the participant-researchers were required to undergo CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) training. The training process greatly inhibited the recruitment process, because I was up-front with people that the training process may take two hours to complete. This turned many busy students away from completing the Flip video portion of the project. Undergoing CITI training does not imply one will be ethical with research, and much of the information on the required course seemed irrelevant to my project. Again, it seems the university's bureaucratic self-representation is taking precedence over (the what should be) ongoing judgment of informed consent procedures.

Because of working under anthropology as my home base, however, I also had a responsibility to adhere to the guidelines provided by the American Anthropological Association regarding human subjects research. The American Anthropological Association's "Code of Ethics" outlines the purposes of anthropology and ethical obligations to which the anthropologist should adhere. The AAA points out that context is critical for ethical decision-making and that the anthropologist must inform fully his/her subjects about the possible impacts of their choices. Guidelines also arbitrate that consent should be initiated in the project design and continue via

dialogue and negotiation through the implementation of the project (AAA 1998: 3). Furthermore, in every research proposal, there should be a section raising and responding to potential ethical issues (AAA 1998: 3). Finally, the anthropologist should make research "appropriately available to non-anthropologists" and should make sure his/her information is properly contextualized (AAA 1998: 4). These guidelines are indeed useful and necessary for the anthropologist carrying out a research project, but they do not always correspond to the rules mandated by university institutional regulations for research involving human subjects. For example, Georgia State University's IRB approval process is an online procedure. They provide only a few templates for Informed Consent forms, regardless of the discipline or nature of the research. These templates provide for sections such as "Risks and Benefits." At first, I attempted to follow the Informed Consent template, but I inserted other necessary sections that are more standard for in the documentary film or journalistic disciplines. However, after submission the IRB mandated that these sections be taken out and their template be followed more closely. Each of the informed consent forms I provided for my participant-researchers ended up being at least three pages in length. *(See Appendix C for Informed Consent Forms).*

The IRB often requires the option of anonymity for subjects involved in research. Again, for the purposes of a speedy approval process, the faculty PI and I made it an option for participants to use a pseudonym instead of their real name. However, if my participants agreed to be filmed, obviously their image and audio would be recorded. So, I had to explain this to my participants, and it was an unnecessary option on the Informed Consent forms to even offer the use of a pseudonym if identifiable information was already readily available. Moreover, while my participants were ultimately comfortable signing the forms, I felt that it created a hierarchical relationship between the participants and myself, which was the exact opposite goal of what I

wanted to achieve (hence my deliberate title "A Collaborative Ethnography"*)*. The templates should have been more direct, shorter and easier to understand and should have been more tailored to the goals of the research project.

In addition to the forms' length, the GSU IRB mandates that Informed Consent forms should be at an appropriate reading level. Their process for evaluating the reading level of the forms is to simply run a spell/grammar check on Microsoft Word and to see which grade level the software program says. The IRB mandates should not rely on Microsoft Word for evaluating the reading level of Informed Consent forms. After all, even after spending several hours adjusting my forms, shortening sentences and taking out longer words, my forms were still too long, too wordy and too confusing because of all of the regulations the IRB imposed on them. Perhaps when researchers use these methods, informed consent should be captured orally on video, which is more standard procedure for documentary film.

While it could be necessary to have a standard of regulations when dealing with human subjects, I argue that it would be much more beneficial to the researcher, the research participants and projects at large to have a separate evaluation process for social science-based research, separating biomedical research regulations from social science regulations entirely. At any institution with an anthropology department that conducts research involving human subjects, an anthropologist should be appointed to the IRB. Furthermore, informed consent forms should be allowed to be more specific to the research project at hand, and should not require the researcher to adhere to the exact templates provided by the IRB. The protection of human subjects in research should always take precedence over institutional self-representation, but the IRB's current regulations contradict this intention.

However, success in my study did come after negotiation and evaluation with the IRB. My goal was to create a project that would allow me to study in-depth how identity is negotiated via family, peers and cultural Others, and in the end I was able to achieve this goal – if through means slightly different than those I originally had envisioned.

III: Family, Boundaries and Cultural Hybridity

Multiculturalism and Assimilation

The word *assimilation* refers to the absorption or incorporation of one less dominant culture (Indian culture) into a bigger, more dominant culture ('American' culture). However, cultural assimilation as a concept is problematic because it relies on the complete absorption and incorporation of a smaller group into a dominant group; the 'solute' culture is finished with the cultural assimilation process when it no longer differs from its 'solvent' culture. Another of these models used to explain the process of immigrant integration is *multiculturalism.* However, proponents of this model seek to maintain differences between two cultures that interact in a local or national context. *Multiculturalism* demands the construction of a public ethnic identity as well as a private one, so the struggle for recognition is now becoming a form of political conflict in multiculturalist societies like the United States (Kurien 2004: 365, Taylor 1998:11).

I am critical of models that do not allow for flexibility and fluidity in the formation of individual identity, but I do recognize that many immigrant groups in the US feel the political pull between the private and public self. More than one of my participants expressed that they do not feel that they are confined to their Indian heritage nor to their American identity but rather recognize that individual experiences vary:

> [In college] there was just a variety, like you couldn't put them all under the label that they're Indian but each one had that distinctism where each one had their own tastes, each one had their own characteristics where it individualized them from others. It wasn't just like they all wanted to study the same thing, do the same thing, it was just more each one had their own rules. And they were becoming more of an individual.
>
> -Amar, second-generation Indian American, interviewed by Ravi, participant-researcher

The most effective way to explain identity formation among second-generation Indian Americans is to merge concepts like *multiculturalism* and *assimilation* with the recognition of lived and imagined experiences of the individual. Participants particularly recognized *assimilation* as a mode of identity formation for immigrants in the U.S.

Broadly, first-generation parents and second-generation young adults seem to be, according to Sinha (2010), concerned with *assimilation* as an "unintended consequence of the pursuit of 'success' in the United States" (Sinha 2010: 1). There seems to be a straight-line trajectory: pursue economic success in the U.S., lose your Indian identity. Participants described to me that they do feel that their parents' culture and ways of thinking differ from theirs. All respondents indicated that they feel that it was the differences between Indian culture and American culture that cause cultural conflict between second- and first-generationers.

This is a small study, and I am not attempting to speak for second-generation Indian Americans beyond those in the study, but it turned out that much of my data did resonate with the experiences documented in existing literature. It was not my intention to bias my data toward the existing literature but to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the ethnic and cultural experiences of South Asians in the U.S. It must be noted that experiences vary not only interethnically but person-to-person, based on many lifestyle factors and personal experiences. It is also important to note that although existing literature documents significant forms of marginalization among South Asians and other Asian groups (e.g., social isolation in schools, racism, stereotyping), many people have not felt marginalized and have developed an identity independently of their ethnic categorization (Taylor 1992, Shankar 2008, Rumbaut 2001, Varghese and Jenkins 2009). Being Indian American, or Desi, signifies different things to different people, and the experiences of each person must be examined to find a precise meaning.

This is not to say that there are not several shared themes among second-generation Indian Americans; for example, the literature documents a 'rediscovery' of Indian heritage when second-generationers enter college (Sinha 2004, Shankar 2008). Still, rigid race and ethnicity categories are insufficient for understanding contemporary immigrants and their children (Kurien 2005: 438). Perhaps the search for an authentic description of being Indian American is equally as difficult as determining an authentic experience of being American.

My study participants position themselves differently from one another in terms of *assimilation*. On one hand, Ravi expressed that he feels he is both Indian and American, and seemed to have little anxiety about this. Nive, a first-generationer who has lived in the U.S. throughout her teenage years explained that she feels she can't relate fully to American culture nor to Indian culture. Zarah explained that her friends are so diverse and her family so 'liberal' that she feels American but has a rich understanding of Indian culture:

> But the good thing was that I always felt like I was in touch with Indian culture just because my parents took me to India almost every other year… I am the oldest child, so I had a lot of attention, as far as, 'Make sure you take care of your brother, make sure you do this, make sure you do that, you know you gotta set an example.' So I was the experimental child. I was always used to going out and figuring things out on my own…and I guess that's part of the reason my parents are so open compared with a lot of my friends'. –Zarah

It was interesting to discover that my respondents thought of their own parents as different from "other" Indian American parents. My participants each stated that their parents are more "Americanized" than other Indian parents, and that they felt their parents became less and less "strict" as they grew up.

Kalita (2003) and others point to issues of parental respect in the second-generation Indian American community. Other articles (see Sinha 2004) point to how Indian American parents of second-generation children want their children to marry within the Indian community. Their perception is that whites and other groups may not adhere to the same moral standards as Indians, where the duty to care for one's elders is central. I have also spoken with a college-aged female who said her parents were afraid of being put in a nursing home if she were to get married to a non-Indian. In *Strangers in a Not-So Strange Land*, Helwig (2004) discusses various literature that points to the centrality of duty in Indian familial life.

Roland (1980) also addresses the close-knit intertwinedness of Indian families. There is a very strong identification with the "we" of the family in contrast to the individual freedom characteristic of Western culture (as cited in Miller 1994). Many Indian families inhibit the process of individuation and separation in youths and move them toward a duty-based morality, whereby the child will think of his or her family's wishes first before making a decision, unlike many people in the broader Western culture (Miller 1994). Furthermore, the duty-based ties that exist in nuclear and joint families also include the extended family in which a high value is placed on deference to elders and leads to intergenerational conflict and a perception of interference from family members (Srivastava 1994, as cited in Dugsin 2001). The results of Dugsin's (2001) qualitative study suggest that cultural conflict stems from areas like education and success, pressure from parents to maintain cultural values, family bonds, lack of boundaries, parental control and abuse, and dating and marriage (Dugsin 2001: 233). Because this article came from the *Family Process* journal, the author offers methods of healing from cultural conflict experienced by second-generationers, asserting that communication and education

with/for parents, therapy (to address anger/self-esteem/resentment), and a support system such as bonding with other second-generationers can be useful (Dugsin 2001: 233).

Overall, my participants did feel that there was a cultural disparity between the second and first generations of Indian Americans. Many times I heard the words "traditional" to refer to Indian culture and "modern" to refer to American or Western culture. Ravi and Zarah didn't feel that their parents had the "typical" Indian parenting style, and rules were more relaxed growing up. However, both did mention a gradual progression from the time they were very young and throughout their teenage years in their parents' strictness. Zarah felt that it wasn't her parents that differed culturally but rather it was her extended family who had 'conservative' or 'traditional' views about Western culture. However, each of my participants argued that cultural norms in India have changed drastically in the last 20 years or so, as globalization has "Westernized" many parts of India, incorporating more values typical of the West.

Regarding her extended family who still resides in India:

> I don't want to say they're very closed-minded but they're not as open as my parents might be either. So every once in a while like if they did hear about like me going out with all of my friends to a club, they'd be like, "So did you tell your parents?" and I'll be like, uh, yeah. They know. It's not a big deal. My aunt, every time something happens, she used to be open-minded but you know but then she got married of course and she's—she has a very strong Indian background I would say, so sometimes she'll find out like oh, you know, we went out, we did this, or—she doesn't know I drink, or that I've ever drank for that matter, for any occasion; my parents on the other hand, when I did drink I told them that…yeah, this is what I had, this is what happened afterwards, I'm home safe. You know, whatever. And they're like OK cool. Her on the other hand, if I was to say that she'd probably freak out. My grandmother, she had found out I drank once and it was a big deal. I had to end up telling her that someone had made it up, that it was a lie, but she freaked out. She was like, 'Oh my gosh, do you know what you're doing? It' so

> bad for you.' Obviously she's never drank in her life but she's like 'it's so bad for you, you're going off to the wrong path, you don't know where things are going to take you, you know? You have other kids you're going to influence,' …you know 'cus I help teach at my mosque too. You know help with extracurricular activities with kids so…

It is also important to note, however, that Indian culture itself has changed over the last few decades. In other words, it has had heavy Western influences, not only including music and fashion, but also in gender expectations and dating.

Zarah, on Indian culture:

> Indian culture has changed dramatically since I was probably born. I know growing up I had restrictions personally from my parents but I also know my friends having restrictions, a lot of my female friends, who I'm still friends with, even guys, they had certain restrictions, and now I feel like even in india they're moving to what we would consider a more Western culture, they're embracing femininity, they're embracing women going to schools. Being in the forefront. Things like that. So it's changing a lot over time.

Zarah also explains her perceptions the cultural shifts among Indians in the U.S.:

> I have to say growing up because I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, itself which was like 22 years ago there wasn't a lot of Indians here. So a lot of times in school or things like that I was usually the only brown child or the only Indian child there. So a lot of times I guess it was fun talking about my culture. The teacher would sometimes pick you out and be like 'Hey, tell us something that you might know.'

The very notion of what is "Indian" is changing, along with what is "American," as Indians adopt American and/or Western cultural, economic and political norms and ideals. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint which beliefs stem from a pre-Westernized India and which ones are influenced by American popular culture. With globalization comes the blurring of boundaries, and the East and West become more difficult to decipher (see Kearney 1995).

Furthermore, there must be a bias when studying Indian parents in the U.S. The parents living here had some reason to immigrate in the first place. Their views were already focused on the West as being more desirable in some way, either economically or idealistically. Again, what is Indian in the U.S. is not what is preserved, but what is constructed. When Ravi interviewed his parents, they both expressed that it is difficult to adhere to Indian norms when living in a place like the U.S., where cultures collide and blend.

Anil, Ravi's father:

> Indians in America are more Americanized. They adapt to most of American culture. The second generation is more exposed to American culture and that is why it is hard for them to keep up with Indian culture. We try to push you toward Indian culture because you're more exposed to American culture.

Ravi: Yeah, I feel lost here with Hinduism. It would have been easier to learn in India.

Vidusha, Ravi's Indian cousin:

> Indians want to modernize and accept American culture, but they suffer a lot because of it. I just want to be on one side. I don't want to stay in between.

Here, we can see that there is a perception that it is difficult to keep Indian values when American ones are present. It seems to be a virtue to keep an Eastern or Indian values. There is the impression among Indian immigrants and Indians in India that the draw for economic prosperity and materialism makes it easy for Indians to forget their cultural origins.

Vidusha, Ravi's cousin who was visiting from India:

> In India, people respect their parents more than Americans do. Here they leave parents and start clubbing and drinking at an early age. I think the restrictions Indian parents have on their kids are required for a good upbringing.

A good upbringing seems to encompass the discouragement of consuming alcohol, staying within close range of family and to be more conservative when 'going out.'

It is reflected in popular Indian blogs and popular culture (e.g., badswami.com: "Indian Frugality"; indianwealthscoops.blogspot.com: "Indian Thoughts: Frugality is In") that Indians and Indian Americans in the first generation are more conservative with money than the second generation in the U.S. Ravi explains that this is due to the fact that in India, people had to save their money to survive, and if you have the chance to make a lot of it, then you should save it. Neenan, Ravi's mother, said that in India nowadays, people do not save their money as they used to: "Before in India, people saved their money, but now they do not." Again, we can see the perception that Indians themselves have changed over the last several decades.

Zarah also expressed that the opportunity to 'make something of yourself' in America could have created this sense of frugality and valuing of education is triangulated against the lack, or limit of opportunity in India:

> So like in India, a lot of people can't afford it for which some kids aren't in school. Whereas when you come to a place like America the expectation is that you are gonna learn, gonna do something, make something of yourself. It's a big deal, like you need to be educated. Like in their head. They want to you be educated. Like if you have the chance then you're crazy to not be.

Here, we can see that socioeconomics and the desire for social mobility may be the driving force behind the cultural norm to value education.

The ABCD ("American Born Confused Desi") is an acronym that came about to describe the Indian American second generation. Lodged between two cultures, the second-generationer experiences cultural disparity between the culture of his/her parents, the culture of their non-Indian peers, and the distance between Indian and American culture. The term may be considered derisive, but according to my participants, it is generally used by the first generation to express their discontentment with the second generation's perceived "confusion" about who

they are. Many second-generationers (both documented in the literature and from my study) struggle to reconcile the perceived pressure to assimilate into the culture of their non-Indian peers and their parents' wishes for them to maintain a distinct Indian cultural identity.

Another acronym commonly known throughout the Indian American second generation is "FOB" for "Fresh off the Boat." This term is sometimes used by second-and third-generationers to mock first generation South Asian immigrants.

Ravi explains the term:

> …FOB is basically someone who is new here from India. And like new can be relative because if they seem like they still haven't assimilated to our culture in America, like kind of blended, they're still considered FOBs. Even if they've been here for 10 years. Like my cousin dated this one guy, and he's like older, maybe 25, 30? But he came here when he was 18. But still she jokes around, calls him a FOB, even though they're like dating. It's like an affectionate 'FOB' because he still presents himself as from Pakistan, like still hasn't really assimilated into American culture. Because he still likes to associate with other Pakistanis, and that's his big group of friends, that's what he considers his family. And so he has less non-Indian, non-Pakistani friends. And he has like an accent too, so, it's just funny.

While it seems that most second-generationers experience "Indianness" and "Americanness" fluidly, it is assumed that one must lose their "unpolished" Indian side (including accents and 'Indian' ways of dressing) to merge with the broader "modern" American culture. Ravi called his cousin's boyfriend "funny" because he has not fully assimilated with American culture. The notion of *assimilation* seems like the way many first and second-generationers conceptualize a second-generationer's place in American society, even though this term does not do justice to the way identity is negotiated. A more fluid, nuanced concept is needed to describe how the second-generationer forms an individual identity based on his/her unique experiences.

Ghosh (1989) asserts that the relationship between India and diasporic Indians is a historical anomaly because the links are not necessarily those of "language, religion, politics, or economics" but is lived within the imagination (Ghosh 1989: 76). While other groups have been linked by these factors (for instance the Israeli Jewish diaspora), Indians in the Indian diaspora come from diverse backgrounds and have varying goals. Ghosh (1989) mentions that Hinduism, the religion that supposedly binds many Indians together (or, as Amar mentioned, is almost synonymous with Indian culture), is in part defined by its diversity in practice, which can break down the ties it has with its Indian origins (Ghosh 1989: 75). Furthermore, conducting business in foreign countries often creates self-sufficiency economically, and marriage within foreign local communities often severs kinship ties (Ghosh 1989). We therefore must look at what is newly constructed in diasporic Indian populations rather than at the amount of "Indianness" that is preserved.

Relation between Religious and Ethnic Discourse

Groups in the U.S. are categorized more often by racial or ethnic identity rather than by religious affiliation. Jain and Forest (2004) highlight in their study that despite concerted efforts to be defined by a religion, Jains from India in the U.S. are categorized ethically as being "Indian" and not by their religious affiliation with Jainism. Because one's identity is determined in part by intra-ethnic perceptions, many Jains identify more broadly with Indians than with Jains. Many Indian Americans are categorized based on physical appearance and racialized labelings that ignore factors such as religion. For example, Ravi expresses his befuddlement upon realizing he could no longer equate being Hindu with being Indian:

Do you equate Hinduism with Indian-ness?

> I met this one girl from Sri Lanka, and a lot of American people if they were educated they would consider her Indian, even though she's Sri Lankan. Actually this was when I was in 6th grade I met her. And this is the first girl that I met that looks Indian but who is Christian. And so I would ask her like, 'Oh what is your religion?' And so I was like, 'Oh ok, but also Hindu right?' She was like, 'No I'm Christian.' And I'm like, 'But you're Indian.' Well she was Sri Lankan, but, 'You're not Hindu? What?' It was so weird for me, but I started to broaden my perspective that there are other religions in India, and as I grew up I learned there is also Buddhism there, a mix of cultures.

It is estimated that around 65% of Indian Americans identify with Hinduism, as opposed to 80% who practice it in India (Jones and Ryan 2007). It is difficult to determine whether Ravi's perception of his Christian classmate as being Hindu was a product of his own amount of exposure to Hinduism (being raised in a Hindu community, most Hindus are of Indian origin), or whether the broader culture imposed this mode of categorization onto him. Either way, it is interesting to note his bewilderment when a religious category he was so familiar with didn't match up with his preconceived notions about ethnicity of that particular religion. "Religious institutions [often provide] the means to create community and to transmit homeland culture and values to children and thus are critical sites shaping the identity construction processes of immigrants and their descendants" (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000, as cited in Kurien 2005: 438).

However, it seems that in some ways, Ravi still equates Hindu religion with being Indian. Here, he describes to me "Indian" philosophy as if it is intrinsically connected with Hindusm. It can't be denied that much of Indian philosophy does stem from Hinduism, which is the largest and oldest religion in India and the oldest in the world, but there are many other religions present in India as well such as Jainism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity (Columbia Encyclopedia 2011).

What about movies you've seen about Indian Americans, has that affected you, or maybe explain how you were able to relate.

Yeah, I think like, it's broadened my view. I'm learning about other American Indians, increasing my perspective about my identity. Another movie is *The Namesake*. Have you seen that movie? That's a really good movie but I thought it was interesting and it made me want to learn more about India and Indian culture. But it made me want to learn more about the background of the philosophy, the philosophical ideas that are Indian.

What would be one philosophical idea that you've seen on a movie that you'd be able to relate to?

I guess when we were talking about philosophy we were moreso focused on Hinduism, I would assume, like that's more like the way that they think is like connecting with other people. Because in my perspective what Hinduism is, is like we all have spirits within us, and then like we're all part of this omnipotent spirit and so our souls are all like connected in a sense. And so building on that and caring about other people is important because divinity is like within other people too.

For Ravi, Hinduism has a major impact on the way he thinks about and perceives the world. However, he seems to use "Hindu" and "Indian" to describe his philosophy quite interchangeably. As mentioned before, this may be a result of his exposure to a more closed Hindu circle of peers, or it may be a result of the broader culture imposing an ethnic or racial category upon *all* Indian Americans, ignoring religious categorizations.

Religious institutions, I argue, may have an impact on the construction of what Taylor (1992) calls a "private self" (as opposed to a purely public one). All groups within a category (Indian) are supposed to carry this more 'authentic' private culture. As mentioned previously,

Ravi and Zarah both separate the 'real' or 'authentic' aspects of being Indian from those of the shallower aspects such as celebrating festivals, listening to Bollywood music and watching Bollywood films. Dalmage's (2010) concept of "border patrolling" comes into play here, as authenticity is maintained through separating the more celebrational aspects of being Indian from other expressions of it, such as Hindu philosophy. Kurien (2005) mentions that upon interviewing men in the Hindu student organization at "Western University," many were conscious of their racial identity, but it was intertwined with religious affiliation. For instance, they knew they were perceived as being passive and nonviolent (some said they were called Ghandi) because they were Indian. However, this identity seems to be reflected off of a broader cultural perception of who Indian Americans are in relation to being Hindu. Another of Kurien's (2005) participants expressed that he began to feel rootless, and upon visiting India, he became interested in Hinduism. When people begin to associate with Hinduism and to reconnect with their own 'Indianness,' they begin to form what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls the "imagined community" (Anderson 1991). Many Indian Americans, even the second- and third-generationers, feel more connected and engaged with religious affiliations as they form intraethnic ties. When Amar moved with his family from Alabama to metro Atlanta in the hopes of gaining a larger Indian community, he expressed his family's 'imagined community' as they became one of many Indian families:

> "You don't necessarily know everyone, but you know there's so many of you out there that you feel comfortable in being yourself."

Performance Narratives and Reactive Ethnicity

Identity as a concept implies that one has reached some final state of being. Hall (1992) offers a different term to reflect the ongoing negotiation one has with his/her heritage:

Identification. Identification as a verb or process rather than a state of being reflects constant identity flux because we "construct our identities based on what we imagine others think of us" (Sinha 2010). Identities are marked with borders that remove us from the spectrum of ambiguity and place us in relation to a binary opposition: first- or second-generation? These categories are arbitrary in nature but are lived within the imagination. These imagined categories are then performed for others as narratives of identity. To illustrate, let's again address Ravi's hesitance to speak Hindi around his peers in high school:

> I tried to stay away from people who spoke Hindi because it was like a sign of them like, just coming from India? And so I differentiated myself from, my friends were American Indians whereas not just Indians, because in my group of friends, those Indians were kind of stigmatized. Because like, I guess it was like we thought they were embarrassing or something.

Here, Ravi is expressing that in high school, he tried to distance himself from those who spoke Hindi while at school because its stigmatization as a sign of not being assimilated. By forming a new categorization (that of the FOB), Ravi and his friends distanced themselves from marginalization. The categorization of FOB was differentiated against the category "Indian Americans" as a form of "reactive ethnicity" (Kurien 2005). In other words, Ravi protected himself from discrimination (either by Indians or non-Indians) by forming a new category to position himself against the "wrong" type of Indian Americans, FOBs. Mendoza-Denton (2008) discusses in *Homegirls* how the constitution of ideological categories in discourse is fraught with contradiction, with different actors taking diverse stances on what it means to be a member of the community she studies (Mendoza-Denton 2008: 105). In a similar way, my study participants each have different perceptions of the ideological categories into which they place members of the Indian American community Nive, for instance, distances herself from those who do not understand 'true' or 'authentic' Indian culture:

> Well I think what India is to [second-generationers] and what being indian is to them is something completely different from what it is to me…I feel like for a lot of people here India is about Bollywood, and Garba (Indian form of dance, widely popular among diasporic youth), and you know just celebrating festivals without really focusing on all the other aspects there are to being Indian, and I don't know, there's always been things I haven't really been able to talk to them about.

She mentioned before that she didn't feel truly American, and she wants to differentiate herself from the Indian Americans who are only concerned with the perceivably shallower aspects of what it is to be Indian. In doing so, she is enacting a performance narrative to place herself within the category of something like "educated Desi." Another concept that can be used to explain this phenomenon is Dalmage's (2000) concept of "border patrolling" in which individuals envision, interpret and reinforce racial borders via social and linguistic negotiations (Dalmage 2000). By creating metaphorical identity boundaries and patrolling them, she separates herself from those she does not want to be associated with.

For some second-generationers, the notion of authenticity is important regarding what it means to be truly "Indian." For instance, Nive explained that one must look beyond the Indian festivals and gatherings to see all of the other aspects of being Indian:

> I feel like for a lot of people here India is about Bollywood, and Garba, and you know just celebrating festivals without really focusing on all the other aspects there are to being Indian…

From an analytical perspective, rather than separating cultures with arbitrary boundaries, we should be looking at what is newly constructed. For instance, in an article by Maira (1999), we see that musical remixes and urban fashion are materials with which to construct and display a seemingly hybrid identity (Maira 1999: 37). Maira argues that this 'remix' is an attempt for second-generation Indian Americans to formulate music and dance traditions from India through

the rituals of American popular culture. In this view, what is Indian or Indian American is not what is preserved, but rather what is constructed (Sinha 2004). By drawing cognitive boundaries around all things 'Indian' and all things 'American,' we may miss the subcultures that arise when people 'remix' cultures to solve the ideological paradoxes between two separate social spheres. In other words, although people at times may use more rigid categories to make sense of experience, their practices and creative engagements resist the rigidity of those boundaries.

IV: Conclusion/Questions for Further Research

This exploratory study suggests that identity for Indian Americans is indeed in constant flux. People internalize racial and ethnic meanings, and inter-group categorizations are sometimes "fraught with contradiction" (Mendoza-Denton 2008: 105). Members of a group avoid marginalization by enacting performance narratives, which allow the actor to re-categorize the self into new, distinct categories to take ownership of individual ethno-cultural identity. For some second-generationers, what it means to be truly "Indian" depends on other second-generationers' perception of a member's authenticity. By separating the 'real' or 'authentic' aspects of being Indian from those of the shallower aspects such as celebrating festivals, listening to Bollywood music and watching Bollywood films, Ravi and Zarah both practice border patrolling. Border patrolling is one mode of *identification*, where one negotiates her/his identity continuously and fluidly.

With the collaborative nature of this study comes an effort to give voice more directly to the participants than do most conventional ethnographies. In an increasingly globalized world, it is necessary to examine the categories in which we place people to assure that our understanding of a group's experience is shaped meaningfully by those experiencing it, allowing the presuppositions of the observer to be challenged. By creating a way for participant-researchers to shape the direction of the project, I uncovered nuances that I would not have had understood otherwise. For instance, Ravi focused a portion of his interviews on his perception that India itself has changed over the last 20 years, thus re-defining what it means to him to be "Indian." He also focused on how he feels his parents have changed over the last 20 years. Questions regarding globalization and cultural shift were not originally part of my research questions. Another instance that highlighted the benefits of collaboration in research was when Ravi

brought up the notion of authenticity when negotiating what it means to be truly "Indian." None of my original research questions included this issue, but it turned out to be one of the most overarching themes among research participants.

It was fascinating to see how Ravi interacted with his friend Amar, also a second-generationer. By allowing participants to speak privately with one another, interviewees (and interviewers) seemed to be more comfortable and perhaps more frank with one another than they would have been when speaking to someone like me, who is outside of the research population. In further research, I would like to expand my methods, loaning out more cameras to more participants to gain a more generalized perspective of second-generation Indian Americans in the Atlanta area. I would also again use the services of participant-researchers to find more interviewees. With a longer, more ongoing relationship with participant-researchers and interviewees, I imagine that people would feel even more comfortable sharing their experiences with me. In addition, I would like the participant-researchers to be able to shape the project's methodology, perhaps suggesting improvements that would allow for more insight and depth. In the future, I would like to compile a full ethnographic film, using a blend of my own footage and participant-researchers' footage. With varied experiences would come more varied video footage, which would give rise to a full, stand-alone narrative. Above all, this project is a pilot study for a collaborative methodological approach using self-video ethnography. I would like to apply this methodology to other ethnographic research projects in other cultural contexts.

I have explored the importance of looking at identity as fluid and in constant flux, conceptualizing it as "identification" (as a verb) rather than as a final state of being. Rather than separating cultures with arbitrary boundaries, we should be looking at what is newly established. What is Indian (or Indian American) is not what is preserved, but rather what is constructed

(Sinha 2004). Through creating a collaborative environment in which to study ethnicity, I have demonstrated that ethnic experience is informed by broader American and Indian American culture but is heavily shaped by the individual. As they continually work to define themselves and those around them, individuals transgress dominant perceptions to create meaning in their everyday lives.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Procedures

For Ethnographic Interviews

1. I will informally invite potential participants to participate in my study and he/she will be given an overall introduction to my study.

2. I will set up an interview time and location with the participant.

3. I will give my participant a copy of the "Informed Consent for Interviews" form to review and sign.

4. The interview will commence.

For Self-Ethnography through Video

1. I will informally invite potential participants to participate in my study and he/she will be given an overall introduction to my study.

2. A meeting time will be set up at Georgia State Television in order to check out a video camera.

3. The participant will be given a copy of the "Informed Consent for Self-Ethnography through Video" to reflect upon and sign. I will also explain to the participant the relevant parts about getting others who appear on the film to consent on video and how the footage is going to be used. I will also address and clarify any questions or concerns the participant may have.

4. The participant will be loaned a video camera for the period of two weeks.

5. The participant will set up a time to return the camera to me. I will ask him/her if she/he is comfortable with submitting all of the videos recorded on the device. If she/he is not comfortable, I will instruct him/her how to delete videos before returning the device to me.

For Participant Observation

1. I will send a letter of permission to the organization or family to be observed through a research participant to be hand-delivered or through the US Postal Service.

2. If accepted, I will set up a time with the participants to observe.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. How much of your identity is determined by your ethnicity?
2. Do you feel that your culture differs from your parents' culture?
3. If so, how do you deal with these differences?
4. Do you have friends who are also Indian American?
5. Have you ever felt discriminated against?
6. Have you ever heard of the stereotype "model minority?" If so, has it affected you in any way?
7. What kind of lifestyle did your parents have before immigrating into the US?
8. Has anything changed since you've been in college as far as re-forming your identity as an Indian American?
9. What was your childhood like?
10. Are you close with your family members?
11. Do you follow a religion? If so, which one?
12. How do you keep connected with the Indian American community in Atlanta?

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Forms

Georgia State University

Department of Anthropology

Informed Consent for Interviews (conducted by Kelly Murray)

Title: Negotiating Identity Among second-generation Indian Americans: A Collaborative Ethnography

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jennifer Patico, Faculty P.I.

Kelly Murray, Student P.I.

I. Purpose:

Kelly is a student at Georgia State University studying cultural anthropology. She will be conducting a research study about identity among second-generation Indian Americans in the Atlanta area. You are invited to contribute because you are a second-generation Indian American. A total of six participants will be recruited for this portion of this study. Participation will require a few hours of your time during the next few months. During this study, you will be asked to answer some questions about your identity as a second-generation Indian American.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in one or more interview(s) with Kelly Murray. She will be asking you questions regarding identity among second-generation Indian Americans. This interview is designed to learn first-hand information about this topic. You will be asked permission to record your interview through video. The interview will take place in a location at Georgia State University to be decided upon with Kelly Murray and at your convenience. The interview portion was designed to be approximately one hour in length, but depending upon your answers it could last longer. Please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. You may also end the interview if you are out of time. If there are any questions you feel you cannot answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, feel free to indicate this and we will move on to the next question. You may be asked to complete subsequent interviews (two to three) that should last no more than one hour. All interviews are optional. Please note that you will not be compensated for your participation.

III. Risks:

In this study, we do not expect that you will have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. You may, however, be asked questions regarding your identity as a second-generation Indian American, and depending on your experiences, you may experience emotional distress. You may also experience uneasiness in the presence of a video camera. Please note that Georgia State provides free counseling to students. Their office is located on the second floor of the Citizens Trust building.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may or may not benefit you personally. You will have the chance to be involved in a project that allows for a better understanding of your views and the experiences of Indian Americans. The findings will be communicated to a broad audience (see below).

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:

Only Kelly Murray and Dr. Jennifer Patico will have access to the information you provide, unless you give explicit permission to film your interviews and to have it used in a documentary film. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP), and the sponsor). Unless you give me permission to use your real name, the researchers will use a pseudonym rather than your name on study records. Kelly will keep the pseudonym key in a secure place in a password-protected file on her home laptop. The pseudonym key will be kept separate from the information you provide. Please note that if you do not want your name to be used, your image and audio may still be used. All video and audio data you provide may be included on the project's web site and/or in a documentary film. The project's web site is located at www.kellyshonorsthesis.wordpress.com. The documentary may be broadcast on GSTV, its web site, and/or at academic conferences and film screenings. If you do not wish for your video and audio data to be used in this way, you may decline to be filmed. If you still wish to be a part of the project, but would not like to be filmed, the data you provide may be included in Kelly Murray's written thesis. No names or identifying information will be used in the written thesis, unless you request otherwise.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Kelly Murray at 770-361-1550 or KMurray5@student.gsu.edu if you have questions about this study. You may also contact Dr. Jennifer Patico at jpatico@gsu.edu or 404-413-5167. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

Check all that apply and sign below:

_____ Agree to be filmed on video. Any and all videos submitted may be broadcast on GSTV (accessible online at www.gstvonline.org), the project's web site, and/or other websites or public conferences. In addition, content of interview may be discussed in Kelly's Georgia State honors thesis.

_____Agree to be audio-taped. Audio may be used in public documentary broadcast on GSTV (accessible online at www.gstvonline.org), the project's web site, and/or other websites or public conferences. In addition, content of interview may be discussed in Kelly's Georgia State honors thesis.

_____ Agree to be interviewed with hand-written notes only. Information will be used in Kelly's written honors thesis.

_____ Agree to your name being used in the documentary and written thesis. If you do not want your real name to appear, DO NOT check here.

_____ _____

Participant Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Georgia State University

Department of Anthropology

Informed Consent for Secondary Participants (appearing on FLiP video cameras)

Title: Negotiating Identity Among second-generation Indian Americans: A Collaborative Ethnography

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jennifer Patico, Faculty P.I.

Kelly Murray, Student P.I.

I. Purpose:

Kelly is a student at Georgia State University studying cultural anthropology. She is conducting a research study about identity among second-generation Indian Americans in the Atlanta area. The final products will be a written thesis and a documentary video. You are invited to participate because you are the friend, family member, or acquaintance of a second-generation Indian American. Your acquaintance is a participant-researcher in this study. He or she is requesting to film you and to use this film in Kelly's documentary video. All participant-researchers have been trained in ethical research standards by the University of Georgia System.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you may appear in a video documentary. This portion of the project is designed to learn first-hand information about Indian Americans and their social experiences, framed through their own eyes. You are being asked permission to be recorded on video as you talk with the participant-researcher. You are also being asked to allow these videos to be used in a documentary. The documentary will be completed by December 2011. Your interview or informal conversation may last from a few minutes to about one hour. Participation is optional. Please note that you will not be paid for your participation.

III. Risks:

In this study, we do not expect that you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. However, during your contact with the researcher you might discuss issues related to ethnicity and identity that you could find stressful, depending on your life experiences. You might feel unease in front of a video camera. Please be aware that no funds are available for costs of any mental or physical stresses, injuries or damages you may experience in the course of this project.

IV. Benefits:

Involvement in this study may or may not benefit you personally. You have the chance to be involved in a project that will allow for a better understanding of your views and experiences in relation to second-generation Indian Americans. The final project will be available online to you to review and reflect upon.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw permission to use your video footage up until the participant-researcher submits it to Kelly Murray. Please let him or her know if you would like to delete any of your videos before he/she returns his/her camera, or within one week of your filming. All submitted videos may be used in the final documentary.

VI. Confidentiality:

Only Kelly Murray, Dr. Jennifer Patico, and the participant-researcher who films you will have full access to the identifiable information you provide. However, your edited footage may be used in a documentary and may be posted online at www.kellyshonorsthesis.wordpress.com. It may be broadcast on www.gstvonline.org. It may also appear on other websites or at public conferences. Your name will not appear in the public documentary or in the written thesis project, unless you give clear permission for this. If you do not give permission to use your real name, the researchers will use a pseudonym rather than your name on written research notes or transcripts. Kelly will keep the pseudonym key in a secure place in a password-protected file on her home laptop. The pseudonym key will be kept separate from the information you provide. Please note that if you do not want your name to be used, your image and audio may still be used. All video and audio data you provide may be included on the project's web site and/or in a documentary film.

Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)).

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Kelly Murray at 770-361-1550 or KMurray5@student.gsu.edu if you have questions about this study. You may also contact Dr. Jennifer Patico at jpatico@gsu.edu or 404-413-5167. If you

have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Secondary Participant:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please check all that apply and sign below:

_____ Please check here to acknowledge that you are participating in Kelly Murray's Georgia State thesis study and in a video documentary. The documentary is being produced by Kelly Murray in association with Georgia State Television (GSTV). Any and all videos submitted may be broadcast on GSTV (available online at www.gstvonline.org). It may also appear on the project's web site, and/or other websites or public conferences.

_____ Please check here to give permission for use of your name in the video documentary and written thesis. (Do *not* check if you do not want your name to be used.)

_____ _____

Participant signature Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

Georgia State University

Department of Anthropology

Informed Consent for PARTICIPANT-RESEARCHERS in Self-Ethnography Through Video

Title: Negotiating Identity Among second-generation Indian Americans: A Collaborative Ethnography

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jennifer Patico, Faculty P.I.

Kelly Murray, Student P.I.

I. Purpose:

Kelly is a student at Georgia State University studying cultural anthropology. She will be conducting a research study about identity among second-generation Indian Americans in the Atlanta area. You are invited to become a participant-researcher because you are a second-generation Indian American. Note that to participate in this phase of the study, you must undergo an online CITI training process through the Georgia University system. Only the social-behavioral focus for human subjects is required. A total of six participants will be recruited for this portion of this study. Participation will require a few hours of your time during the next few months. During this study, you will be loaned a FLiP video camera through Georgia State Television in order to document your own life in response to the research questions. This portion is designed to last around two weeks. You may spend as much time as you like during that time.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be contributing to a video documentary. Kelly will be asking you to document your own life in relation to your position as a second-generation Indian American. This part of the project is designed to learn first-hand information about this topic, framed through your eyes. First, you must undergo an online CITI training process through the Georgia University system. Upon completion, you will be asked to sign and submit this consent form. At a mutually convenient time, you will meet with Kelly Murray and Jennifer Patico to discuss the project, its goals, and methods. You will have the chance to answer any questions you might have. Then you may begin your video filming. You are asked to release these videos for use in a documentary that will be completed by December 2011. Participation is optional. Please note that you will not be compensated for your participation. If you choose to record someone besides yourself in these videos, you will need to obtain their written permission. You will be provided with a list of questions to use as a guide when interviewing others. Kelly will provide you with the necessary consent documents in a binder for you to keep throughout the duration of the study.

III. Risks:

For this phase of the study, you will be using a video camera that will be loaned to you by GSTV at Georgia State. Please be aware that you will need to sign GSTV's standard form for borrowers (see attached). It requires that you pay for the camera if you lose or break it while it is in your possession. This study does not have any funds to pay for replacement of lost, stolen or damaged cameras.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may or may not benefit you personally. You have the opportunity to be involved in a project that will allow for a better understanding of your views and experiences as a second-generation Indian American. The final project will be readily available online to you to review and reflect upon.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise allowed. Please note that you may withdraw permission for the use of your video footage up until you submit it to Kelly Murray. All submitted videos may be used in the final documentary.

VI. Confidentiality:

Only Kelly Murray and Dr. Jennifer Patico will have full access to the identifiable information you provide. However, your edited footage may be used in a documentary and may be posted online at www.kellyshonorsthesis.wordpress.com or broadcast on www.gstvonline.org. It may also appear on other websites or at public conferences. Your name will not appear in the public documentary or in the written thesis project, unless you give clear permission for this. If you do not give permission to use your real name, the researchers will use a pseudonym rather than your name on any written research notes or transcripts. Kelly will keep the pseudonym key in a secure place in a password-protected file on her home laptop. The pseudonym key will be kept separate from the information you provide. Please note that if you do not want your name to be used, your image and audio may still be used. All video and audio data you provide may be included on the project's web site and/or in a documentary film.

Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)).

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Kelly Murray at 770-361-1550 or KMurray5@student.gsu.edu if you have questions about this study. You may also contact Dr. Jennifer Patico at jpatico@gsu.edu or 404-413-5167. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

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Please check all that apply and sign below:

_____ Please check here to acknowledge that you are participating in Kelly Murray's Georgia State thesis study and in a video documentary. The documentary is being produced by Kelly Murray in association with Georgia State Television (GSTV). Any and all videos submitted may be broadcast on GSTV (available online at www.gstvonline.org), the project's web site, and/or other websites or public conferences.

_____ Please check here to give permission for use of your name in the video documentary and written thesis. (Do *not* check if you do not want your name to be used.)

_____Please check here to confirm that you have completed the CITI human subjects training course, social-behavioral focus.

_____ _____

Participant Date

_____ _____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date