

**BETWEEN TWO LIFE STAGES AND CULTURAL REALMS: FIVE CASE STUDIES
WITH ABCDS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

by

Jacqueline Luisa Schaffer

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This thesis was presented

by

Jacqueline Luisa Schaffer

It was defended on

March 30, 2011

and approved by

Marie Norman, Adjunct Professor, History-Carnegie Mellon University

Neepa Majumdar, Associate Professor, English- University of Pittsburgh

Milica Bakic Hayden, Visiting Lecturer, Religious Studies - University of Pittsburgh

Thesis Advisor: Joseph S. Alter, Full Professor and Chair, Anthropology- University of

Pittsburgh

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This ethnographic study is based on in-depth participant observation with five American-Born Asian Indian college students (hereafter referred to as ABCDs) in their early 20s. This term, ABCD is one that is normally used within the United States-based South Asian community but is used here in place of Second-Generation Asian Indian American because it more directly underscores the state of in-between-ness that the subjects studied expressed as applicable to their experiences. This study provides a partial portrait of the ways that ABCDs manage the tension between their families' expectations and the dominant hostile mindset towards people who *look* "Middle Eastern" in Post-9/11 America. Indians in the U.S. are sometimes unfairly perceived to have divided loyalties in an era where patriotism and nativism have increased among the mainstream American middle-class. This thesis posits that the public treatment of ABCD individuals as both Model Minorities and stigmatized suspicious persons – prejudice erroneously assumed against people who "look middle-eastern" – results in angst that each of the informants navigates in different ways.

The data analysis suggests that the physical separation from parents and the freedom of college creates space and time for a relatively unmonitored lifestyle. However, life at this stage is complicated for ABCDs who, since 9/11 have experienced prejudice based on misidentification.

This post-9/11 hostile environment has created a complicated and contradictory space in which ABCDs have to negotiate their identity. Combined with parental pressure to excel, this produces anxiety and ambivalence.

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this study, I examine the phenomenon of stereotyping first through an analysis of the historical tendency in the U.S. to regard as outsiders whatever immigrant group has most recently arrived. I then turn to the issue of stereotyping as it affects Asian Indians in the U.S. from 1965 onwards. The second chapter contextualizes the phenomenon of stereotyping towards immigrant groups to the U.S. from the 1840s through the 1965. Chapter 3 looks at the early Indian arrivals to the U.S. through the post-1965 largely skilled-labor force from the Indian Subcontinent. This chapter also examines the birth and perpetuation of the so-called Model Minority¹ stereotype towards Asians in the U.S. and concludes by introducing the tension that this causes for ABCDs². In Chapter 4, I

¹ The Model Minority stereotype is the U.S.-held belief that certain immigrant and/or minority ethnic groups are inherently smart, hard-working and from good cultures.

² This term, ABCD (American-Born Confused *Desi*) is one that is normally used within the United States-based South Asian community but is used here in place of Second-Generation Asian Indian American because it more directly underscores the state of in-between-ness that the subjects studied here expressed as applicable to their experiences. The term *Deshi* comes from the Sanskrit word (*DESHA* (n.), which means “a place or spot.” The noun *DESHI* usually means “local” as distinct from foreign or cosmopolitan. It implies a local, “country-born” individuals. See V. S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi: Motilal Barnasidas, 1978, p. 511, 512.

discuss my research methodology and timeframe. In chapter 5, through a discussion of their leisure activities, I point out some of the challenges that my ABCD informants face during their undergraduate careers. I conclude this last chapter by presenting a few key themes that are common to all of the informants studied here.

2.0 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF UNITED STATES HISTORY AND THE NORMALIZATION OF STEREOTYPING

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the phenomenon of stereotyping towards immigrant groups to the U.S. from the 1840s through 1965. By examining stigmatized groups throughout this nation's early history, I show how class and race factors prove foundational in later assertions of the insidious Model Minority stereotype towards Asian Indians in the U.S.³ This section starts by outlining the two main waves of immigration: the 1840-1862 so-called "old" immigrant wave and the 1890-1924 "new" immigrant wave. The "old" wave was made up primarily of people from nation states in Western Europe. These peoples were Caucasian and often spoke English or various Romance languages. The "old" immigrant wave is discussed here through a description of Irish and Italian immigrant experiences. With the "new" immigrant groups, I demonstrate how additional factors of perceived difference begin to factor into the class barriers that characterized earlier immigrant groups of Western Europe. Next, through the lens of xenophobia towards Slavs in the U.S., I analyze how factors like non-Romance language usage, dress, and class factor into stigmatization of Eastern Europeans during that time period.

3 See chapter 3 for a historical background on the birth and perpetuation of the Model Minority stereotype.

Stereotyping, while centrally a class-based issue, is in fact made up of many barriers for post-Exclusion Act non-Caucasians in the U.S. The feeling of being an outsider that manifests itself because of external societal and economic pressures aimed at non-Caucasian immigrants on the basis of racial difference has historic rooting. The non-Caucasian early immigrant, while certainly not a homogenous group, is here discussed by taking a brief look at the Chinese immigrant experience. The earliest Chinese settlers to the U.S., by virtue of their degree of racial difference from the majority Caucasian culture, were not only treated as second-class, but as subhuman.

This section's examination is particularly concerned with class because this is the common factor faced by all immigrant groups in the U.S. (and certainly elsewhere, although this fact is not emphasized here). Other factors like differences in ethnicity, language, religion and skin color are important but not commonly applicable to all of the groups examined. While this section indicates how immigrants to the U.S. have been stereotyped since the country's early years, the subject of forced immigration (as of African people who were made to serve as slaves) is beyond the scope of this thesis. This section is focused, rather, on immigrants who arrived in the U.S. post 1840 *and* who at the very least came from a *relative* intrinsic desire to earn and remit monies back to their home countries.

My goal is to gesture towards the issue of stereotyping in the context of immigrant groups from the mid 1800s through the mid 1900s. The examination of selected groups within this time period allows for a narrative analysis of the multiple factors which give birth to and perpetuate stereotypes (both overtly negative and seemingly positive). Including an extraneous number of cases of stigmatized groups here is unnecessary given the fact that the issue of Model Minority stereotyping of post-1965 Asian Indian immigrants is the most salient form of

immigrant stereotyping that this study is concerned with. Basically, the purpose is to show that social stigmas are not limited in any way to the subjects examined in this study or to the 21st-century immigrant nor are they generalizable to all groups everywhere in the U.S. at all times.

In the case of early Western European immigrants to the U.S., there are obvious advantages that today manifest in a relatively homogenized white culture into which these previously “ethnic” groups are now absorbed. However, a historical overview of stereotyping against immigrant groups in the U.S. is necessary to show that the issue of prejudice based on outward appearance is historically-rooted. Of course, I would be remiss not to point out the obvious advantages that the Irish had over the Italians in their assimilation process because of their English language ability. Furthermore, I would also be imprudent if I left out the issue of race in this discussion of immigration, especially as this affects Asian immigrants. This fact of racial difference among post-Chinese Exclusion Act immigrants of non-Caucasian race allowed bigoted “old” immigrants to perpetrate their racist ideas and later rendered permissible the insidious Model Minority stereotype, introduced publicly in the 1960s. Because the Asian continent is so vast, an examination of all groups who migrated to the U.S. would be impossible. Given this, I simply turn, to illustrate the point, to the post-Chinese Exclusion Act immigrants whose reasons for emigration were largely to earn remittance monies.

This section of the chapter will explain the experiences of the “old” immigrants (earliest migrations, 1840 through 1862) by looking at two groups from that wave: the Irish and the Italians. As alluded to previously, the Irish may seemingly be a group whose Caucasian race, Christian faith, and English language abilities would have been enough to exempt them from prejudice. Even with these seemingly advantageous characteristics, the stigma was palpable upon their early arrival. “[the] peak of Irish immigration to the United States occurred in

response to the Famine in the late 1840s, the Irish continued to arrive throughout the twentieth century, because until the 1990s, when Ireland received financial infusions by the European Union and American corporations, it remained a poor country lacking a vibrant industrial base” (Maloney 2009, p. 105). Ireland’s history of being an impoverished nation is what served as grounds for already settled Caucasian citizens of the U.S. to judge the Irish immigrants negatively. Part of the rejection that the Irish faced is due to the fact that they were categorized pejoratively as a homogenous people. Maloney states:

Irish Americans have been portrayed as political and social conservatives, in large part because of the central place of Catholicism in their communities. That portrayal is very often accurate. But as Kenny notes, Irish America included several significant Left or radical figures... While the progressive tradition did not prevail among Irish Americans or in the United States more generally, it is important to acknowledge the diversity *of political and social traditions and experiences* that the Irish brought with them or that influenced their children [italics added for emphasis] (Maloney 2009, p. 105).

It is critical to a good understanding of the Irish immigrant to underscore their differences in order to avoid over-generalizations.

Many Irish changed their names in order to seem more “English”, a practice that effectively improved their chances of being accepted into the established U.S. society of the time. The reason that the early Irish put forth this front of name-changing is two-fold according to Maloney:

... [first], until recently, claiming one’s English origins conferred much higher status than did an Irish identity; [and] second, one’s last name is a major, if imperfect, marker of ethnicity,” (Maloney 2009, p. 104).

I point to this name-changing phenomenon among the Irish because it underscores how important it is to hide one's ethnicity behind other more positive stereotypes in the interest of host societal acceptance. Not only does this illustrate how "passing" for a more affluent ethnicity helps avoid stereotypes, but the fact that it is relevant to the early Irish immigrants confirms that the central issue for stereotyping is class.

Despite the early application of negative stereotypes against them, Berg notes how much progress the Irish have made since their initial settlement in the U.S. He cites two examples of empowerment, politically and in terms of social media. He explains:

...they have evolved from being a thoroughly denigrated immigrant group to becoming so mainstreamed that there have been two presidents of Irish descent. In the silent and early sound cinema, the Irish were commonly stereotyped as irresponsible and pugilistic, and represented as the dumb cop or drunken, good-for-nothing, unemployed father. By and large, those stereotypes have ceased to exist in the American media (Berg 2002, p. 26).

Some derogatory names used for the Irish were "Micks" and "Molly Maguires" terms which indicate that this group was being singled out as new-comers.

The basic connection between the early Irish immigrants of the mid-1800s and the early Asian Indian immigrants of the mid-1900s is that the American host society applied stereotypes to both groups. Despite the fact that the stereotypes were meant to glean essential truths about these people, the generalized nature in both cases renders an inaccurate archetype.

Unlike the Irish, Italians had the burden of a language barrier added to their disadvantaged new-comer status. The number of immigrants was initially small:

Records for the United States began in 1820 when 30 Italians arrived. There were less than 75 a year until 1833; less than 2000 until 1870 when 2,891 arrived.

As families settled, more Italians began to arrive in larger numbers to the U.S., “The year 1873 brought 8,757, a number not again reached until 1880 when 12,354 arrived” (Nelli 1983, Pp. 39-40). Nelli explains how the early Italian immigrants came to the U.S. mainly from the Northern states of Italy and were often professionals, craftsmen, and/or businessmen who came to the U.S. with the intention of making money and then returning to their homeland. Whereas the later waves of Italian immigrants came from Southern Italy and usually had less educated backgrounds. It is from this later wave, I posit, that the negative stereotypes towards Italians developed.

In New York City, Italian immigrants of this time period lived in deplorable conditions. Cosco points out the hypocritical logic that he posits many Americans used to justify their stigmatization of Italians upon their initial entry. He states:

In Italy, the Italian was the stuff of cultural romance; in New York, he was a threatening, if provocative reality. For many Americans, Italy remained the land of culture, history, and romance. However, for some of the same Americans, Italy was now the distrusted source of unwanted peasant immigrants pouring into a city ill equipped to assimilate them (Cosco 2003, p. 14).

Another relevant account was Jacob Riis’ *How the Other Half Lives* which used photography to point out just how impoverished the latter immigrant arrivals in NYC were. Cosco’s and Riis’s critiques combined demonstrate the degree of distaste that assimilated Americans held against immigrants in general, particularly the Italians and Eastern Europeans.

One derogatory name for Italians is “Wop.” Rawson explains the derivation of well when he unpacks the meaning of this word which is actually an acronym:

Wop frequently is said to be an acronym for WithOut Passport or WithOut Papers, which is how some immigrants arrived in the United States, or Working On Pavement, which is what many did afterward...Almost certainly the term comes from the Neapolitan *guappo*, a tough guy, a showy ruffian, a fop. This word was used as a salutation by Sicilians in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The oldest example of *wop* in writing comes from 1912 in *Courts and Criminals*, by Arthur Train, a former Manhattan assistant district attorney.

Rawson goes on to describe an early 1900’s New York City sub-culture of young men of Italian origin who were known as “waps” or “jacks” because they, “allow[ed] themselves to be supported by one or two young women...[who adorned themselves with] a particular cut of hair, and dress with half-turned-up velvet collar, not unlike the old-time Camorrist [the Camorra being the Neapolitan version of the Mafia], and have manners and customs of their own.” The important factor is that this wop/guinea name-ascription is a label which got applied to other groups of Italians as a generally unsavory descriptor. “From this it is not hard to understand why *wop* developed disparaging connotations. The same thing seems to have happened in the Old Country, where *guappo* has been adopted in a derogatory sense to mean a Sicilian” (Rawson, 1989).

To glean some understanding of the “new” wave of immigrants to the U.S., I now explain the Slav’s dilemma. I follow this up with a brief consideration of race issues through a consideration of Chinese immigrants. By examining these two groups, I aim to not only show a

trend in racial discrimination towards groups who became increasingly “exotic” relative to western Euro-Americans, but do so with the purpose of setting up the Model Minority stereotype.

The “new” wave of immigration to the U.S. (1890-1924) brought largely Eastern European individuals. Hailing from non-Western European societies meant that on top of the language barrier faced by groups like the Italians, these people had to deal with another level of otherness born of being widely regarded as hailing from peasant societies, a stigma that was applied from the earliest waves of Eastern Europeans whose different language, dress, and religious affiliation, made them easily distinguishable from the “old” immigrants. As a result of the perceived differences described above, Eastern Europeans were made self-consciously aware of their difference. This meant, according to Wtulich that they were, “...regarded as a new immigrant [group which] meant that one’s own [group] was considered to be of a separate class in the society but not of it” (Wtulich 1994, p.9).

Generally speaking, the Eastern European was regarded as a human laborer and nothing more:

Foreigner was the term applied to those who emigrated from central and East Europe. Pulled and pushed into the industrial and urban centers of the United States, the foreigners were indifferently referred to as hunkies or slavs (Wtulich 1994, p. 10).

The Slavic immigrants’ burden was that—as the latest wave of a seemingly endless influx of immigrants—they were considered a “new” addition to the foreigner “problem.”

American xenophobics used all sorts of tactics to categorize the Slavs, mostly derogatory appellations.

Of the several types of terms denoting stereotypes, two have been used regarding the Slav, namely epithets and ethnophaulisms...immigrant, alien and foreigner... and peasant, hunkey, and 'Polack' [respectively] (Wtulich 1994, p. 8).

These slurs which were most popularly used to describe Slavs and Eastern Europeans are indicative of stupidity and poverty, stereotypes that, according to Wtulich, functioned to keep them in a lowly societal place. Furthermore, they were commonly asserted by ethnically intolerant members of the "old" wave of immigration who perceived that Eastern Europeans came from peasant societies. The historic birth of derogatory terms used to describe Slavs, as related by Wtulich, appear below:

Between 1900 and 1930, Bohunk was commonly used to refer to an immigrant of central and East Europe, usually a Czech, Hungarian, Pole, Slovak, and even an Austrian (Wtulich, p. 15). Bohunk is a conflation of the words "bohemian" and "hunkie" which were pejorative terms denoting Hungarians, Lithuanians, Slavs, Poles, Magyars and Tyroleans (*New York Herald*, 1896 in Rawson, 1989). The "Bohunk" name was used "Originally from the 1890s [to denote] an immigrant from east-central Europe, but today usually [indicates] a descendant of these immigrants (Rawson, 1989).

The common theme between Asian Indians and Eastern Europeans is language and a sense of otherness from not being from Western European descent.

Unlike the Model Minority stereotype, these names are indicative of the impression that a first wave of immigrants can leave on any given group. In the above cases, the names were used as negative descriptors tied to their lowly status as laborers. The point is that these early arrivals' class status has a profound negative affect on the public opinion towards individuals who are

descendants on those groups later on. This is an important point as the phenomenon applies to the Model Minority stereotype in the opposite way as well.

To address the issue of race which affects this study, I now turn to the post-Exclusion Act Chinese immigrants. While Daniels indicates that individuals came from China to the U.S. as early as 1860, those individuals, by virtue of their not arriving in the U.S. by choice, are not emphasized here. The Chinese Exclusion Act, established in 1882, was finally repealed in 1943 by a law that allowed more Chinese to come into the U.S. with the opportunity to eventually become citizens. For most Chinese, the legislation written to prevent their coming to the U.S. demonstrates intense bigotry against an out-group (relative to other groups of Caucasian race). Those who came to the U.S. following the Chinese Exclusion Act were at first not allowed to become naturalized citizens. These individuals were teachers, students, merchants, and “travelers for pleasure.”

The crux of their struggle was racial difference; Wei explains the shift of American bigotry well when he speaks of the experience of some Chinese immigrants who worked in a Colorado mine:

In general ethnic antagonism towards the Irish in the West was mild in comparison to what they had experienced in the East. They no longer occupied the lowest social and labor stratum, which was reserved for the Chinese and other racial minorities (Wei in Hom 1995, p. 185).

Because they were a people who so obviously had racial differences with the majority of U.S. society, not only were they regarded as second-class, but often as lower than human.

A derogatory name for the Chinese and later Japanese is “Yellow peril” which demandingly referred to their skin color. Another term of distaste applied by racially intolerant Americans was “Chink” which represented a heightened attempt to distinguish as an out-group

and stigmatize the Chinese. According to my adviser, Joseph Alter, “Chink refers to the slant of the eyes characteristic of East Asian individuals. “Chink”, “is a demeaning reference to a feature of biological difference that is thought to signify deceit and shady business practice” (Joseph Alter, Personal Communication, April 2011).

The commonalities that the early Chinese and Asian Indians share are salient for this analysis; non-caucasianness *and* exotic language usage. Both served to keep outside of the mainstream these groups.

The common pattern of stereotyping, negative and positive, is primarily motivated by issues of class; the skills with which immigrant groups are documented as having arrived, the extent to which they were allowed to cultivate their skills and the barriers in place that prevented them from pursuing their talents, all factor into the scheme of how stereotypes develop. The apparent pattern is that immigrants who entered as laborers are regarded as second-class whereas immigrants who entered as skilled professionals have attributed to them the insidious Model Minority stereotype, a trend that prevails until today.

3.0 ASIAN INDIANS IN AMERICA, PIONEERS TO PRESENT

3.1 EARLY INDIAN ARRIVALS TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Later waves of groups and individuals from all around the world who came as professionals (mainly post-1965), often hailing from the upper echelons of their home societies, are accepted today as Model Minorities because they offered important skills that served the U.S.'s political and economic interests. The fact that the stereotype continues to be placed on second-generation Asian Indian immigrant children whose life experiences are not the same as their often entrepreneurial parents is the point that I want to draw attention to now.

By first discussing a brief recounting of the earliest Asian Indian arrivals and later with more detailed focus on the 1965-onward Asian Indian wave of immigration, I outline the birth and perpetuation of stereotyping as it developed and persists in the United States

The earliest known records of Asian Indian immigrants to the U.S. date between 1871 and 1899 when there were a total 491 individuals who were born in India living in the U.S. Also, according to the 1900 U.S. census, 2,050 "Indians" immigrated to the country. It is important to note that there is little evidence available as to the ethnic or religious background of these people; all we know is that they were born in India. Between 1901 and 1910, 5,800 immigrants from India are recorded. The majority were married male workers seeking to earn money so that they could remit it to their wives and families in India with the ultimate goal often

being to buy land in India after amassing approximately \$2,000.00. By 1914, new immigration from India was down significantly with only 172 Asian Indians on the books for that year. An enforcement of a newly established literacy test precluded many Asians (and certainly other non-English-speaking individuals as well, although this point is not emphasized here) from entering the U.S. at that time. Then, only students, skilled professionals, ministers or religious teachers, and travelers were allowed to attempt the literacy test.

By the 1920s, naturalization became an issue for the first-generation of Asians, especially in reference to Japanese and Asian Indians. It is estimated that approximately 100 Asians of various national origins became naturalized into the U.S. in the 1920s. There Followed a 1922 Supreme Court case, *Ozawa Vs. U.S.*, wherein a long-domiciled, fully-aculturated Japanese man was unanimously deemed ineligible for naturalization on the grounds that he was not Caucasian. In 1923, a U.S. citizen, Bhagat Singh Thind, had his status revoked on the grounds that—despite his being Caucasian—he was not white in the “understanding of the common man.” The final court case related to this historical trajectory of Indian Immigrants in the U.S. came to the Supreme Court in 1926 and was the first to be won by an Asian Indian against the U.S. government. The defendant, Sakharam Ganesh Pandit, a California-trained lawyer represented himself in court and proved that his citizenship had been procured legally: Pandit won that legal contest and thus set a precedent for later cases like one University of Pittsburgh class of 1911 graduate, Prafulla G. Mukerji. The following story is his legacy:

As an undergraduate in Calcutta in 1904, Mukerji helped organize boycotts of English goods and schools, and, in the backlash the agitation produced, decided to emigrate. Arriving in the U.S. in 1906, as he remembered it with \$50, he worked for a year as a hydraulic engineer in

New Jersey, was admitted to the University of Pittsburgh and graduated in 1911. He went to work for the U.S. Steel Corporation and was employed there until his retirement in 1956.

Sometime after 1915, he obtained citizenship; in 1924 he received a letter from the Attorney General of the U.S. instructing him "to show cause in court as to why your citizenship should not be revoked." Mukerji took political rather than legal course of action. On his behalf, Senator David Reed of Pennsylvania introduced a joint resolution into Congress which would permit those Asian Indians holding citizenship to keep it. The resolution died in committee, but, because of the Pandit case in 1926, Mukerji kept his citizenship. He then embarked on what may have been the first organized attempt by Asian Indian citizens to influence U.S. lawmakers: he helped establish the Hindu Citizenship Committee which worked to obtain citizenship for all Asian Indians (Daniels 1989)⁴.

By 1946, with courageous overcoming of racial intolerance through people like Sirdar Jagit Singh, the President of the India League of America, the Act of July 2, 1946, gave the right of naturalization, and a small immigration quota to "persons of races indigenous to India." By 1952, in the wake of a repeal of the above-mentioned act and of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act in December 1943, "racial and ethnic bars to immigration and naturalization were dropped." As a result, 7,000 "East Indians" entered the U.S. in the seventeen years between 1948 and 1965.

⁴ Noteworthy is the Hindu-centric legacy that this trajectory sets out.

3.2 THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASIAN MODEL MINORITY STEREOTYPE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Model Minority myth is a form of prejudice reflected in a positive stereotype that Asians work hard and are “naturally” smart, particularly in mathematics and the sciences. The term Model Minority was coined in the mid-1960s by William Petersen, a social demographer who believed that the success and achievement of Asian immigrants in the U.S. paralleled those of the Jewish immigrants who preceded them (Lee 1996, in Joshi 2006, 216). Peterson’s assertion of the Model Minority term is erroneous on two major levels: first, his appraisal of the “Jewish immigrants” puts forth the notion that these people are a homogenous group; and second, he misguidedly applies this same essentialized model of a so-called “successful” group to Asian immigrants. In both cases, Jewish and Asian, Peterson’s assertion is unreasonably generalized and is therefore inaccurate. According to my literature review, the first mass media articulation of the insidious Asian stereotype was published in December 1966, when *U.S. News and World Report* put out an article lauding the success of Chinese immigrants. This article reflected the public attitude towards Asian immigrants and simultaneously perpetuated it. The basic function of the stereotype was that, “U.S. society...idealized Asian immigrants and defined them collectively as hard-working, smart, high-achieving people of good cultures (Lee 1996 and Winnick 1990 in Saran 2007).

The multi-faceted political and social processes that were at work during the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. illuminate the Asian Model Minority stereotype. Then President Lyndon B. Johnson endorsed the idea of a “Great Society.” This was the notion that the U.S. could progress socially and politically if it could rid itself of racial injustice and poverty. This initiative was the catalyst for many political reforms including the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act

(PL-89-236). This law abolished the 1924 National Origins system which, up to that point, had restricted to minimal levels the number of Asians permitted to immigrate to the U.S.

Between the years 1970 and 2002, 1,005,100 immigrants came from India to the U.S. This period marked a time when the Civil Rights Movement was emotionally charged for minorities of sundry backgrounds. For Asian immigrants who were coming to start new lives in the U.S. in unprecedented numbers during this politically-charged time in U.S. history, the prejudiced mentality manifested itself in the form of a Model Minority stereotype based on racial prejudice.

This wave of Asians included individuals from the Indian Subcontinent, usually men with skilled labor abilities in the Sciences and Engineering. The occupations that these Asian men were trained in were advantageous to the U.S. government's national security. Their skills were more cheaply utilized than domestically-trained professionals. The goal that Asian Immigrant labor served at the time was to advance America's technological development in the then ongoing arms race with the Soviet Union.

What happened socially to Asian skilled immigrant laborers was quite insidious. Unlike the bigoted racism against earlier groups of "old", "new" and early non-Caucasian laborers/farmers immigrants described in chapter 2, the Model Minority stereotype expected members from the post-1965 Asian immigrant wave to live up to an impossible standard. For the ABCDs in this study, application of this stereotype by outside forces like first-generation parents and the pre-9/11 host society manifests itself as internalized angst (discussed in Chapter 5).

In place of recognizing Asian immigrants for their hard work and dedication towards the greater good of the U.S.'s economy, the media propagated the Model Minority stereotype based

on social class and education to give the illusion of a complimentary disposition by the American public toward the Asian immigrants. Lee even asserts that the Model Minority myth was used to ignore the demands of African American Citizens and other minority groups for equal rights. He claims that the governing sociopolitical establishment in power during the American Civil Rights movement used Asian immigrant achievement, “as an example to other minority groups to seek educational and economic success without governmental assistance” (Lee 2005 and Osajima 1988 in Saran 2007). The Model Minority myth, therefore, caused minority groups to be jealously resentful of Indians. At the same time, the host society was using Asians for economic advantage, but not aiding in the process of their being accepted by those minorities whose difference was equated with inferiority by the Caucasian Americans who represented the majority.

Since September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the U.S. largely modified its previous open-door policy toward immigration of South Asians to the U.S. According to Nafziger, “Several proposals even called for the amendment of our Constitution to deny citizenship to children of noncitizens” (Nafziger 2009). It is this kind of anti-immigrant sentiment that situates the study at hand, one that examines the difficulties and barriers that the ABCD informants face as people, because of their complexion (seemingly “Middle Eastern”, “brown” sometimes deplorably referred to as “sand nigger”) and exotic-sounding names. In short, they are viewed as akin to terrorists because of their affiliation with an “over there” that the U.S. has been at war with for the last decade. The perceived divided loyalties of South Asians by those members of the dominant U.S. culture who are racially intolerant have increased because of nativist-born governmental initiatives intensified when President George W. Bush was in office. The development of the Department of Homeland

Security—specifically the office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement—has largely been responsible for overreaction to newcomers in the last nine years (Nafziger 2009). This newest form of discrimination based on racial intolerance is not insidious like the Model Minority stereotype. Rather, this overt racism is born from a disposition that bigoted Americans have developed over the course of the first decade of the 21st-century in response to 9/11. This mentality of suspicion against South Asians in the U.S., particularly against males, has resulted in unreasonable assumptions of connection to terrorist networks in the Middle East, superficially presumed on the basis of supposed physical resemblance to Muslim extremists/terrorists.

It is important to note that this sense of Indian affinity with America-hating Muslim extremism is a phenomenon which American media coverage sources have largely perpetuated.

The effect that this post-9/11 public attitude adjustment has on my ABCD informants is divergent. In one case, it is my understanding that the post-9/11 stigmatization is part of the daily experience of angst-inducing suspicion⁵. Some ABCDs experience a double burden of prejudice that is complicated and inherently contradictory. While trying to live up to expectations of high achievement and success they are sometimes treated with suspicion and fear. Although I only encountered this bigoted post-9/11 “anti-brown man” sentiment with Manmit, the point is still universally applicable to South Asians. The ambient sense of being an unwelcome minority comes from instances of famous people like that Sharukh Kahn being

⁵ This applied to Manmit, the informant who was raised in the notoriously racially intolerant American south and who attends a University of Pittsburgh satellite campus in rural Pennsylvania. Also, Manmit is the informant who I have known for the longest and the occasion to broach this personal topic have come up more frequently than with the other informants who I met afterwards. All of these are factors that contribute to what may otherwise seem like a unique and isolated case.

subjected to “racial profiling” on August 15th 2009 when he was pulled aside because his Khan surname. Despite his fame and success as a movie star, Mr. Khan was pulled aside at the JFK airport for secondary screening for his Muslim last name and appearance.

The factor that complicates this notion of negative public opinion towards Asian Indians is the reality that all of my informants’ first-generation immigrant parents still expect high academic achievement. In the interest of gaining increased upward mobility as the second-generation ages, this parental hope is rational. However, there is a disconnect between the parents and their ABCD sons and daughters that instills a feeling of loneliness evident in my informant’s narratives: not only does the public now have a negatively-charged misunderstanding of their identity; but their parents expect of them a seemingly impossible level of success and achievement.

3.3 ANALYZING U.S. IMMIGRANT IDENTITY

Many scholars from varying fields have studied identity from a vast range of perspectives. Here, the phenomenon is approached from the perspective of a few scholars whose examination of Indian identity is based on participant observation and/or empirical data. Relatively few writings that I have examined deal directly with Indian-American individuals’ day-to-day struggle with identity, especially among ABCDs.

Authors like Sunania Maria and filmmakers such as Kabir Khan have considered the discrimination towards South Asians in the U.S. targeted towards the Muslim population of the diaspora. However, despite their not being “Jihadists” or even practicing Muslims, they feel the impact of prejudice born of rekindled nativism among those members of U.S. society who do not

know—nor care to learn—the differences between groups of immigrants whose countries of origin are in South Asia and/or the Middle East. As Maria found in her 2008 study of U.S.-Muslim South Asian youths, I also conclude that my ABCD subjects are seen suspiciously by those members of the U.S. society who are racially intolerant (Maria 2008, p.132). Since South Asians are a relatively new diasporic community, the level of public understanding of them in terms of religious or philosophic diversity and/or varied regional origin is limited.

Few studies examine some of the struggles of ABCDs. Rupam Saran’s study from 2008, which looks at ABCD students in middle and high school, speaks to *some* of the issues that the informants here face. Another by Joshi from 2006 deals with ABCD alienation in high school contexts as well. Barring possible case studies of second-generation individuals in other western nations whose Asian Indian populations are substantial⁶, participant observation studies on Indian diaspora identity negotiation in western contexts, are largely limited to textual analysis. A select number of films from the late 1980s through the first decade of the 21st century deal with issues facing the second generation Asian Indians in the U.S. (see “Movies Consulted” in the notes section for an annotated enumeration of these films). The ethnographic observations of five ABCD college students and the literature that appears in my notes are the sole data that are analyzed here.

6 Namely, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

3.3.1 The Indian Diaspora Population in the United States of America

Some scholars describe diaspora through the paradigm of the Jewish diaspora, a population scattered in earlier migrations by force and later waves often by choice to pursue upward mobility (Mishra 1996). While the forceful framework of population migration applies to some diaspora populations in various contexts, the families of my informants are of the latter type. More recently, some scholars have broadened the definition to be more inclusive of all immigrant communities, describing it as a, “somewhat diffuse formulation that is used to describe any immigrant community” (Maira 2008). Another way of looking at the phenomenon of diaspora has been to describe the psychology behind identity negotiation at the individual level. The individual reasoning in this line of logic describes the process of finding belonging amidst nostalgia for home: “Desire for a nation might be a realm of active identity-production, a mode of living in the world of transition, while hybridity may leave its component (and national) parts intact” (Shukla 2003). Still others look at the Indian diaspora in terms of transnationalism, that is an existence, “...based on the concrete, strategic ways in which immigrant communities ‘forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement’ through economic, political and cultural ties (Basch et al in Maira 2008, p. 133).”

However, none that I have encountered to date have more aptly described the phenomenon of Indian immigrant communities more thoroughly than Rajan and Sharma who abandon the “diaspora” label altogether. In the context of the U.S. in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, they use a different descriptor, “New Cosmopolitans.” They describe South Asians in the U.S. as mobile beings, physically, culturally and ideologically. Their characterization of a New Cosmopolitan type of person is:

[one who] blur[s] the edges of home and abroad by continuously moving physically, culturally, and socially, and by selectively using globalized forms of travel, communication, languages, and technology to position themselves in motion between at least two homes, sometimes even through dual forms of citizenship, but always in multiple locations (through travel, or through cultural, racial, or linguistic modalities (Rajan and Sharma 2006, Pp. 2-3).

The movement aspect of this New Cosmopolitan paradigm is reminiscent of the multiple media forms which constitute today's lived experience of several forms of information sources that pervade and define our increasingly technological environment. They posit that those belonging to this New Cosmopolitan population of Indians in the U.S. reside within in-between realms or, "spaces of identity, culture, and of ethnic nationalism as well as old assimilative logic of host cultures" (Rajan and Sharma 2006). The difference here is that the New Cosmopolitan paradigm avoids the dichotomized paradigm of immigrant vs host society member. This outlook on the Indian diaspora avoids the disunion of newcomer immigrant and citizen because this logic inaccurately defines both groups. Basically, the New Cosmopolitan view provides a more flexible framework which accounts for the inevitable differences which occur on the basis of class, political view, generation, gender, and other variables.

The flexible, mobile, accommodating nature of this New Cosmopolitan paradigm applies to each subject in this study. Despite their seeming mastery of context-based cultural role switching between host culture (college demands and other interactions with the outside world) and family obligation (Indian diasporic parental expectations), they are not always able or willing to live up to the normative standards placed on them by these two outside forces.

My informants are all the children of post-1965, pre-1985 immigrant parents whose careers are white collar. I assert that despite their family's middle to upper-middle-class statuses, they suffered from the application of positive stereotyping from both their parents and that of the majority society during their pre-9/11 childhoods. Perhaps the same unreasonably high educational expectations that the ABCD high schoolers from the Saran and Joshi studies experienced also affected my informants. The fact that all of them have parents who expected them to successfully pursue studies conventionally associated with lucrative job eligibility and have struggled to achieve this standard is important. Furthermore, the parental pressures I have observed being placed on my informants with regard to education and marriage partner prospecting constitutes a stress-inducing dimension of the Model Minority phenomenon for these individuals.

The parents of the five ABCDs analyzed here are all from India and have fought their way (academically and personally) to gain entry to the U.S. to earn degrees in higher education as a matter of personal ambition (and perhaps parental pressure of their own). Their parents came to this country during a time when the U.S. government's perceived need for high-skilled labor in the face of an arms and technology race with the Soviet Union was very high (Chan, 1991 in Maria in Raghuram, 2008). Prevailing parental standards of exemplary minority status for their children, contrasts with the relatively newly-born negative stereotypes of dominant culture in the post 9/11 U.S. social climate.

3.3.2 Parental Trends in the Community That Try to Maintain a Positive Image and Why They Fail

According to Saran, the persistence of the Model Minority stereotype is a, “political act to mask oppression and marginalization of minorities.” According to Saran, four major political aims have been achieved by the Model Minority discourse:

1. Providing a distinguished status externally made Asians feel obliged and appreciative of white policymakers. This created fear among Asians who might want to demand something from the dominant society lest they lose their “prized status.”
2. Overlooking the needs of Asian Americans who by virtue of this pigeon-holing are constantly reminded that they do not need or deserve assistance because they are intrinsically successful academically and economically.
3. Creating separation among minorities to such a degree that Asian Americans are perceived by other minorities to be untrustworthy. This is possible because the Model Minority status is defined by others and thus instills a notion of disempowerment in the Asian immigrant community, and it manipulates individuals to form their identity within a hegemonic framework.
4. Assuming that all Asian Americans are obedient, submissive, that they believe in conformity and respect authority. (Goodwin 2003 in Saran 2008, Pp. 75-76).

The political factors posited above applied largely to the pre- 9/11 first generation of South Asians in America (i.e. the post-1965 pre-1980 professional parents of ABCDs such as those in this study). The argument here is that the above historically-rooted political factors are what established the Model Minority reality that socially affects my informants in this examination.

One way that the ABCD community constructs their identities is by internalizing parental and external expectations and pressures (Saran 2008, p. 75). Saran posits that for ABCDs in general, deviance from an academic major other than pre-medicine, pre-law, or engineering results in a disappointed family because of subsequent failure to live up to the Model Minority status.

The ethnographic present of this examination situates the informants between two life stages and cultural realms. The time period during which I performed participant observation with these five was during their college years. The significance of this is that their leisure activities coincide greatly with the kind of path they are taking. I argue that individual niches symbolized by the informants' extracurricular activities are indicators of the adherence to or divergence from family and/or dominant cultural expectations. All are insular on some level, a tendency which, I argue, demonstrates their feelings of being outsiders to the U.S. mainstream society.

3.3.3 Post-September 11th 2001 Social Stigma towards South Asians in the United States of America

Important for an understanding of the cultural context that ABCDs occupy in this study is an acknowledgement of the fact that they are examined during a time period when many U.S. residents have developed unfounded suspicion towards the South Asians among them. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), reported hate crimes against those *believed to be Muslim* in 2001 increased by 1,600% from the previous year in the FBI's own estimate" [italics added for emphasis] (Nguyen in Maira 2008, p.135). Added on to the stress-inducing Model Minority fantasy still held by my informant's parents since 9/11, is the nativist views of

racially intolerant U.S. citizens who see people like Manmit and/or Pradeep (who have in common their self-identified characteristic of being “brown men”) as somehow threatening. Maira explains that Americans who fear South Asians are basically unreasonably nervous, “[the] social and national anxieties in the U.S. about how Muslim, South Asian, and Arab Americans will position themselves in relation to the nation state and what kinds of citizens they will become.” She then goes on to describe these individuals in the context of the post-9/11 U.S. culture as, “being regarded generally as *suspicious individuals*... or are at least seen as having *divided loyalties* during a time when national unity is imperative [italics my own]” (Maria 2008, p.132).

In terms of the lived experience of my informants, this seems to run along gender lines most obviously. For the two males in this study, especially Manmit, the daily angst born of suspicion is palpable. The following is an example from my field notes:

We were at the gas station in Bradford Pennsylvania once in October of 2009. Manmit was pumping my gas while I waited in the car. Half way through the pumping process, a baby-boomer-aged Caucasian couple pulled into the station in a white SUV with a bumper sticker that read, “McCain-Palin 2008” on the back bumper and a front license plate bedecked with a bald eagle/American flag motif. By chance, Manmit finished filling his gas tank and happened to walk into the store to pay at the same time as the red-white-and-blue-clad couple. Evidentially in an attempt to protect her, the husband grabbed his wife by the waist so that she would walk farthest away from Manmit (field notes, October 2009). When Manmit returned to the car, he confided, “Fucking white people! It is like they think I am a terrorist just because I have brown skin, am unshaven, and have a big nose” (personal communication, October 2009).

While gender clearly played a factor in the above scenario, men being the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks and thus the target demographic of South Asians to be subjected to such misguided gestures of unwelcomeness, I assert that this surely has an impact on the women of the community as well: in the sense that this kind of misunderstanding is psychologically damaging for ABCD men like Manmit, certainly his female counterparts sense the confusion and become affected as well, only in an indirect way. The ambient sense of impending terrorist attacks on our nation (perpetuated by the media sources) are largely internalized by conservative and/or uneducated Americans.

One study attempts, “to provide a more grounded analysis of diaspora in relation to empire today” (Maira, 2008 P. 132). In that study the “experiences of South Asians in the US after 9/11 within the framework of empire helps to illuminate their relationship to the state and to understand the role of various South Asian diasporic communities in the global world order as shaped by US policy.” Its main goal is to situate the experiences of the youth within the political context of the aftermath of 9/11 through cultural representations, public discourses, state institutions, and social relations (Maira 2008, p. 137). The findings of Maria’s study help to illuminate—if even partially—the struggle that ABCDs go through as people who have unreasonable stereotypes placed on them by the dominant society.

Another author broaches the issue of inter-religious struggle stating, “while some Indian Americans have spoken out against racism and Islamophobia in America as being a problem for all, regardless of religion or nationality, others have responded by distancing themselves from Muslims and Arabs rather than extending support” (Maria 2008, p. 35). Manmit practices the silence tactic as a social survival technique stating in an informal interview from 2010, “I already have people looking at me funny, not to be rude, but I have enough problems living in this

country and don't really want to create more for myself by standing up for other peoples' problems, I have enough of my own" (personal communication, July 2010). Manmit's sentiment reverberates among the other informants whose primary concern is to counter act the prejudice (miss) directed at them, rather than take a public stand in support of Muslims experiencing prejudice.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 RESEARCH METHODS

During the most active period of the study, from February 2010-February 2011, I was in the midst of completing my last two academic years of college at the University of Pittsburgh, the institution which all of the informants also attended. I took a mixed-methods approach of written response, personal (face-to-face) interaction, text-based communication (through both internet chat and cellular text messaging interfaces), video interview, and video observation all of which serve as data for this study. By observing these five diversely opinionated individuals as they progressed through their college careers from the point of initial contact through to their senior year, a broad understanding of their life stories becomes apparent.

The main data that this analysis draws on comes from responses to questionnaires that the five informants filled out for me between the months of May and August of 2010. These documents are a record of facts about them that deal with family-influenced obligation, religious outlook, academic major, preferred leisure pastimes, and how they think about their lives after college.

I also draw from observations made of the individuals from 2005-2010 during which initial and ongoing contact took place, usually—but not always—on a one-on-one basis. I interviewed on camera three of the five informants. These video interviews took place in three

different locations and times between February and June 2010. The first of the three one-on-one video interviews happened in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S., during the month of February 2010, the second in Dhrangadhra, Gujarat, India, in May 2010, and the third in Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India, in June, 2010. Additionally, during my time in India, I filmed candid interactions between two informants' and their extended family members in Rajkot, Gujarat, India and Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India, respectively.

The five informants are a small pool of second-generation Indians whose varying outlooks represent a broad range of coping mechanisms that help them manage the stress of mediating the two disparate realms of private and public life. It is noteworthy that I selected them on the basis of their personal belief diversity, a tactic which shows a much broader scope of ABCD outlooks. Raised in the U.S., their life stories are meaningfully demonstrative of a coming together of two worlds whose philosophies are drastically different from the dominant U.S. accepted outlook (i.e. Christian). Their depth of understanding of these two discordant cultures, U.S. and Indian, as I have come to understand it, requires a great deal of self-awareness. My informants all have deep compassion for those who occupy one or the other cultural "realm" and are cognizant of their societal positioning between the two.

The term "realm," as it is used here, refers to the private space of the elder Indian generation and the public space of the dominant U.S. culture respectively. The conflict between them, often based on imagined contradictions between the two realms, creates a complicated and contradictory reality for ABCDs. These spaces must be navigated by my informants on a regular basis and constitute a daily place-based struggle of identity negotiation for them (Miller in Raghuram 2008, p. 285). These individuals are dependents of the portion of the immigrant parents from India whose class status and educational achievements are from the relatively

privileged segment of the Asian Indian group (Sangha in Raghuram, 2008, p. 139). Their parents' occupations place them comfortably within the middle to upper-middle class of U.S. society. Arthur Helweg describes it well in this 1990 study of successful Sikh immigrants in the U.S. when he says, "Those with professional and business orientation do not constitute a majority but comprise an important segment of the community in terms of numbers, wealth, and political influence for both the U.S. and India" (Helweg and Helweg 1990, p. 5). Conservative-mindedness among the first generation of Asian Indians, as embodied by politicians like Bobby Jindal, underscores the complicated and contradictory reality for my ABCD informants. This is related to how each informant finds ways to short-circuit and/or bypass entry into mainstream American culture.

In the final analysis, this treatment is an account of the struggle that second-generation Indians face as members of a model minority. The prevailing polar pressures of family and host culture, while seemingly benign, create a need for personal space from both realms that is realized in the relatively fleeting moment of college life. Not only are they in between two cultures, but also between two life stages, the only point at which individual autonomy is exercised as yet. All of them have different stories but are ultimately desirous of acceptance from both cultural realms. The caveat that makes this balance difficult for them at the stage of life that the ethnographic present here situates them is that they want distance enough that their own choices can weigh in on their lives' circumstances. Their view points are all divergent but are fraught, ultimately with what I call ABCD angst.

4.2 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This research looks at a small sample of five ABCD college students at the University of Pittsburgh and how they perceive themselves in relation to the dominant U.S. culture and their Indian diasporic families. Five people may seem like a negligible sample, however, these five, by virtue of the sundry ABCD paradigms that they represent are, in fact, representative voices of a much larger group. While many works have studied the first-generation Indian immigrants in the U.S., few writings to date examine the lived experience of these immigrants' offspring from their own perspectives in the wake of September 11th, 2001. These ABCD individuals are people who are creating their own place within the U.S. in magnificently diverse ways. Although the children of immigrants often experience anxiety as a result of being radically different from their parents, ABCDs embody a set of profound contradictions and paradoxes.

Some of the questions that help to get at these contradictions and paradoxes are as follows: How does a parent's heritage, culture, and religion influence a child? Do children embrace their parents' religion because of influence from their families or due to other causes, such as estrangement from the U.S. society? How actively do they practice their religion? Are they frustrated with life, or are they eagerly pursuing careers, goals, and education? How do they cope with the post- 9/11 stigma of either direct or family member-targeted racism? What are their attitudes towards marriage? Do they wish to marry outside of the Indian community, within, or not at all? What are their outside of the classroom activities and what do these behaviors indicate about them?

This research is based on five case studies of ABCD college students. It looks closely at their perception of and role in changing and affecting their destiny in the U.S., as citizens with voting rights and as a growing minority that is changing the demographics of the U.S. They are

also crucial politically as young members of a Model Minority group (whose viewpoints may be different from mainstream Americans but may not have strength in numbers as voters). These young adults can affect the perception of South Asian and Middle Eastern people in the U.S. and throughout North America. By studying their identity, the reasons behind their feelings of anger, hatred, angst and covert behavior and disillusionment can be revealed, so that these feelings that lead to distress can be changed and situations and lives improved

5.0 FIVE ABCD CASE STUDIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE INFORMANTS

All of the informants' names are aliased to protect their identities. In this section, interview material from each of the research subjects will be presented and analyzed in the context of the United States Post-9/11 culture. In general, however, the common theme for all of the informants is that they feel as though they do not fit in either at home or at school and that they have each developed ways to release stress associated with this tension. What is unique for this group is that they are managing the dual cultural expectations of their Indian families and the U.S. culture.

This section looks at the five research subjects self-reported upbringings, includes some key personal anecdotes that reflect their college experience, and describes how these individuals view themselves in relation to the next step in their lives. Important to this treatment is what lies ahead: marriage and the expectation to start a family. Although this is an expectation that most parents have, in the context Indian immigrants and their children it is an expectation that highlights the achievement oriented ideals that are integral to the Model Minority myth as well as a sense of nostalgia on the part of the parents for a sense of continuity with their Indian heritage.

5.1.1 “Savita”

Savita is 21-years old, born in Brooklyn, New York. She holds citizenship in the U.S. and is applying for Non-Resident Indian (NRI) citizenship to India. She is a traditional⁷ undergraduate student who will graduate in May 2011. After college, she plans to obtain a masters degree in Public Health with self-reported intentions to then apply to medical school. She reports a religious affiliation with Jainism and Neuroscience (she explains that the latter is a belief in explaining religious beliefs scientifically). She goes to the Hindu Jain Temple in Pittsburgh about 5-10 times per year (depending on how family schedules coordinate). She is a Political Science and Neuroscience double major whose top three leisure activities are dancing Bhangra, hanging out with friends, and reading/watching T.V. and movies.

Basically, she feels more at home in the U.S. where other second-generation Indians surround her on a daily basis. She is a captain of the Steel City Bhangra team, a predominantly ABCD-populated University of Pittsburgh Oakland campus student organization that allows her to share with peers in the experience of being Indian in America. She has a boyfriend who would conventionally fit the criteria of her parents for a future marriage partner; however, they would disapprove of the fact that they are together while still completing their schooling. For this reason, their relationship is secret from “Mumi-Papa,” the combined names she uses whenever referring to her parents. Her living in a house that is located near the University of Pittsburgh

⁷ Traditional here just means in the sense that the subject is graduating on time following the completion of high school; in the United States, the standard for this is four years after high school graduation.

campus allows her to spend leisure time with this significant other when not otherwise occupied by class or extracurricular activities. It is noteworthy that this phenomenon would not be feasible if she or he were not enjoying the relative freedoms of U.S. college lifestyle.

As the daughter of a well-respected physician tough expectations to maintain tradition prevail in her life. The expectation to be non-violent in the Jain religion extends into all facets of her life. The conviction to be vegetarian, to marry someone who is lacto-vegetarian, and to abstain from any use of alcohol, has proven to be difficult to manage on all fronts for Savita who is often surrounded by people who cannot even fathom such restrictions. This is evidenced by the fact that her boyfriend is a vegetarian (although he does often eat eggs) and also by the fact that she has consumed alcohol. Savita must be covert about her relationship and some of her on-campus leisure activities both of which fly in the face of her parents and extended family members' idea of what is appropriate for Savita as a yet unmarried Jain woman.

Below are Savita's self-reported Leisure activities:

Dancing *Bhangra* for the University of Pittsburgh "Steel City Bhangra" team activity is an activity that constitutes the main thrust of Savita's extracurricular activities outside of—and sometimes in excess of time to—coursework obligations. As the Captain of the women's troupe of this team, "Steel City Girls," she not only spends time in practice—about four days per week for three to four hours—but she also spends extra time outside of practice choreographing routines, filling out colligate dance competition applications, coordinating the meeting times, and managing the costumes. She admits that her father does become frustrated with the fact that this takes away from her study time, and that he often inquires, "Why do you dance so much? You waste so much time!" (Personal communication, November 2008). With so much time and physical energy dedicated to this competitive dance pursuit, it is no surprise that many of her

best friends and significant other are also members of Steel City Bhangra. “Dancing is my happy place!” Savita once proclaimed when I asked her what drives her to give so much of her leisure time to Steel City Bhangra (personal communication, November 2008).

Evidentially, Savita’s connection with this dance form helps bring her closer to other ABCDs but also allows her to interpret (through creating choreography) her ideas of what Indianess can be for ABCDs. She is experimenting, exploring, and discovering herself constantly through the Bhangra dance medium.

Hanging out with Friends is another activity that Savita includes as time outside of Steel City Bhangra practice and rehearsal time (although she often does so with members of the team, including her boyfriend). In general, this is an activity that occurs in tandem with studying during week days and final examination time. On the weekends, however, she does hang out with some friends and consumes alcohol occasionally.

In Gujarat, where Savita’s family is from, alcohol is a banned substance. As a Jain, Savita is not supposed to drink alcohol as part of the religious doctrine. These two prohibitions on Savita damaged the relationship between her and her mother and father; the trust was gone. Now, over two years later, she must keep another secret from her family, her boyfriend. The two started their relationship in the Spring of 2010 and remain a couple to date. The fact that she is in a romantic relationship at all (let alone with a non-Jain) would be forbidden, and this information could again damage the already compromised relationship that Savita now has with her parents in the wake of the alcohol consumption/suicide attempt of 2008. This secretiveness is a tactic that must be maintained in order for family tensions not to rise to an intolerable level:

If my parents found out that I was doing something else ‘wrong’ [namely, that she is involved in a sexual relationship with a man who is both not Jain and who is not her

husband or even a suitor chosen by her family], things would be really bad for me” (personal communication, May 2010).

The nature of this relationship as it relates to the next step in a lay-Jain’s life, namely heterosexual marriage is divergent from what would traditionally be expected of her given that it is a covert behavioral choice. Nonetheless, this choice to be covert allows Savita to depart from her parents’ unreasonable expectations for her as a young ABCD Jain while still keeping parental distrust at bay.

Savita is found of reading novels for leisure; this is an activity that she reports doing often when on family vacations since friends are not around during that time. Perhaps, this is one way that she copes with the angst of being around her family since reading is a pastime that she reports doing often whenever she is on vacation and spending exclusive time with her family. Being occupied in a book perhaps stems any extensive inquires about arranged marriage prospects, a topic which she describes as unpleasant and unwelcome. In September of 2010, I attended a Hindu-Jain Temple ceremony with Savita where reading notes for an upcoming Neuroscience exam served as buffer material between she and her mother. During the ceremonies, a Jain-Icon statue auction took place in order to raise money for the temple. It was evidentially the expectation that young devotees like Savita hold each statue as it was bet on. When Savita had finished taking her turn standing in front of the entire congregation, she

confided to me, “I hate standing for the bidding at this event each year because I feel like a contestant for *shaddi.com*⁸” (Personal Communication, September 2010).

Watching Television and Movies

This activity is one that normally happens when she is spending time with friends on the weekends and does not have Bhangra obligations. Given her heavy involvement with Bhangra, this activity does not often happen. However, when it does, it is usually accompanied by American friends who sometimes are imbibing.

5.1.2 “Manmit”

Manmit is 24 years old, was born in Mineola, New York, and is a U.S. citizen. He self-identifies as an Agnostic who goes to temple as often as necessary to appease his Hindu family, approximately once per year or less. His mother is from Jammu City, Jammu and Kashmir and his father is from Chandigarh, Punjab India. Manmit is from a family who would rather he not date at all, let alone someone outside of the Indian community. When he was 18 years old, intercultural dating is just what he did. Forging a signature on a letter from a fictitious college in upstate New York, Manmit headed up to that state from his parent’s home in Pennsylvania to stay with his new, and first, girlfriend in her home. After three months of separation from his family, the Caucasian-American woman broke ties with him due to his refusal to have sex with

⁸ *Shaddi* is the Hindi word for marriage. *Shaddi.com* is an online social networking site, the main function of which is for members of the South Asian community to post biographical data with the ultimate goal of getting matched with a suitor for marriage.

her, and Manmit returned to an angry Hindu mother and father in Pennsylvania. Manmit's relationship with his immediate family was transformed from that experience, but they accepted him back into the family, albeit with a degree of distrust. A few months later, Mamnit met another Caucasian-American woman at a local grocery store where he had held a part-time job. She and he went steady for about four months when she too broke the relationship off and exchanged Manmit for another man willing to have sex with her before establishing a committed relationship. This discordance with U.S. promiscuity is one that Manmit struggles with to this day. "I get shy in public when I hold hands with my current girlfriend of five years and I plan to marry her!" Manmit said to me once in conversation (personal communication, November 2010).

Having graduated high school in 2004, he attended the University of Scranton as a pre-medicine track student majoring in Biology for two full academic years (August 2004-May 2005 and August 2006-May 2007) before he finally dropped out. After he'd completed his 4th semester in the Spring of 2007, Manmit had failed all of his courses. He was depressed and overwrought with parental pressures to fulfill the Model Minority standards which were so unreasonable that when he did not meet them, he became depressed and starting skipping class. I retell his story in detail now following the University of Scranton drop-out through to the present year:

The summer of 2007, out of ideas for what to do, he moved in with a retired English professor whom I here call Robert. Robert taught English for 25 years before retiring and took Manmit in after having met him at a local Burger King. Manmit moved in within months of dropping out from the university. After a few months of depressed feelings, he eventually decided to attend trucking school in Indiana where he obtained the appropriate license and worked for several months as a truck driver. After deciding that trucking was not a career path for him, he moved on from that endeavor, returned to his new home with Robert in Pennsylvania

to regroup. After enrolling in a local community college near Robert's home for the Spring semester of 2008, he started taking courses and decided that he was displeased with his prospects there as well. He then applied to the University of Pittsburgh where his girlfriend was enrolled and after being rejected from the main campus was alternatively able to gain admission to the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. Manmit returned to college with 43 transferrable credits under his belt at the age of 22 where he matriculated as a sophomore in the fall of 2008. As a non-traditional student, he is on track to graduate in December of 2011 with a degree in biology.

Following graduation, Manmit plans to either enter graduate school and pursue the biological sciences or an allied health career called Cardiac Perfusion. The former is a career path that he hopes would lead to professorship, and the latter is an option that would result in his joining the business that his father works for following graduation.

He plans to marry his girlfriend, a Caucasian woman who attends the University of Pittsburgh main campus. While his girlfriend does not meet the criteria that his family would typically approve of, their relationship is not covert. Over their five years of unbroken togetherness, his family, Manmit reports, welcomes her with open arms whenever the two visit on college breaks. While he asserts that he plans to marry this current partner, he notes that if he and his girlfriend were to break up, he believes his parents would revisit the arranged marriage idea and he would not be opposed. He attributes this to the fact that he is not shallow and believes that he could love anyone, regardless of race, if she were to be his wife.

He enjoys computer games, botany, and listening to music. And so this informant's college life autonomy manifests mainly as individual autonomy since he is physically separated both from his significant other and his family during the majority of the year (during the

academic year). Emotionally, however, this informant has cultivated solidarity between life partner and family.

Below are his self-reported leisure activities with analysis:

Since Manmit's family was mobile during most of his childhood, he moved three times to three different states between the ages of one and sixteen. He spent his grade-school years in Tampa, Florida, where he established a childhood friendship with a male peer of mixed Euro-Puerto Rican descent that lasts to this day. At age 13, he moved from Tampa, Florida to Dublin, Ohio, because his family's clothing business failed and his father was beginning schooling for a new career in Cardiac Perfusion. The first three years of high school were spent in the country bumpkin-ridden atmosphere of an Ohio public school where Manmit was one of few, if not the *only*, non-Caucasian student in the school. Finally, in his senior year, Manmit's father settled on his current career in the eastern region of Pennsylvania.

I posit that because Manmit was uprooted and moved from location to location as a child and throughout adolescence, he used computer games as a tool for socialization:

When I play video games, no one knows who I am, what I look like, or my name, and so cannot judge me as being different than them like people tend to do to me in person” (personal communication, May 2007).

This leisure activity was one that served as a coping mechanism for Manmit who felt that he could not fit in with the majority society not only because he was Indian but also because he was constantly the new kid in the classroom of predominantly Caucasian-American children. Following the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, with heightened suspicion and disapproval of those perceived to look middle eastern, Manmit's time with the MMORPG *Everquest* proved to serve as a virtual world that seemingly

allowed him to do just what the game's title promised, at least for the summers of 2002 and 2003. He recalled the time he spent on the game during those summer months:

A couple of times during those summers, I spent over 24 hours straight on the computer, my mom brought me food at the computer and begged me to stop. I just couldn't, I was hooked (Personal Communication, March 2011).

I posit that this was a response to the heightened feeling of otherness that Manmit must have felt at this point in his life. Not only was he already a racial minority whose childhood was riddled with uncertainty, having moved so frequently as his father sorted out his career, but he was also an adolescent at the time, surely going through ordinary growing pains as well.

Botany

As a biology major, Manmit is really interested in—in fact is fascinated by—all living creatures. “I love anything that is living. It is so interesting to me” he once told me in conversation. As evidence of this, he has a whole store of plants growing in his current residence including—but not limited to—an orange tree, a people tree, and tomatoes. This activity is one that is solitary in nature and that suits well Manmit's childhood feelings of societal rejection: “Animals and plants cannot judge me like people do. As long as you are gentle with them and care for them, they give of themselves” (personal communication, August 2010). Manmit connects with his Indian heritage by growing plants that are popular in India. It is a hobby that he has pursued for many years. He used to grow plants like *Tulsi*, vine, a pomegranate bush, and a pepper plant in his bedroom when he still lived with his parents, a living situation that ended in the middle of the year 2007 when Manmit began living with the Robert. Through growing an Indian garden around him, I posit that he can more fully express who he is without

using words, a mode of self-expression which in the final analysis demonstrates his personal journey for self-discovery.

Listening to music

Also in line with his tendency towards solitary activity, listening to music is a hobby that occupies much of his leisure time although more recently not always alone. Since he dropped out of the University of Scranton, he has had many life-changing experiences including the opportunity to live with a retired professor, Robert, an alumnus of the University of Scranton of Italian-Slovak Catholic family. Being able to live with Robert, a kindly father-figure, has helped him to establish healthy interaction with the majority society. The connection to music as a non-isolated activity here manifests in exposure to Opera. Thanks to Robert, Manmit now enjoys music with company, a step towards healthy but measured interaction with American people. This alternative home space allows Manmit and his girlfriend to live in close proximity to, but specifically separate from his and his girlfriend's disapproving families.

5.1.3 “Pradeep”

Pradeep is a Queen's, New York-born 21 year old. He is a member of the Christian Cavalry Church in Philadelphia, the city he calls home. Linguistics major, Pradeep can best be understood in his own words, words that are strikingly similar in dialect to African-American Vernacular English (as evidenced below in Pradeep's unaltered articulations). He is a U.S. Citizen born to Christian Kerala-natives. His Protestant Christian mother and Catholic father met via arranged marriage prospecting back in the early 1980s, and they soon moved to Tennessee. Pradeep's father had already gone to medical school in India by the time he'd moved to the U.S. He wanted to pursue research in America in biological chemistry and so got his PhD

in Tennessee while doing research. Shortly after the marriage ceremony in Tennessee, Pradeep's mother discovered that she was pregnant with her first son, Pradeep's older brother. At the time, Pradeep's mother was studying for the medical board exam (having to repeat the test since her medical degree was from India and thus null in the U.S. at that time).

To remain true to both Pradeep's speech and the internet medium through which he and I communicated here, the spelling, phrasing, and style is reproduced here from a Face Book Chat conversation. Below, is Pradeep's response to my questioning him about the current state of his parent's relationship and his relationship with his family: "they aint together no more...lol well they seem to hate each others' guts... don't got a relationship w[ith] my dad"(personal communication, February 2011).

His parents live in separate states, the father in Tennessee and his mother in Philadelphia. He lives with his aunt while he is home from school in Philadelphia during college breaks because he does not have contact with his parents or brother any longer, "i shut myself off from my household pretty much. even now, im not very close with any of them because they all pretty much still have those [negative] feelings towards me. i may have had to cut them off from my life but God's given me so many other blessings" (personal communication, February 2011). Pradeep's religious faith is an extremely important aspect of his life that he uses to guide his consciousness, "even though i aint got a relationship w my fam like most ppl do, i still love em. theyre who God gave me. cant NOT love them" (personal communication, February 2011).

Because his embracing of born-again Protestant Christian lifestyle is a choice that, I argue, allowed Pradeep to enter into main-stream American easily, it is necessary to include his account of how he did this.

Here is his own account of his religious journey, as communicated through text-based Face Book interface:

I was born (obviously) into a Christian fam. always "believed" in God but never really put it past that till i was about 18 broke up w/ Traci [his x-girlfriend] for the first time. [I] never felt so crappy in my life. [I] realized i was puttin faith in dumb crap that could wither away. thats when i wound up turnin away from puttin my faith into crap that could come and go. turned to God. ever since then.. its been, like any journey, a crazy road. good times/bad times. times where ive been close, times where i havent been close. but thank God He always brought me back. i never found God. He found me. wish i could elaborate on what exactly i did. but so is the mystery of faith. basically, (and i apologize because this could never capture it) i trusted in God. asked for Him to keep me resolute when the world around me looked so dark stared to devote every facet of my life (fighting, studying, etc.) towards Him and tried to do it all to His glory and make Him proud of what ive done. i still try.. you can always devote more (Personal Communication, February 2011).

Below are his self-reported leisure activity with analysis:

Martial Arts is an activity is one that, in my analysis, is closely related to a decided rejection of Pradeep's South Indian roots. Perhaps not permanent, nevertheless, he expresses a profound dislike for Indian culture and people. "I hate Indian people, I think that they are gross" Pradeep declared to me shortly after meeting me (personal communication, October 2009). His Caucasian x-girlfriend, Tracy, is a woman whom his family decidedly rejected when they found out about her romantic relationship with him. Once, she even ran away from Pradeep's mother in apparent fear of assault—verbal and/or physical (Pradeep never elaborated during our initial

meeting in the fall of 2009). Whatever the case, Pradeep has frustrations and he releases them by training for and participating in Mixed Martial Arts tournaments: “well fighting/teaching fighting (ive been blessed with being able to TA a boxing class at Pitt)” (personal communication, February 2011).

Here is his own account of how he integrated martial arts into his Christian lifestyle relayed through Face Book chat interface:

Pradeep: the fight world is a very hedonistic world with not too many reps for God. most fighters think about 1) fighting 2) sex 3) getting drunk/high etc as far as fighting/training (for myself) i try and show that light in the gym. whenever ppl ask me to hit the clubs/strip clubs etc i tell em no cause i got Jesus and i dont play that stuff. and random things like that where i try and show the love God's put in me. basically be a thorn in their flesh because im doing the right thing and theyre following their own fleshly desires (Personal Communication, February 2011).

Jacque: How do you perceive that people usually respond to your sharing that intimate faith with them?

Pradeep: well i try to lead by example and, besides that, reflect my faith in the random things i say. i always be talkin bout God cause He dominates my entire life. im not one of the ppl thats all about givin people gospel tracts and tellin them they need Jesus...they unconsciously ostracize me. i get left out of a lot of times when they hang out with each other. they tend to be weary about telling me things because of my faith. it is very, very lonely (Personal Communication, February 2011).

Pradeep then elaborated on how he copes with his feelings of loneliness through prayers:

but, like i was reading in my devotions this morning...the sacrifice is HUGE but the rewards is infinitely greater. fighting in itself is one of human's base instincts (to defend one's self). because of that, it brings out many hedonistic desires/actions in many ppl that dont have the direction that only comes from Christ. it in itself, just like any other sport, is very exciting though (Personal Communication, February 2011).

When I asked him how he became interested in Martial Arts, he replied with the following:

to be real, watching Rafiki beat up the hyenas in lion king is what inspired me to get into martial arts. and the good Lord gave me a talent for it. a talent which im being called to be a good steward of.. which is why i give all of it back to Him. and try to rep Him in the fight world.. which is such a dark place. my father hated it though and told me i couldnt do it so i had to stop a few months after i got into it. but i started with like kiddie karate. it was a pretty lame program but it was fun. then i got into taekwondo which is primarily a kicking art. it has some practical applications but it wasnt really the most down to earth style. my dad made me stop that too because he hated it....he was just never a fan of it. he said it made me too aggressive. i dont want to tread on his feet at all and show him his proper respect so all ill say is people will see what they want to see (Personal Communication, February 2011).

Jacque: How did you feel when your father told you that you had to stop practicing martial arts?

Pradeep: i was extremely upset. i wasnt very social at home because i was not very close with any of them. this was one outlet i had and he took it away from me. my mom didnt

agree with him but didnt have much power to say anything (Personal Communication, February 2011).

Pradeep then turned again to his faith in God to close our encounter:

you're always gonna be outcasted (to an extent) if you (REALLY) got God. He's the opposite of the world and thats why the world wont include you as much. cause they hate Him. that feeling of being different comes from having God in general. but Christ even tells us to have joy when we are shunned by this world. because the same thing happened to Him and as Christians we are supposed to follow His path. ^that's i guess how reading the Gospels have helped me.. they have reminded me of His example and basically been God's way of speaking to me and telling me im on the right track. i shut myself off from my household pretty much. even now, im not very close with any of them because they all pretty much still have those feelings towards me. i may have had to cut them off from my life but God's given me so many other blessings (Personal Communication, February 2011).

Pradeep's case is seemingly special in the sense that he aligns himself with aspects of U.S. culture that diverge saliently from the other four informants' ways of exploring. Since he is divorced so decidedly from his family, he exhibits more of a free agent quality. A self-made individual in comparison, he manifests strength from a profound faith in the unseen. Perhaps this salvation is all he has to hold on to in this world. The short-circuiting of entry into mainstream America was achieved by virtue of Pradeep's embracing American born-again Christianity.

5.1.4 “Zarreen”

Zarreen is 21 years old, born in Mumbai India, raised in Pennsylvania, and is a U.S. citizen. Although not technically American-Born, by virtue of her conscious experience, Zarreen is an ABCD (her parents brought her to the U.S. within two weeks of birth). She is a Zoroastrian, a religion that is so rare that there are no places of worship to attend outside of Iran and the Indian subcontinent. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in December 2010 with a degree in Microbiology. She is now working in an AIDS research lab for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

She enjoys playing violin and did so for the University of Pittsburgh Orchestra for seven semesters. She also enjoys reading, doing lab research, surfing the internet and spending time with friends. However, she feels a sense of isolation from the dominant society because she is a virgin and has “Old-World” values from her parents—with whom she is very close—yet yearns for understanding of how and why she is so far removed from the “...dominant white society, the society that took its modern morals from the hippie generation, the free—have sex everywhere—generation” (personal communication, February 2010). She expresses that she feels that her sex-is-taboo attitude is better understood by her “Asian friends” and confesses that she puts on a façade when she is with her “white friends.” She conjectures that she would fit in better with people from the 1950s U.S. society. She admits that no white person has ever asked her in such detail about these aspects of her life plan without her feeling threatened⁹. She expressed gratitude

⁹ I am a Caucasian female who happened to be raised in Pennsylvania as well. The reason that she does not feel threatened is superficially because I am not in competition with her for Medical School admission. However, this also relates to a general feeling of invisibility which I posit manifests from her position in society as a “brown”

for the opportunity to participate in this study. Her variety of autonomy in the college context allowed for a space to complete her studies in a locale that is physically separate from the comfortable bosom of “Old World” values held by her parents and to a considerable degree, impressed on her. Yet she unhappily faces the reality that most of those around her hold beliefs about sex that are not abstinence-only as hers are.

Suspicious of her parents’ late-decision to have a child, “My parents were about thirty seven when I came into the picture,” Zarreen suspects that she was adopted. She was born in Mumbai supposedly to parents who traveled there for her birth, brought back two weeks later to the U.S. where her parents had been living for twenty years at the time, and raised in Pennsylvania. “I look nothing like my parents” she told me once while we were taking a study break together (personal communication, December 2010).

The angst that Zarreen harbors from this thought that she’s been adopted is one that causes her to feel unsure of her parents’ motives, “If they just told me, it would not change my love for them *at all*. I would just say ‘okay’ and move on, my suspicions confirmed” (personal communication, December 2010).

Zarreen plays the violin for the University of Pittsburgh Orchestra. A dedicated microbiology major, she only pursued this singular extracurricular activity because she did not

woman, a fact that she described as being off-putting, “I always felt, to put it in an example format, that I was looking into a large glass-enclosed space, standing on the outside watching those inside. It was that feeling of being somewhat of an “outsider”, an “observer” of sorts, just being a spectator of the various goings-on inside the glass encasement, not quite understanding - or even wanting - to be a part of what was happening” (personal communication, March 2011).

want to have divided attention too much of the time, “My focus is on my studies right now” she told me in February 2010 during our on-camera interview. This endeavor is one that she’s indicated is mainly in place because she wanted to have an outside-of-the-classroom activity that will “look good” on medical school applications without detracting from her academic focus.

Reading is an activity that she spent most of her non-class attendance time in the library studying. Having studied with her on several occasions in the book stacks of the Hillman Library at the University of Pittsburgh, I’ve noticed that her interests for reading material vary greatly depending on the texts that surround us. Whenever she takes a break from studying, she’ll explore the shelves of materials for items that strike her fancy at that given time and begin to read.

Interest in internet browsing is an activity that occupies both public leisure times (that spent in the library on public computers) as well as private leisure time. This usually involves two possible activities, broadly defined, browsing for current news and watching videos of many genres (YouTube and Google Videos). Whatever the activity, she is usually browsing because she wants to take a break from studying.

5.1.5 “Priya”

Priya is 21 years old, born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and had U.S. citizenship and Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI). Priya’s mother, father, and two younger sisters have lived in Pune, India, ever since she entered college in the fall of 2007. Now, she is set to graduate from the University of Pittsburgh in May 2011 with a degree in Religious Studies and intends to matriculate in the fall semester 2011 in a master’s degree program in the Pittsburgh area, majoring in early childhood development. She has made clear her intentions to teach only a few

years before settling down with a husband and having children (personal communication, February 2011).

She is a Hindu—“Vedic Philosophy of Swadhyaya: Self-Study and Universal Acceptance”—and organizes and hostesses meetings once per week in her apartment for fellowship with other female college students¹⁰, mostly Swadhyaya devotees. She enjoys *Yuva Kendra* coordination (small gatherings during which the ideals of a spiritual leader, Pandurang Shashtri Athavale, are discussed among female devotees). Study of Hindu scriptures with her mother daily and classical Indian singing in Sanskrit are her self-reported non-coursework pursuits.

She tries to connect herself as much as possible with her Indian roots. Her views on the caste system embrace fully its conventions. She holds that the caste system of India “is a perfect scientific system that is based on logic and makes complete sense when understood in context” (questionnaire response, August 2010). She supports arranged marriage on the basis that it is methodical and not based purely on, “sensory fulfillment” but rather, “a choice made by careful consideration of all elements of the world, scientific as well as emotional” (questionnaire response, August 2010). She also considers the “geographical background and socio-cultural context that are also elements of compatibility,” entertaining the idea that two people who are racially diverse but raised in the same cultural context might also make a good match. She holds that her appreciation for the Indian arranged marriage formula is not based on a reverence for

10 I attended these on five occasions between the Spring of 2008 through the Spring of 2010.

tradition or history, but science. She states, “I do not think that it is biologically or socially advantageous to direct, promote or prefer marriage that is outside of one’s social and racial background. The purpose of a marriage is to cultivate and proliferate a positive society, and to add mutations, unnecessarily, to a fragile gene pool is ultimately destructive to society” (questionnaire response, August 2010). Based on her belief that the Indian arranged marriage system is founded on a, “cultural guideline from Vedic¹¹ scripture,” her marriage prospects are being made by her mother and father’s word-of-mouth searching over the phone or in person for an ABCD among contacts in Pune/Mumbai. The fact that her family lives in India means that the process of finding another ABCD of Priya’s caste who accepts Swadhyaya philosophy is challenging.

Priya has had trouble in the past with connecting effectively with peers at the University of Pittsburgh who are not interested in or devotees of Pandurang Shashtri Athavale’s—the Swadhyaya spiritual leader’s—religious philosophy. She clarifies that this is because she feels that there is not a relationship between her spiritual following and my observation of difficulty in her communicating with peers. It is important to include her thoughts on my observation in this position of the analysis because they are relevant to what I am arguing:

Yuva Kendra was/is not a result of my principles, and philosophies not fitting into the existing social groups here at pitt. It is about a Different philosophy of intellectual discussion about indian culture and it's present day relevance. Granted, HSC [Hindu

¹¹ Vedic religion as it is referred to here is the religious predecessor of Hinduism, thought to have ended around 500 BC.

Student Council] ISA [Indian Subcontinent Association] don't discuss those types of things, and I don't believe in discussions that don't progress the thought of the individuals involved, BUT, at the same time, it's not that I'm not friends with many of the people who are involved in groups like that and multicultural societies. Yuvati kendra does not belong to my personal philosophy, it belongs to Athavale's Philosophy, and the fact that I choose to do it and hope to build relationships with friends who also want to learn and know more about the indian culture, is irrelevant to my connections with other peers (indian or otherwise) at Pitt (E-mail correspondence, March 2011).

I posit that Priya's relationships with peers on campus who are uninterested in Athavale's Philosophy result in "friendship" in an empty sense, a kind of distanced acquaintanceship that lacks mutual understanding and appreciation for her lifestyle. The difficulty with communication is both the result of the difficulty that comes with managing the tension between natal cultural identity and host society (This is an issue that the other informants discussed regarding sexual shyness elsewhere in this thesis).

Her autonomy is one of defensive nostalgia for an India that she has created for the purpose of maintaining Indian standards of womanhood. Her way of reconciling her diasporic status is by adhering faithfully to her religious pursuits and mission of sharing Pandurang Shashtri Athavale's philosophy with female peers who wish to engage.

Yuva Kendra Activities/Coordination

Yuva Kendra are weekly youth meetings that Priya used to organize single-handedly for college-aged men and women in the Pittsburgh area who practice "Vedic Philosophy of Swadhyaya: Self Study and Universal Acceptance." Her positioning within the gendered hierarchy of the religious leadership changed in the Spring of 2009 when she was instructed to

let the male attendees take control of the mixed-gender Yuva Kendras and to take a more secretarial role. It is my assertion that despite the fact that she was the one who most fervently enjoyed arranging the meetings and leading the discussions, her role changed based on her gender. Priya notes that she was not upset about this change at all. In a follow-up correspondence, she made her position clear:

...it [had] to do with the simple structure and guidelines of the Swadhyaya work as a whole, and our reorganization was simply us following the rules with no hard feelings whatsoever. And it really didn't have to do with the gender roles so much as the full structure being reorganized to be universal among all countries that have Yuva and Yuvati kendras (E-mail Correspondence, March 2011).

Study of Scriptures with her mother, 1.5 hours per day

A true mark of her dedication, Priya does this via telephone since her parents live in Pune and she in Pittsburgh. This is another facet of her attempt to stick to the “straight and narrow” of the conservative Hindu dogma.

Classical Indian singing

A talented singer, she does this not for performance but for devotional purposes. The singing happens in tandem with her prayer rituals.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The five informants in this study are incredibly different people. In many ways they are also exactly like other college students who experience the anxiety of growing up while attending college. What seems to be clear, however, is that the research subjects experience the general

anxiety of growing up and attending college in ways that highlight and extenuate the profound tension between their own desire to fit in and be like other people their age, and the various ways in which racial prejudice and family expectations make it very difficult to do this. As a result we are able to see the research subjects articulate a kind of double life, and to present themselves as “different” people to their families, to their friends, and also to other ABCDs with whom they share a common sense of achievement, alienation and frustration. Along with this, it is possible to see in each of the personal narratives similar patterns in the way in which each subject turns inward and tries to construct experiences that produce a sense of security based on a sense of isolation or individual uniqueness. To better understand this it would be necessary to engage in psychological research, or research in the area of cultural psychology. Although it is impossible to draw conclusions on this level, what is striking is that all five subjects seem to have internalized the cultural contradictions that are reflected in a unique pattern of migration, upbringing, education and prejudice.

While conducting interviews with the subjects of this study I also became aware of more general practices engaged in by some ABCDs. While these activities are by no means distinctive of their cultural background, they reflect the way in which anxiety of the particular kind that they experience is worked out on a private level. Some of the ways in which individuals find “escape” is through viewing pornographic videos, masturbation, drug use, and premarital sex. Because pre-marital sexual intercourse is taboo for all, and forbidden for some, it is an activity that is fraught with tension and frustration. Trying to ensure that parents do not find out what is going on produces a great deal of anxiety. Drug use in the form of cannabis smoking is an activity that is explained in terms of dealing with depression. It helps the individual to temporarily escape from “bad feelings” and experience emotional release.

I was aware of one ABCD who got drunk and was completely distraught because her parents were completely opposed to the consumption of alcohol. After hours of suicide threats and attempts, her friends were at a loss about what to do. A phone call was made and the father came to pick her up. The implications of this event were “seriously bad” for the informant’s parental relationship.

A number of informants spoke in a general way about the trauma of domestic violence, and how they were not able to reconcile this with the family-based ideals of their parents’ Indian heritage. Although domestic violence is not unique to ABCDs, it is yet another instance in which the reality of lived experience undermines idealistic and idealized expectations, and reinforces a negative sense of self in relation to prejudice.

In conclusion, there is no formula for calculating how ABCDs manage the tension between family expectations, public prejudice and their sense of being American. The common theme is that these informants cannot easily reconcile the tensions that they live with. It is hoped that drawing attention to some of the issues that affect the five ABCDs in this study will spark an interest and promote open dialogue about the lived experience of South Asians in America in general.

APPENDIX A

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
LETTER**

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Bend it Like Beckham, directed by Gurinder Chadha, Bilb/Road Movies, 2001.

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Millind Soman Made me Gay, directed by Harjant Gill, Tilotama Productions, 2007.

Mississippi Masala, directed by Mira Nair, Mirabai Films, 1991.

Namesake, The, directed by Mira Nair, Fox Searchlight, 2006.

New York directed by Kabir Khan, Yash Raj Films, 2009

Rang De Basante, directed by Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, UTV Motion, 2006.

Road to Guantanamo, directed by Mat Whitecross and Michael Winterbottom, Roadside Attractions, 2006.

Standard Operating Procedure, directed by Errol Morris, Sony Pictures Classics, 2008.