

FROM SARIS TO SKIRTS: A STUDY OF CHANGING LIFESTYLES OF INDIAN
WOMEN IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

FROM SARIS TO SKIRTS: A STUDY OF CHANGING LIFESTYLES OF INDIAN WOMEN IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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The women in this study were part of a wave of immigrants who arrived in the United States during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These times were rife with political and social turmoil including the “second wave” of the US feminist movement. The study demonstrates how differences in social and cultural backgrounds influenced these women’s ideas of emancipation, liberation, and their perceptions of American women. By examining the women’s experiences at home and in the workplace, this study argues that the American feminist movement and its outcomes were important contributing factors in these immigrant women’s emancipation. An analysis of their social practices provides an understanding of this emancipation process. It shows how their lifestyles changed and how these immigrant women were able to pursue careers, raise children and enjoy greater equality with their spouses.

PREFACE

The idea for this thesis originated very early in graduate school after a class in American Women's history. This class spawned my interest to learn how and why Indian women immigrants' lives changed after coming to the United States. As an immigrant from India, I share many characteristics with the women in this study. College-educated, middle (or upper-middle) class, progressive yet conservative, these women (who were mostly married) came to the United States after 1965 when American women themselves were experiencing changes resulting from a decades-long struggle against inequality, injustice, and sexual discrimination. These Indian women came from patriarchal societies where customs shaped women's lives, and declared what was or was not appropriate for women to be or to do. Cultural expectations or cultural norms outlined men and women's roles and expected women to be subservient to men (especially their fathers and husbands). Not sanctioned by law, customary practices restricted women's rights and deprived them of fully developing their potential.

As an immigrant to America who experienced similar constraints from such social customs in my home country, I believed there was a connection between the social and political changes wrought by the American feminist movement and the changed lifestyles of Indian women immigrants in America.¹ While there are several works of writers and historians that describe Indian immigrant experiences in the US, I found no study that dealt with the effects of the American feminist movement on post-1965 Indian women immigrants. This was confirmed by a participant in my study, a historian, who

¹ The terms United States and America are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

acknowledged the gap in this type of literature on Indian immigrants in America.² My thesis provides a glimpse of the changed lifestyles of a group of Indian women immigrants, and explains how the American feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s affected their lives. This was often unacknowledged by these immigrant women. This study demonstrates how, away from their home country's restrictive social environment, the immigrant women emerged as individuals who not only enjoy equal status with their spouses, but have become self-assured and economically independent. This study is both an intellectual piece of work and a personal journey, which began decades ago when I was a young girl growing up in India.

My acquaintance with America and things American began at the age of 11 when my family moved from the cosmopolitan city of Bombay (now Mumbai) to a small town named Lonavala in the Western Ghats of India.³ Bombay had been our home off and on for eight years before my father, an officer in the Indian Navy, was transferred to this sleepy little town in the middle of nowhere, or so it seemed to my young mind. I suspect my father had some knowledge of the isolated nature of the place. As for my mother, my siblings, and I, our knowledge of Lonavala was minimal. We knew it was a beautiful hill-station more than 2000 feet above sea-level and had an annual rainfall that exceeded 250 inches.⁴ Needless to say, despite the breathtaking natural beauty around us, the rains literally dampened our spirits for three months every year for the next five years.

² PR, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 11 June 2008. Hereafter known as PR interview. See Appendix B (3) for PR interview transcript.

³ The Western Ghats is the mountain range that runs parallel to the west coast of the Indian peninsula. The average elevation of these mountains is about 4000 feet although there are some peaks that are well over 7000 feet high.

⁴ Takahashi, K and H. Arakawa, eds., *Climates of Southern and Western Asia, World Survey of Climatology Vol. 9* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1981), 86-87, 92, 94.

My mother was upset. She left behind a host of close friends, familiar surroundings, and, her mobility (something she discovered very quickly). Lonavala was like many small rural American towns – remote, untainted by urbanization, with no mode of public transportation. This situation severely restricted my mother’s ability to do ordinary things like shop on her own, spend a day out with friends, or go to the movies. Soon my very sociable mother settled down to a tranquil life in the mountains. She made new friends and became an active participant in the semi-monthly meetings of NOWA (Naval Officers’ Wives Association) where ladies worked together for community welfare. My brother was dispatched to an Anglican boarding school in a nearby town, and my sister and I enrolled in a Catholic convent school outside the naval base. It was at this school that I was first introduced to stories about life in the United States.⁵

Our school’s small library had an assortment of books, including several volumes of the Nancy Drew mystery series. When I discovered Nancy Drew, I was transported to another world. My naïveté led me to believe that all American teenagers had a lot of fun outside of school. I devoured the Nancy Drew series to experience the same fun and adventure. Other more down-to-earth information about America came from the radio station *The Voice of America* (VOA) that my father tuned to every morning; magazines like *Reader’s Digest*, *National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, and *Life*; and our world geography and history lessons at school. My older sister’s American pen-pal, Chris, provided more direct contact with America. Although I do not recall the exact nature of their correspondence, I clearly remember Chris’ picture in her high school graduation

⁵ Now known as the Navy Wives Welfare Association, NOWA was established in 1948 to help families of naval personnel deal with social and cultural adjustment, and to look after their welfare.

gown and cap. Indian high schools did not have graduation ceremonies; such exercises were only held at the college and university levels.⁶

The high school graduation gown was one among many things I learned about American life that was fascinating and very different from my life in India. While I prided myself on my geographical knowledge of the US, I was unaware of America's history of immigration, least of all the Immigration Act of 1924. By the time I was a college student in the early 1970s, I knew few people who had moved to America for higher studies. As an adult, I visited the US twice as a tourist before I immigrated. As a tourist I observed that American women were uninhibited and definitely more outgoing than most Indian women I knew, including myself. They seemed progressive, self-assured, and unhindered by traditions or social practices that seemed ingrained in Indian women, including those interviewed for this study.⁷

I realized after immigrating that, despite our differences, American and Indian women shared many similarities. Many American women endured subjugation through paternalism, and faced discrimination and gender disparities professionally, socially, politically, and at home. Both groups of women had centuries-old histories of fighting for equality. While American women gained many rights that helped improve their social and economic status, Indian women in the mid-twentieth century remained subjugated by social practices and traditions that limited their freedoms. Their life was a *de facto* subjugation, not a *de jure* one. American women's fight for equal rights resulted

⁶ Alan Heil Jr., *Voice of America: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 1, 78. In his biographical study of his tenure with VOA, Heil talks of the "global network that had a universal reach... long before satellites, telephones, laptops, or even consistently reliable transoceanic telephone communications."

⁷ See Appendix D for characteristics of the study participants.

in several Supreme Court decisions which changed their lives at home and at the workplace. Equal wages for the same work, prohibition against employment discrimination, the use of contraceptives by married couples, and later the legalization of abortion were a few of many rights accorded to American women in the 1960s, and 1970s. Along with these landmark events were major changes in US immigration laws that brought thousands of skilled professionals from India and other Asian countries to the United States. The participants in my study belong to this exclusive group of immigrants who migrated to America after the 1965 Immigration Act allowed Asians to migrate to the US.⁸

As someone who shares many similarities with the study participants, I found that it was often difficult to separate my experiences from my interpretation of their experiences. While I have tried to interpret their responses outside of my own history, there were times when my personal history both helped and hindered my ability to mine the oral histories more aggressively or to push my questioning. For example, I was unable to elicit responses from several women especially with regard to questions on personal relationships, contraception, abortion, and sexual liberation of women. Clearly, some participants seemed uncomfortable and embarrassed to discuss these topics even though they admitted that living in America broadened their horizons and made them more outspoken than they used to be in their home country. My position simultaneously

⁸ A few important sources on the history of American women's liberation movement that detail various aspects of the movement including the opposition that American women encountered from Congress before equal rights laws were passed, and the conflicts that divided women's groups and alienated minority women's groups from predominantly white modern feminist groups, are: Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991); Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); and Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

enriched and limited this research even as the study gave me the opportunity to delve into resources that explained many questions about women's place in Indian society. These included the ancient scriptures that put women on a pedestal yet kept them subjugated, and about the women's movements in India whose goals differed from those of the American feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Since the study focuses on effects of the American feminist movement on Indian women immigrants, the major criterion for their selection was immigration to the United States between 1965 and the mid-1980s. Atlanta, Chicago, and Detroit were selected after determining that the majority of the literature on Indian immigrants focused on those living in the major metropolises of Boston, New York, and New Jersey in the North East, and San Francisco, and Los Angeles on the West Coast of America – main entry points to the country. A further historiographical survey also indicates that much research has focused on issues of race relations and identity. Studies on Indian women immigrants focused on social and psychological issues, their difficulties finding the right balance between westernization and traditionalism, and rifts between parents and children due to the “western ways” of American-born children. Some studies also show that women more than men had more difficulty with assimilation, as they were emotionally unable to separate from their roots.⁹ This attachment to roots had many women seeking

⁹ US Census Bureau, *The Asian Population: 2000 Census 2000 Brief* by Jessica S. Barnes and Claudette E. Bennett. According to the report, by the end of the twentieth century the Indian population stood at 1,678,765. See the following for information on migration, culture, religion, identity-crisis, and social experiences of immigrant Indians, specifically women: Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Sheba Mariam George *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Maxine Fisher *The Indians of New York City: A Study of Immigrants from India* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1980); Shamita Dasgupta *A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian Women in America* (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1998); Meenakshi Thapan ed., *Transnational Migration and the Politics of Identity* (California: Sage Publications, 2005); Parmatma Saran *The Asian Indian Experience in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Inc., 1985).

solace in ethnic associations and organizations proliferating in most large cities in America.

For example, Bela Thacker's study demonstrates how immigrant women of the 1970s developed strategies to fulfill their need for security, comfort, and acceptance from both Indian and American societies. The need for social acceptance led these women to associate with their American colleagues, while their own ethnic associations fulfilled other emotional needs.¹⁰ In her study of post-World War II Indian women immigrants' assimilation experiences in the US, Shalini Dev Bhutani noted that the women dealt with change by altering the personal objectives of their pre-immigration days. Although the women missed the close family and social ties of their home country, these feelings were offset by the individual freedom and personal growth the women experienced in the US. Women who were unable to find this balance often returned to India. Others, who saw living in the United States as advantageous to their children, remained in the US while they longed to return to their home country.¹¹ Another study on Indian immigrants by Jiwan Lata Dixit examines New York City families and the conflicts that arose between parents who clung to their traditional values and their American-born children who adopted western values. Dixit points out that, despite the fractured relationships between the two generations, the children excelled academically due to the psychological (more than financial) support of the parents and their traditional values.¹²

¹⁰ Bela Thacker, "Homeward bound: Asian-Indian women putting down roots in Houston, Texas" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Buffalo, 2004).

¹¹ Shalini Dev Bhutani, "A Study of Asian-Indian Women in the United States: The Reconceptualization of Self" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1994).

¹² Jiwan Lata Dixit, "The Social Adaptation of Asian-Indian Professionals and Their Children in New York City" (ED.D. diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1983).

Most recent studies on Indian women immigrants cover topics such as gender, class, and crossing gender lines. Shamita Dasgupta immigrated to the United States in the late 1960s and is the co-founder of *Manavi*, an organization dedicated to fighting domestic violence in the South Asian community. Dasgupta's collection of essays by South Asian women in America covers a wide variety of topics considered taboo in South Asian cultures: domestic violence, sexuality, and gender issues. The essayists wrote about personal problems and issues they ordinarily would not have addressed in their home countries and noted that they were often unable to make a clean break from social constraints because of deeply entrenched traditional values.¹³ Prejudiced social values and practices of Indian communities in California are evidenced in Sheba Mariam George's study on Indian American nurses. These women from the southern state of Kerala, India, immigrated to the United States in the 1970s. Many of their husbands (white-collar workers in India) were relegated to blue-collar jobs in the US. The husbands took care of the house and children while their professional wives worked at jobs that paid considerably more than they earned. However, these men reclaimed their patriarchal authority and status in their churches where they held powerful positions which reinstated the control they lost at home. George's study reveals how role reversals affected social and personal relationships in traditional societies, and class-consciousness created distinctions between working-class and professional men and women.¹⁴

A different aspect of immigrant life is revealed in *Namasté America*, Padma Rangaswamy's study of the Chicago Indian community whose numbers more than

¹³ Shamita Dasgupta, *A Patchwork Shawl*.

¹⁴ Sheba Mariam George, *When Women Come First*. Kerala women constitute the highest percentage of female nurses in India, where unfortunately nursing is not seen as a prestigious job.

doubled between 1970 and 1990. Rangaswamy states that the community retained their cultural identity through the many cultural, religious, business, and social associations they established over time. These associations also provided emotional comfort to elderly parents and educated second-generation Indian Americans about their culture.¹⁵ Yet another study about Indian immigrants in Chicago is detailed in Sharmila Rudrappa's *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American*. Rudrappa describes the contradictory functions of two organizations and the conflicting messages they send to immigrant women. One organization, a temporary shelter for battered ethnic immigrant women, encourages the women to set aside their ethnic values to assimilate into American society. The other, a cultural organization propagating traditional values, encourages immigrants to retain their ethnicity and be a distinct part of the larger American culture.¹⁶

While these studies are important to the historiography of Indian women immigrants, they primarily focus on problems of identity, assimilation, gender, and generation. The studies do not investigate connections between women's accomplishments or freedoms *and* the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, specifically the American feminist movement. Educated and well informed, the Indian women in this study were not immune to, or ignorant of, debates about sexual equality, equal pay, and sexual freedom. How these debates shaped their initial adjustment to American society forms the foundation of this study.

In order to examine this aspect of my study, I chose to conduct oral histories of Indian women. This thesis relies extensively upon phone interviews conducted with each

¹⁵ Padma Rangaswamy, *Namasté America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Sharmila Rudrappa, *Ethnic Routes to Becoming American: Indian Immigrants and the Cultures of Citizenship* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

of the 15 study participants whose names are replaced by their initials to protect their identities. The study's purpose was explained and all interviewees were asked the same questions. Several interviewees were either unaware of the American women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, or did not clearly understand the term "emancipation" in relation to the movement. Although they were unable to answer fully on those issues, the women shared *their* understanding of emancipation, which helped frame my argument about their changed lifestyles in America.¹⁷

Other primary sources include Indian and American newspapers for articles on women's movements and general political news, US and Indian censuses for population statistics, US laws, dissertations on Indian immigrants in the United States, and published oral interviews. Equally important were secondary sources for their historical information on women's rights and movements, and immigration. India's religious and social histories provided perspectives on gender roles and women's place in Indian society.

This research is divided into three chapters. Starting with a brief history of Indian immigration in the US, Chapter One contains a historical background of the Indian women's movement (starting from the nineteenth century) and explains the influence of ancient Indian scriptures which defined women's place in society. It briefly discusses the American feminist movement and outlines issues that were central to both women's movements. Chapter Two examines these immigrant women's perceptions of American women before coming to America. These perceptions emerged primarily from books, American films, and the media. Chapter Three investigates the daily life experiences of the study participants after they immigrated to America. Unaware of the discriminatory

¹⁷ See Appendix A for questions asked of interviewees.

practices against women in America, these women experienced firsthand discrimination not because of race, but gender. Even after immigrating, although they saw and heard about the women's movement on television, they paid little attention since, as one interviewee explained, they were engrossed in their own day-to-day lives raising their families and making adjustments that come with migration – issues they saw as separate from the goals or agenda of American feminists.¹⁸ The chapter also explores changing gender roles within their families and workplaces, and advantages and disadvantages of living in America. Almost unanimously, the women agreed that America gave them greater opportunities for personal development and growth, and to be self-reliant. The concluding chapter takes a broader look at participants' perceptions and experiences and seeks to determine what factors helped change their lives. Evidence of their social upbringing, practices, and traditional values remained even though their lives changed considerably in America.

Central to these women's experiences and understanding of America and American women was the differences in liberation and emancipation. For these Indian women, western "liberation" and feminism had connotations of sex, rejection of family, multiple partners, and unstable marriages. On the other hand, they understood "emancipation" as sharing equal partnership with their spouses, stable marriages, equal opportunities at the workplace, and economic independence albeit not at the cost of their family's well-being. (For some women, traditional values prevailed over their desire for economic emancipation, but they made adjustments willingly.) Even though their ideas of emancipation differed from American women, this study reveals that the women

¹⁸ LM, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 12 August 2008. Hereafter known as LM interview. See Appendix B (1) for LM interview transcript.

enjoyed many more and different freedoms than their contemporaries did in their home country, India.

CHAPTER ONE A HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 lifted restrictions on Asian immigration to the United States and resulted in an influx of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent. The laws stipulated conditions of eligibility for applicants: a skill or professional qualification was required. The greatest advantage they offered applicants was permission to migrate with families. Immigration and census data indicate that by 1975, close to 100,000 professional men and women from India had moved to the United States. They were well-educated, spoke English, and appeared to assimilate easily into American society. Most of them were highly qualified professionals who held white collar jobs prior to emigration. This second wave of Indian immigrants was generations and a world apart from its predecessors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite ethnic similarities, the improved social and educational backgrounds of the second wave of Indian immigrants made them more sought after than their predecessors.¹

Statistical sources reveal that the first Asian Indian arrived in North America in 1820. The numbers increased slowly, and by the late nineteenth century the Indian population rose to 269. Joan Jensen's *Passage from India* and Arthur Helweg's *An Immigrant Success Story: East Indians in America* provide comprehensive studies of this first wave of Indian immigrants. Chinese and Japanese immigrants vastly outnumbered their Indian correlates. This first small wave of Indian immigrants worked in the farms

¹ Stephen W. Stathis, *Landmark Legislation 1774-2002* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2003), 267. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 "abolished the national origins quota system" and "imposed a ceiling for the first time on immigrants (120,000) from the Western Hemisphere"; Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2003*, Table 2; Joan Jensen, *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 280; Harold M. Scheck Jr., "Scientists influx into U.S. now more from Asia than Europe," *The Times of India*, 22 January 1973. See "Indian American Center for Political Awareness," <http://www.iacfp.org> for information on the history of Indian immigration in the United States, population, education and income statistics. It is estimated that approximately half the number of immigrants were women.

and lumber yards of the western United States and Canada. A majority were already married when they came to North America, but many had left behind their families in India since they considered this journey a temporary move. Although they were hardworking and industrious, there was growing animosity against them from their American counterparts who accused Asians of ruining the job market by accepting work for low wages.²

Not all early twentieth century Indian immigrants were farm laborers. Harold Gould's study of early Indian immigrants reveals that although the majority worked in agriculture, some came as students for higher learning in American universities. Gould states that a group of young politically inclined Indian intellectuals, namely Teja Singh, Taraknath Das, and Lala Lajpat Rai, tried to arouse the sympathy of the American people against British rule in India. However, political pressures on America from the British government, the growing hostility between American and Asian farm laborers, and the US government's fear that "job discrimination would make them [Indian laborers] unemployed and as a result they would become public charges," led to the US Immigration Act of 1924 banning Asians from immigrating to America. This ban lasted until the 1965 Immigration Act once again allowed Asians, including Indians, to immigrate to the United States.³

When Indian women came to the US after 1965, they arrived at a politically, socially, and culturally tumultuous time. For many American feminists these were the

² Arthur W. Helweg, *An Immigrant Success Story: East Indians in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 45-57; George T. Kurian and Barbara A. Chernow, eds., 4th ed., *Datapedia of the United States: American History in Numbers* (Lanham, MD: Bernan Press, 2007), 63, 65, 67; Jensen, *Passage from India*.

³ Harold Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies: The Indian Lobby in the United States, 1900-1946* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), 88-89, 111-113, 133; Jensen, *Passage from India*, 163-193; Helweg, *An Immigrant Success Story*, 48.

peak years of the second wave of feminism. Indian women were not unfamiliar with women's movements. In fact, women's movements were not unknown in India. Radha Kumar's study of women's movements in nineteenth and twentieth century India describes the creative ways women protested social and political injustices. In the late nineteenth century, Indian women joined men in political protests against British rule, and to fight for India's independence which it achieved on 15 August 1947. The early twentieth century saw the development of local and regional women's organizations in several Indian states and cities that addressed issues of education, healthcare, women's rights, and economic independence. Examples of these area organizations include the *Banga Mahila Samaj* in Bengal, the *Satara Abalonnati Sabha* in Maharashtra, the *Mahila Seva Samaj* in Bangalore, the *Bharat Mahila Parishad* in Benares, and the *Prayas Mahila Samiti* in Allahabad. National women's groups came into being such as the Women's Indian Association (WIA), the National Council of Women in India (NCWI), and the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC), all of which continue to work to eliminate gender discrimination and educate women on healthcare issues and the importance of economic independence.⁴

In post-independence India, the Constitution of India theoretically granted women the same rights and protections as men, but in practice women lacked both social and political rights. Major women's groups (WIA and NCWI) worked to resolve these injustices and other issues including the sexual, economic, and workplace exploitation of women. The 1960s and 1970s were times of economic turmoil in India. Women found novel ways to protest and express their dissatisfaction. They marched on city streets with

⁴ Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India* (London: Verso, 1993), 53-73. More information on the WIA and AIWC are available from <http://womensindia.org> and <http://www.aiwc.org>; Internet.

placards reading anti-government slogans, and conducted sit-ins in local politicians' offices to demand the government impose a prohibition against alcohol, reduce food prices, and provide essential commodities to consumers.⁵ Despite such actions, Indian women preferred (and still prefer) not to call themselves "feminists." They were simply citizens demanding justice, equality, and the rights promised them by the Indian Constitution.⁶ Vasudha Narayanan argues, "The word *feminism* has its detractors even among well known women activists in India and many of them explicitly reject the term *feminism*." She specifically refers to Madhu Kishwar (a well-known Indian woman activist and founder-editor of the women's journal *Manushi*) who refuses to be labeled a feminist.⁷ Affirming that men, politics, and the media have supported the women's movement in India, Kishwar explains why she rejects the use of the term "feminism."

Ideologies and isms can play an important role in binding people together for bringing about and hastening social change; provide inspirational symbols for organized expression of discontent; and help make individual struggles collective. Today, when I refuse to be labeled a feminist, it is not because I prefer to be identified with some other ism. It is because I find currently dominant isms inadequate, some even harmful.⁸

⁵ D. Prabhakar Talari, "The Harassed Middle Class," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, July 1966 ; "Poster Campaign to Fight Rising Prices" *The Times of India*, 11 January 1973; "Women Ready to Boycott Open-market Sugar," *The Times of India*, 16 January 1973; "Women's *Morcha* Demand Cheaper Essential Goods," *The Times of India*, 13 February 1973; "Women Plan 'Armed' March," *The Times of India*, 14 October 1973; "State-wide Stir Plan by Women," *The Times of India*, 10 November 1973.

⁶ Indian Constitution, available from <http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/welcome.html>; Internet. Accessed 7 December 2008. India became independent of British rule on 15 August 1947, and the Indian Constitution which came into effect on 26 January 1950 promised "Equality of status and opportunity" to all its citizens regardless of caste, color, and creed.

⁷ Vasudha Narayanan, "Brimming with *Bhakti*, Embodiments of *Shakti*: Devotees, Deities, Performers, Reformers, and Other Women of power in the Hindu Tradition," in *Feminism and World Religions*, eds Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 30.

⁸ Madhu Kishwar, "A Horror of 'Isms': Why I do not Call Myself a Feminist" in *Feminism in India*, ed. Maitrayee Chaudhuri (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2004), 26-51.

The immigrant women in this study were not immune to notions of liberation which they viewed as political freedom from external rulers such as the British.⁹ They were familiar with the history of women's movements in India and their fight against political and social oppression that had its roots in ancient norms and practices. These practices kept Indian women subjugated within the confines of home and family. They restricted their development intellectually, socially, economically, and by the twentieth century, politically. To understand this form of social subjugation of Indian women, one needs to explore the vast literature on ancient Indian scriptures. These include the *Vedas*, the Laws of *Manu* and other religious and philosophical texts which discuss life and death, men and women's roles, women's status in society, and society's expectations of them. These ancient scriptures and gender role definitions were written by men, an indication of the existence of a patriarchal system more than 2,000 years old. The edicts of these ancient scriptures became traditional practices and family values, most of which continue to this day. There are, however, communities in certain regions of northeastern India and in the southern state of Kerala which have matriarchal and matrilineal family systems where kinship and property descend from females. In these locations women enjoy equal rights as men, and sometimes wield more power than men.¹⁰

Explaining how "historical, political, cultural and economic factors" affected women's status, Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishnaraj state that the ancient scriptures

⁹ "Liberation" was not a frequently used term to define women's freedoms in India although Indira Gandhi in her speech at a women's conference said that for a woman to be liberated she "must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality..."

¹⁰ Thomas Laird, "A Woman's World," *Whole Earth Review*, Winter 1995, 6-13. Laird explains that while the existence of the matrilineal culture in Northeast India has made women economically, and socially, *but not* politically independent and powerful, it segregated the male and female population. On the other hand, men and women of the centuries old matrilineal community of Nairs in the southern state of Kerala have enjoyed a more harmonious relationship.

had conflicting views on women's roles. The *Vedic* scriptures consider women to be spiritually more powerful than men; women are responsible for the family's spiritual and moral welfare. Women were put on a pedestal and held to high standards by the strongly patriarchal society which ultimately controlled them. While the *Vedic* scriptures bestowed these powers on women, the Laws of *Manu* (supplement to the *Vedas*) stripped women of all powers and relegated them to "the lowest level of the Hindu caste system." Women were expected to serve and worship their husband, regardless of the husband's character and moral values; men were above all laws, while women were subject to the Laws of *Manu*. Desai and Krishnaraj go on to explain that other factors contributing to the deteriorating status of women were "...the conquest of Aryan over non-Aryan women, the victory of the patriarchal tribes over indigenous matriarchal people, or imposition of Brahminical austerities on society, or foreign invasions in India." Ancient India's patriarchal society tightened its hold on women in order to "protect" women's virtues and integrity from foreign invaders – the Muslims in the tenth century and the Europeans in the sixteenth century AD.¹¹

Examining the role of Hindu traditions in the ideology of the Indian women's movement, Catherine Robinson states that women's organizations in India rejected the term "feminist" because it was believed "to embody an antagonism towards men which was not evident in India where, it was claimed, Indian men supported Indian women's campaign for change."¹² However, Robinson's research overlooks the efforts of famous

¹¹ Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, *Women and Society in India*, (Delhi, India: Ajanta Publications, 1987), 25-49. Desai and Krishnaraj based this upon the studies of historians Jayaswal, Mukherjee, and Omvedt.

¹² Catherine Robinson, *Tradition and Liberation: The Hindu in the Indian Women's Movement* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 2, 147-153.

early nineteenth century Indian male social reformers Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Keshab Chandra Sen, who openly condemned society's treatment of women and sought to improve women's lives. With help from European missionaries, they established schools where girls were taught home economics and skills to help them become economically independent. These reformers also sought to end the practices of child marriage and *sati*, where widows were forced to die by immolating themselves in the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. They encouraged learning in women and helped re-settle widows by promoting widow-remarriage, an idea vehemently opposed by Indian society at that time. Efforts to improve women's lives through education continued to grow with support from the government as well as European and Indian women who opened schools in major cities in India. By the early twentieth century Geraldine Forbes notes, "There were educational institutions for women in all parts of the country... Parents had more options, they could choose the type of institution, the curriculum, even the language of instruction."¹³

Even in pre-independent India, when upper-class women and men fought for independence from the British, the elite classes continued to clamor for a "western style education" for their daughters. The ability to speak, read, and write English or what was known as "western style education" was a status symbol among the elite. Rama Mehta states, "Knowledge [education] was something they [the parents] respected but kept at a distance for girls. It was for men to take it seriously, as they were the future

¹³ Sekhar Bandopadhyay, "Caste, Widow-Remarriage, and the Reform of Popular Culture in Colonial Bengal," Sumit Sarkar, "Vidyasagar and Brahmanical Society," and Geraldine Forbes, "Education for Women," in *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader*, eds. Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 100-117, 118-145, 58-77. These three essays discuss the contributions of male social reformers Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Raja Ram Mohan Roy towards women's upliftment, and women's education in nineteenth-century India.

breadwinners.” These parents believed that knowledge of the English language would get their daughters eligible husbands, give them upward mobility, and keep them occupied until they got married.¹⁴

While women from the elite classes seemed content with their parents’ decisions on education and their future, some of the women activists who fought for India’s independence and were made members of India’s ruling Congress party, were not exactly satisfied. They alleged that the Indian government was indifferent towards their needs and fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution – the Right to Equality and the Prohibition of Discrimination.¹⁵ Following a lull in women’s activism in the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s saw a resurgence of women's movements characterized by a diversity of issues and participants. Educated women, supported by their underprivileged grassroots counterparts protested against gender discrimination at political and economic levels, sexual harassment and abuse, and rising food prices coupled with unavailability of essential commodities. These women demanded prohibition of alcohol and focused on human rights issues involving young children. By the second half of the twentieth century there was considerable transformation in Indian women’s lives. Women sought and attained significant change through emancipation from social prejudices and practices. They challenged and won political and legal rights and made major progress through their demands for justice and equality in the workplace. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s several landmark policies were passed to improve women’s lives. Notable among

¹⁴ Rama Mehta, *The Western Educated Hindu Woman*, (Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1970), 33-48.

¹⁵ Kumar, *The History of Doing*. Notable women feminists and freedom fighters who joined the Indian Congress were, Annie Besant, Kamala Devi Chattopadhaya, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and Sarojini Naidu; Rebecca J. Cook, *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 76-94; Jana M. Everett, *Women and Social Change in India* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 1-3.

them were the 1961 *Dowry Prohibition Act* (followed by an amendment 22 years later), the *Divorce Reform Act* of 1969, the *Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act* of 1972, the *Special Marriage Act* of 1974, and the *Hindu Succession Act* of 1979, which gave women equal property inheritance rights.¹⁶

Although politically women seemed to have gained much, many women continued to be victims of oppressive and fundamentally flawed social and traditional practices. Education continued to be an important factor in women's emancipation and social reformers, activists, and women's groups pressed to promote education for women of *all* classes, especially to inform them of their rights. Prior to the 1960s, it was not unusual for Indian women from middle and upper class families to be educated even if they were not expected to use their education to get a job or pursue a career. However, these women were encouraged not to be too highly educated, because it would be difficult to find a husband with similar or higher educational qualifications. By the 1950s and 1960s, many middle-class Indian families viewed the education of girls as an asset, a protection, or safety net to be utilized only when hard times befell the families because

¹⁶ "Mrs. Jung Pleads for Economic Freedom for Women," *The Times of India*, 24 January 1973. Mrs. Jung was the wife of the state Governor Ali Yavar Jung of Maharashtra, whose capital is Mumbai; See page 6 of Introduction for reference to women's movement in India; Kumar, *The History of Doing*, 143-181. In Hindu tradition, the *dowry* is the gift that a bride takes with her to her husband's home. In the twentieth century this practice became grossly misused by grooms and their families so much so that the Indian government has now legally banned the *dowry* system. *Sati*, an ancient Hindu practice where widows were forced to die by immolating themselves in the funeral pyre of their dead husbands, was abolished by law in nineteenth century India. However, the practice continued well into the twentieth century in remote Indian villages and got national attention including women's groups which pushed for stringent punishment for offenders who enabled this practice; Robinson, *Tradition and Liberation*, 10-23; Everett, *Women and Social Change in India*, 143. Most Indians (especially Hindus) follow the patrilineal family system where women are viewed as dependents of men or the male head of the family, and although Hindu laws provided for their maintenance, women were for a long time denied property rights; Reeta Sonawat, "Understanding Families in India: A Reflection of Societal Changes," *PsicologiaTeoria e Pesquisa*, 17, no, 2 (2001): 177-186.

traditionally men, not women, were the providers. Family and social values shaped all spheres of women's lives – education, marriage, and economic independence.¹⁷

Leslie Calman's study of women and politics in India reveals that, although women had gained access to education and some economic freedom, traditions, archaic religious practices, and patriarchy still controlled their lives. As a secular country where the population follows various religious faiths having their own religious laws, the Indian government is unable to impose common laws for all women, irrespective of their religious beliefs; nor is the government able to convince minority religious leaders to change their laws.¹⁸

Researching gender inequality in contemporary India, Archana Parashar explains that while the Indian Constitution grants equal rights to women, India's cultural plurality and different religious laws continue to give women fewer rights than men. Parashar further states that though Indian feminists seek "a common family law for all Indian women," they face opposition from mainstream feminist critics and "the men and women of minority communities who demand respect for cultural identity."¹⁹ Exploring the connection between "gender and class, and gender and caste" in India, Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi state:

¹⁷ Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, *Daughters of Independence: Gender, Caste and Class in India* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 122-123; Rama Mehta, *The Western Educated Hindu Woman*, 33-48.

¹⁸ Leslie J. Calman, "Women and Movement Politics in India," *Asian Survey*, 29, no. 10 (1989): 940-958.

¹⁹ Archana Parashar, "Gender Equality and Religious Personal Laws in India," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 14, no. 2 (2008): 103-112; Karen Isak Leonard, "India," in *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965*, eds. Mary C. Waters & Reed Ueda, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 458-468. Leonard gives a brief history of Asian Indian immigration in the US, explains their diverse religious and cultural practices, and discusses how they integrate into American society by "hybridizing" the two cultures.

The contradiction for women today is that despite the liberality of the laws, the inequalities remain. The implementation of the laws to secure equality continues to be hindered by patriarchal family structures and by barriers of caste and class... What makes male supremacy particularly resistant to legislative change is the fact that women's subordination remains embodied in the personal relations of the patriarchal family, and patriarchal relations are part and parcel of the social structure.²⁰

Similarly, the 1960s and 1970s women's movement in India, which concerned itself among other things with consumer issues, improved civic amenities for all, and prohibition, did not directly affect these women who belonged to the middle and upper-middle classes. Their class and social status sheltered them just as it put restraints on them. Middle and upper-middle class status gave these women access to good education, provided emotional and physical comforts, and a sense of well-being. But the very same class and society also put them under close scrutiny, and failure to abide by society's unwritten and unspoken dictates often made women and their family social outcasts.

Educated and middle-class, the Indian women in this study shared some of the demographic characteristics of mainstream American feminists and non-feminists, even if they did not share their history, ideas of family, and religion. Their arrival in America coincided with the movement that historians call the "*second wave of feminism* to underline the fact that there has been one long continuous movement rather than two, separated by a forty-year hiatus."²¹ In addition, America was in the throes of the civil rights movement, student protests, the gay rights movement, the American Indian movement, the Vietnam War, and the continuing Cold War with the former Soviet Union. This period also saw the passing of several laws such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to

²⁰ Liddle and Joshi, *Daughters of Independence*, 75.

²¹ Davis, *Moving the Mountain*, 26-27. Davis explains, "Most Americans were taken by surprise when the second wave of feminism swept the nation in the 1960s. Women's rights had been considered a dead issue. Supposedly it lost its relevance once women won the right to vote."

address voting inequalities, and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act to prohibit “sex discrimination in education by programs that receive federal financial assistance.” Some legal changes addressed women specifically - equal wages for the same work, prohibition against employment discrimination, the use of contraceptives by married couples, the legalization of abortion, and an act which banned employment discrimination of pregnant women.²² While the immigrant women of the late 1960s and early 1970s had read and heard stories of America and American women, they had very little knowledge of the political and social injustices American women experienced. Most news coverage of 1960s and 1970s America by newspapers and magazines like *The Times of India* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, (apart from the Vietnam War and anti-war demonstrations), involved news about racial discrimination against African Americans, the civil rights movement, and Martin Luther King, Jr.²³

However, efforts of various American women – individuals and groups – transformed the lives of many American women during the 1960s and 1970s. Despite mixed reactions, Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* created a new awakening among American women and men. While some educated suburban women were no longer

²² Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For critical events of the 1960s see pages 301-317; Brian K. Landsberg, ed., *Major Acts of the Congress*, 3 vols. (New York: Thomson Gale, 2004). Although Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned workplace discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, it did not include discrimination based upon pregnancy. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 took care of this aspect of women's rights at the workplace.

²³ “Vietnam War to End on Sunday,” headline news in *The Times of India*, 25 January 1973; “Diary of the Vietnam War,” *The Times of India* 25 January 1973; “LBJ Escalated Vietnam War,” *The Times of India* 24 January 1973; “US Schools in Grip of Racial Riots,” *The Times of India*, 3 November 1973; “American Women Take Too Many Drugs During Pregnancy,” *The Times of India*, 27 March 1973; “Anti-abortionists Mobilise Support Against US Court Ruling,” *The Times of India*, February 26, 1973; Sunanda K. Datta Ray, “Aspects of America , Parts 1, 2, & 3,” *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 3, 10, 17 January 1965. In Part 1 Datta Ray describes his journey to the southern states of Louisiana and Georgia where he sees firsthand the practice of discrimination against blacks. Part 2 of his report, “End the War in Vietnam” is a pictorial study of American women in Chicago protesting America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

content with being traditional housewives, others asserted that they were perfectly happy being the “model” wife, mother, daughter, or sister.²⁴ Friedan’s call drew the attention of mainly professional and middle-class women. However, feminist organizations in major American cities successfully mobilized women of all classes to fight for social and economic justice, political rights, and equality in the workplace. Literary works of prominent feminists like Gloria Steinem, Sara Evans, and Kate Millet further fueled the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵

Alongside the feminist groups which advocated for change in American women’s rights and lives, were the non- or anti-feminists with whom these immigrant women, despite cultural differences also shared some similarities. Many Indian women’s beliefs resembled those of the more conservative American women of the 1960s who disapproved of the social improprieties and the “sexual liberation” of some fellow American women. It was the reason for discord among many American women in the early 1960s. Narrating the role of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

²⁴ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton Press, 1963); Joan Cook, “Mystique View Backed by Many, Author Finds,” *New York Times*, 12 March 1964; Marilyn Bender, “Alumnae Look Backward, Forward – and at Each Other,” *New York Times*, 8 June 1964; “Woman is Beginning to Find Her Place – and It’s Not in the Kitchen,” *New York Times*, 16 February 1966; Ronnee Schreiber, *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21-22. Conservative Republican Phyllis Schlafly was a prominent anti-feminist who started the STOP-ERA campaign “to block the passage of the amendment, which would have made sex discrimination explicitly unconstitutional.”

²⁵ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad*, 3-14; Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen, eds., *Decades of Discontent: The Women's Movement, 1920-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983). Although the period covered is between the two World Wars, this study describes the economic, cultural, and social struggles of women of different races and religions and their collective fight for rights done through trade unions and organizations; Marian Faux, *Roe v. Wade: The Untold Story of the Landmark Supreme Court Decision That Made Abortion Legal* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 23-36. Millet’s controversial book examines patriarchy and the politics of sexual relationships which she says are “power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another.” Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983). These are a few among several important sources for information on the history of the American feminist movement, its causes, and outcomes.

(SNCC) in her classic study of the American women's movement *The World Split Open*, historian Ruth Rosen states that during Freedom Summer 1964 when northern white college students traveled to the Deep South, their uninhibited behavior shocked southern women, and men. Not only did southern women dress differently (modestly), but also, they were not overtly sexual like the northern college students, many of whom "wore décolleté necklines and dangling earrings..." and were known to have sexual relations with black and white SNCC male workers.²⁶ This overt and open sexuality, for many anti-feminists became synonymous with feminism and its essential quality. Indian women immigrants also often echoed this perception.

Additionally, support from men was not uncommon among minority or majority women's groups in America. Studies on American women's movement reveal that minority women did not completely separate themselves from their men, nor did they wholly support the predominantly white feminist groups. Although the objectives of the mostly white, educated middle- or upper-class women who led the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s were aimed at benefiting all women, they did not necessarily reflect the needs of minority women. Many African-American, Native American, and Hispanic women bonded with their men to fight for equality or justice, while many white American women saw themselves as separate from their men.²⁷

²⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), 102-103.

²⁷ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 213. "Family solidarity represented the premier value for Asian, Hispanic, and African American women... talk of women warring against men or seeing fathers, brothers, and husbands as the enemy seemed anomalous and a direct threat to cultural traditions of collective solidarity."; Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain*, 69-93. Discussing the birth of the women's liberation movement in this chapter, Davis points out the differences of opinion between radical and liberal feminists, and reasons for discord between white and African American feminists.

Although this *second wave of feminism* resulted in enormous changes in American women's lives and, as this study reveals, affected the lives of these immigrant women, it was overshadowed by other political events of the time. As Rosen explains in her study, one day in the early 1980s when she was getting ready to lecture on the history of the movement, she asked her class "what issues had the women's movement redefined." To her surprise their "Eyes glazed over. Their main political memories focused on cars waiting in long lines for gas, and helicopters fetching a disgraced president into retirement or lifting Americans out of Saigon."²⁸

Similar to Rosen's students' memories of America in the 1960s and 1970s, these immigrant women's ideas of America did not include women's movement. Their America was one of Vietnam, John F. Kennedy, loose women, and the civil rights movement. Their knowledge of America and American women was derived from news sources, books, magazines and films. KS, a study participant, summed up her and her fellow participants' unawareness of the women's movement with these words, "Actually, the changes [wrought by the feminist movement] were already in place. I didn't have to go through any changes that would affect me."²⁹ In other words, the movement was a *fait accompli* and therefore, these women did not feel connected to it in any way.

²⁸ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xiii.

²⁹ KS, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 28 July 2008. Hereafter known as KS interview.

CHAPTER TWO

IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICAN WOMEN
AND THEIR IDEAS OF EMANCIPATION

In 1982, a Rotary scholarship brought interviewee MBA to a mid-western university in the United States for graduate studies in communication arts. She had visited America with her family in the early 1970s when she was a sixteen year old recent high school graduate. Not a total stranger to the country, she was especially aware of the cultural differences between her homeland of India and the United States. Being an avid reader she had acquired a fair amount of knowledge about life in America which helped her transition comfortably to her new life as a student. MBA had done her undergraduate and graduate studies in the late 1970s at St. Stephen's College, a premier institution in New Delhi, India, and subsequently worked as a news anchor for a national television network in India, *Doordarshan*. MBA believed that her cosmopolitan upbringing combined with her successful television career in India worked to her advantage in her new surroundings. She stated, "I never really had anything you would deem a culture shock." But she realized after immigrating that some of the American books and magazines she read and the films she watched, which helped formulate her ideas and impressions of American women, were biased and unfair to the women. Hollywood films as well as books and magazines projected this image of the "loose" American woman to the outside world. MBA confessed that living in India she believed American women were "very sexually liberated." She thought they were "very fast," and "when

they went on a date they pretty much slept with [suitors on] their first date.”¹ It was after she met several American women at graduate school who were “pretty conservative... caring, loving, and very family oriented,” that she realized her perceptions were biased and incorrect. The women she met were the antithesis of the typical image of American women known to perhaps most people around the world.²

MBA’s initial media-based perception of American women was not unique. Many Indian women of the 1960s and 1970s believed that American women were very liberated – sexually, socially, economically, and politically. Study participants of that era perceived American women as possessing “enviable freedoms.” These Indian women belonged to conservative middle and upper middle-class families and were raised in a society where a gender-based hierarchy was the norm. Culturally, it was accepted that the father was the head of the household and that his decisions should not be challenged. The study participants unanimously agreed that their parents never discriminated between male and female offspring; they emphasized the importance of education for all children and treated them alike. However, this parity changed as daughters grew older. Several

¹ Hollywood films have a huge fan following in India. James Bond movies with their seductive heroines, and other popular movies of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s often portrayed sexually liberated American women, for example, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *The Graduate*, *Love Story*, etc., affected people’s perceptions of American women. For more information, see Ken Bloom, *Hollywood Song: The Complete Film and Musical Companion* (New York: Facts on File, 1995).

² MBA, telephone interview by author, 31 July 31 2008. Hereafter known as MBA interview. Founded in 1881, St. Stephen’s College was a men’s educational institution until 1928 when it admitted women students for the first time. It closed its doors to women in 1949 with the founding of Miranda House, a women’s college. St. Stephen’s re-admitted women in 1975. *Doordarshan* India was an autonomous television network until the early 1990s when independent networks hit the airwaves. See Appendix B (2) for MBA interview transcript; “Morals on Campus,” *Newsweek*, 11 January 1965. This article briefly mentions a four-year study of the sexual habits of coeds in three American colleges which revealed that one in four women had pre-marital sex. According to the researcher Mervin B. Freedman, “The Puritan heritage has by no means passed from the American scene.” “The Sexy Sell,” *Newsweek*, 29 April 1968, is an article about television commercials using “pretty girls to make a pitch.” Media advertisers all over the world including those in India have used this strategy. And ironically, while Indian women remain constrained by social norms and practices, baring their bodies to advertise bath products, clothes, and cosmetics is acceptable to society.

women stated that while in many ways their parents were broad-minded and encouraging, they still reinforced traditional expectations of their daughters. Not calling this discrimination, the women noted that there were limitations on what daughters could do and what they were expected to do. While these women had good educations and happy childhoods, as single young women they were not encouraged to have careers or jobs. In the 1950s, 1960s, and even in the 1970s, a common practice among middle-class Indian families was to get daughters married soon after they completed their college education. Many women were married by their early twenties. Several women stated that they began to work only after marriage. For many, marriage was the passport to the freedoms they were denied as single women, such as the freedom to do a job, or travel unchaperoned. Adhering to family expectations and abiding by social norms affected their belief that American women were very liberated. This chapter explores the possibility that these women's own history could have shaped their perceptions of American women and their ideas of liberation and emancipation. This, despite the fact that many women realized upon immigrating that their perceptions of American women were inaccurate; that books, films, and the media had often misrepresented American women.

Educated, intelligent and outspoken, these women's ideas of emancipation were decidedly different than those of most American women, including America's white middle-class feminists. Raised in predominantly paternalistic societies, these women accepted their fathers' role as head of the family and transferred this acceptance to their husbands when they married. The women revealed that first their fathers, and later on their husbands, were major forces behind their education and careers. The traditional role

of the Indian male as the head of the household, provider, and decision-maker remained unchanged though men became more accepting of the changing roles of women. Study participants did not perceive themselves as oppressed. Conversations with them did not reveal resentment toward their fathers for decisions made on their behalf with regard to education or marriage. They belonged to a paternalistic society and had learned to adjust and accept. In her essay on Indian women and traditional practices in the 1970s, Margaret Kalakdina states,

Children soon learn that the locus of power is in the father – the disciplinarian. She [the girl or daughter] is discouraged from showing aggressive modes of behaviour, and the feminine model of grace, modesty and self-effacement is frequently reinforced.³

For middle-class Indian women, schooled in the idea that American women were immodest, sexually liberated, and unfeminine, they believed that femininity was in direct opposition to western ideas of liberation. For these Indian women, liberation did not mean giving up cultural values of femininity and womanhood. However, they did believe that when American women spoke of liberation, they meant sex and immodest behavior. Several stated that they found contradictions in American women's behavior. They thought many American women were aggressive and sexually permissive – both unwomanly traits in their home country, India. That, while American women demanded equality of sexes, they also demanded preferential treatment because they were women.

LM, the only immigrant woman in this study who spent part of her childhood in the United States in the late 1950s- early 1960s, explained why she considered some American women's behavior ambiguous. She said, "I have some difficulty accepting that

³ Margaret Kalakdina, "The Upbringing of a Girl," in *Indian Women*, ed. Devaki Jain (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India Publications, 1975), 89-97.

women [and men] are equal and so on. Socially the guy is still expected to pick up the tab, or hold the car door open. It doesn't make sense to me ... there seems to be a little bit of a disconnect and that I could never understand. Either they are both equal, they both carry heavy things or there is one that needs protection, somebody who listens to the protector rather than assert herself.”⁴

With the exception of two participants, who stated that they were never really curious about life in America or American women, the majority of the women in the study admitted that America fascinated them. Magazines like *Vogue*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Readers' Digest*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Life*, and books, movies, stories they heard from relatives who had settled in or visited the United States, and their correspondence with “pen-pals,” helped shape their impressions of America and American women.⁵ Additionally, newspaper reports in *The Times of India* describing various aspects of American life also helped shape their perceptions of America and American women. The reports included a wide range of information covering race problems, anti-war demonstrations led by American women, and protests against *Roe v. Wade*. Despite being fed on such information, for many, America seemed like utopia, a

⁴ LM interview.

⁵ PR, LM, and MBA interviews; RB telephone interview by author, tape recording, 22 June 2008. Hereafter known as RB interview. Correspondence with pen-pals was a common practice among high school children in India during the 1960s and 1970s. It was also a source of learning more about another culture and its people. Today with the Internet, the art of letter-writing has almost disappeared. See John Swain, “Art of letter writing 'dying out among over-50s' as people use email and texts” in *Telegraph.co.uk*, 20 April, 2009. Internet, accessed 27 October 2009. A few of the many American writers popularly read in India were Taylor Caldwell, John Fowles, Harold Robbins, Judith Krantz, Sidney Sheldon, Mary Stewart, Irving Stone, Jacqueline Susann, Leon Uris, and Irving Wallace.

place where dreams came true, where hard work was rewarded, and where women appeared to be on equal footing with men.⁶

A college student in India in the late 1960s, PR believed that American women were highly emancipated because they enjoyed equal opportunities at the workplace. Impressions like PR's were common among the young, educated, and working women in India. Yet, there were others who saw American women in a different light. Comparing her life to the characters in the Ayn Rand books she read along with stories about Gloria Steinem and the feminist movement in the United States, MB of Detroit believed that as a single woman, she was more independent and liberated in India and thought otherwise of American women. As a financial secretary with a wildlife resort company in the Kaziranga National Park in Assam, India, she was economically independent and was set upon building her career when she got married and moved to the United States. In her initial years as a home-maker in the United States, she felt less independent relying on her husband for economic stability. Immigration procedures had prevented her from working until she qualified for a "green card." MB's frustration was apparent but it was not clear which of the two facts she thought was more responsible for her loss of economic independence – her marriage or her inability to work in America. She said that while her family was liberal enough to let her work and be economically independent, they were also conservative and wished to see their daughter married. She explained "it

⁶ Sunanda K. Datta-Ray, "Aspects of America, Parts 1, 2, & 3," *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 3, 10, & 17 January 1965; "End the War in Vietnam," pictorial essay of anti-war demonstrations by the Chicago Hyde Park Women's Committee, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 10 July 10 1966; Jane E. Brody, "Anti-abortionists Mobilize Support Against U.S. Court Ruling," *The Times of India*, 26 February 1973; PR interview.

was understood that I will be married off and also pursue some career.” Her parents believed that she could be married and still work.⁷

Adherence to family values and social practices was an inherent part of these women’s lives and, though sometimes these practices put constraints on women’s freedoms, they also served as cocoons sheltering them from the outside world. Their knowledge of the women’s movement, which came from news and magazines, was limited to apocryphal “bra-burning incidents” and Gloria Steinem. PC was one of three participants who had heard Steinem’s name, and her impressions of American women were based upon books and films. She knew that American women were very different from Indian women and thought that the feminists were anti-men. She also knew that the United States was “a land of plenty” where people had a good life. Therefore, it was difficult for her to comprehend what the feminists wanted. She also believed that being “brought up in a closed and protected family environment” made it difficult to understand American women or their needs.⁸

Although these immigrant women knew very little about America’s feminist history, they all agreed that American women enjoyed a variety of freedoms. Their initial perceptions of American women’s freedoms varied from economic freedom (due to their ability to work whether they were single or married), to social freedom (from paternalistic control over their choice of education), to the most common belief that they were sexually liberated. AP’s impressions of American women were unflattering. Married to an American who lived and worked in India during the 1970s, AP believed

⁷ MB (of Detroit), telephone interview by author, tape recording, 11 August 2008. Hereafter known as MB (of Detroit) interview.

⁸ PC, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 29 July 2008. Hereafter known as PC interview.

that “American women were fickle and very few had a stable marriage; very few women were dedicated and had one husband, one family throughout their married life.” She admitted that she was hasty in her judgment, but in her view American women were exploited by men and society, and often ended up suffering the consequences of their [sexual] freedoms. In AP’s opinion, although Indian women were less liberated than American women and not completely free from abuse, they still commanded more respect from the opposite sex than American women did.⁹

Similarly, MB, a special education teacher currently living in Atlanta, said that American movies and magazine illustrations that portrayed American women as socially and sexually liberated always made her uncomfortable in the presence of her parents, elders, and the opposite sex. Her traditional and conservative upbringing in gender-segregated atmospheres contributed to her ideas of propriety. Just like AP, MB also believed that sexual liberation in America was the reason for high numbers of divorces, unwed mothers, and the numerous social and psychological problems that plagued American society.¹⁰

In her analysis of the American media’s effects on women, Susan Douglas states that the media,

Sent mixed messages about what women should and should not do, what women could and could not be... the media urged us to be pliant, cute, sexually available, thin, blond, poreless, wrinkle-free and deferential to men... but it also suggested that we could be tough, rebellious, enterprising, and shrewd.

⁹ PR interview; AP, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 12 August 2008. Hereafter known as AP interview.

¹⁰ MB (of Atlanta), telephone interview by author, tape recording, 2 August 2008. Hereafter known as MB (of Atlanta) interview.

Such was the power of the media that even when they (news media, TV shows, magazines, and films) “may have turned *feminism* into a dirty word they also made feminism inevitable.”¹¹ This power of the American media also influenced women in other parts of the world as seen from these Indian women’s perceptions of American women. But it is not known whether family expectations, or the social and economic limitations imposed on these women as well as cultural differences affected their perceptions of American women. Furthermore, these factors could have also affected their ideas of emancipation that were vastly different from American women’s ideas.

PC grew up in the early 1950s in an upper-middle class Bengali family in Calcutta, India, when colleges that specialized in medicine and engineering were not gender segregated. She mentioned that her father did not let her brilliant sister study medicine because it was not proper for a single girl to be studying in a coeducational institution. While PC’s father recognized the importance of education for his daughters, he played by society’s rules and denied his daughter the education she desired. PC’s sister eventually studied clinical psychology and became a school counselor.¹² Desai and Krishnaraj’s research on 1970s Indian women in higher education reveals that while things may have changed to some extent, women who entered the field of medicine, often “opt out of private practice which is lucrative in favour of lower salaried, fixed hour jobs in public hospitals” because,

It is not improbable that a work situation that involves interacting with male colleagues, dealing with men patients in a variety of situations as well as being on

¹¹ Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Random House, 1994), 9-10.

¹² PC interview. PC is one of five sisters. She has a graduate degree in Bengali literature which she taught at a high school in Calcutta. She has never worked in America but is now mulling over the idea of teaching Bengali to immigrant children in the Atlanta area.

call for night duty may well deter parents or husbands from allowing their fully qualified daughters or wives from taking up employment or setting up practice.¹³

Similar to PC's father, other middle-class parents recognized the need to provide a good education to their daughters. But their ultimate wish was to see the daughters married to husbands who were good providers. Some parents discouraged their daughters from entering professions like medicine and engineering because they believed it would be difficult for them to find suitable husbands; besides, the idea of a daughter being more educated than her husband was unacceptable to the parents as well as to society. Curbing females' choices in education was another form of female subordination, and for a long time many women never protested this attitude. Parents who encouraged their daughters to excel in their studies, regardless of the field they chose, also reminded them that a woman's primary role was that of caregiver. Hailing from a matrilineal community in the southern state of Kerala, India, where women "...grow up without a sense of being secondary or in any way 'inferior' to the male members and where the birth of a female child is as celebrated as that of a male child," LM said that her parents never discriminated because of gender, but they believed that marriage was important for every woman. Being academically gifted, her parents suggested that she study medicine or join the civil services, neither of which appealed to LM. While they gave her the freedom to enter predominantly male fields, they told her they would pursue a good marriage proposal for her, even if it disrupted her studies.

¹³ Desai and Krishnaraj, *Women and Society in India*, 170-171.

Fortunately for LM, a suitable marriage proposal from a young medical doctor came just as she finished her undergraduate studies.¹⁴

Although concerns for their daughters' marriages remained unchanged, the late 1960s and 1970s saw many middle-class parents change some of their views about their daughters' education, future, and need for economic independence. Several women in this study mentioned that their parents welcomed their daughters' choices in education and their desire to work or have careers. MBA said that her father used to jokingly tell his children that "education was their *dowry*" and therefore it was important that they acquire as much of it as possible.¹⁵ Some of the women, who lived in India for a while after they married and before they immigrated to America, mentioned that their husbands were not averse to their wives' working. Several stated that they were encouraged to pursue careers or have jobs where they could utilize their education.¹⁶ Commenting on the contributions of growing numbers of educated working women in India in the early 1970s, Susan Bagchi wrote, "To see our once homebound women venturing into the world of business and politics no longer seems strange to most of us. Encouraged by certain changes in their society, Indian women are expanding their roles and interests outside the home." Census of India statistics reveal that the percentage of urban educated

¹⁴ LM interview. LM belongs to one of the oldest surviving matrilineal communities in India – the Nairs of Kerala. For more information on the Nair (or Nayar) community see C.J. Fuller's *The Nayars Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

¹⁵ MBA interview; All of the 15 women interviewed in this study had undergraduate degrees or more, before they immigrated; three of them had professional degrees, and another three had graduate degrees; five of them had worked at various white collar jobs before they immigrated.

¹⁶ KS and PR interviews. KS was an architect engineer who recently retired, and PR who worked as an airline executive in India switched careers after immigrating. Both women stated that their parents expected all of their children (boys and girls) to be educated and able to support themselves. Both were already working when they got married and continued to do so, encouraged and supported by their husbands and their families.

middle-class women in the Indian workforce in the 1970s and 1980s was considerably higher than it was in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷

In the 1960s and 1970s, many educated Indian women not only joined the workforce, but also became involved in organizations to improve women's economic status. DB, from the eastern state of Assam, India, explained how women of all classes, including those from the villages in Assam, were taught skills to become economically independent. Her mother, along with other educated women, taught rural women skills so they were "not totally dependent on a husband or the male member of the family." She stated, "They learn crafts like weaving and every family has a loom." Similarly, many urban educated women's groups (mostly non-governmental organizations) teach underprivileged women skills they can utilize to earn a living and become economically independent.¹⁸ In rural areas of India, laws protecting women are often violated and women are the worst victims of social and paternalistic practices that take drastic forms.¹⁹ But for many Indian women, including those from educated, middle-class families like the women in this study, emancipation from ancient prejudicial social practices and paternalism was more important than equal opportunities at the workplace. DB believed that in some ways Indian women were more emancipated than western women. To illustrate her point she said, "When Indira Gandhi was the prime minister, [there] were no

¹⁷ Susan Bagchi, "Working Women in India Usher in Social Changes," *The Times of India* 21 October 1973; "Mrs. Jung Pleads for Economic Freedom for Women," *The Times of India* 20 January 1973; Census of India, *Series Tables: Economic Tables, Workers (Main and Marginal)* http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/B_Series/Worker_Main_Marginal.htm Internet, accessed 30 May 2009.

¹⁸ For a complete directory of women's non-governmental organizations in India and their missions, see: http://www.indianchild.com/women_ngos_in_india.htm Internet, accessed 30 May 2009.

¹⁹ Kumar, *The History of Doing*, 115-126. Cases still abound of *dowry* deaths where young married women are tortured and killed because of their parents' inability to fulfill the demands (money or material goods) of their husbands and in-laws. The Indian government is still unable to enforce the 1961 *Dowry* Prohibition law which abolished this practice.

females in those roles – in politics, and in [at] that kind of level. When you hear so much about emancipation and feminism and that kind of thing and I am thinking in some ways India is kind of [more] ahead than some of these so-called western and modern countries.”²⁰

Just as each woman’s perception of American women was different, so was their idea of emancipation. But they all concurred that education and economic independence were critical to woman’s liberation, especially liberation from social oppression and paternalism. For some, notions of liberation and emancipation changed as they aged. Living in the United States as a young teenager in the late 1950s, LM thought that a girl was emancipated if she could “dress in skimpy clothes or go out with boys.” By the time she became a mature adult, a housewife and a mother, her views on emancipation changed. She said, “To me, I would think that [emancipation is] respect for a woman’s opinion, for a woman as a person. That would be the key to the thought of emancipation because without that the woman is simply a non-entity.” Similarly, MBA’s ideas of emancipation changed with circumstances. As a single working woman in India who was economically independent, she considered herself very emancipated. After she got married, she said that financial security [economic independence] was only part of her idea of emancipation. What completed her idea of emancipation was when her family and spouse allowed her “to have the space to be who I am to fulfill myself and my intellectual capacities.” At the same time, she believed that her family’s happiness was more important than her need to be emancipated; that emancipation and being a good

²⁰ DB, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 8 September 2008. Hereafter known as DB interview; *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Indira Gandhi.” <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9035988> Internet, accessed 12 October 2009. Mrs. Gandhi was Prime Minister of India from 1966-1977 and 1980-1984.

wife and mother were antithetical. In current sensibilities such behavior would be considered martyr-like or that MBA was not free from social practices that put women's needs lower than men's or their families. MBA's views on emancipation were both conservative and idealistic. PLS, who was born in pre-independent India and was the youngest of eight siblings, gave her definition of emancipation as a "chance to grow, do what you want to do, when you can do [things] independently...the choices you make in life – that is what is the essence of freedom, of liberation. But when we were growing up, that was not the case. We had to follow what our parents wanted us to do. Even education and a lot of opportunities were not available to us, or even the professions were not open to us. We could [only] be either teachers or physicians or lecturers or something like that."²¹ LM and PLS were both born in pre-independent India and belonged to progressive upper-middle class families that encouraged learning, but where fathers were very much in control of their daughters' education. While they acquired graduate degrees, they were fully aware of their social and family obligations as women. Although it is hard to affirm what aspects of their lives influenced their ideas of emancipation, experiences during their young adult years are clearly one major factor. Similarly, MBA is a self-proclaimed emancipated woman who was a post-independence child from a progressive upper-middle class family where the father encouraged his children to pursue whatever studies they chose. Still, she believed that her family's happiness took precedence over her emancipation. Were latent social values and practices responsible for this changed attitude?

²¹ LM and MBA interviews. PLS, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 6 October 2008. Hereafter known as PLS interview. See Appendix B (4) for transcript of PLS interview.

Several other women believed that economic independence emancipated a woman, and education was a contributing factor to this independence. KS, a retired architectural engineer from Atlanta said, “I think it [emancipation] has something to do with education. Educated women all over the world enjoy a great degree of freedom to choose whatever they want to do, to live the life they want to lead.”²² However, those women (in this study) who were not economically independent (whether by choice or circumstance or because of social constraints) had different notions of emancipation. Interviews with these women were conducted individually and not in a group. LM, though, made a unifying point with regard to the education and economic independence of women that explains cultural and social values ingrained in these women. “Because however financially independent you may be, the decisions are always made within the context of the needs of all the people around you. I mean, I can’t just suddenly take off because I have the money and the ability to do it. I just can’t say ‘OK, I am going to spend a year in Italy.’ I mean I could, but I wouldn’t. So in that way even though you may have the education and the [financial] capability of making your own choices, you would defer to your elders [elders], you would defer to the situation that your family is in. Nobody lives in a vacuum.”²³

Unknown to these immigrant women, most American women’s lives began to change in the 1960s and early 1970s. The “happy housewife image of the 1950s” gave way to images of confused, dissatisfied, angry women who, aware of their own social and

²² KS interview; AS, telephone interview by author, tape recording, 14 July 2008. Hereafter known as AS interview; see pages 39-40 for MB’s views about being less independent because of her economic dependency on her husband.

²³ LM’s view on emancipation demonstrates that despite her matrilineal background where women exercise more powers than men, she shares traditional ideas of woman’s place and duties as women do from patrilineal societies of other geographic regions in India.

political oppression, were fomenting a revolution of their own.²⁴ These Indian women's perceptions of the "highly emancipated" and "sexually liberated" American woman were formed from books, media, and Hollywood films, which they discovered were not true representations of American women. Some women admitted that they had hastily pre-judged American women as they had since met many who were the exact opposite of the "fast" types they heard and read about. Others found American women's behavior contradictory – using feminine wiles to obtain what they wanted and at the same time demanding rights that they believed were denied them because of gender.²⁵

These Indian women were from the middle or upper-middle classes and came from very different social and cultural backgrounds. They did not see themselves as oppressed, even if by western standards they would be considered so. Raised in a paternalistic society where social practices had kept women subjugated for centuries, it also shaped their perceptions of emancipation. They were highly educated, smart and intelligent, and despite the fact that many of their parents (especially their fathers) made decisions about education and marriage on their behalf, the women accepted such actions as normal. In fact, they did not see these as discriminatory. They did not raise objections to their parents' authority. Many among them affirmed that their parents knew and did what was best for them.²⁶

²⁴ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 212-232.

²⁵ AP and LM interviews. AP said she had a "wrong impression" of American women, believing they were all "fickle." She found later that they were like "any woman from any part of the world." On the other hand, LM seemed more critical of the way some American women expected separate treatment because of their gender and at the same time demanded equality in all other aspects.

²⁶ LM, PC, RB, PLS interviews; LH telephone interview by author, tape recording, 30 September 2008. Hereafter known as LH interview. While discussing issues pertaining to the parenting of her young daughter who was born and raised in this country, LH explained how cultural differences changed her attitude. "I cannot put controls on her like my parents [did] towards me, because she needs freedom to do

Although these women's ideas of emancipation varied from economic independence, respect from the opposite sex for a women's individuality, and the ability to make independent choices, many also believed that their emancipation centered on their family's well-being. For some women, it was difficult to separate themselves from their families and think of themselves as individual beings even as they desired recognition for their individuality. In many ways they were like some of the conservative American women of the 1950s or the anti-feminists of the 1960s for whom the family was above everything. Most of these Indian women, however, had jobs and, in many ways, were more independent than many conservative American women. Social, economic, and cultural circumstances, not politics, determined their ideas of emancipation.

Leaving behind comfortable and sheltered lives, close family networks, and familiar surroundings, these Indian women came to America for numerous reasons – the most common being to seek better opportunities. Others came to join their spouses who were already in the US studying or working. In the following chapter, these women share their daily life experiences in America, at home, in the workplace and in society. It is through their experiences that one can appreciate how their outlook on life changed and how they emerged from their cultural and social practices which shaped their thinking to become self-assured and independent women. In America, the women learned about the feminist movement and its fight for equal opportunities which some of these women erroneously believed American women always enjoyed. Not all of their experiences were pleasant, but the women acknowledged that, overall, they found in America what

what she wants, what she wants to study or even who she wants to get married to... Yes, I think it is difficult ... for parents who are born and brought up in India.”

they had desired in their subconscious – the freedom to do what they wanted without the constraints of social values and paternalism. This freedom, however, they would understand outside a feminist paradigm.

CHAPTER THREE
 COMING TO AMERICA: IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES, ADJUSTMENTS,
 AND CHANGES

Landing in New York which was our first port of entry, it was quite awe inspiring. I didn't expect to see something which looked very futuristic... all that glass, and steel, and highways. Everything was different in real life than in the books and movies. (PR)

I landed in Michigan (Detroit) on July 4, 1976, the bicentennial year, and there was this huge fireworks and everything going on. So I remember that day... it is part of history. (LH)

When I first came to Chicago, the first thing that amazed me was how flat the countryside was... the first time when we got on I-94 or I-83 E, for miles around us we could see only corn fields and soybean fields... that really kind of shocked me I think, coming from Assam where there are hills everywhere... (DB)

In England it was more like a British royal attitude everywhere... attitude, manners, very formal when you speak to anyone; when we came to America, it seemed like everyone was so casual here. (PLS who spent two years in the UK before she immigrated to the US)¹

For most of the Indian women immigrants in this study, the United States was their first experience in traveling or living abroad. They embarked on their journey with trepidation, but hoped to find success in the country that beckoned immigrants to its shores with the promise of a brighter future. They were young and their first impressions of the United States were expressions of wonder, excitement, and occasional disappointment. Although many came with plans to live and work temporarily, save money and then return to India, the majority stayed and adopted the United States as their new home.²

¹ PR, LH, DB, and PLS interviews. These were their first impressions of America upon immigrating to the country.

² PR, and AS interviews. PR, who currently lives in Chicago mentioned that after living in America for a decade, she and her husband decided to return to India for personal reasons. But after a few years in India, they came back to the United States. AS said that after living in America for a few years, the family moved to the Middle East and later India, because of her husband's job. They planned to retire in India but their sons preferred to live in the United States which is why AS and her husband came back to America. They are now settled in Atlanta.

For many women, adjusting to American society was not very difficult even though they had little knowledge of the new culture, and even less (as they would discover), of the political and social injustices American women experienced. Nevertheless, these immigrant women would soon find themselves affected by the feminist movement's causes and the rulings of the Supreme Court. They would also learn that, despite the cultural and social differences, American and Indian women faced similar social problems. Gender discrimination and paternalism, which were common trends in the Indian society and workplace, also plagued American society. Outside the confines of traditional Indian society, these Indian women became more self-assured, took on responsibilities normally associated with men, and participated equally with their spouses in making decisions related to personal and family matters. Many said that their husbands encouraged and appreciated their contributions in areas unrelated to household chores (traditionally considered women's work). Through the experiences of post-1965 Indian women immigrants in the US, this chapter examines their metamorphosis from economically dependent and culturally subjugated to self-assured and independent women who adapted to their new environment and crossed gender barriers.

Like most immigrants, when these middle-class women moved to the United States, they left behind a way of life they were accustomed to, including close family networks, sheltered upbringings, traditions, secure jobs, and comfortable lifestyles.³

Although the women had an idea that life in the United States was very different from life

³ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1989); H. Brett Melendy, *Asians in America: Filipinos, Koreans, and East Indians* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977); Joann Faung Jean Lee, *Asian American Experiences in the United States: Oral Histories of First to Fourth Generation Americans from China, the Philippines, Japan, India, the Pacific Islands, Vietnam and Cambodia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1991).

in India, they were astonished to find how little they knew about the country and women whose freedoms they envied. Interaction with American women at professional and social levels contradicted their preconceived ideas of American women. The media's portrayal of the "sexually liberated" and "loose" American woman was mostly misleading, as several immigrant women stated. According to RB, even though American women "were a lot more independent than Indian women," the concept of the "ideal family" still existed among the American women she knew and met.⁴ Such ideas of family and a woman's place were shared by many American women in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Commenting about the debate on a woman's place, historian William Chafe states:

Even though discontent with sexual roles was limited to a minority of middle-class women, however, 'the woman problem' quickly became a subject of nationwide controversy.... A housewife could skim any magazine on the newsstand and find herself 'castigated, praised, worried over and analyzed.' Every side offered its own interpretation of the dilemma. Feminists claimed that women were unhappy because they were still tied to the home. Anti-feminists blamed the upsurge of discontent on the fact that women had ventured too far from their traditional role. But persons of all ideological persuasions agreed that a problem existed.⁵

As part of this debate, women rose to oppose equal rights, and notable anti-feminist and conservative Republican Phyllis Schlafly mobilized the support of men and women nationwide to successfully campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Just as they were oblivious to the feminist movement, the icon of conservative American women, Phyllis Schlafly, was completely unknown to the study participants.

⁴ RB interview. RB's first exposure to an American family was her husband's host family in Michigan. See previous chapter for Indian women immigrants' impressions of American women formed (in India) through books and magazines, movies, correspondence with pen-pals, and stories heard from relatives who lived in America or traveled as tourists.

⁵ William Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 176; See also Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Like most other women, PC was unaware that in the 1960s and 1970s there were conservative women in the United States who did not agree with feminist ideologies, and formed their own organizations to counter the feminists.⁶ Discussing the STOP-ERA campaign against the feminist movement, historian Nancy MacLean states that Schlafly's mainly white Christian supporters "warned that feminism would undermine 'the rights women already have,' above all, 'the right to be a housewife.'" Schlafly herself argued that "women have the status of special privilege," and to ask for "equal rights" would lower their status.⁷

Similar to the immigrant women, many conservative anti-feminist American women professed to put their family above their own selves. Their goals, although anti-feminist, were to promote the presence of women in American politics.⁸ Giving an example of some of the beliefs of the anti-feminists led by famous conservative Republican Phyllis Schlafly, historian Flora Davis wrote,

The heart of the anti-feminist argument was a defense of traditional sex roles. Schlafly argued that equal rights would actually be a step down for women because they already had special privileges, such as the right not to take a job; she claimed that if the amendment [Equal Rights Amendment] passed, wives would be forced to provide half the family's income.⁹

⁶ PC interview; See Schreiber, *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* for information on American conservative women's organizations.

⁷ Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 246-247.

⁸ Catherine Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage Through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 188-211.

⁹ Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain*, 388-391.

Conservative American women formed their own anti-feminist groups to combat feminist ideologies since they believed they were already liberated, even if their ideas of liberation differed from feminist ideas.

Nevertheless, the immigrant women concurred that American women were more independent than them. Most American women made their own decisions regarding their lives or, if married, jointly with their husbands. They also found that it was not common practice among young American couples to consult with senior members of their families about matters concerning their nuclear family. Close ties between generations and the high regard younger generations had for older generations' guidance were common aspects of Indian family life. Most of these immigrant women missed this inter-generational connection during their early days in the United States. Over time, they learned to accept and even welcome this new responsibility for making independent family decisions without the guidance (and sometimes interference) of their elders. Moreover, as one of the women remarked, the prohibitive cost of phone calls to India in the 1970s and the 1980s and the absence of the Internet for easy communication were other factors that deterred them from seeking the advice of parents and other family elders in India. For many, this was the start of equal-partner relationships with their spouses. They became economically and culturally independent. Several who had immigrated soon after their marriage went back to school and then to work. A few who had young children and whose spouses worked extra long hours juggled various aspects of household duties and child care responsibilities with part-time jobs. Their early years

in the United States were challenging, but these women believed that those challenges helped them become independent, the quality many envied in American women.¹⁰

While many of these women were pleasantly surprised to find that American women were not as the media had portrayed them, their discovery of gender discrimination in the workplace, irrespective of race and skin color, came as a surprise to these women. Being non-white, these women expected to face discrimination because of their race or skin color, but not gender. Centuries of subjugation by British colonists left Indians wary of the white race. Although most of these immigrant women were born in independent India and had no first-hand experience of colonial control and subjugation, they were aware of the British colonists' treatment of Indians. History books described discriminatory and inhuman treatment of Indians regardless of caste, class, age, and gender. Movies about India's fight for freedom depicted scenes where British soldiers mercilessly beat up Indians who resisted or defied their commands. British contempt for Mahatma Gandhi was well-known throughout the Indian sub-continent, South Africa, and Britain because he challenged their laws and fought for rights. Similarly, news about America's civil rights movement, race riots, and the prejudices harbored by white Americans against people of color were common knowledge to these women. Sources of such information included American magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Life* which covered political and social issues in the United States and were available to readers in India. While these magazines also covered events related to the feminist movement, and a few women recalled having heard and read of Gloria Steinem, overall, information

¹⁰ LM, PR, PLS, and RB interviews. LM immigrated to the US in 1966, PR and PLS in 1971, and RB in 1974. These women spoke of their feelings of isolation as new immigrants and the absence of fellow Indians in the areas where they lived which added to their loneliness. But most importantly it was the lack of family support that led to new and additional responsibilities.

about the American feminist movement had less impact on the women than news about race discrimination in America.¹¹ In her study of Cold War politics and civil rights, historian Mary L. Dudziak explains,

In the years following World War II racial discrimination in the United States received increasing attention from other countries. Newspapers throughout the world carried stories of discrimination against non-white visiting foreign dignitaries, as well as American blacks.¹²

Discussing her experiences at the workplace PR, who had worked as a public relations executive in a major airline industry in India, stated that when she sought employment in the Chicago area in the early 1970s, she found that most women held clerical jobs while men were managers, although many of the women were as educated as their male managers. She was frustrated that, even with her undergraduate degree in English literature and past management experience, she could not find a job that matched her skills. She said, “When I came to the United States I found that my education didn’t really count very much because everybody wanted to know what my typing speed was – that is all they were interested in.” She was offered clerical jobs while her engineer husband who, despite early setbacks, was offered work that matched his educational qualifications. PR mentioned that, initially, she believed her failure to get a job was due to her status as an immigrant and a woman, but soon realized that she was discriminated

¹¹ Michael Marriott, “In Jersey City, Indians Protest Violence,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1987; Alfonso A. Narvaez, “Jersey City Indian Community Protests Rash of Racial Attacks,” *New York Times*, 8 October 1987; Arvind Verma, “Consolidation of the Raj: Notes from a Police Station in India, 1865-1928,” in *Crime, Gender and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions*, ed. Louis A. Knafla, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 109-132; For more information on racism in British India see Martin Wiener, *An Empire on Trial: Race, Murder, and Justice under British Rule, 1870-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Richard Attenborough’s Oscar-winning film *Gandhi* is a historical account of twentieth century India’s fight for freedom. It also shows the British colonists’ discriminatory treatment of Mahatma Gandhi and other Indians. See Introduction page 2 for more examples of race discrimination against early Indian immigrants in the United States.

¹² Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12.

against primarily because of her sex. PR went back to school “to earn an American degree.” She earned a masters degree and worked in marketing and advertising for seven years, and later returned to school to do her doctorate in American history so she could teach.¹³ Although PR does not belong to the category of people Nancy MacLean refers to in her study of the history of workplace discrimination in America, her experiences at job hunting and those of her husband do fit MacLean’s theory. MacLean states, “What made the exclusion of so many possible for so long was a shared assumption in the mainstream that those who were denied access to better jobs were not important.”¹⁴

MBA also experienced discrimination in the workplace because of her sex. She stated that when she came to the US in 1981 to attend graduate school, there were not as many “brown skinned” people (South Asians) as there are today. Despite her experience in television broadcasting, she “had a heck of a time finding a job to match my skills... if I had the same set of skills today it would be much much easier for me to find a job in the media today. I used to be a national anchor on Indian television – but even though I had all the accreditation, all the experience, I couldn’t even get an interview. I have been through my share of being discriminated upon because I am a woman.”¹⁵

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, this form of gender discrimination had changed slightly, as MBA and RB would discover. While MBA had worked as a news anchor with a major Indian television broadcasting company, RB had never before worked outside of the home. She married soon after finishing college in India and joined

¹³ PR interview.

¹⁴ MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough*, 7, 9, 117-154. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

¹⁵ MBA interview.

her husband in the United States in the mid-1970s. Both these women obtained graduate degrees from American universities before they began to look for jobs. RB started off as a quality control manager in a food processing company and MBA managed an audio-video company. Later, MBA left the company to work independently from home. As a self-employed consultant, MBA had several responsibilities. She was a market researcher, a public relations person for an international company, and a freelance writer. Now a senior manager in a food production company with branches nationwide, RB mentioned that, although there are many women managers in her workplace, salary disparities continue to exist between genders - men in her position with less experience earn much more than she. Both RB and MBA believed that these workplace difficulties stemmed from gender issues rather than race or nationality.¹⁶

Believing that American women's emancipation included victory over all forms of gender discrimination, these educated and talented immigrant women were disillusioned to find it existed at the workplace. Some of the women who had worked in managerial and other high level positions in India were familiar with workplace gender discrimination. In the 1960s and 1970s, Indian job advertisements routinely specified the need for male or female applicants for specific jobs. Often, secretarial and other clerical jobs were reserved for women, and technical and managerial positions for men.¹⁷

¹⁶ RB and MBA interviews; Department of Labor, *Women at Work: A Visual Essay* (2003). According to this study the proportion of women managers more than doubled between 1972 and 2002, from 19.7 to 45.9 percent; Department of Labor, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook* (2007). This document states, "Employed Asian women were more likely to work in the higher paying (on average) management, professional, and related occupations than employed white, black, or Hispanic women (about 46 percent compared with 39, 31, and 22 percent respectively)."

¹⁷ PR interview. Discussing discriminatory ads in newspapers PR said, "...in India, an ad would say 'wanted young attractive, convent-educated girl for a receptionist' and that would be advertised in the papers. And I knew that such a thing was banned by law in the US and that made me feel good." See

Although these Indian women believed *gender*, not race, drove workplace discrimination, a dearth of studies on post-1965 Indian women immigrants' workplace experiences makes their assumption tenuous. The 1990s saw a sudden surge of Asian writers who wrote on a wide variety of issues affecting Indian immigrants, especially women. Most of the studies dealt with an identity crisis among second generation immigrants and the trauma of assimilation and adaptation. Other research focused on first generation immigrant women who struggled to find a balance between becoming westernized and staying rooted in Indian traditions. Few researchers dealt with workplace discrimination.¹⁸ Marilyn Fernandez's study of 1990s Asian Indian Americans in the Bay Area states, "Indian women have more difficulty breaking through the glass ceiling barriers in sectors where there are more (white) women managers." Her research disclosed that "Asian Indian female managers earn less than (\$30,556) U.S. born white female (\$36,262) and immigrant white female (\$34,257) managers." Fernandez does not elaborate on the issue of discrimination against Indian women in management, but her research is indicative of race rather than gender discrimination, contrary to what the interviewees in this study experienced. Fernandez's study further shows that workplace discrimination is not limited to women alone. Several Indian men she interviewed voiced their frustration at salary disparities and at their inability to advance in their careers despite their high educational qualifications and hard work; they believed this disparity was because they were non-white or non-Americans. Fernandez states that a survey by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission of 1995 found that Asian American

Appendix C for job ads in Indian newspapers specifically asking for male candidates for the positions of General Marketing Manager, or Steno-Typist, *The Times of India*, 26 and 29 October 1973.

¹⁸ See Preface footnotes 10-16 for studies on Indian women immigrants and issues on assimilation and identity crisis.

executives believed “aggression and socializing (white male values) are more important than hard work and merit in the corporate culture.” The survey results reveal existing cultural differences between Americans and Indians. Most Indians, especially those not raised in the United States, tend to be shy and refrain from expressing their inner feelings, especially at the workplace. Their quiet behavior is often interpreted as indifference or a lack of interpersonal skills, which works to their disadvantage.”¹⁹ Such behavior is not exclusive to Indians, as revealed in Nancy Woloch’s study of women’s experiences in America. Woloch quotes a third-generation Japanese American woman, “My parents urged me, unconsciously I am sure, to perpetuate the stereotype of the quiet, polite, unassuming Asian. But survival in American society requires one to speak up vociferously to defend one’s rights and gain recognition.”²⁰ While personal experiences differ, the women in this study maintained that America gave them the opportunity to assert their rights and find their identity.

Similar to Fernandez’s research on Asian Indian experiences in the workplace is Parmatma Saran’s analysis of 1970s interviews and surveys of Indian immigrants in the New York metropolitan area. Saran states that the immigrants’ initial admiration for “American hospitality, openness, and informality” began to wear off once they started to compete in the job market. While these immigrants admired the “freedom and hard work that are very much a part of the American way of life,” they felt that they were short-changed because of their race. They found that less educated white Americans often received promotions faster and were paid more. They believed that, because of “physical

¹⁹ Marilyn Fernandez, “Asian Indian Americans in the Bay Area and the Glass Ceiling,” *Sociological Perspectives*, 41, no. 1 (1998): 119-149.

²⁰ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), xi; Magoda Marayoma quoted in Woloch, 570.

and cultural differences,” their chances of progress dwindled, especially when they had to compete with white Americans.²¹

Joann Faung Jean Lee offers another study of Asian immigrant experiences with race discrimination in the workplace and in public places. Lee chronicled oral histories of four generations of Asian Americans from various Asian countries, including some from India who lived in the New York and New Jersey areas. Her interviewees, both male and female, ranged in age from pre-teens to early eighties, some of whom had lived in the United States for over 50 years. Older generation interviewees with language and communication problems said that white and sometimes black Americans ridiculed their accents. Several members of the younger generation mentioned that in school they felt more comfortable fraternizing with African Americans than with whites who refused to accept them as one of their own. Madhu Chawla, an 11 year old American-born Indian girl said, “I like black people but the only thing is, they don’t like us because the Indian people like to dress their own way. Old ladies wear saris. They put this red stuff on their head. They put a dot on their forehead, and that’s what they don’t like.” Madhu Chawla’s mother, Sudershan, a college educated nurse, said, “We wear our Indian dress because of our culture, and because we are proud of it. But there are people who say, ‘This is like a curtain... You [are] wrapping around a curtain?’ They don’t even know the value. They don’t know the culture.” The mid and late 1980s race-related attacks on Indians in the New Jersey areas shocked Indian immigrants all over the United States as well as in India. Dubbed the “Dotbusters,” a group of young whites terrorized New Jersey Indians, especially women who wore traditional Indian clothes like the *sari* or *salwaar kameez* and adorned their foreheads with a red dot, a *bindi*. Despite several

²¹ Saran, *The Asian Indian Experience in the United States*, 40, 94, 101.

deaths, the offenders got away with very light punishments angering the Indian community in the United States. The unprovoked attacks alarmed the generally pacifist Indian community who believed that ignorance of their culture made them targets of racial discrimination. Many Indians left the area fearing future attacks. Several among those who stayed changed their attire and began wearing western clothes, and even discontinued using religious symbols like the *bindi*.²²

The experiences of the New Jersey Indians during the 1980s are vastly different from the workplace gender discrimination the women in this study experienced. Though two women (study participants) returned to India with their families after more than a decade in the United States, they explained that their decision to return was purely personal. Both women later re-immigrated to America and continue to live with their families.²³ Despite experiences of discrimination, most Indian immigrants successfully assimilated into American society. Through their diligence and hard-work they have risen to be among the most economically successful post-1965 immigrants in America.²⁴

The women in this study were part of this elite group of successful immigrants. However, economic achievement was not their only measure of success. Several acknowledged that their contemporaries in India shared the same success level as they did professionally, but they lacked a certain freedom that these women enjoyed in

²² Joann Faung Jean Lee, *Asian American Experiences in the United States*, 3-55, 110-115, 175-181; Madhu S. Chawla, "Racial Hatred," interview by Joan Faung Lee, *Asian American Experiences in the United States*, 116-117; Sudarshan S. Chawla, "Different by Choice," interview by Joann Faung Lee, 118-120; George James, "Jersey Murder Trial is Bias Issue for Indians," *New York Times*, 14 March 1989.

²³ The women referred to here are PR of Chicago and AS of Atlanta.

²⁴ Everett S. Lee and Xue-lan Rong, "The Educational and Economic Achievement of Asian-Americans," *The Elementary School Journal* 88, no. 5, Special Issue: Minorities (1988): 545-560; Herbert R. Barringer, et al., "Education, Occupational Prestige, and Income of Asian Americans," *Sociology of Education*, 63, no. 1 (January 1990): 27-43.

America. As PR stated, “I think that women in the US, me included, and many of my contemporaries feel that in the US they can find their own voice and the courage to stand up for their own convictions in quite an assertive way that might not have been possible in India with societal and family pressures.” She stated that it was difficult to generalize on the issue of women’s freedom in India, because much depended upon family environment. “Some of my friends were married into very traditional families who [her friends] were severely restricted about what they could and could not do, even going shopping in the *bazaar* on their own was something that was not done.” There were other friends in advertising who “lived a life of enviable freedom. They did what they wanted, when they wanted, which was way beyond what my more traditional family would have allowed.” MBA’s views about women in India were quite similar. She stated, “I see friends of my sister who were very capable women and who worked for a while but they did not get any support from their husband[s] who, not because they were not nice men, but they had demanding careers.” Typically, in India’s tradition-bound patriarchal society, women’s roles as co-providers are considered unimportant. The example MBA gave reveals how Indian traditions and norms control women’s freedoms and keep them subjugated.²⁵ While the women in this study did not immigrate to the United States to get away from the constraints of traditional practices or religious laws, they acknowledged that living in America made it easier for them to assert their rights. Some mentioned that even though some of their contemporaries in India enjoyed the support of their spouses, it was often parents, or parents-in-law and other relatives who raised objections when women deviated from the accepted norms of society. Even among the educated classes, women struggled to hold their own. These immigrant

²⁵ PR and MBA interviews.

women also believed that being in America made their spouses less patriarchal and more open to the idea that their wives were their equals, which also made it easier for the women to find their identity.²⁶

Not long after immigrating, many of these immigrant women went back to school with plans for a career or a job. For those who already had professions like MD (doctor), KS (architect), and LD (research scientist), it was a matter of finding jobs related to their respective fields. Having spouses in the same profession helped in their early adjustment. These women explained that since their spouses understood the demands of their profession, they often helped with household chores. They also realized that their lives would have been different in India where labor is cheap and household help readily and easily available. In their early years of immigrating, hiring help was out of the question since they could not afford it. Spouses' pitching in to do housework was a normal occurrence in many Indian immigrant households. With the exception of four women, who chose not to pursue careers because their husbands had very demanding work schedules, the rest of the participants in the study mentioned that this pattern of shared responsibilities continues. The women agreed that this sharing was unusual by Indian standards but appreciated the help and believed it strengthened their relationship with their spouses. Some thought of it as a creative way of spending time together since both partners worked separate jobs and spent a large part of the day away from each other. Others thought of it as happenstance, but they did not view this as victory for women per

²⁶ PR, AS, PC, MBA, MB (of Atlanta) and AP interviews. All of these women commented on Indian society's restraints on women which often prevented their development as productive, intelligent human beings. Ironically, in the 1960s when American feminists were fighting for equal rights for all women, India had elected its first woman Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Despite the fact that women could be highly educated and hold responsible jobs, the predominantly patriarchal Indian society still believed that decision-making was a male prerogative.

se. On the contrary, they saw it as an opportunity for both partners to learn and be independent.²⁷ An example is PC, raised in a well-to-do and conservative Bengali family in Calcutta, who said, “I didn’t have the courage to tell my father I wanted to learn driving.” Growing up in India in the 1950s, it was not proper for women to drive cars and be on their own. However, with her husband’s encouragement and her own desire to explore, she learned to drive in the United States and says, “I go out wherever I want to on my own, I do the things that I like to do I have seen a lot, learned a lot, read a lot – the world has come closer to me.”²⁸

Aside from sharing household chores with their spouses, these women saw changes in other areas as well. Several women talked about the added responsibilities they took on in the absence of their husbands. They became heads of their households when their husbands were out of town on work-related trips for long periods. The women believed that under such circumstances they became more responsible and self-assured and earned the admiration of their families. Adjustments had to be made when their families began to grow, and many women gave up full-time jobs to be home to raise their children. This was also a time when they missed having their extended family to help out. PR said, “Once I had my children and was raising my daughters, I had to rely very heavily on family support while I was working.” Fortunately, PR’s mother and mother-in-law, both widows, were able to stay with her for extended periods and take care of her children while PR concentrated on her teaching career. She continued, “Today [in the twenty-first century] when I see the amenities that my daughters have for

²⁷ KS, LD, LM, MBA and PLS interviews; MD telephone interview by author, tape recording, 10 October 2008. Hereafter known as MD interview.

²⁸ PC interview.

childcare, for good professional nanny care, those kinds of things were either beyond our reach as new immigrants or did not exist. The kinds of daycare centers that you have today – where early child development is approached very seriously... and I think that is coming from women fighting for their right, being in the workplace more and more.”²⁹

While she fails to mention political change, PR seemed to refer to the changes brought about by the continued demands of the women’s movement – the right to work and for proper child care facilities so that children could be cared for while the mothers were at work. Several women, who were not as fortunate as PR to have close family members visit, live with them, and take care of their offspring while they worked, either quit their jobs or worked part-time until their children were old enough to be left home after school without adult supervision. MD, a physician, gave up her full-time practice when her children were born and worked part-time when they were young. She said, “In the beginning when we were both [medical] residents, there were no children at that time. The household tasks were equally divided. I did the cooking and he did shopping and the outside work, the billing and banking and all that, but later when we had the children, I think it became [a] more traditional pattern than the equal division type of thing.” She enjoyed her spouse’s help around the house until her children were born. MD reverted to

²⁹ PR interview; See Emilie Stoltzfus, *Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care after the Second World War*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003), for information on national and local policy debates concerning public funding of child care in the two decades following World War II. Stoltzfus gives an example of two camps - one which believed that if women stayed home to raise their children there would be no need to provide them with child care assistance; the other camp (grassroots activists) argued that women did not want to be a burden on society and believed it was the duty of the state to provide for child care while the mothers worked; Jessie Bernard, “The Status of Women in Modern Patterns of Culture,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 375 (January 1968, Women around the World): 3-14. Bernard states that the October 1963 President’s Commission on the Status of Women “recognized the need for services to help mothers carry out their responsibilities. They recommended a wide array of services, including child-care services, health services, and services related to the home, as well as services related to employment.” Furthermore, the commission stated that this responsibility was to be shared by voluntary and professional organizations as well as federal and state governments.

the traditional role of care-giver and home-maker while her husband became the major bread-winner.³⁰

In the 1970s and early 1980s, several study participants opted to stay home to raise their children because they believed it was the right thing to do.³¹ They readily gave up their jobs or interrupted their careers to give their children the kind of foundation they had growing up in India. For many, this was possible because their husbands earned good salaries that allowed them to get by with a single income. Married to an American, AP's first child was born in India where she had ample help with child care and housework. When the family moved to the United States AP, who had completed a year of graduate studies in biology and genetics in India, said that she made "a conscious and natural decision" to be a stay-at-home mom. "I didn't want to put the child in daycare; I just wanted to care for the child since I was home... we [AP and her husband] both agreed on the same thing, that the biggest investment in the family is the children. We will never get these years back, the childhood years back; but the career, I can build up any time in my life. Based on that, it was very important for us to give them a good foundation." AP went back to school to study computer science when her children were old enough to go to school; she now has a career in information technology.³²

Similar to AP were MB (of Atlanta) and RB, both of whom returned to work when their youngest child was old enough to go to school. Both took jobs that would

³⁰ MD interview.

³¹ Ronnee Schreiber, *Righting Feminism*. The Concerned Women for America (CWA) was founded in 1979 to oppose the Equal Rights Amendment, and "is one of the largest grassroots women's organizations in the country." The Independent Women's Forum (IWF) founded much later in 1992, is an organization of professional women who worked towards "establishing a national and institutional voice for economically conservative women." 4, 90-93.

³² AP Interview.

give them the flexibility to be home when the children got home from school. They explained that since it was easier in the US to back to school at any time, re-tool if necessary and get a job, they did not worry about putting their careers on hold for their children. Opportunities of going back to school to study further or to re-tool oneself are rare in India; but, they pointed out, their contemporaries in India had the luxury of close family networks that could take care of the children while they worked. Another case of re-tooling is that of MB (of Detroit) who stayed home to care for her young children. She went back to school to study art since she “was hooked on Japanese art” and planned to teach it in school. But when her husband’s job took them to Hong Kong for a few years, MB started teaching English to young children. She mentioned that she did not have an education degree but liked the idea of teaching English. When she returned to the United States she found a job as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at an inner-city school in Detroit working with immigrant children from East Europe, Russia, and Africa.³³

Some of these immigrant women had the unusual experience of being a single parent, even though they were married. As MB (of Atlanta) explained, “My husband is a consultant and he is always out of the house. I actually run this household like a single parent, and I have raised three kids all by myself. If I would be in India, I would not be as responsible as I am today. I would be more dependent upon someone else doing things for me. I know I would not have had this much capability if I had not come to this country.” MB was proud of her achievement, raising her daughters single-handedly, although admitting that her husband was the financial provider and a father *in absentia*.

³³ PR and MBA interviews. PR changed careers from advertising to teaching at a college and MBA worked as a manager at an audio-video company before she became an independent consultant; RB, MB (of Atlanta) and MB (of Detroit) interviews.

She believed the situation made her more self-reliant and is certain that, if the same situation had occurred in India, her parents would have stepped in to help her out, which would have made her less responsible. The realization of her inner strength makes her proud and thankful to be in America. In addition to being a self-styled “single parent,” MB works full-time as a special needs teacher in an Atlanta suburb.³⁴

A different case of being a “single-parent” in the early 1970s was LM who said, “I felt very strongly that since he [her cardiologist husband] is hardly ever at home, I needed to be home for the children. I was not comfortable with leaving them to be raised by some person with whom I had no link at all.” She explained her choice by saying, “Different women make different choices and for me that was not an acceptable option so I decided to stay home.” By the time her children were in different levels at school, the family moved from Lexington, Kentucky, to the Chicago area and “he [her husband] was busy all over again with a new job. He was hired to set up the division of cardiology at the Highland Park hospital which was all-consuming. So it meant that nobody was home.” LM took a job in her children’s school that allowed her to work while the children were out and be home when they were. Working in the school also helped her “understand the education system,” and gave her a sense of being productive.³⁵

Likewise, the women whose jobs involved traveling mentioned that their spouses not only accepted their absence from home as vital to their profession, but they also had no qualms about taking over the reins of household duties. W.J. Goode explains of “equalitarianism” in society and family, “when the status of the female changes, so does that of the male; if the woman gains greater rights of choice and decision in many areas,

³⁴ MB (of Atlanta) interview.

³⁵ LM interview.

the male must necessarily lose some of his former power in those same areas.”³⁶ While the latter part of Goode’s theory may not apply to these women or their spouses, the understanding between them helped maintain a balance in their families. MBA thought that her husband’s acceptance of the demands her job made on her time not only enabled her to concentrate better on her job, but helped strengthen their marriage. She also believed that her absence gave her husband more time with their young sons and set an example to them to not genderize work. MBA said, “I have two boys. One is 21½ and the other is 16. I always tell them that you will make better husbands if you have compassion and understand that anything that a woman can do, so can the man. The only difference is that a woman can bear babies when a man can’t.”³⁷

This type of support from spouses was a departure from the traditional ways that most of these women were accustomed to growing up in India. In the 1960s and 1970s married working women in India rarely, if ever traveled or stayed away from home for long periods; it was viewed as unacceptable by conservative-minded Indians, especially Hindus and Muslims. Women who were Christians, Jews, or Parsees – faiths considered more broad-minded or westernized in India – enjoyed more liberties than Hindu and Muslim women.³⁸ RB, who works full-time since her children have grown up, travels extensively every month. Like MBA, RB believes that without her husband’s support she could not have achieved so much professionally, and is completely at ease when she is away from home knowing that her husband will take care of everything in her absence.

³⁶ William J. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1963), 54.

³⁷ MBA interview.

³⁸ Leonard, “India,” 458-468.

She talked about her husband's prowess in the kitchen and joked that if ever they were unemployed, they would open a restaurant!³⁹

While most of the women had careers, others volunteered in local organizations that promoted Indian culture. PLS and LM have been actively involved in social work for over three decades. LM said, "I think I have done more volunteer than paid work in my life." She found it rewarding and convenient because the flexibility of volunteering allowed her to plan other activities with her friends and family. Both women volunteer for organizations that help new immigrants assimilate into American society and life. PLS is also the co-founder of a women's help center based in Chicago that provides emotional support and temporary housing for abused women. She reminisced about the time she immigrated to the United States nearly forty years ago, "When we came here [to Chicago] there was no support system for us... the women were very home bound raising their children. We also wanted to promote our culture and also learn about lot[s] of things that were very basic, like recipes [cooking], and we really did not know how many other Indians were living here. And that is why we wanted to bring the women together." She stated, "Now I see a tremendous difference in the women who come from India. The newly immigrant women are ready to get into the workforce right away. When we came here we were more family oriented and wanted to bring up the family just like we were brought up back home."⁴⁰ Keeping traditions alive was important to these women; and while they readily adapted to the American way of life, their traditions gave them an identity. The same need for identity keeps KS, PC, and AS of Atlanta closely connected

³⁹ MBA interview.

⁴⁰ PLS of Chicago is a founding member of *Apna Ghar*, a shelter for abused women; LM, also of Chicago is actively involved with helping new immigrants adjust to American society.

to a local association whose motto is “to promote and sustain cultural, charitable, educational, and literary activities on behalf of the Bengali community of greater Atlanta.” Though these women spent close to four decades in the United States and appreciate what America has given them, they continue to have strong ties to their cultural heritage.⁴¹

Several scholars have discussed immigrants’ need to create a home away from home to perpetuate their culture and traditions, which they do in many ways.⁴² These women were no exception. As a result of their homeland’s vast regional diversity, Indian immigrants in the United States have brought with them an assortment of traditions, practices, and cultures that are unique as well as strange to most people unfamiliar with their customs. Organizations such as the Assam Association of North America, the Bengali Association of Greater Atlanta, Detroit Malayalee Association, and others serve as gathering places to celebrate festivals, religious rites, and social and cultural events and teach second generation Indians the language of their parents. Immigrants also participate in local and international, inter-faith meetings to share culture, religion, and traditions. The previously mentioned organizations also serve as meeting places for elderly immigrants who have migrated to be with their children in the United States; organizations and events help the elderly stay connected to their cultural practices.

⁴¹ The Bengali Association of Greater Atlanta was founded in 1979 with just a handful of Bengali families. Today there are more than 200 families who live in the Atlanta area but on festive occasions, Bengalis from the neighboring states of North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi get together in Atlanta to celebrate their religious traditions and rich culture.

⁴² A few notable studies are those of: Sunaina Maira and Rajini Srikanth, *Contours of the Heart* (New York: Asian American Writers' Workshop, 1996), Lavinia Dhingra and Rajini Srikanth, *A Part, Yet Apart* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), Sunaina Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture In New York City* (New York : Garland Publishers, 2000), Sunita Sunder Mukhi , *Doing the Desi Thing: Performing Indianness in New York City* (New York : Garland Publishers, 2000), and Padma Rangaswamy, *Namasté America*.

Jyotsna Kalayar explains why these organizations are an important part of older immigrants' lives. "Culture shock, role reversal, and adapting to a new society are big thresholds for older immigrants to cross.... In late life, moving from an Eastern culture like India to a Western society such as the United States may be a traumatic experience." Access to such organizations keeps older immigrants content, occupied, and gives them a sense of security in their new environment.⁴³

Coming to America with preconceived notions of the country and its emancipated women, these immigrant women were shocked to find this preconception to be only partially true. American women went through a revolution of their own – a revolution these Indian immigrants knew little or nothing about. As PR stated, "I believed I had come to a land where women had equal opportunities and it didn't seem that way at all." The women realized that they faced the same obstacles as white American women, obstacles that the US feminist movement had fought for decades to remove.⁴⁴

For many women in the study, opportunities gained upon immigrating to America offset frustration at the workplace. America gave them the freedom to be and do what they wanted, when they wanted. As much as they loved the country they grew up in, missed the security of close family networks and comfortable lifestyles with help readily available, and the cultural solidarity that comes from being among one's own people, they realized that Indian male dominance at the economic, political, and social levels

⁴³ Madhulika S. Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002); Jyotsna Mirle Kalavar, *The Asian Indian Elderly in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 6; David Reimers, *Still the Golden Door: The Third World Comes to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 114-115; Ignatius Chithelen, "Indian Immigrants: Keeping Alive the Old Way in the New Land," *New York Times*, 29 June 1986; Marian Courtney, "The Cultures of India Thrive in Jersey City" *New York Times*, 4 May 1986.

⁴⁴ PR interview.

stifled women's development. Away from these constraints, the women believed that even their spouses seemed more uninhibited in their support for their wives, leading to a strengthening in their relationships. The women participated equally with their spouses (and sometimes on their own) in making important decisions; they shared household duties, and reveled in the knowledge that work, especially housework, need not be categorized by gender. These were small but significant steps towards liberation – a liberation defined by changed gender roles, not sexual behavior. Recognition as individuals with equal rights was, according to many, the greatest advantage of living in America.

A few study participants remained traditional or conservative in certain aspects of their lives, especially with regard to staying at home to raise children. This behavior was not a cultural issue; many American women exercised their right to stay home to raise their children. The immigrant women who took time off to be with their children appreciated the opportunity to return to their careers or begin new jobs. Some changed career paths by going back to school and entering different fields of study.

Despite disappointment over gender discrimination in the workplace, the women recognized the value of the economic and cultural freedoms they enjoyed in the United States. Compared with contemporaries in India who enjoyed similar professional success and had more leisure time because of help from household employees, the women in this study believed that overcoming the challenges of living in the United States made them stronger individuals. They metamorphosed from economic dependency and cultural subjugation to self-assured and independent women who not only adapted to their new environment, but also crossed social and gender barriers set by ancient traditions.

EPILOGUE

To be liberated, a woman must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality. We need women to be more interested, more alive and more active not because they are women but because they do comprise half the human race.

- Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, "Speech at the Inauguration of the All-India Women's Conference, 26 March 1980."¹

Ironically, in a country steeped in traditions and social norms that encourage women to be secondary not equal to men, Indians elected Indira Gandhi, a woman, as head of state in 1966, and again, in 1980. Considered "one of history's most powerful and significant leaders presiding over a huge, complex, religiously-riven and male-dominated country," the excerpt from Mrs. Gandhi's speech describes her as a liberated woman seeking to arouse her passive fellow Indian women to redefine themselves in order to be liberated. Her elite background combined with her political heritage gave her access to western culture and education from an early age. With her father Jawaharlal Nehru's support, Mrs. Gandhi developed a persona of a strong woman who pursued her goals without letting her femininity be a hindrance; she did not compare herself to men, nor did she see them as rivals, but she demonstrated that she could be and do no less than them.²

Growing up in India the women in this study were subject to their society's dictates which ordained men as providers, decision-makers, and heads of families; society also decreed what was appropriate or not for women to be or to do. Their ideas of liberation, though not exactly the same as Indira Gandhi's, were varied and differed from

¹ Mrs. Gandhi's complete speech is available online at: <http://gos.sbc.edu/g/gandhi1.html>

² Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001). Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first prime minister and Indira Gandhi was the third; their family is often compared to the Kennedys of the United States.

American women's ideas. All believed that education and economic independence were essential to a woman's liberation, but freedom from social oppression and paternalism were critical factors in these immigrant women's liberation. Education was never denied to these women even though sometimes the choice of study was restricted. If some women were economically independent in India, it was because their families (father or husband) were progressive and approved of their desire to work. For some others, social norms influenced their families' decisions and prohibited them to work and be economically independent. In the United States, some study participants chose not to be economically independent; their family's well-being came first. These women believed that having such priorities did not make them less liberated because, taking care of their family and making important decisions for them gave them the ability to be emancipated. Their spouses respected them for their contribution and saw them as equal partners in their marriage.

Although these women had their own unique definitions of liberation and emancipation, their class, upbringing, traditions, and social customs greatly influenced their perceptions of the freedoms American women enjoyed. Several study participants came from families that preferred to have their daughters attend sexually segregated schools and colleges. Discussions of sex and public demonstration of affection between sexes (especially single people) was frowned upon by the society (and families) the women grew up in. Therefore the American women depicted in films, described in books, and later, encountered by these women upon immigration to the US, left many study participants unable to surmount the sexual connotation of liberation, and the deep divide they felt that persisted between what was political and what was personal. Susan

Douglas's account of the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s explains these immigrant women beliefs and perceptions of American women and their sexual freedoms which were based upon what they read and the films they saw.

By the early and mid-1960s, the Sexual Revolution was one of the biggest stories in the print media. Publishers and editors discovered that sex helped sell magazines – even newsmagazines... Magazines like *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *Esquire*, and the *Ladies' Home Journal* all looked for deeper explanations for the Sexual Revolution. With the availability of contraceptives and penicillin, the three age-old deterrents to premarital sex – conception, infection, and detection – began to lose their power to terrorize middle-class girls.³

For the women in this study, political freedom was the ability to enjoy the rights granted by the Indian Constitution and the protection from laws passed by the government. As Indian women, they were entitled to all the fundamental rights granted by the Indian Constitution.⁴ However, what was *de jure* was not *de facto*. In reality, social norms and traditions based upon ancient scriptures deprived Indian women of many rights the Constitution granted them. Also, these women's class (middle and upper-middle) and elite status, in an effort to shelter them from what society regarded as “inappropriate” for women, actually prevented them from being liberated. Furthermore, their class and status shaped their blindness to how their lives were shaped by gains for American women – daycare for children, equal opportunities at the workplace and others that the American feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s achieved through the passage of several laws that benefitted women at home and at the workplace.

The women in this study made many adjustments after they immigrated to the United States. Some adjustments were pleasant and rewarding, others, not so. But unlike

³ Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 65-66.

⁴ Maurice Linford Gwyer, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921-1947* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1957), 2 vols.

many post-1965 Asian immigrants (especially those from China, Korea, and Vietnam) these Indian women were educated and spoke fluent English, which helped them assimilate more easily and gain acceptance into American society.⁵ In her study based upon interviews with Asians living in the US, Joann Faung Lee reveals that most of her interviewees (men and women) faced discrimination at work and in their neighborhood because of their different accent, or their inability to speak English. Second-generation immigrants spoke English like Americans but still faced discrimination because of their oriental features which they said was traumatic and hardest to overcome. Yet another person confessed that she “never wanted to hang out in Chinatown ... hanging out with Chinese kids in Chinatown would remind me too much of hanging out with nerdy kids and being Chinese.”⁶

All the women in this study had college degrees when they immigrated to the US. But their desire for economic independence and the setbacks they suffered in the US finding suitable jobs drove many back to college for further studies. Their quest for economic independence also opened their eyes to the existence of workplace discrimination in America where one woman believed American women were “highly emancipated” because they enjoyed “equal opportunities at work.”⁷ The women also realized that American women faced the same form of discrimination at the workplace even though laws protected women from such practices. Nevertheless, in many ways

⁵ Socioeconomic Characteristics by Racial/Ethnic and Asian Ethnic Groups, available from <http://www.asian-nation.org/demographics.shtml> Internet. Accessed 25 November 2009.

⁶ Joann Faung Lee, *Asian American Experiences*, 99, 104, 107, 121, 123,135.

⁷ PR interview.

these women's class, education, and social backgrounds protected them from the kind of discrimination Asians in Lee's study faced.

Moving to the United States was a life-altering experience for this group of post-1965 Indian women immigrants whose arrival coincided with the American feminist movement. But more importantly it was the distance from their families that revolutionized and democratized their lives in fundamental ways. For them, democratization meant the ability to make independent choices, to enjoy equal status with men (most importantly, their spouses) and to be free of social constraints that often control their lives. Most of these women came from conservative backgrounds where single young women seldom stepped outside unchaperoned, or studied in co-educational schools or colleges, or made career choices and marriage decisions on their own and without their father's (and extended family members') approval. Through their personal experiences, one learns that away from their family and society that put constraints on them and controlled their lives these women enjoyed stronger relationships with their spouses and learned to appreciate more each other's individuality. Changes in household politics, role reversals in the absence of a spouse, participation in decision-making, and sometimes making independent decisions were factors that contributed to their liberation from their society's gender-biased norms. Some women's jobs involved traveling across the country or abroad for extended periods. They said that because their husbands supported their endeavors they felt comfortable to leave their homes and families and pursue their careers worry-free. They believed that this support had a positive impact on their job performance – something that would not have been easily accommodated or

achieved in their home country.⁸ Childrearing was important to all of these women. Some of them were able to take breaks from their careers or jobs to raise their children, and later on go back to school to retool and rejoin the workforce. The opportunity to do so was another way these women were democratized in America.

This study is more than a story of the lives and experiences of a group of first-generation post-1965 Indian women immigrants in the United States. It reveals through their perceptions of American women how the Indian women were limited by their own social and traditional values and religious beliefs, in their understanding of American women. This thesis reveals how the women (although not representative of all Indian women immigrants), benefited from living in America. This thesis contributes to the growing literature of immigrant studies and gives a unique perspective of feminism, emancipation, and liberation through the eyes of a group of Indian women immigrants.

⁸ MBA, RB, and LH interviews. All three women's jobs involve traveling within the country or overseas at least once every month.

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<http://www.baga.net/>

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Apna Ghar (Our Home) of Chicago provides culturally-appropriate, multilingual services, including emergency shelter, to survivors of domestic abuse with a primary focus on the South Asian and other immigrant communities.
<http://www.apnaghar.org/indexnew.shtml>

Michigan Asian Indian Family Services - non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to serving the Asian Indian community in the metropolitan Detroit area.
<http://www.maifs.org/>

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Appendices

Appendix A

Oral History Interview Questions

Participant's Name: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Decade you immigrated to the US: 60s 70s 80s

Reason you immigrated: _____

Marital Status (at time of immigration): _____

Education Level - before immigration: _____ after immigration: _____

Current Occupation: _____

Current place (city) of residence: _____

About life before immigrating:

1. Can you share some information about your family background and early childhood?
2. Describe to me your parents' attitude towards education. Did they have different expectations for male and female children?
3. Did your parents ever encourage you to have a career, or do a job after you completed your education?
4. The following 6 questions apply to married women:
 - a. How did you meet your husband? Did you live in a joint family system in India after you were married?
 - b. Describe your relationship with your husband before you came to America.
 - c. Did your relationship change after you migrated? How did it change?
 - d. Do you think living in America had anything to do with the changes in your relationship with your husband?
 - e. What were your sources of information about America before you immigrated?
 - f. Tell me about the time when you first arrived in the United States. What were your first impressions of the country?

4. The following 6 questions apply to single women:
 - a. As an adult in India, did you live with your parents or separately?
 - b. If you lived separately, what did your parents think about it?
 - c. What were your sources of information about America before you immigrated?
 - d. Did your parents influence you or your decision to immigrate to America?
 - e. How did they react to your decision to immigrate?
 - f. Tell me about the time when you first arrived in the United States. What were your first impressions of the country?
5. What were your opinions about American women before you came to America?
6. Did those opinions change after you began to live here? If so, how?
7. In my recent conversation with a noted Indian woman immigrant writer and educator who came to the United States in 1970, she mentioned that she believed American women were “highly emancipated.” Do you agree with her belief? What is your idea of “emancipation”?
8. In the 1960s and 1970s, the actions of the feminist movement (or the Women’s Rights Movement) led to major Supreme Court decisions, thus changing the lives of American women at home, and at the workplace. Equal wages for the same work, prohibition against employment discrimination, the use of contraceptives by married couples, and later, the legalization of abortion – these were some of the rights accorded to women. Do you believe these rights helped emancipate American women? What are your views on these issues?
9. Do these rights affect you in any way? If yes, could you explain how?
10. If the interviewee is a working/career woman:
 - a. What made you decide to work outside the house, or become a career woman?
 - b. How did your decision affect the family or your household?
 - c. Tell me about your husband’s views on having a “working wife.”
11. Since the time you arrived in the United States, how do you think the role or life of Indian women immigrants has changed?
12. Do you think your life is different from your contemporaries back in India? How is it different? What do you feel about it?

13. Is there anything I should have asked you that I did not ask, with regard to the influence of the American feminist movement of the 1960s, on you?

Appendix B (1)
Transcript of oral interview with LM
Date: 12 August 2008

Author: Can you hear me?

LM: Yes

Author: OK this is perfect. I can hear you very well too. I just want to start off with the formalities...First of all, thank you for letting me record this interview. This interview is part of my research for my master's thesis in American history. My thesis is a study of how the social, cultural, and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s in America – especially the feminist movement – affected Indian women immigrants. As an immigrant who is also interested in women's studies I believe this research will be a valuable contribution to Indian Diasporic studies. I also need to tell you that the transcribed material will be used in my thesis which will be kept in Hunter Library, and will be available to researchers who wish to know about the effects of the American feminist movement on Indian women immigrants. I hope this is OK with you?

LM: Yes that is alright

Author: OK thank you. I would like to start off by asking you what your initials are.

LM: LM

Author: Mrs. M, where were you born?

LM: In Kerala, India

Author: And which year did you immigrate to the US?

LM: In 1966. I mean technically we were not immigrants. We had come here for two years as most people did at that time.

Author: And so, can you tell me why you immigrated here?

LM: My husband was coming for further training in his field which was cardiology, and we had planned that he would complete his training and then we would go back to India.

Author: And of course since you came with your husband, you were married at the time you came here and with no intention to immigrate, right?

LM: Right.

Author: And, may I ask what your education level was before you immigrated, and after you immigrated, i.e., if you pursued any higher studies?

LM: I did not pursue higher studies in this country. I had my BA in English literature – honors – from New Delhi’s Lady Shri Ram College, and I don’t know if this is of interest or not, but I did my high school in the US, and went back to India for college; then got married after college and then came back to the US.

Author: Umm, that is very interesting because you are the first person who I have interviewed who has grown up in this country, went back to India and then came back to the United States... OK,

LM: In both cases it was because I was attached to a) my father and mother, and secondly, to my husband (she laughs)

Author: that is interesting, very interesting. Do you currently work somewhere?

LM: No I volunteer at various places now – no I do not work professionally now

Author: So that means you worked somewhere professionally?

LM: Briefly I have, before the children were born, my husband was in the University of Kentucky at Lexington, so I was working in the university, and then after we moved to Chicago, and the children grew up, I took up a job at the children’s school as a librarian, then gradually exited from those kind of jobs and then I was periodically doing free lance writing for a corporate health newsletter. And at present I am completely unemployed.

Author: But you do volunteer at several organizations?

LM: Yes, yes, I think I have done more volunteer than paid work in my life

Author: I am sure the organizations are honored to have your services...

LM: Well, you know there aren’t too many unemployed people and so they are happy to have any volunteers. And I personally find it rewarding plus it gives me the flexibility to do, make the adjustments I need for the rest of my life, for my family demands.

Author: so you are currently living in Chicago? Is that where you live?

LM: We live in a north suburb of Chicago it is called Highwood.

Author: Mrs. M, I would like to go back to your childhood, and if you could share with me some information about your family and childhood. And also describe to me your parents’ attitude towards education and whether they had any different expectations from male and female children, if you have siblings of both genders ...

LM: I have 2 brothers. Do you want to ask me specific questions or do you want me to just ...

Author: Just keep talking about whatever comes to you mind about your family, your parents...

LM: We are from the Nair-Menon community of Kerala which is a bit atypical, not like most of India. It is a matrilineal community in Kerala and Kerala women are known to be independent because the family property descends through the female, so by and large we grow up without a sense of being secondary or in any way inferior I suppose is the word, to the male members. I mean the birth of a female child is as celebrated as that of a male child – the female child is not considered a liability. And so coming from that kind of a culture and then within our personal family, from my grandfather and grandmother's time, my grandparents - my mother was the youngest of 11, and they were firm believers in equal education for both boys and girls. So I have, my mother's generation are all gone now, but they were all highly educated. There were doctors among the women as well as among the men. My mother herself had her masters' in physics; she came third in Benaras Hindu University that must have been in the early 1940s. So it wasn't unusual... all are fluent in English and it was not unusual for Malayalee Nair families to be that way. So that attitude prevailed in my upbringing and as a matter of fact my mother wanted me to be a doctor and I didn't particularly care for that field and once I decided to do English literature, my father was encouraging me to go into the IAS (Indian Administrative Services). The IAS first no, because it involved traveling and who knew where I would end up as a young woman; they did have those reservations but for the IAS they didn't have any. And so they did not have any differences in expectations between boys and girls, though my mother always put this caution into us to study hard and do our best. But if there was a good proposal, they must explore it. That was her qualifying remark as far as my future was concerned. And by the time I finished my English literature a good proposal did come along, so that is how I ended up getting married and growing up I don't think there was any particular sense that because I was a girl I was being held back actually not in the least bit... and in fact I was a better student than my older brother and so they had higher expectations of my academic and professional success than they had of his. Though my father used to say that he's got more intelligence in his little finger than all three of you combined... But he was not the kind who would buckle down and study – I was the more conscientious child and they

expected that I would go further. . So they were kind of disappointed that I did not pursue further studies when I came to the US – I was married young, I was 20 and came here and they were disappointed I did not study because they thought I was wasting my talents because I was confining myself to home and hearth.

Author: Now you also mentioned that you grew up in this country, right?

LM: Yes, at one point when I was 12 my father was posted to the embassy in Washington DC so I came here and we lived here for about 3½ years, between the ages of 12 and 15½. I graduated from Bethesda Chevy Chase high school – it was unusual because those days (and still are) children are 17 and 18 when they finish high school and they had to make a special program which allowed for me to graduate at a much younger age. Initially in this country they were very strong on social rather than academic parities in schoolroom. And they were reluctant this was in the late 50s – I think I was the only Indian in the whole school and my father went to the principal to say that I needed to be at a much higher grade so that I would finish school by the time he was posted back to India I would be 16 and ready for college there. They would not accept until he told them that it is alright for your countrymen to stay in school when you are 18 or 19 but in India our life expectancy is only 42, we can't afford to stay that long in high school. So then it was OK. Academically it was no problem at all but socially it was quite a different story.

Author: I'd like to come back to your years in this country later, if you don't mind. But tell me about the time when you first arrived in the US as a young married woman. What were your impressions of the country – having lived here already a few years...

LM: I sort of knew what to expect but whereas before I was a child in my parents household and I had no responsibilities, plus in the embassy we were allowed to bring a maid servant – it was a very good life in Chevy Chase, Maryland at that time. It was very good being a child and not have any responsibilities; and since we had a maid servant we did not do very much by way of household chores – whereas now I was a young married women and the fact that I was going to have to run a [household] at that time it was a studio apartment, but anyway, to take care of the needs and all that – it was a novelty but we came here with a spirit of adventure so we really didn't really take it to heart because it was a two-year stint and we would go back to our real life back home, you know...

Author: So it was to Chicago that you came with your husband soon after you married?

LM: No, we came to Denver, Colorado.

Author: Ok. I would also like to ask you what your opinions were about American women before you came to America – in between those years of living here and going back to India and coming back here. Did you form any impressions about American women? And did those impressions or opinions change after you began to live here as a young married woman?

LM: I think as a teenager I wasn't really that aware of the status of American women. My mother's friends from the neighborhood were all very educated – nobody worked. But there wasn't any sense of somebody needed to work and was not being allowed to or somebody was being denied a promotion. And in my mother's circle of friends in the late '50s. So that rarely entered the conversation in my mother's circle of Indian friends...there were a couple of spouses of embassy people who were doctors and they were able to get some kind of position – I don't know exactly what because they couldn't have been licensed. I couldn't tell you the details, but they did work. They volunteered and kept up with their profession so I never felt there was any sense of deprivation among my mother's friends. Even though they were all college-educated, and coming back in the mid-'60s, the first year that we were in Denver, we all lived in one apartment building in the hospital campus and we got to be very close to all the other interns and residents and everybody was at the same stage in their lives, even though some were just starting families. And they were a good mix of people from all over the world as well as local American couples or families. And again, some of them were nurses and they did part-time work because they had children and I rarely noticed any sense of frustration on the part of any woman I was close to. It was just not there. I don't know, maybe I was not looking for it and I was blissfully unaware – it certainly would have come up in some conversation. I don't recall anybody, but that was within the hospital campus and within that first year we really didn't have very much of a social circle outside the physicians and their families. You know we were newlyweds and we had wanted to have more time with each other. We really didn't make an effort to go beyond the social circle that already existed at our feet, at our doorstep, rather. Among none of them did I sense any

frustration or sense a resentment of missing opportunities or being held back. I started being aware of that much later I guess as the feminist movement started gaining power.

Author: Right, right. You mentioned your mother's friends and colleagues when your father was stationed here in the US [I meant Indian] embassy in Washington DC, were they mostly American friends or were they a mix of ladies from all over the world whose husbands were also in the embassies and in consular offices?

LM: A few friends were a mix of people from the Indian embassy and people in our neighborhood. And then a sprinkling of people that my father had come to know because of having to deal with them professionally and whose wives and my mother bonded kind of. Occasional, I remember a Japanese lady – not that much an international group of women though there was an international club. But her circle of friends was primarily Indian or American.

Author: And these American ladies were also housewives since they were well-placed in life, they came from affluent families... Is that why you think they were not working women or career women? Do you remember?

LM: I am not sure about the mindset of those days, but they were all college-educated women. Maybe that was the norm those days, go to college, meet whoever you are going to marry and then you settle down...

Author: Exactly.

LM: And he goes to work (?)

Author: Yes, this was so in the 1950s, if you've... I am sure you have read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* which was all about the women during that time who despite their education and all were content to just have a family and raise their children.

LM: Yes...I mean I know about the book but I haven't taken the time to read it, and know much about it. But I think the upshot (?) of it all was they were just content to have a family. There was not a sense of having missed out on something.

Author: Right, OK

LM: And I think that's what changed later on.

Author: I would like to go back to the time when you met your husband... how did you meet your husband? And, you did mention that soon after you were married you came to Denver. I would also like to know how your household chores were distributed between

the two of you after you came to America, considering that he had a very busy schedule as an intern.

LM: Yes, that pretty much determined how the chores were distributed (she and I laugh) because he was just never home. It was pretty lonely that first couple of years – they used to go to work in the morning and then if they were on call that night, they would be in the hospital for the night and then they would put in the days work all day the next day and then come home the next evening. And he would come in so exhausted and it would have been completely unreasonable ... I don't know... I wouldn't even have the heart to ask him to do something... I mean it would just be uh...unpardonable...

Author: Inhuman?

LM: It would be I don't know, to ask him to do household chores when he would come home in that(?) state. I mean at that point there were no children, and in our small studio apartment it would be extremely selfish of me to think that I can just lounge around and not do anything...

Author: Right, it would be inhuman I am sure...

LM: Yes...

Author: Tell me about how you met your husband, Mrs. M.

LM: We had mutual, actually one set of friends who became very close in Washington DC and that friendship had continued with my family. And this family had grown up, not grown up but were next door neighbors with my husband's family. So this particular lady kept telling my parents that about my husband's family and how much we were in sync with each other and how their son was the right age for me and kept on about it and then from another close friend the same name kept coming up and this was all while I was going through college and unbeknownst to me, because my parents always told me "you focus on your studies and you do well" and that's what you have to do. Besides, the discussion of marriage would distract me from that. But in the meanwhile all these conversations were going on and because this family's name kept popping up, my parents decided to make some enquiries... and my husband's family is well known in our community and so is mine. But the two had never ever met and there were plenty of people who knew both families. So my father was particular about talking not only to common friends but my husband's employers - he was working in the railway hospital in

Madras at that time – but he was keen to talk to the people who reported to my husband or who he would be supervising. He said that the true measure of the man was how he behaved with the people he worked with who were below him in the rank. It was I guess a little bit of detective work and everything kept coming up wonderful so then when I finished college they said well – I was supposed to go to Oxford and they said go ahead with your application, but there is just one boy we would like you to meet. And so they organized a tea-party at my aunt’s house and my husband his family and uncle came; and from my side there were my parents and my aunt and uncle. Everybody talked to each other and decided it was a wonderful thing and we were not particularly attracted to each other, but...I don’t know but somehow we both had this sense that everything seemed to be so nice in terms of the families’ values and attitudes towards things that we just decided to go along...and it was...oh gosh...42 years ago.

Author: That’s good! Congratulations!

LM: Thank you! But just like that, it was like our decision to stay in this country – and it just happened and after all these years here we are!

Author: So soon after you were married, did you get to live in India at all? Or did you come straight to the United States?

LM: We lived in India for about 3 months and then we came here, no, 4 months.

Author: OK. My next question is about emancipation. Actually, you know Dr. Padma Rangaswamy, right?

LM: Right.

Author: ...because she gave me your name actually. She had indicated several months ago when I had spoken to her on the phone...that, growing up in New Delhi, she and I think a few of her friends believed that American women were highly emancipated. Do you believe that American women are or were emancipated at that time in the ‘60s? Or, do you think that Indian women are or were more emancipated than American women?

LM: I think it kind of depends on how we thought of emancipation in those days. When we were teenagers our view of emancipation meant you could dress in skimpy clothes or go out with boys...that was how at least in my mind I would have thought of someone as being very emancipated. I really, when I was a teenager I didn’t give much thought to career and you know life choices of that sort. It was just that western women – they wear

make-up and wear high heels or they have so much freedom. Actually I didn't spend that much time thinking about those things. But after I came here and had my children, I began to feel that Indian women in India were far more liberated, far better off in terms of options available to them than people in this country – without a doubt I would say that.

Author: What kind of options are we talking about here?

LM: I think that in India – and I know from how it has worked out in my own extended family, the women didn't have to go to work feeling guilty that she is neglecting her children because there is this extended family that will pitch in and take care of home; we don't have that kind of feeling that when you are gone your child will go astray and who is going to make sure that everybody has a proper meal and those kind of pressures that American working women have even to this day - I think are far less in India. Now I have lived away from India too long to know because servants are much harder to get over there...and extended families are now more nuclear families. But I always think that once a woman decides to have a career, her life is easier over there if she is a woman in India and mentally also she has far less pressure and guilt feelings are lesser on her – just because she has more families who can pitch in and because she can have domestic help.

Author: And you also mentioned that the community you come from, is a matriarchal society uh, matrilineal, right?

LM: Matrilineal, not matriarchal...

Author: Matrilineal, yes, I am sorry. And that would... correct me if I am wrong but I would probably think that women in your community are highly emancipated in every way. I mean because they also make their own decisions, right?

LM: Yes and no. Because however independent financially you may be, the decisions are always made within the context of the needs of all the people around you. I mean, I can't just suddenly take off because I have the money and the ability to do it. I just can't say OK, I am going to spend a year in Italy – I mean I could but I wouldn't. So in that way even though you may have the education and the capability of making your own choices, you would defer to your elders, you would defer to the situation that your family is in... I mean nobody lives in a vacuum, so...

Author: Yes, that is very interesting. Mrs. M, I just wanted to talk to you about the major Supreme Court decisions that came about because of the actions of the Feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which changed the lives of American women at home and at the workplace. And some of the decisions which of course became laws and all, laws like equal wages for the same work, prohibition against employment discrimination, the use of contraceptives by married couples – it may sound strange and you probably know this having lived here for so long, even married women felt that they had the right to choose when to have a baby or whether to have a baby and that is why the use of contraceptives was made legal; and later on the legalization of abortion. These were some of the rights that were accorded to American women by the Supreme Court.

LM: I didn't know that they couldn't use contraception...

Author: In the '60s yes, I wish I had done more research on what it was all about, but I have this from one of the reference books in our library. But it was very interesting because I thought it was mostly Roman Catholics who do not believe in child... what is the word? Yes, birth control. But yes, this was also one of the things that the Supreme Court had to allow women to do after they were married. What are your views on these issues? Do you believe that these rights helped emancipate American women?

LM: I would think so if those were things that women had no say in earlier; then being able to do so would definitely be liberating. Now maybe even though... now, by emancipation what do you mean exactly?

Author: yes, to me emancipation was something – I felt the same way as you did. I come from ... although my father was in the Navy, but he was still very conservative in certain ways. He was not very... he of course he asked us to concentrate on studies while we were in school and college and not us not to think about marriage – because they would take care of that... and I was used to think that American girls were really very – you know they could talk freely to boys, and go out with boys – not that I was craving to go out with boys... but those were some of the things I thought of as emancipating a young teenager, maybe. But for women, I felt that it was the freedom – not freedom actually – but being treated as an equal, in a family whether it was as a child, as a daughter in the family, as a wife, sharing things, you know even when it came to making decisions, important decisions, having a say in the running of a household jointly,

anything that is done jointly, I would think of as emancipating a woman. In other words, I think respecting a woman's thoughts, ideas, beliefs, you know...

LM: Right...

Author: You know, that is how I think of the ...when I think of the word emancipation. And I am trying to get other people's views on emancipation. I mean, there are so many different ways of interpreting that word. Right?

LM: To me, I would think that the respect for a woman's opinion and a woman's (?), to me that would be the key to the thought of emancipation because without that the woman is simply a non-entity.

Author: Right. Absolutely – and I do have some difficulty with some issues here that women here have fought for, but that's another story. I mean I guess different cultures have different ideas on what a woman should do or what a man is expected to do or ... you know...?

LM: Yes, I have some difficulty accepting though they say that women are equal and so on, still socially, I guess with this new generation it is not quite the same but, but it used to be that in spite of all that, the guy is still expected to pick up the tab, or hold the door open – so those kinds of things come from that kind of culture which is strange from the outside and it doesn't make sense to me you know... that the woman would sit and the guy would have to walk all the way around the car to open the door – that seems ridiculous to me! So there all of a sudden they are people who needed to be, to have the cloak thrown over their ... (?) so that her shoes wouldn't get wet; there seems to me to be a little bit of a disconnect, and that, I could never understand. Either they are both equal – they both carry heavy things or there is one that need protection and somebody who listens to the protector rather than assert herself. That part never made sense - I could never understand, and I think the new generation is coming to more comfortable accommodation with these old values of chivalry and codes of behavior that is required and certain things – I think they have thrown it all out of the window.

Author: You are absolutely right. OK, Mrs. M I just wanted to ask you...

LM: You can feel free to call me Lakshmi if you are comfortable...

Author: (laughs) actually I was not sure if I had to address you as Dr. M because I thought being Dr. R's colleague... and I thought I'd do some research on you but I didn't, I couldn't.

LM: No there is not much research on me... that's OK

Author: But your name is in the Indo-American Society... Indo-American Center, right?

LM: Yes.

Author: I was wondering, what are your husband's views on having a working wife – I know that you are not one now, but you did work briefly, isn't it? What did he think of it? Can you tell me something about what it was like when you were a working wife and mother?

LM: Yes, when I was much younger, he was very keen that I – because I enjoy writing – so he was very keen that I take courses and develop this talent. Especially in those days when the field was wide open, so any thing that I would have chosen would have been good for me because I spoke English, you know? But I felt very strongly that since he is hardly ever at home, I needed to be home for the children. I was not comfortable with leaving them to be raised by some person with whom I had no link with at all. I mean, that was just me. Different women make different choices and for me that was not an acceptable option so I decided to stay home. When the children had grown older and they had reached a point where they were at school all day, and I could explore other options, by then the timing was such - we had moved to the Chicago area where he got busy all over again with a new job and he was hired to set up the division of cardiology at the Highland Park hospital, which was all-consuming. So it meant that nobody was home, then I knew that if I put in a full day at work then when I came home, I am not this high-energy super-woman who would then be able to make “roti” for my family and then make sure that their music practice and all their routines were done without feeling stressed out. I know my limitations, I am basically somebody who likes things to be at an even keel. I don't like erratic and violent jolts of stress in my life. So knowing that I consciously decided that I would take a job in the children's school which meant the same hours plus it was a way for me to – again, we were the only Indians in the area – it was a way for me to understand the education system and work my ...(?) which was

within the same school, and at the same time I felt like I was doing something, a little something outside the home. So that way it used to be a nice easy compromise – my husband by this time with the demands on his career, was also worried that if I took on quote unquote, “ a real job, a corporate job” or something that was a very high level demanding kind of position, it would change the atmosphere in the house. And I agree with him that it would, because I would be stressed out and with two people stressed out, there really would be no give.

Author: Right.

LM: I think in that regard I probably did make more of the accommodation in our family. But then you know I had the luxury of being able to do that.

Author: Right. Are you in touch with your contemporaries back home in India? And if you are, do you think your life is different, very different from your contemporaries back home, in terms of having a career, or choosing not to have a career, of being able to volunteer, and things like that?

LM: A couple of my close contemporaries are people who have successful careers, and occasionally I admit to a twinge of – or wish I could do that...but I don't know if I would have been able to sustain the pace that they are able to sustain. A, because of the circumstances of their lives, they have a lot more support to run their households and attend to their families... after coming here, we had no families here - My two brothers, did come to the US, but very, very much later – so we were pretty much the first people in our families to do so, and there really wasn't anybody that I could feel comfortable leaning on. With that situation, I felt that I needed to be the one that my kids could lean on.

Author: Right. Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have already said above, about life here, and do you think your life would have been different if you had moved back to India and stayed there?

LM: It is very different. I have always thought that if we had never come here, I think our relationship, my husband and my relationship would have been different because I think we would have had so much family around us we would have not made as close an initial bond between each other as we have since we were so close to each other, learning the ropes comparatively by ourselves; we were both extremely close just from that fact

that I don't know if that particular kind of relationship would have developed had we stayed on in India. If we had stayed on and gone back, I don't know – it is a sort of speculation, and I don't know but we got used to having a tremendous amount of privacy here, and going back there, there's two sides to everything. And on the other side of the privacy coin is loneliness. So it is very hard to say, you know, whether you will ever find the balance. When you go to India, you just know that everybody is going to be a part of your life, and for short periods it is exhilarating and wonderful and you come away with all your batteries re-charged. But if you were to live there a long time, I am not sure having being exposed to the level of independence and doing our own thing here that we have here, going back there and being a part of everything thing you do and being accountable to somebody or the other would sit well with us. I am sure you will become very unpopular very soon...

Author: Yes... Mrs. M, I need to send you some paperwork – just the formalities that I have to comply with because I am doing this research and interview, and for which I need your signature. So would you give me your mailing address, or do you want to email it to me?

LM: I can give you a mailing address.

Author: OK. I've got the tape on, so...

LM: xxxxxx, IL, 60040

Author: Thank you so much for your time and your input. It was very interesting, and I really enjoyed listening to what you had to say, and your views on life in America and you know just being here as a young married woman, and growing up here as a teen-ager,

LM: Not at all. I hope it was useful. If you need more names I can give you some. But I don't know if you really need any more.

Author: I do actually, because not everyone has responded. So if it is OK with you what I will do is send you this questionnaire so if you want to tell your friends - I am looking at ladies who came here during the time that you did, or even a little later in the '70s. If it is OK I will attach this questionnaire so they would know what they are in for, what I am expecting, what they might expect at the interview.

LM: OK. Because plenty of my women friends are doctors and their experiences of course would have been completely different from what I have had so that might be...

Author: Yes, I will also give you the names that Mrs., Dr. Rangaswamy gave me so you won't duplicate them. OK?

LM: Right.

Author: Thank you so very much again...

LM: Not at all. Good luck to you.

Author: Thank you. Bye bye!

LM: Bye!

Appendix B (2)
Transcript of Oral Interview with MBA
Date: 31 July 2008

Author: I want you to know that this recorded interview is part of my research for my master's thesis in American history. My thesis is a study of how the social, cultural, and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s in America – especially the feminist movement – affected Indian women immigrants.

MBA: OK

Author: As an immigrant who is also interested in women's studies I believe this research will be a valuable contribution to Indian Diasporic studies. I also need to tell you that the transcribed material will be used in my thesis and will be kept in WCU university's library archives in my thesis which will be available for researchers who wish to learn about the effects of the American feminist movement on Indian women immigrants. I hope that is OK with you?

MBA: Can I ask you a question? (MA wants to give me her land line # so that she can participate in the interview using her speaker phone. She had asked me to call her on her cell phone because she thought she would be outside the home during the time of the interview.)

Author: May I have your initials please?

MBA: MBA

Author: Thank you, and where were you born Ms. A?

MBA: I was born in Gauhati, Assam, India

Author: OK. Which year did you immigrate to the United States?

MBA: Actually I came here to go to Grad School in 1982, and I became a citizen in ... (she calls out to her husband to find out which year!) 1987, I think.

Author: OK, what made you immigrate to the US, what brought you here?

MBA: Well, actually I got a Rotary scholarship to go to grad school here, and so I came here and never really had any intention of immigrating. But I met my husband in grad school and that was the end of that!

Author: So you went to grad school here. Can you tell me where you went to grad school here?

MBA: Yes, the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I did a – actually I had finished my BA and MA in India but I came here and did a second masters in communication, communication arts.

Author: OK, do you currently work somewhere?

MBA: Yah. Actually I work as a consultant, I am self-employed.

Author: OK and where are you located right now, where is your place of residence?

MBA: Naperville, Illinois.

Author: Alright, I am going to go back to your childhood now. And I would like for you to share with me some information about your family and your childhood. And if you could describe to me your parents' attitude towards education, and whether or not they had different expectations from male and female children? – If you have siblings, that is.

MBA: OK. Well, my father came from an extremely poor background but he came from a very bright family. And what happened was he was enormously, enormously encouraging of education. In fact he used to joke and say that that is your dowry. So we were always encouraged to live up to our potential and actually he would say that you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth and you have to do better than I have done and so we were always encouraged to reach and achieve. And he never really made any discrimination between me and my brother – between my brother, my sister and I.

Author: That's very good, very interesting...

MBA: Yah.

Author: And, tell me about the time when you first arrived in the US. What were your impressions about the country.

MBA: Actually you know what, because I had most of my formative years in Delhi – that's where I grew up, and I had a very cosmopolitan upbringing, and went to St. Stephen's College and Modern School, so I never really had anything you would deem a "culture shock." I had no trouble assimilating. And I guess being conversant with the language played a big part to do with that...

Author: Right...

MBA: But the only thing I realized very fast was that I was gaining a lot of weight because I was eating a lot of deli meats. (Both Author & MBA laugh)

MBA: But other than that I really had no problems settling down and all that.

Author: so you knew a lot about the US before you moved here, right?

MBA: Uh, huh...

Author: Can you tell me from where you got your knowledge about the States? Where you gained information about the country and... before you moved here? Where and how?

MBA: Well I used to be a very avid reader, read a lot... and my family and I came to this country for a trip around the US right after I passed high school. We actually took a Greyhound bus and went across this country and saw/traversed about 25 states in about 5 weeks....

Author: Uh, huh...

MBA: So that was a real eye-opener...and I think I was about 16, 16½ then and I was always very open to the world and read every bit of information I could find so really nothing was different. So the only thing was meeting people – getting to know people and getting acclimatized here. Other than that I don't think I really had no problem.

Author: So, did you know anything about American women, did you form any opinions about American women before you came to America? And if you did, did those opinions change after you moved here?

MBA: Well yes, actually, one of the things that the media and everything... I won't say promoted, but the impression was that most American women were very fast. And when they went on a date, they'd pretty much sleep with their first date. You know, that was something that completely changed when I first came here, because I found that most of the women were pretty conservative – at least those that I had met. So that was something that I had discovered, but I also discovered that a lot of women were also caring, they were loving, very family oriented, and it really depended upon the social milieu that you consorted with – you know who prescribe to which values.

Author: and I guess when you came to the US to live here – as a graduate student, the women that you came across were students like you – they were fellow students?

MBA: Actually when I came – that was what, about 1984 [1982?], that was about 26 years ago, there were very very few women students in Madison WI, than there were men. There were a lot more men – very few Indian women. You could count on the

fingers of one hand how many Indian women there were. We were a huge minority, but there were a lot more guys around.

Author: OK, but did you have any American women friends in college?

MBA: Yes, I did, I did.

Author: And they were what you just told me about, being conservative and not exactly the way you had thought them to be – fast and things like that?

MBA: You know, the funny thing was, I may sound naïve. But I really didn't know when I came from India that there was any such thing as lesbian women... I discovered that I had a Greek friend who was a lesbian. But she was a wonderful woman – never made any moves on me or anything. She was very bright and came from an extremely conservative family. But she was one of the star students in our class. But I learned about different aspects of the world, that women could be so different yet be a contributing factor to society. I learned to become very open-minded.

Author: That is good, that is really very nice. Now you mentioned that you met your husband at grad school, right?

MBA: Uh, huh.

Author: And so, where did you live after you were married? Can you describe to me how you and your husband handled household chores?

MBA: My husband after graduating actually got his first job in Chicago. I was actually a year behind him in grad school. So we got married while I was still in grad school and we came to Chicago. My husband actually, I am very blessed – my husband actually came to this country when he was 13 or 14 years old. He is of Indian origin but most of his formative years he has grown up in this country, so I like to describe him as the best of both worlds. He is very uh what should I say – he is Christian for one thing and I am Hindu, but I also tag along with him to church with him and the boys because I don't like being home alone... my husband actually is a very non-Indian husband if you know what I mean...he helps me around the kitchen – we just made *rotis* where I was doing the “*bayloing*” and he was doing the “*sakoing*” ...

Author: Fantastic!!

MBA: Yah. We really have a wonderful time in the kitchen, we cook together, we love throwing parties together, and he'll do the dishes. We really look upon our marriage as a team effort.

Author: That's wonderful

MBA: Yes, and he is always very supportive of everything I do and always been just my biggest champion. I don't think I could have asked for a better husband.

Author: That's a great blessing, ya. Ok, as a married working woman, do you think it is important to share household chores? You just mentioned that you do... but do you think it is very important for a married woman to have her husband chip in or do you think there are certain things around the house that because women do better, they need to do it and that it is theirs to do and that men do not have to do and vice versa?

MBA: Well, I think it is a bit of both. I really feel that if you want to have a quality marriage and you want to be quality parents you ought to share... because there are only so many hours in a day and by the time you come home from work or regardless of whether you work, you effectively have only 4 hours or so to spend together in the evening with your children and your spouse. And if the wife is going to do the cooking and cleaning and doing the dishes, it doesn't really leave much time with your children or your spouse. But if the husband ... [had to stop for a few seconds since the sound of a train drowned our conversation] if you look upon it as a team effort or you share what you do, you ultimately do have some time to spend together. We never watch television, we do not have cable. But we love watching movies and we love spending time together and like to go for a walk in the evening. So if you are always and if you share... and I always believe that if you set an example to your children, I have two boys one is 21 and a half and the other is 16, I always tell them that you will make better husbands if you have compassion and understand that anything that a woman can do, so can the man. The only difference is that a woman can bear babies when a man can't. Other than that everything is the same and so you have to learn to do laundry and do the dishes and to cook and do everything. I don't know if that answers your question or not...

Author: Yes it does and it leads me to another question... if you were to live in India, do you think [train interrupts us again] if you and your husband were living in India, do you

think things would have been the same as it is here, like sharing the household chores and all that stuff?

MBA: Uh, you know that is an interesting question... I have never really thought about it. But one thing I do know, one of the things was that when my mother- when my husband was really young about 17 his mother was dying of breast cancer. And the last two years of her life the siblings were – one of them was married and the other was away at war, and my husband took care of his mother during the last few days. And I think that taught him the value of taking care and just being there for the one you love and I think that sort of went towards a lot of his mental make-up. And I think given the compassionate human being that he is, if we lived in India and didn't have domestic help, I am sure he would have helped out. But I think, both of us actually even though... I go back to India about 2 or 3 times a year, both of us feel very strongly about the fact that even though it is a pain to do your own housework – I am sure you have lived in the country long enough to know that you do your own housework?

Author: Right...

MBA: ...be your own cook, gardener, janitor, everything...but there is still something to be said about the fact that you alone are responsible for your own actions. Even now when I go back to India, I don't like to ask the servants or the cook to fetch me anything or to do anything for me. I just have a very hard time with that mind set. And I think I have always been that way. So I think that if we lived in India, we would have been the same way. I don't think living in America has anything to do with it. We might have had maybe a driver to run the kids around to different places and maybe someone to help with a few of the basic chores...but other than that I think, the things we enjoy doing together, we would probably still be doing together.

Author: OK, I mentioned that because I don't know if you will agree with me or not but our society back home is still a male-oriented society where we like to pamper them and not have them do things around the house and that is why I was wondering if things would have been the same if you were living in India...and you know that's what made me ask you that question.

MBA: You know what, I really have no patience with that mind-set. Because I feel that just because somebody's gender is different, that doesn't bring them an entitlement...

ultimately it comes down to consideration and caring for the people you love, and if someone is spending a lot of time and effort doing something, cooking and cleaning and all of that and you are just sitting around just because you are a male, I think there is something patently unfair about that. I think that my job as a mother is to instill in my children a compassion for another human being be it male or female. I don't really approach life from a gender perspective. I approach it from a perspective of caring, compassion, consideration and understanding – and I think if you have that and you respect and love the other person, those things just emanate from within.

Author: Thank you. Recently I had a conversation with an Indian woman immigrant who is also a writer and an educator who came to the United States in 1970. She mentioned to me that she believed American women were “highly emancipated.” Do you believe that American women are emancipated? Or, if they are more emancipated than Indian women?

MBA: Umm, you know it is amazing, but a lot of American women are a less emancipated than we think they are ... I think they had to fight a lot for it...

Author: Right...

MBA: and I think those who are emancipated... I think ultimately both societies are very similar... but I think now a lot of Indian women are more emancipated, they have had more opportunities to go out and work and get paid and things like that and they have a lot more basis for asserting themselves and their independence. So I think if an American woman is assertive it is because she has the wherewithal to be so...

Author: Right. So, correct me if I am wrong, so your idea of emancipation is being financially independent, capable, or...

MBA: My idea of emancipation is that my family and my spouse allow me to have the space to be who I am ...to fulfill myself and my intellectual capacities. It is very funny you know, I used to have a very very fulfilling career in India in the media. And then I came here and I put aside my career because I wanted to raise my family and sort of be there for them. I used to consider myself an emancipated woman. But now I think that you know being financially secure is only half the story...but if you are not happy and if you don't see that your children are settled and happy and are grounded, all the success and financial security you have is really meaningless. To me the ultimate happiness of

my family is more important than my emancipation. To me I think the goal of feminism is equal work for equal pay, and for treating women with respect for what they can contribute to society. I would still like a man to open the door for me, pull out a chair for me treat me like a lady. I don't think I need to just... as a matter of fact I get upset when a woman is too strident about her rights as a woman. I think if you are a woman who is capable, who is intellectually able to contribute to society, then a man or whoever it is will ... should be able to see that and accord you the respect that is due you.

Author: Since you have mentioned the feminist movement, that brings me to the question about the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to major Supreme Court decisions, thus changing the lives of American women at home, and at the workplace. Equal wages for the same work, prohibition against employment discrimination, the use of contraceptives by married couples, and later, the legalization of abortion – these were some of the rights accorded to women. What are your views on these issues?

MBA: Well, to be honest with you, when I first came to this country, it wasn't as brown as it is today. And I had a heck of a time finding a job to match my skills...and if I could turn the clock back, if I had the same set of skills today it would be much much easier for me to find a job in the media today. I used to be a national anchor on Indian television – but even though I had all the accreditation, all the experience, I couldn't even get an interview. I don't think it is the same way now. And in terms of the feminist movement, I think... I have been through my share of being discriminated upon because I am a woman and all that. I don't ...honestly think I have really ever felt discrimination because I am from India or that I am of a different culture. As a matter of fact I have always had people respond to me very positively. So I have never felt really discriminated against except for the fact that I am a woman, and I have not been paid as much as I would like being paid - but that was several years ago.

Author: OK. What made you decide to work or have a career? I know that you mentioned you were a national anchor back in India. But what made you start working after you came to the US and after grad school?

MBA: well initially after I got married, I didn't have any children. So it didn't make sense not to work. And sometimes I laugh and joke and say that a woman's education is

her biggest liability. And when you have been educated at the WASU you really feel you need to justify that education and I am such a restless spirit and feel that everyday I have to learn something new... and I couldn't imagine just sitting at home doing nothing. I wanted to work and I wanted to contribute to the family funds so to speak...we had financial goals, we wanted to buy a house and things...and I guess one had to work to earn the money to do all that. (there is a brief interruption) So, that's why when my second son was born I used to have a very demanding career – I used to be the manager of an audio-video company that was a self-development product and it was a pretty long commute. It took me about an hour each way and my younger son [I think she meant her older son] was about 6 when my second son was born and it was extremely tiring trying to manage two kids get them to swimming lessons and all that. So the company was evolving and even though the job that I had was ideally suited to working from home, they didn't believe... the tele-commuting mind-set hadn't really taken off then. So they wouldn't agree to my working part-time or tele-commuting, so I quit and I free-lanced for a while just so I could be home with my kids. And once they grew up a little bit I decided to go back to work. So my work – I am a consultant – I love my work because it gives me a lot more freedom with my time.

Author: Yes, you mentioned that you have your own business, right?

MBA: Yes, I do several things. I am in marketing research, I am a ____ moderator, I do marketing and PR for a ____ firm, I am also a freelance writer, and then I do _____ development for executive recruiters.

Author: Hmm, what are your husband's views on having a working wife?

MBA: My husband's views on having a working wife?

Author: Yes...

MBA: What are my husband's views on having a working wife, honey? (she calls out to her husband!) He says "it stinks!" (Both, MBA & Author laugh) No, actually, he is very supportive. You know to be honest with you every man likes to come home to a woman who is there,

Author: Of course yes.

MBA: But I do think he is a very spoilt husband. I like to think I take good care of him. I cook almost every day. I cook everything from scratch and quite frankly, if I were to stay home everyday I would drive him crazy and I would be bored.

Author: Yes, yes, I understand that...

MBA: I mean, say for example I have to go to Brazil next month for an assignment. I am going to go for about 5 days, so he is going to have to hold the fort down. I go to India twice a year, you know on some writing assignment...and he takes care of my children. I mean had he not done that I wouldn't be able to go to visit my family back in India. So he's been doing that for literally about 12 years – he's been taking care of my children while I am gone.

Author: that is great! OK, Mrs. A, since the time you arrived in the US, how do you think the life or the role of the Indian woman immigrant has changed? Do you think your life is different from your contemporaries back in India?

MBA: it is hard to say. It really depends upon which strata of society you come from...and I think when I go back and see some of my friends in India, it depends on the family you have married into... and what the social structure and ethos of the family is...if it is a very conservative family then I find that woman sort of kowtowing to that family's values, you know? But if it is a nuclear family, then the woman is progressive and working outside the house, usually they are living by themselves - the husband and the children – in a nuclear family of their own and then it doesn't really matter. But there are still a lot of families where there are women who and I think it also depends upon what kind of a job that woman has, and what kind of support she has. You know if you have the financial means to have a driver and a domestic help and everything else, then you don't have to worry about how the wheel of the everyday family is running... because then you can pay money and have it done. Only when you don't have the income to pay for all of that, then it becomes a stress factor. I see it all the time. I see, I see friends of my sister who were very capable women and who worked for a while but they did not get any support from their husband...who not because they were not nice men, but they had demanding careers. And in India now I think what is happening in India is at a point where America was about 10 years ago. There is a lot of new money

and a lot of horizons are opening up... but I think unfortunately they are not realizing it, the price they are having to pay, they will have to pay ultimately down the road...

Author: ...and what exactly do you mean by that?

MBA: I mean, I can see that there is going to be a preponderance of divorces...I think there is going to be a lot of psychological problem, lot of people now, for example take the call centers, OK? A lot of these call centers have people who are working with American clients, they are working almost half a whole day's biological clock ahead of us. These are young people who are awake when really, they should be sleeping. They get off finish their shift at 7, 8, in the morning. That is really the end of their day's work. So now, in Bangalore and all, basically you see them hitting the pub and all that at 7 o'clock in the morning. Then they go home to sleep and basically have no interaction with their family.

Author: Right...

MBA: there is a lot of social psychosis there is a lot of broken relationships, there is a lot of – a huge rise in the incidences of alcoholism, and a lot more psychological ramifications that I don't think Indians are realizing, that I don't think corporate America is realizing really.

Author: Yes, that is true. Well, thank you so much for your input. I mean, I have really enjoyed listening to what you've had to say about life here and about your experiences. And if there is anything you would like to add to what you have already said, I'd be glad to listen. But I know I am interrupting your dinner...

MBA: No, no, no. I am done with dinner- I am just munching away for the fun of it!

Author: There is just one thing I need to let you know – that I also need to send you some paperwork for which I need your mailing address...so would you please tell me what it is? Or do you want to email that to me?

MBA: I will tell you, xxxxxx, IL, 60540.

Author: Thank you again! And I really enjoyed listening to what you've had to say...

MBA: Likewise, and I wish you all the best. What prompted you to do this research?

Author: Well, I am at the last leg of my degree in American history... I had to read so many books and write so many papers and then I thought to myself, why not write about something that has to do with Indian women? You know, I have always been interested

in learning about women's history. Nobody writes about them, especially Indian immigrant women who came here during that time when there was so much going on here. And Ruma has been very helpful – getting me connected with women... and has given me some names. But if you happen to know anyone who came here in the '70s... would you please...

MBA: Absolutely! Yes, I'd be happy to help you. How many more names do you need?

Author: At least about half a dozen more, because not everybody is going to respond...

MBA: Sure. I will give you um... I will talk to them,

Author: Yes,

MBA: Actually there is a friend of mine who is a social worker - her name is Aruna Jha. She used to work for Apna Ghar which is a social service organization...

Author: Yes, I have heard of it...

MBA: And she actually runs a... she is the founder of an organization called AASPI – Asian American Suicide Prevention Initiative.

Author: Is that in Chicago?

MBA: Yes, it is based in Chicago. Her focus is, she works with families who have faced loss through suicide because of all the problems you have alluded to – and some of my other friends. Yes, I am sure they would love to talk to you.

Author: what I will do is send you a copy of the questionnaire so that they know what they are in for...

MBA: Sure

Author: I would really appreciate that.

MBA: And like I told you in my email – there was an email I did a survey a couple of months ago. It was so long winded. I mean I wouldn't have minded if at the outset they had said it would take 45 minutes to an hour instead of 15 minutes. I was so irked because I had not budgeted the time. By the time I got to the middle of it – I mean it just wouldn't end. And I got so sick of it I ended it. The other thing, I remembered that question you asked about women who come here from India?

Author: Yes...

MBA: it is very interesting, some of the women, it depends upon the social milieu they come from, if a woman comes from an educated background and say she works in a professional capacity – say she is a computer engineer or a doctor, or something, her lifestyle is not diametrically different from what she lived (like) in India, you know, or anywhere in any developed country. But it is very interesting to see say, and I am not being - please don't think I am being racial or anything – but say if you look at a lot of these Gujarati women who come in, you know who work in Dunkin' Donuts and all that. These are not very well-educated people, but they really have made enormous strides with assimilating in this country while they are still very very attached to their Indian origins and Indian ethos. But I think they have done remarkably well I think in terms of fitting in and making the best of what they do and they also have the great good fortune of having a very supportive social fabric. I mean a lot of Gujarati people you will find are extremely supportive and helpful of family and friends. They have a really big network of support that when they have a party and all that, they will come to help as servers and all that. And I think they have really understood the thing of dignity of labor and realized that no job is beneath them. And I think that is wonderful to see.

Author: Yeah. Of course, and I think you get to see more of that when you come to this country. We try to be independent and do things ourselves instead of being waited [upon] hand and foot.

MBA: Hmm. But you know what, it is actually in fact a little different than that. I think when you grow up in India and I am including myself in that – when you grow up in a social system where you have servants and cooks and domestic help, you really don't look at them as individuals. You really don't look at them as individuals, as people who have needs or people who need to be respected or wants. Or you know people who have the same kind of basic urges as all of us do as human beings. And because we don't confer on the kind of respect and dignity – we cease to think of them as human beings. They are just people who are working and that's really not true. And maybe I am a little different, but I have always thought that no matter what a person does for a living he is ultimately a living breathing human being who needs to be given the respect and treated like a human being. You know...And it really doesn't matter what background he comes from.

Author: Well, thank you again. (The last part of the conversation was about a common friend of ours)

Appendix B (3)
Transcript of Oral Interview with PR
Date: 11 June 2008

Author: Good Morning Dr. R. First of all, thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. Before we begin the interview I would like to ask if it is OK with you that I tape our interview. That way I won't have to bother you by asking you to repeat your sentences because I will be taking notes all the time, and most importantly, we will be sure we get it right when I write it all down later...

PR: OK to tape

Author: Thank you for letting me tape our interview. This interview is part of my research for my master's thesis in American history. My thesis is a study of how the social, cultural, and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s in America – especially the feminist movement – affected Indian women immigrants. As an immigrant who is also interested in women's studies I believe this research will be a valuable contribution to Indian Diasporic studies. I also need to tell you that the transcribed material will be kept in Hunter Library's Archives for anyone who wants to find out about the effects of the American feminist movement on Indian women immigrants.

PR: Uh, huh

Author: May I have your initials please?

PR: PR

Author: And what was your place of birth?

PR: India - Kerala, India

Author: When did you immigrate to the US, which decade?

PR: I immigrated to the US in 1970

Author: What was the reason you immigrated to the US?

PR: My husband was approached along with a lot of other engineers who were in Ranchi which is where he was working and asked if we would like to spend a few years in the US... that it was possible to get a job and Green Card and was told that we could return to Indian whenever we pleased. So it just seemed like a good idea, and a good opportunity to travel and see the place. We had no intention of immigrating and making a permanent home in the US. It was more to travel and avail of the opportunity to earn in

this country by working. And then when we were done with travel, we were expected to go back.

Author: So of course you were married when you came here...

PR: Right

Author: What was your education level before you immigrated and after you immigrated?

PR: OK, I had a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Delhi University. I graduated in 1965. And then when I came to the United States I found that my education didn't really count very much because everybody wanted to know what my typing speed was – that is all they were interested in. So I figured I ought to go back to school to earn an American degree. So I went back and got my masters degree in 1976 – from the Univ. of IL and worked in marketing and advertising for 7 years before I went back to school in the 1990s to earn my doctorate in American history.

Author: So was your master's degree also in history?

PR: No, my bachelor's degree was in English literature, my master's degree was again in English literature but with specialization in creative writing, but my doctorate was in American history.

Author: Oh great! So do you currently work somewhere?

PR: Yes I do – I do some freelance consulting work now.

Author: Do you also teach now?

PR: Yes, occasionally.

Author: Where is your current place or city of residence?

PR: It's Chicago – well, not the city of Chicago, but a southwestern suburb of Chicago called Clarendon hills.

Author: Now we are going to start with growing up in India. Can you share some information about your family and childhood? Describe to me your parents' attitude towards education. If you have any brothers, did your parents have any different expectations for male and female children?

PR: OK, I was born in Kerala but within a few years we moved to Delhi; I spent early years – elementary school in Trivandrum living with my grandparents – my grandfather was a school teacher; my family was very very keen on you know, good education; and

since my father had a job in Delhi where he was frequently transferred, they (parents) left us (sisters and brothers) lived with our grandparents so we could get a stable education in the early years; then for middle school and high school we joined our parents in the north. And I grew up in Delhi, and going to a convent school, and very early on I realized that education important because Dad told us how difficult it was for him to get us admitted to a convent school. It was highly competitive, and he had to spend like, day after day for almost a month trying to secure admission for us. But he thought it was important for us to get an English medium education. I went to an English medium Irish convent in Delhi, and then to Delhi university - Miranda House – which was at the time the top college in Delhi. We were always aware that we were expected to do well in school, you know, be achievers; I personally topped all the exams - Sr. Cambridge exam, Delhi university exam, and I know it was a source of great pride for my dad. My brother too expected to excel. As far as studies were concerned, we were treated pretty much equally. It was important to do well whether you were a girl or a boy.

Author: Tell me about the time when you first arrived in the United States. What were your impressions of the country before you came here?

PR: Before I came here whatever I knew was based on you know Hollywood movies, and we used to read a lot of American magazines like Life, Reader's Digest...and landing in NY, which was our first port of entry, it was quite awe inspiring. I didn't expect to see something which looked very futuristic to me you know all that glass and steel and highways, everything was different in real life than in the books and movies, glass, steel, highways, everything, different in real life and in the movies and in the books. But when I started to look for work, I began to feel that the country was not what it seemed to be; because in India, I held very responsible position with as a PRO, assistant PRO with Indian Airlines; had to do a lot of writing for the in-house magazine, doing interviews...but after coming here when I started interviewing for a job, as I mentioned earlier, people were not interested in that. I was asked to sit for typing exam and clerical types of job positions it was quite a disappointment for me. Because I believed I had come to a land where women had equal opportunities and it didn't seem that way at all.

Author: Yes, that is interesting because I do not know if you remember our conversation a couple of months ago in March when you and other women in Indian believed that

American women in the late 1960s, and early 1970s of was that they were “highly emancipated.” I did not ask you then what exactly you meant by the word emancipation. Can you tell me now why you believe that American women were emancipated?

PR: Well, I think it was basically equal opportunities at work. Because you see my husband was an engineer and the kinds of jobs he was offered – this was still a difficult market because at time in the early ‘70s the big 3 auto makers were on strike; there was a recessionary atmosphere. It was hard for him to find a job, but when he was offered work it really took into account his engineering skills whereas in my case, I had writing skills and they were not taken into account at all. But I am not sure if it was because she was an immigrant from foreign country or because whether I was a woman. Later I realized that it was because I was an immigrant, because I found once I joined the workforce, I found typing pools where the secretaries were all women in one room, that the managers were all men at that time, and slowly I was beginning to get an impression of both gender *and* race – and the fact that I was an immigrant, I was beginning to ask myself how all these factors played a part in my opportunities in the workplace.

Author: That is interesting... can you tell me how did you meet your husband?

PR: Well, our families knew each other back in India, so our marriage in India was...but we also knew each other, so meeting my husband in India was pretty kind of traditional you know, got married with family approval, etc., I didn’t think that that was unusual there.

Author: Where did you live after you were married before you came to America? Did you live in a joint family system?

PR: No, no, no. We were a nuclear. As soon as we got married and we stayed in our own apartment in Ranchi where he had his first job as an engineer working for Heavy Engineering Corporation so were in a two-bedroom apartment of our own

Author: This is a little personal question - describe your relationship with your husband before you came to America, and after you migrated.

PR: Back in India there are certain expectation of you know what I would do when I got married; the home was the primary responsibility. In fact when I got a job opportunity top teach at a school very far from home, there was a family concerned about how I would manage the house and a job, and there was a general consensus that I would stay at

home. But I did not really mind because I did a lot of freelance writing – I wrote for magazines and so I could stay at home and be intellectually fulfilled. When I came to the US however, the question of not working was not there; because we needed the income and I knew that I had revenue producing skills; so having to work from day one was the expected thing. That was a major difference between life in India and life here.

Author: In the 1960s and 1970s, the actions of the feminist movement (or the Women’s Rights Movement) led to major Supreme Court decisions, and you know those very well, being a historian yourself – it also changed the lives of American women at home, and at the workplace. What are your views on these issues? Do you believe these rights helped emancipate American women? Do you believe they affected you in some way, and if yes, how?

PR: Oh yes, I think it has worked immensely for American women. And I feel like I am kind of going through that because I would see all these Equal Opportunity ads and kind of wonder at society that would say that you have to give a job to someone regardless of gender or race. I mean it seems a great ideal but I felt that it was not followed in the workplace yet - for instance in India, an ad would say wanted young attractive, convent-educated girl for a receptionist and that would be advertised in the papers. And I knew that such a thing was banned by law in the US and that made me feel good. But with regard to how society was geared to accept women, I think I began to feel it very keenly once I had my children and was raising my daughters, I had to rely very heavily on family support while I was working. Today when I see the amenities that my daughters have for childcare, for good professional nanny care, those kind of things were either beyond our reach as new immigrants or did not exist – the kinds of daycare centers that you have today – where early child development is approached very seriously... You know when you put your child in a daycare center it is not going to get just food and sleep but some developmental coaching as well – and I think that is coming from women fighting for their right, being in the workplace more and more and it is not a done deal yet it has a long way to go, but I think the 60s and 70s provided a great start.

Author: When you decided to work outside the house after you came to the US, how did it affect the household? Tell me about your husband’s views on having a “working wife?”

PR: Like I said, living in the US it was almost a forgone conclusion that one would use one's skills to add to the family income and any conflict that might have arisen between managing work and the home were for me resolved through family support – both my mother and my mother-in-law happened to be widowed so they didn't have their own families to run in India so they could come and stay with me for long periods of time and help me raise the children, and that is what enabled me to raise the children and continue working. And it didn't give rise to any major conflicts with my husband about, you know, his role in helping with the house work and like that – there were enough family members around, to help with that.

Author: Since the time you arrived in the United States, how do you think the role/or the lives life of Indian women immigrants has changed? You did mention the availability of day-care centers and all that... How do you think your life is different from your contemporaries back in India? What do you feel about it?

PR: I think that women in the US - me included - and many of my contemporaries that I have talked to and in my work I have interviewed many of them, women feel that in the US they can find their own voice and the courage to stand up for their own convictions in quite an assertive way that might not have been possible in India with societal and family pressures. So, many of them do feel they have come into their own – it is certainly true for me. I know that the choices and the ... (?) that I have made in my professional life – I don't know if they would not have been possible in India; because my life is a little bit unusual in that in the 1980s I, my husband and I went back for personal reasons – in fact I have seen women in India who are my contemporaries who I went to school and college with, who have very fulfilling and meaningful careers; so I can't say that things were wonderful for me just because I moved here, but I do know that I felt more confident about voicing my opinions and speaking my mind more than I might have had I been in India.

Author: Do you think your contemporaries who were working there were restricted by certain societal norms and expectations?

PR: You know what, I think it totally depends upon class and the family environment in which you are; there are families in India where some of my friends were married into very traditional families, who were severely restricted about what they could and could

not do, even going shopping in the bazaar on their own was something that was not done— and yet there were lots of women, I have lots of friends in advertising in India, who lived a life of enviable freedom – they did what they wanted when they wanted which was way beyond what my more traditional family would have allowed. So it is hard to generalize; even here, I really think that it is hard to speak of Indian society in general. And in the US, I would say the same is true...you know depending upon your own education, your own background, whether you come from an urban setting in India, and some come from a rural setting... your life in the US can be, can vary widely.

Author: So it is not as if once you come to the United States you do as you please... it definitely depends upon the background you were raised in, I guess - do you think, is that right?

PR: Yes, and also the household to which you belong – there are many women who come here to join their husbands, or their in-laws who are already settled in the US, and their experiences are very different from mine I know. Some of them have felt quite stifled or thought they would have much more freedom than they did, so it is really hard to generalize. But I can say that the women of my class and generation who came in the 1970s – for us I think the major issue was how to raise our children in the way we were told is the best way to do it because we had certain ideas and at the same time find meaningful identity as educated women, you know. Like some of us I think were forced to go to work when we would rather have stayed home with the children, and some others were forced to stay home and take care of children when they would rather have stayed in their jobs and continued their careers. Those were I think our main conflict that we had to work through.

Author: so it is more of an individual thing, a family thing...

PR: Right, only those who had a certain kind of education a certain kind of upper-class background in India and you were married into a family which is not particularly restrictive, but you know, for which traditional value is important, chances are such women would have had shared experiences.

Author: Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have said regarding women in the United States after they have immigrated here? How life has changed for them? I understand that you cannot generalize but do you think that the feminist

movement in America had any impact at all on immigrant women who came here from India?

PR: I think it did though we may not have been aware of it, or as much aware of it then as we have become with the passage of time. In other words when we were going through the struggles that we were going through as immigrants – I don't think many of us were aware that the women in this country were going through a feminist revolution. We were too much a part of it I think at that time – but today in the 1990s, when many of us have raised our own families and when I see how our children are living – how many of the opportunities they have are so much better than what we had, we can look back and attribute it I think to the feminist movement of the 1970s – for me personally, that was definitely the case. And then again I believe that many of my contemporaries may also feel the same way.

Author: Was it very obvious to you then that women were fighting for something that was rightfully theirs?

PR: Oh yes, I was aware of it because of all those bra-burning (she laughs), street demonstrations that were taking place at the time – we were reading about it... like I said you know, you look for help wanted ads and you see this EEOC following every advertisement, and you'd ask yourself what on earth that means, and you became aware that people could not discriminate against you by law, but when you saw all that discrimination in the workplace – you really couldn't do anything about that I think – at least not as an immigrant. You didn't hear of so many cases of civil suits, or there were class action suits against major companies because of discrimination against women... all that and much more happened in the '80s and '90s and that would definitely not have happened if that revolution had not taken place in the '60s and '70s

Author: Thank you so very much for your time Dr. R. I will mail you some forms for which I will need your signature. They are the consent forms for the release of the interview transcripts which other researchers might want to look at.

PR: Yes.

Author: Thank you so much again, and I really appreciate your time.

Appendix B (4)
Transcript of Oral Interview with PLS
Date: 6 October 2008

Author: Thank you very much for letting me record this interview Mrs. S which is part of my research for my master's thesis in American history. My thesis is a study of how the social, cultural, and political movements of the 1960s, and the 1970s in America, especially the feminist movement affected Indian women immigrants. As an immigrant who is also interested in women's studies, I believe that this research will be a valuable contribution to Indian Diasporic studies. I also need to tell you that the transcribed material will be used in my thesis which will be kept in Western Carolina University's Hunter Library, and the thesis will be available to researchers who are interested in learning about the affects of the American feminist movement on Indian women immigrants. I hope this is OK with you?

PS: Yes, that is fine.

Author: May I have your initials please? I am asking for your initials because in case I need to use any direct quote for my thesis, I am going to use only your initials and not your full name.

PS: OK, it is PLS.

Author: OK. And where were you born Mrs. S?

PLS: I was born in India – in Shimla.

Author: OK, and which year did you immigrate to the United States?

PLS: In '71. Before that I was in England for 2 years.

Author: OK. And what was the reason you immigrated to the US?

PLS: I accompanied my husband, who is a physician.

Author: Uh, huh. So, can you tell me what your education level was before you immigrated to the US? And after you came to the US, i.e. if you pursued any higher studies?

PLS: I have a master's in Hindi Literature, and I also have a bachelor's in education from India.

Author: OK. And did you study further when you came here?

PLS: I did some computer programming, but I did not pursue much after that.

Author: Are you currently working anywhere?

PLS: No, I am not.

Author: And where do you currently reside?

PLS: I live in xxxxxx, Illinois...

Author: uh, huh...

PLS...which is a suburb of Chicago.

Author: Can you share some information about your family and your childhood, Mrs. S? Like, if you could describe to me your parents' attitude towards education, if they had any different expectations from male and female children. That is, if you have siblings.

PLS: Yes, I am the youngest daughter of my parents – and we are 8 of us, 6 boys and 2 girls. And my youngest brother is also... actually 8 years older than I am. So I was like a menopause (!) child of the family. But my parents always insisted on higher education and 4 of my brothers are physicians and my 2 other brothers are engineers. And also my sisters-in-law are highly educated – one is a physician also. So we have always, always insisted on higher education.

Author: Uh, huh. Was there any... did you notice any differences in their (parents') attitude towards male and female children with regard towards education – you mentioned that almost all – 4 – of your brothers are physicians; what about the girls, did they insist on you'll getting a professional degree?

PLS: Yes, my sister, because she is about 13-14 years older than I am, she got married early at the age of 18. She did not finish her college but she did her "Shastri ..." (?) like the 12th grade – she was very young when she got married; that was in 1949, actually...

Author: that was the year my mother was married too!

PLS: Really!!! Yes, very young, but her husband is a lawyer – retired a long time ago – he, they always insisted on higher education. There was no, whatever you can study it is up to you, but they liked that everyone should become independent that way.

Author: Right... Now tell me about the time you first arrived in the US. Now I understand that you said that you moved to the US from the UK – so you were already exposed to western culture. But can you tell me your first impressions of this country?

PLS: You know, when we were in England it was more like a British royal attitude everywhere, attitude, manners, very formal when you speak to anyone, but when we

came to America, it seems like everyone was so casual here. Even in their dress – the dress code and all, everything was so casual. We came here in the month of June and it was pretty hot here, and everybody wore different kind of clothes we were used to. That was the first impression I got – that America was closer to India, because of the weather I guess, and it was very easy to talk to people that way.

Author: So, did you form any opinions about American women before you came to America?

PLS: Not really as much... because whatever I got to know was from my family members who were already here and through magazines and books and things like that. And so, you always get a very nice picture of the women here, very well-dressed and beautiful and everything is perfect. But when I came here I noticed how much obesity there was in this country.

Author: This was way back in the '70s?

PLS: Yes.

Author: Wow!

PLS: And it really got my attention that people here eat too much (she laughs)

Author: Uh huh. Yes, yes...

PLS: That was very striking actually.

Author: And...

PLS: Because people in England were not like that... people were healthy and they were not as obese as Americans.

Author: Yes... can we talk a little bit about how you met your husband? And where you lived soon after you were married?

PLS: Yes, actually I was born in Shimla but I was brought up in Delhi. All my education took place in Delhi; it was an arranged marriage, my parents arranged it, and he was from Kanpur. At that time he graduated from Kanpur Medical College and then he went to Lucknow for his post-graduation in surgery. And he was known to my other part (?), my sister-in-law... marriages used to take place within the community so he was kind of a distant relative of my sister-in-law. And I ... it was a total arranged marriage – he did not see me, I had a peek somehow!!! (Both of us laugh here) I was not supposed to ... Although that was not the case, my parents gave me full freedom – like anybody

could come and talk to me and it was fine (with them); but he came from a very conservative family and he was not even ready to get married at that time so he sort of refused to get married but somehow his parents pressured, and the family pressured – the pressure was so much that he accepted the offer and agreed to get married...

Author: So did you live in India for sometime before you moved to the United Kingdom?

PLS: Yes, we were there for three years then we came to England. I was living in Kanpur most of the time. Then the last year I started living in Lucknow and I was teaching there.

Author: OK. So after you moved to the UK, then it was your husband's decision to come to the US – that is why you moved here?

PLS: Yes, he wanted to come here, and then my family wanted him to come here because there were more opportunities and a brighter future as a physician, and you know, advanced knowledge and everything else all – they wanted him here - there was more pressure from my family than his...

Author: So when you moved to America you already had quite a few members of your family living here, if I understand you correctly?

PLS: Yes, one of my brothers was in England, and one brother was already in America...

Author: OK...So I guess because your husband is a physician, there is no question about whether or not you shared household chores...right? I guess, or am I wrong in assuming that he did not help you around the house when you came here?

PLS: Initially it was very difficult for him to do that because he was on call every night, and the duties will run 36 hours straight. So whenever he would come home he would just go to bed to sleep, you know. So in those days it was not very possible. But he has been very considerate and understanding about it.

Author: Uh huh... that's nice to know. But generally, I understand that this does not apply to you but do you think if you were a working woman and would it be right for the husband and wife to share household chores or do you think women should do what they do best and leave the men to do what they do best?

PLS: I think it is good to have an understanding to work and to help each other. That is the best situation. And of course they will do no matter what, do what interests them most, and they will carry on to do that. But nowadays it has become very difficult – if they do not help each other, then it creates a problem.

Author: Right, right. I wanted to just share with you a conversation I had recently with a noted Indian woman immigrant who is also a writer and an educator, and came to the US in 1970. She mentioned that growing up in New Delhi, she and her friends believed that American women were highly emancipated. Do you believe that American women are emancipated? Or if (whether) they are more emancipated than Indian women?

PLS: They are, more... and the other thing that I have noticed is that with this women's liberal (liberation) movement, that is more of a propaganda than what it actually is. They are more liberated than Indian women of course, but I see that women here are dominated by men too. And that is why there is a lot of domestic violence and suppression and they are still fighting for equal pay. There is a lot of (male) dominance in America also, though they may be called more liberated and all. I think that it yes, it is just projected more like look like that (that they are liberated), but deep down if you look at it - in the family relationships, they still have the same problems we have.

Author: Can you briefly give me your idea of emancipation?

PLS: I would think it is the chance to grow, do what you want to do, when you can do independently what you want to do...the choices you make in life – that is what is the essence of freedom, of liberation...and in America, that opportunity is more available, and in India also now, but when we were growing up – that was not the case. I think... we had to follow what our parents wanted us to do. Even education, and a lot of opportunities were not available to us, or even the professions were not open to us, because we could be either teachers or physicians, or lecturers or something like that. They were the fields that were open mostly for the ladies and the girls there. But in America, you have a choice that way.

Author: I want to give you a brief history of the 60's and 70s (in America) and the actions of the feminist movement – that you just mentioned, also called the women's rights movement...which led to the Supreme Court's passing of many decisions (laws) that changed the lives of American women at home and at the workplace...equal wages

for the same work, though' that is not quite true, and then prohibition against employment discrimination, the use of contraceptives by married couples... this may sound strange but married women felt that they had the right to decide whether or when to have a child, and the legalization of abortion. These were some of the rights accorded to women. What are your views on these issues and do you think these rights that were granted by the Supreme Court to American women and other women living in America, did they in any way liberate American women?

PLS: Hmm...I... think these are actually women's rights in many ways. Whether they were passed by the Courts, who had given these rights to them... I think for sometime there was the struggle, and it seems like the women are trying to forcefully get their rights...so the men got a little bit more... felt like they were losing something that they wanted to control a little bit more. So that is what is happening whether it is (?), I mean it gave a little negative feeling all around. It has changed in some ways but I wouldn't say that women have gained fully their rights even today. They are still struggling to get equal pay; they are still struggling to get equal positions in the workplace... so the struggle is still going on. And so it may have passed on the paper – the courts may have said that these are your rights...but in real life it is not happening.

Author: Right... when you came here in 1970, do you recall seeing any such movement or hearing or reading about these movements – women's rights movement – in America? I am assuming that you came to Chicago and have lived there ever since?

PLS: I came to Massachusetts first, then in 1972 I came to Chicago, and I was really very busy with my 2 little kids because they are only 18 months apart, and there was no help around in the family. Of course we were living independently by ourselves and my husband was working 36 hours straightforward (at a stretch), so I did not get that much chance to read at that time. I was so busy with the children, but yes, it was the movement I read (about) later on, or saw the effects of that...

Author: Did you ever work outside the house? Do a job outside the house? Or have a career after you came to the US?

PLS: You know, I have not worked much in the work field here...I had raised the kids and then I started doing volunteer work.

Author: OK...

PLS: All my life I have been a social worker, and doing volunteer work.

Author: I am sure they appreciate your work... I mean getting volunteers these days is few and far between (I meant, difficult)...

PLS: Yes you know, till '76, '77 I had been involved with social services with the community and you know...

Author: Can you tell me something, a little bit about the social services organizations that you work with?

PLS: Yes, I actually co-founded the Club of Indian Women, and it was a social and cultural activity ... but after 4-5 years we started a crisis line – Indo crisis line... it was a 24-hour hotline and we used to get calls from all over the nation. Anybody would call, even men would call and women and everything. We got a special perspective of the Indian, Indo-Pak community, what kind of problems existed and all that. And we would refer them to the appropriate person and resources and get whatever help we could get. It was more like connecting them to the right person and things like that. But in 1989 I was the co-founder of women's shelter *Apna Ghar* (Our Home, in the Hindi language). So this has led me to being more focused in women's issues in that respect. But I have also been involved with other organizations like the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, AIA – the Association of Indians in America, the Medical Association – in the auxiliary also; then *Chitrahaar*, one of the television shows, Indian television shows in Chicago – I was also one of the hosts in that...

Author: That's a lot of work to keep you busy...

PLS: Oh yes! We have done Chicago Tribune nights also, beauty pageants also (she laughs)... my...I have done many hours of social work/service!

Author: I am sure, yes! What are your husband's views on having such a busy social-worker wife?

PLS: You know, I have always wanted to do more than that ...more than being just a housewife...and these social services have given me an opportunity to be more flexible with my hours and raising the family at the same time. And then also being involved with the community...and at that time in the early '70s, so much to be done in the Indian community, that we got involved in those... at that time, and one thing led to another and we just kept on going...

Author: Right... since the time you arrived in the United States more than 30, almost 40 years ago, how do you think the role or the life of Indian women immigrants has changed?

PLS: Yes it has – that is one reason why we started the Club of Indian Women. Because when we came here there was no support system for us... the women were very very home bound... raising their children and we were sort of afraid to be mixing up with the men's train (?). And we also wanted to promote our culture and also learn about lot of things that were very basic in our growing up and families and ... recipes... we wanted to learn something and we did not have the means of getting anything... there was no cell phone... all those things were not there in the '70s.... and we really did not know how many other Indians were living here. And that is why we wanted to bring the women together and we started a network for professional women where we trained them on a lot of things like how to dress up, how to have (do) your make-up, how to talk, how to present yourself and those sorts of things. We did a lot of seminars on that too...and along with that the social aspects of life also. We got closer to them by the Indo-crisis line... they could call and we would help them and direct them... so at that time there were a lot of these issues that the women were facing ... now I see a tremendous difference in the women who come from India. The newly immigrant women are ready to get into the workforce right away. They really are focused on themselves, on their own growth and on their own selves. When we came here we were more family oriented and wanted to bring up the family just like we were brought up back home. Our values were the same (she means like her parents'); but now I see the young girls that are coming from India, the next day they want to get back to work – either they were working there or they are ready for the work field. They don't have the same kind of inhibitions and trends that we had.

Author: Yes, right... how do you think your life is different from your contemporaries back home in India? Do you ever get to meet your friends you grew up with and see how different their life is – if it is different, can you tell me something about that?

PLS: Yes, I feel that the people that we left behind, friends who are of the same social caliber – social status I should say – they are enjoying life more I guess in some ways. Especially the women, they have some help around the house, they are enjoying their

retirement - most of them are already retired, their husbands are retired, and over here still, we didn't have the freedom – we were lucky to have that but the cost of the freedom, we are paying for that – we are still scrubbing our floors and working our tails (?) off! That difference I still see... we are still working and their husbands are retired and I see that they have more contentment there than we have here.

Author: Uh-huh... do you think that if you were to still live in India and not come to the US your life would have been the same... no, let me just re-phrase it. Coming to America, how has it changed you?

PLS: Coming to America... you see because I have been a housewife all my life although I have done a few things... like, I had a(n) art gallery which I had for one year or so, and also I have done my own interior designing – you know I used to work as an interior designer... from home. I have done a few experiments here and there. Then I was doing some wedding decorations also – I actually started that because I am interested in art... I am an artist and I work with those things, and I worked little bit here and there. So what I feel is that if I lived in India I would have had more chance of pursuing my art over there... somehow... The reason is that I get so involved with other things that I leave my art behind... and I tell myself “OK I will do it tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow and ...” If I was there maybe I would have worked at home, then... I would have been more free to do so... I don't know... maybe it is just my thinking...

Author: Hmm... is there anything else you would like to add to what you have already said about living in America? How did... You told (spoke) about life being different in England... how is life different in America than it was in England?

PLS: I think in America we feel more down(?) ... because the nuclear family is so important here and people are just doing everything for themselves. England I think – it is closer to India – so I feel (there is/are) a little bit more extended family there than here. Here, we do have it – we do meet our extended family living in different cities... but I think here, self is more important than anything else. Even the children, we notice that they are more self-conscious and self-promoting in many ways, than I would say in India or in England... I am not sure what is happening in England now, I have no contact there... but I would say the Indian community here – we are mostly following what happened there in England – Indians are following that because they have been living

there (England) much longer time and we are new here. We are going through the same psychological changes, social changes that we have already gone through. But I see it is creeping in on our lives also, we are becoming you know like... a strong community – the population is much larger now than before... we are more visible now. I mean when we go to big cities like Chicago, we have places where you feel like you have come to a mini India.

Author: Right, right...

PLS: That difference is not as much now – actually in some ways it is better, because they are cleaner, and you can find (?) in one place and you don't have to go from shop to shop to shop like in India, and roam around. We can find everything here – we are becoming more comfortable, more Indian.

Author: That's very interesting to know. Mrs. S, I need to send you some paper work for which I need your mailing address. Would you tell me what your mailing address is so that... or would you like to email it to me? This is just the formal...

PLS: I can give you now...

Author: OK...thank you...the tape (recorder) is on...

PLS: xxxxxx, IL, 64527

Author: OK... thank you so much for you time... I really appreciate it. And, you know I don't know how to say it, but Mrs. LM and Dr. R were both very helpful, and I am so glad I was finally able to connect with you. Have a safe and happy Dassera and Diwali...

PLS: Oh, thank you. Where are you from?

Author: I am originally from Calcutta but I was raised in Bombay and then now we live in the western part of North Carolina, about 3 hours north of, about 150 miles north of Atlanta.

PLS: OK!

Author: It is a very small university town and there are hardly very many Indian families. So..

PLS: You know, the surprising part is that our son has moved back to Bombay. He is married now – he got married 2 years ago and now he is living in Bombay!

Author: Is he married to a western woman, a westerner?

PLS: No, he is married to an Indian who was here in Chicago....

Author: Oh, so that helps...

PLS: Yes...

Author: I am ...

PLS: Our daughter is in Chicago, so...

Author: I hear of a lot of young people who are moving back, who have lived here, but I have not heard of anyone who was born here or in England and has moved back to India. But I am hearing of quite a few young people that are moving back to India...

PLS: And our daughter is 36 years old and she is not married so I see the change there, I mean ...(she laughs) women in our own family... I got married at the age of 22 and she is 36 and she is not married! She is ready to live on her own!

Author: Yes, I mean there are pros and cons to both sides of the culture, in India and here. It is just so different, I mean, I find it difficult to find a balance actually...

PLS: Actually the society has become very fluid in a sense...and it just flows from one to another... there are no boundaries as such.

Author: That is such a nice way of saying it...

PLS: ... and it is very difficult to find them (?) in any shape, size, or form... it really is...right now. It is moving from one direction to another, and you know, I feel such a change in the women's positions... My mother was educated only up to the second grade, but she was a very smart woman. And the education in degrees or in classes didn't really matter. She was a very practical woman and that mattered in life.

Author: Oh yes!

PLS: And now, my daughter is ...(???), she is (has) a doctorate in psychology, and she is teaching doctorate students, and she is counseling people – she is doing all those things but as far as the practical knowledge is concerned, I would not compare her to what a second grade graduate could do. There is such a difference – she is educated, but she is not as practical as my mother was.

Author: Yes...

PLS: As I said, it is very fluid... people are doing what the movement is or flows (?)

Author: Yes, but at the same time you've got to give her credit for doing what she is doing. I mean, you know...

PLS: Yes...

Author: It is just... I guess, circumstances have changed so much that you learn to adapt and make your mark somewhere in the society, in the world, and go from there. I guess that is how life is...

PLS: Yes. The standards have changed, actually there are no standards...in a sense, everything is accepted, unless it is a criminal act. Everything is accepted, you can stay without marriage, you can (have) a live-in marriage, you can live together without marriage... I mean, when we first came here people used to ask us, "are you going to let your daughter date?" And I said, "you know, I don't know how the times will be." Forget about dating ... they live together, they have children without getting married. You know, it is very difficult to know whether one thing will apply to the other.

Author: Right...but then if you have noticed, it is happening back home in India too...among middle class people. I know of quite a few of my colleagues who have for several years now lived together, have children, but ... the same kind of thing is creeping into Indian society too – especially middle and upper middle class.

PLS: As I was saying... it is fluid...

Author: Exactly!

PLS: The distance is becoming smaller and smaller...

Author: The term "globalization" is so apt – it is so correct! That's what's happening... the world has become so small...

PLS: It has...

Author: Thank you so much again, Mrs. S. I really appreciate your time, and more importantly, what you have said is so interesting. I will put the(?) in the mail in a couple of weeks – it is just an agreement release form of this tape, and the contents of it.

PLS: OK, thank you very much.

Author: Thank you, bye-bye!

PLS: Bye!

Appendix C
Job Ads

STENO-TYPIST

A male candidate with a speed of 120/50 w.p.m. having good command over English, able to handle the correspondence independently.

Candidates staying in the Thana-Kalyan region will be given preference.

Please apply immediately to Box 34127, "The Times of India", Bombay-1.

- The Times of India, 26 October 1973

GENERAL MARKETING MANAGER

Rs. 4000 plus

The Company
Internationally reputed electrical engineering company of British origin and a leader in the market, producing a well-known brand of equipment for distribution, control and protection of electricity. Needless to mention that it is growth-oriented.

The Position
A very senior position. Demands consolidation and expansion of the present selling and marketing activities and creation of demand for new and diversified products in ELECTRONICS and ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION EQUIPMENT. Necessary is the development of a dedicated sales group through modern management techniques. A challenging position in every respect.

The Person
Must be a man of mature understanding with proven ability in all-India sales management of an electrical engineering company of repute. Should be a creative, dynamic and result-oriented gentleman in his forties, with sound health. Thorough knowledge of electrical technology is necessary; exposure to modern marketing concepts is essential.

Applications, quoting salary expectations and giving full details of qualifications and experience, may please be sent within 10 days of this advertisement, in strictest confidence, to Box 34357, "The Times of India", Bombay 1.

Identities of applicants shall not be disclosed to any party, nor any references made without prior consent.

- Times of India, 29 October 1973

Appendix D

Characteristics of Study Participants
 (The “+” next to educational achievement indicates sundry training
 and qualifications; “Upper” denotes upper middle-class)

Initials of Participant	Education	Middle Class	Worked in India (# of years)	Date of immigration	Worked in US?
AP	Master	Yes	No	1981	Yes
AS	Master	Yes	Yes	1978	No
DB	Master	Yes	No	1975	Yes
KS	Bachelor in Engineering (Architecture)	Yes	Yes	1970	Yes (retired)
LM	Bachelor +	Yes (Upper)	No	1966	Volunteer
LD	Ph.D.	Yes	Not known	1977	Yes
LH	Bachelor +	Yes	No	1976	Yes
MBA	Master	Yes (Upper)	Yes	1982	Yes
MD	MD	Yes	Not known	1968	Yes
MB (Atlanta)	Bachelor +	Yes	No	1987	Yes
MB (Detroit)	Bachelor +	Yes	No	1982	Yes
PC	Master	Yes (Upper)	Yes	1971	No
PR	Ph.D.	Yes	Yes	1970	Yes
PLS	Master +	Yes	No	1971	Volunteer
RB	Master	Yes (Upper)	No	1974	Yes